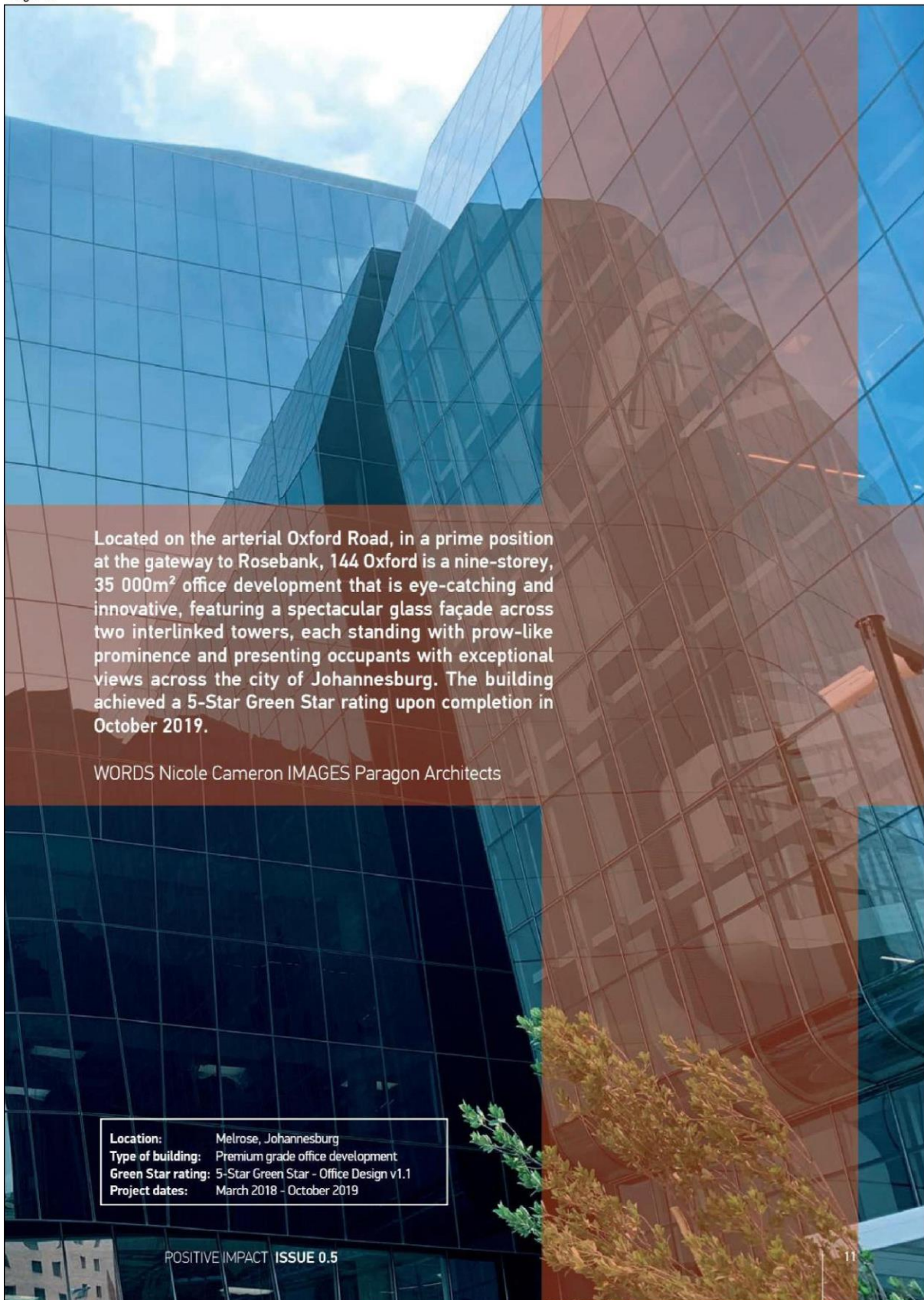


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Page: 10



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Located on the arterial Oxford Road, in a prime position at the gateway to Rosebank, 144 Oxford is a nine-storey, 35 000m² office development that is eye-catching and innovative, featuring a spectacular glass façade across two interlinked towers, each standing with prow-like prominence and presenting occupants with exceptional views across the city of Johannesburg. The building achieved a 5-Star Green Star rating upon completion in October 2019.

