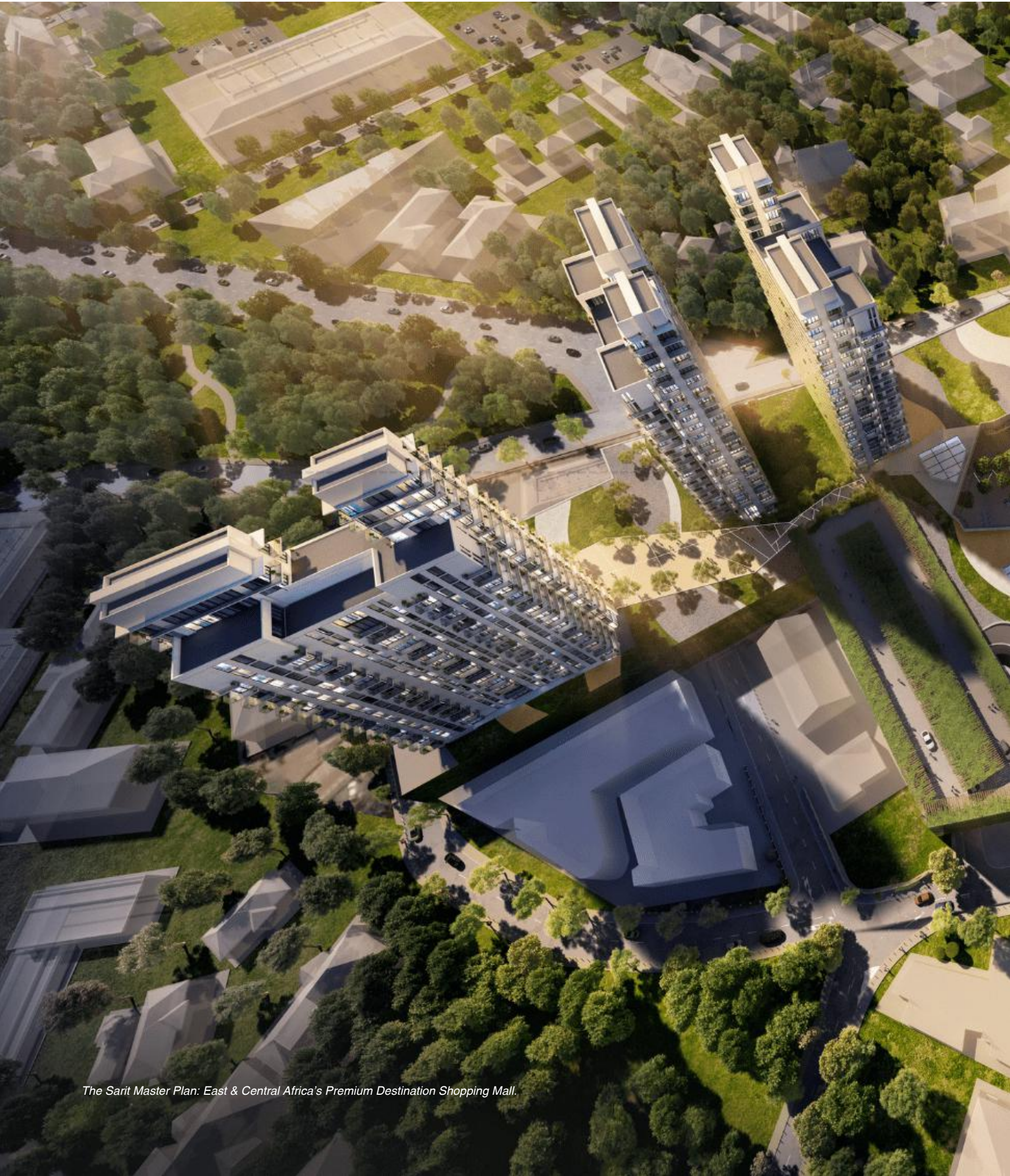




CHAPTER 3

Shopping and Retail







RISE AND RISE OF SARIT



Text Book Centre that provided seed capital for Sarit.

Since its opening in April 1983, Sarit, the premium destination mall in East and Central Africa, has provided unique shopping experiences and transformed the Westlands landscape into a vibrant commercial hub. Over four decades, it has significantly impacted the local economy by creating jobs and driving growth.

