



*"We wanted to build the best city, and we asked ourselves if the way we live is not good, how do we make a city different, better."*

# Steyn City

## A RENEWED SENSE OF COMMUNITY

To appreciate and fully understand the vision that inspired Douw Steyn and Giuseppe Plumari to develop Steyn City Lifestyle Resort you really need to visit it. It is difficult to put into words the way you feel on a tour through the development. As a parent you are looking at all the wonderful play areas for your children, not just the built jungle gyms, but the rolling open parklands, and the babbling streams, with not a road in site for as far as your eyes can see. Still in its infancy, from a built perspective, houses dot the landscape here and there, and you realise that even when all the stands are developed, they are of such a good size that you not going to get the feeling of being on top of each other, looking into one another's bedrooms or bathrooms, and you appreciate the open tracts of manicured and wild grass that separate the properties, rather than towering walls creating canyon effects that isolate us from our neighbours.

The clusters and townhouse apartments are closer together, giving one a sense of community as they are all based around focal points like a deli (with the most delicious meals and steaming coffee), and a swimming pool and play park for the young ones.

Works of art appear at regular intervals throughout the development – the result of Steyn City's local artist upliftment programme overseen by Charles Gotthard, South Africa's only architectural ceramist, who mentors the local artists from neighbouring Diepsloot and Cosmo City. They are not just technically and visually impressive, what makes them even more exciting is that your children are encouraged to explore them and play on them – the waking Giant is perhaps the most impressive and whimsical climbing frame they will have the opportunity to play on. One could sit for hours, staring at the magnificent





mosaics that grace the walls of the underpasses too – each time finding something new in them. So much thought has been put into this lifestyle resort – and there is a deep understanding of how we should be spending our time, engaged with the community, exploring the outdoors, our children running free and embracing the nature around them. It is easy to feel an overwhelming sense of “this is what I want for my family and my life, this is how we should be living”.

## BUILDING THE BEST CITY

We spoke to Giuseppe Plumari about the lifestyle resort and how it came to be. “We wanted to build the best city,” he shares, “and we asked ourselves if the way we live is not good, how do we make a city different, better. The first thing that has the biggest impact on our lives today is the car. We can go where we want, but it makes us insular, and we don’t meet our neighbours, kids don’t play in the streets, children are lonely, they only meet at school or shopping centres.”

He talks about pre-Roman times, how the road network was no different, and people used to walk around. He says that today the car has taken over, there is nowhere for people to walk, children have lost their independence, and their mothers are taxis. “We are

not letting our children walk to the shop for fear of getting run over because we live on islands in a sea of traffic. You can’t even cycle to work because it has become too dangerous and that it is having a negative impact on the new generation.” He smiles as he recalls memories of walking around the streets and suburbs as a child. He speaks about the urban planning at Steyn City, “If you look at suburbs they are all on chequered grids, you can navigate 1: 100, at Steyn City, we moved away from that because traffic can go anywhere on that grid and we don’t want to create islands at Steyn City. We have put a ring road – and no roads through the middle, no matter whether you are in a house or apartment, there is a park on one side of each property, your child goes out on the park and they can manoeuvre anywhere on a parkland side, not a road side. This layout means that you are able to walk as far as the stables without having to negotiate a road. If you do have to negotiate a road, you go under it, using underpasses.” There is a planned City Centre at Steyn City where everyone will park underneath it and use walkways above so you are not walking across parking lots on the ground level – instead the parking is below with access levels. The Steyn City has back-up generators for apartment blocks, city centre, and offices, and there is piped gas into all the residences. There are offices, hospital, schools and an internal shuttle system coming. The resort even has its own water reservoir.

## A SENSE OF FREEDOM

Plumari says, “It’s not a golf estate, it’s a lifestyle resort. It’s sad that our kids grow up not knowing their neighbours and cannot visit their friends on their own. Sadly too many people live in shopping centres, but for kids, they need space, freedom to move, adventure. They need to burn up energy and adrenalin, or they land up in trouble. They need to play sport and be active. Here they have that freedom to find a buddy and go fishing. The same goes for adults, they experience a sense of space and the freedom to move.”

He says the feedback they have received from the public has been very positive, they are overwhelmed by the beauty, the concept, the infrastructure and the clubhouse. He says that it is a secure lifestyle resort which offers a lifestyle you will not find anywhere else. Despite the imposing gatehouse, the lifestyle you find at Steyn City is within reach of many, not just the chosen few. There is a careful distribution of cost, with apartment living starting at R1.5 million. Entering Steyn City, whether you’re buying an entry level apartment or building your dream mansion on one of the large stands, means you are gaining access to all the incredible amenities, and levies are lower due to the critical mass, achieved through the eclectic mix of apartments, clusters and freestanding homes.

Photo: © Steyn City





## A MORE PEDESTRIAN LIFESTYLE

When you talk about the various residential enclaves, Plumari refers to them as villages, bringing to mind scenes of close communities who care about their immediate surroundings and their neighbours, and who know when someone is out of place meaning security is tighter. He bemoans the insular lifestyle that has become commonplace in South Africa, "You can't walk anywhere here – you want exercise you go to the gym. You want to cycle you put your bike on the back of your car and go out to the cradle or spin in the gym." He talks about European cities where people walk more, often travelling a number of blocks to their favourite restaurant or coffee shop. He says in general, people in Europe are willingly forced to go outside their front doors and meet their neighbours, and do so in parks and coffee shops across the city. This is the lifestyle offered at Steyn City, which will soon have such boundary-free villages appearing across its landscape. This is also one of the reasons it has great appeal for multinationals. The installation of more than 15 kilometres the first phase of boulevard throughout the lifestyle resort means residents are able to walk and find a destination to stop and have a cold drink or coffee and catch up with friends. At intervals along the boulevard you will stumble across play areas for the kids with outdoor gym facilities for the parents. At the end of the day it is about discovering all the different destinations available

to explore. When Plumari and Steyn laid out their plans, installing fibre into every home was a given, "The city is gridlocked – the bad planning is becoming a problem – and it can take 2 hours to get to work." Fibre from home makes telecommuting a viable option for many. For those who do still need to go into the office, Steyn City has contributed a third of the costs of the William Nicol upgrade, which will be further extended to the N14, linking it to Midrand as well as the current Cedar Road upgrades.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Besides improving the surrounding infrastructure, through the upgrading of roads and sewerage systems, the lifestyle resort is also well into their plan to plant a million trees and other plants, which they cultivate at their in-house nursery. The lifestyle resort has also created many employment opportunities, with over 12,000 people from the local surrounding communities like Diepsloot and Cosmo City, now employed.

The lifestyle resort skills centre, and its art programme are specifically aimed at uplifting local individuals and their families, who are tasked with paying the opportunities forward through skill exchange within their communities. Plumari says they don't believe in isolating their neighbours but rather creating opportunities for all, right on their own doorsteps. ■ **Lindsay Grubb**

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