

# GO!Durban a catalyst to establish urban improvement precinct

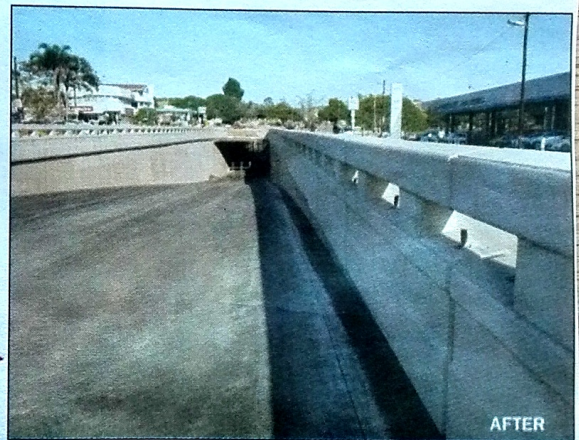
## METRO REPORTER

WITH the visible upgrade of the road systems in Pinetown for the first phase of the GO!Durban integrated rapid public transport network, residents and business owners in the area can look forward to an upgraded urban environment which is poised to stimulate the local economy.

A public meeting held in Pinetown recently marked the beginning of a connection between GO!Durban's transport infrastructure and operational upgrades with the opportunities that are inherent in maintaining and managing these upgraded precincts for the economic benefit of businesses and residents in the area.

The Urban Improvement Precinct (UIP) Company's Cara Reilly says precinct management offers an economic and investment solution to urban centres. Urban degeneration and decay underpins increased crime which leads to fear and ultimately an undesirable space, specifically public space that translates into private property devaluations via rentals.

She stresses the UIP concept is not a South African elitist one and originated in Canada to deal with the issue for getting more out of property values by tackling the public spaces in which they are situated. Internationally the aim is to



Before and after pictures indicating the progress made in the Pinetown Central Business District in the Integrated Rapid Public Transport Network construction.

Pictures: SUPPLIED

maintain vibrant spaces and the optimism for public private partnerships to invest in public space and thus encourage a live, work, play environment.

"While the City owns the public space, it is those businesses with vested interest in that space that must drive change and partnerships to prevent or reverse urban decay. The aim is to secure property values by building investor confidence and retaining existing or attracting new businesses," Reilly says. Core to a UIP is estab-

lishing and maintaining a relationship with eThekweni Municipality, providing the privately funded supplementary services including security and cleaning, creating dedicated points of contact such that the municipality and the UIP have a single entry of communication and being a catalyst for social and environmental development.

Mayor Zandile Gumede said the Municipality acknowledges the tremendous value that the private sector adds to the economic development of the City.

"As history has shown us too, public private partnerships have proved to be a key catalyst in stimulating development, so with the City's investment into GO!Durban, we believe this too will provide a foundation for many other opportunities. We trust that the plans to establish a UIP will further add value to this area which will in turn drive a positive growth in the local economy, and we thank the private sector for taking this initiative," said Gumede. EThekweni Municipality Economic Development

and Investment Promotions Unit Gary Cullen says the Municipality recognises UIPs as growing opportunities within the City.

"The municipality wants to simplify the UIP process so it can roll out the concept throughout the metropolitan area. The reality is we need to do our bit to make the process easier – the municipality recognises the wealthier areas like Umhlanga Rocks can achieve successes with a UIP but that raises questions on how can we work with those less wealthy areas to equally

establish UIPs," he said. South African Property Owners Association (Sapoa) consultant Andrew Layman said globally public transport nodes attract business and economic activity. Urban precincts, which in Durban are called UIPs rather than merely urban precincts, happen around the world.

The benefit inherent in UIPs is that the private sector, essentially the rate-payers, are involved in the decision-making process for improving the zone.