Sarit is the brainchild of two individuals, Mr. Maneklal Rughani and Mr. S.V. Bachubhai Shah, whose initial bonding was their shared interest in education, with each running bookstores in Nyeri and Murang'a, respectively. Their first collaboration led to the creation of the renowned Text Book Centre Ltd in 1965, which was always an integral part of, The Sarit Centre.

A visit by the spiritual master His Holiness Sat Guru Sat Hariram Bapa in 1973 to Mr. S.V. Bachubhai Shah's home, where Sarit is located, was a pivotal moment for the two families. The Spiritual Master Praised and Blessed the land, inspiring the families to purchase the surrounding parcels of lands and find a purpose for the Blessed land - a process that took five years, marking the inception of, The Sarit Centre.

Mr. Maneklal Rughani's visit to the United Kingdom in 1976 was a turning point in the retail industry in East Africa. On his research trip, he visited The Brent Cross Mall, the United Kingdom's first shopping mall that inspired the concept of, The Sarit Centre. The families laid the first foundation stone in

January 1981, inviting friends and investment partners to what would become East and Central Africa's first enclosed Shopping Centre.

The journey to complete, The Sarit Centre was not without challenges. Halfway through construction, the 1982 attempted coup that took place in Kenya disrupted the original plan, which included three levels of shopping, a commercial office tower, and a basement parking area. The coup attempt brought with it a loss of confidence in the economy, causing the bank to withdraw its funding and saw potential tenants who had expressed interest withdraw almost overnight. Despite the challenges of the economically and politically gloomy early

eighties, the developers had full confidence in the economic growth of Kenya. They decided to persevere and complete the mall in its smaller version, seeking temporary funding from friends and family. Consequently, the basement, originally intended for parking, was repurposed as additional retail space, and the open area was converted to a car park and the idea of a commercial space was for future development.

“There were moments of great joy because we were doing something completely new, which was a different challenge. With that euphoria, however, came a huge pit in the stomach because we were going away from something that we were very good at, which was book selling, to real estate development of a grand magnitude.” recalls Mr. Mahesh Rughani.

A demographic survey for Westlands was done to ensure that the mall was well-planned and designed to meet the needs of the surrounding community. In the following months, the team worked tirelessly to complete the project, with a set launch date of April 27th, 1983, which was Mr. S.V. Bachubhai Shah’s birthdate. Despite having only two tenants, Text Book Centre and Uchumi Supermarket, the opening ceremony was a grand affair, with the mall decorated with traditional banana leaves and Indian sweets offered to the customers who visited the mall on that day.

Soon after, Kenya Commercial Bank Ltd, Sarit’s first banking tenant, joined the growing list of tenants. In less than five years, what would have been considered an audacious dream by critics, was now home to over 60 retail businesses including, Africolor Labs Ltd, Anicare Ltd, Bata Shoe Kenya Plc, Beauty Quest Ltd, Healthy U 2000 Ltd, Hotpoint Appliances Ltd, Jaff’s Optical House Ltd, Jewelart Jewellers Ltd, KCB Bank Ltd, Kibic Watches, Monty’s Kenya Ltd, Noor Lampshades Ltd, Premji Dungar & Sons, Text Book Centre Ltd, The Garden Centre Ltd, Unik Glass & Framers Ltd, and others who have been tenants for the past 41 years. In 1995, the developers of, The Sarit Centre embarked on the Second Phase of development in response to the



Love, Belong, and Enjoy at Sarit.

growing demand for more space from existing tenants and the intention to provide a wholesome shopping experience to its customer. The expansion also aimed to introduce new businesses not previously available in the mall, enhancing the Centre’s completeness and providing customers with an expanded array of options.

During the construction of the Second Phase of, The Sarit Centre, Mr. Nitin Shah, traveled to Singapore to attend the International Council of Shopping Centres conference. While there, he observed that it was essential to include a food court, cinemas, a health club, and an exhibition facility in the Second Phase. Upon his return, the developers requested that the architects make changes to the plan to accommodate these additions. These design changes were not easy, however they resulted in, the first food court,

cinemas, health club, and column-free exhibition hall. By establishing the food court, The Sarit Centre saw a significant increase in the daily foot traffic, with a couple of thousand more visitors coming in each day. This change revolutionized the dining scene in Kenya, as families could now enjoy meals together without being limited to just one option.

