

Building redesigned for students' digs



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PROBABLY the first actualisation of Cape Town Mayor Nomaindia Mfeketo's vision to introduce affordable housing into the CBD is a recently completed, private students' residence on Sir Lowry Road near the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and the Castle of Good Hope.

Monpak, a seven-storey commercial building dating back to the 1960s, has been completely redesigned internally by city architects Bam Zöllner, with external "re-interpretation", to provide accommodation for 96 students. A long-term, renewable lease negotiated by Annenberg Real Estate has been signed between the institution and the building's owner Monty Perlman.

"While the mayor's declared intention to bring affordable housing closer to the mainstream is still in the planning stage following her budget last month, the Monpak project has independently already come close to what will be the result of her vision," said practice partner Chris Bam.

Among the R200 million projects in progress in the studio, Bam Zöllner has completed another students' apartment project in Rosebank.

Zöllner said both have given them keen insight into this residential sector and its very specific needs. "We had to reach back a bit into our own past and in doing so enjoy the elements we can contribute to the lives of today's students that we might have wanted for ourselves."

Project architect Heidi Zöllner said Monpak Centre in the city had offered excellent opportunities for its current purpose and the R5.5 million refurbishment project included redesigning the existing floors to accommodate students' rooms surrounding a common area, bathrooms and a kitchen on each floor.

Alternate floors are for men and women students and have, in a lighthearted vein, been colour coded to reflect the difference.

"The original Modernist style has been



New lease on life: Monpak Centre in Sir Lowry Road recently underwent a R5.5 million refurbishment which included redesigning the existing floors to accommodate student rooms surrounding a common area, with bathrooms and a kitchen on each floor.

amended somewhat through colour and other subtle adjustment, and the stairwell, a very prominent external feature, has been re-clad to create a particular point of interest on the façade," she said.

One of the most rewarding of the changes is the re-orientation of the building and its entrance to an attractive square on the mountain side.

"The City Council has also shown a spirit of partnership in providing students with the most pleasing environment by granting waivers on the parking, thus allowing full use of the building for comfortable living," said Zöllner.