Sarit’s journey with exhibitions began with a Turkish Exhibition Organizer that conducted a series of successful exhibitions, each featuring a distinct theme, spanning four weeks. This marked the launch of the exhibition hall at, The Sarit Centre and soon after, Peter Moll, the former Marketing Manager, suggested inviting organizations to hold exhibitions as a way to attract new customers. This idea proved to be a successful, and exhibitions at The Sarit Centre became a regular feature. Over the



four decades since its inception, Sarit has hosted numerous local and international exhibitions and private events.

Upon observing Global Shopping trends after a trip to Dubai, Mr. Sarit Shah stated that, 'The brand has taken steps to enhance the retail offering and shopping experiences with the Third Phase of Sarit. As a pioneer in retail offering and shopper experience, Sarit has set the standard for innovation and technology in the industry. Phase Three increased the total built up area to over 1,000,000 sq.ft with an expansive exhibition facility, featuring a single-span and column-free hall, the largest of its kind in the region, and a parking silo for 980 cars. Technology has revolutionized retail experiences, with Digital Wayfinding providing a seamless gateway to magical shopping journeys by simplifying mall navigation. The Sarit Loyalty App enables shoppers to pay parking with ease, enjoy guilt-free shopping with Digital Gift Vouchers, while transforming every purchase into an adventure by earning and redeeming points and you can even transfer points to your loved ones with the app.'

In addition, Sarit features a nine-story parking lot with 950 spaces and a green wall designed by a Kenyan landscape architect using indigenous species, promoting sustainability and biodiversity, making it the first green mall. The surrounding roads and existing retail space have been significantly upgraded.

The Third Phase features a variety of food and coffee shops, restaurants, a bowling alley, a trampoline park, an expanded exhibition hall, a children's play area, an upgraded cinema with four screens, a state-of-the-art gym, and a unique bar and lounge boasting the longest bar at 42 meters. Additionally, the open rooftop garden, is a one-of-a-kind in Kenya that offers a serene escape with 110 indigenous trees and a stream-like water feature adorned with coral stone cladding. Surrounded by entertainment and dining options, Sarit stands out as a premium destination for exceptional retail experiences and relaxation. Sarit has retained its unique charm and aims to remain the premium destination mall in East and Central Africa, housing both international and local brands that offers a wide variety of retail experiences across Beauty, Healthcare & Pharmacy, Boutique & Luxury Fashion, Family & Entertainment, Fashion, Food & Beverages, Hypermarket, Jewelry, Watches & Eyewear, Learning, Leisure & Sports, Lifestyle, Home & Furniture, Money & Banking, Phones & Electronics, Restaurant, Café & Fast-Food, Services & Offices and Shoes, Leather & Bags.

Sarit is an iconic landmark, transforming from 'The Sarit Centre - City within a City' to 'Sarit - Your City,' blending vintage charm with modern shopping spaces. With a bold commitment to innovation and development, Sarit's ambitious Master Plan includes expanding into





The contrasting skylines and the expansive aisles tell the story of the continuing development of Sarit.



residential, hotel, and commercial offerings, propelling growth in Westlands, Nairobi, and beyond. Envisioning an exciting future, Sarit's Master Plan, will develop into three more phases over 25 years. The first three phases are already focused on retail, while the upcoming Three Phases will feature dynamic commercial spaces, luxurious residences, and a world-class hotel. In *The Legacy of the Two Families, 2023*, published in commemoration of Sarit's 40th anniversary, Mr. Nitin Shah, states: "The success of a mall is not measured by its size or the number of retail outlets. It is measured by the footfall over the seven days of the week, and in this respect, Sarit is a Leader. This is confirmed by the many businesses and tenants who have been with us over the 40 years."

Sarit, crafts moments that fuse the unique charm of modernity with the warmth of human connection. Their spaces are a blend of cherished vintage and contemporary favourites, that are designed for you to feel at home, share joy, and revel in vibrancy. As an evolving icon, Sarit stands out by offering an ever-changing tapestry of Shopping Experiences. Keep an eye on Sarit for a parade of new and distinctive retail adventures. They are dedicated to excellence, ensuring that every visit is memorable. Sarit is more than a Centre; it's the heartbeat of Your City.