WORDS Nicole Cameron IMAGES Paragon Architects

Location: Melrose, Johannesburg
Type of building: Premium grade office development
Green Star rating: 5-Star Green Star - Office Design v1.1
Project dates: March 2018 - October 2019

The building at 144 Oxford represents another iconic development for Growthpoint, who have responded to the increased pressure in this node for premium office space. “Rosebank is attracting even more leading businesses and demand for space than nearby Sandton and Melrose; as can be seen in its P-grade rental levels,” says Paul Kollenberg, Growthpoint office division asset manager. With a larger floor plate than most other developments in the area, the building takes advantage of the size and shape of the property on which it is located (equivalent to six football fields), and presents a uniquely elastic design that supports modern business, with flexible spaces that can be adapted according to how a company thrives and evolves.

A VIBRANT STREETScape

Situated directly opposite the landmark hotel, Hyatt Regency, and a short walk from the Rosebank Gautrain station and other public transport, the concept of urban integration was important for 144 Oxford. To optimise this link, Paragon Architects challenged themselves and the construction industry to create a better streetscape environment. They came up with a landscaped stair that incorporates indigenous planting, custom landscape lighting and water features; all serving to soften the transition between public and private space.



The façade goes one step further in that it is also modular in design and can be completely dismantled and reassembled elsewhere.

The ground floor podium level extends this landscaping, with low planter-walls rising and falling into the floor to create winding seats and private spaces. All spaces are designed for the people who work in the building to enjoy their lunch breaks and use pause areas. They are envisioned as ideal places to rest and reset; while taking a step out the front doors will connect occupants to the vibrant restaurants, lifestyle, shopping, hospitality and entertainment features of the quarter.

Describing the building’s iconic design, Paragon project architect, Laura Strydom, says: “The west façades are shaped towards a curved glass pinnacle which cantilevers outwards towards the road. The main façade consists of double-glazed unitised façades, incorporating a dark grey glass. The outermost façade of the northern building features a secondary offset glazed ‘skin’ with raking sides – a nod to the fast-paced vehicular movement on Oxford Road.” Every part of the building features performance glass of different types, based on the internal layouts and requirements. The entire building is double glazed, even incorporating acoustic glazing in some instances.

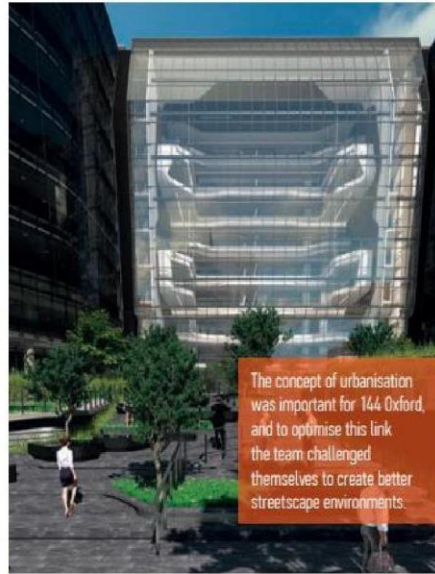
And what of all the glass? Why is it used so extensively, in 144 Oxford and indeed many modern commercial buildings; and is it sustainable? “Glass is indeed a popular aesthetic for both owners and tenants, especially for high-end developments where the look is associated with prestige,” says Aurecon’s Tiffany de Klerk, sustainability consultant on the project. “But, the use of glass is not just for aesthetics. Extensive façades allow maximum light to penetrate the building and create a bridge between the interior and exterior. Internal spaces feel bigger and well lit and create an overall better working environment with views to the exterior,” she says. 144 Oxford has a high-performance glazed façade that allows maximum light while reducing excess solar heat gain. The design



The nine-storey building is eye-catching and innovative, with its spectacular glass façade extending across the two interlinked towers, which stand with prow-like prominence and present exceptional views across the city.



The construction of 144 Oxford meant particular challenges, given the fact that the Gautrain servitude cuts through the site, and that it is located next to a residential suburb.



The concept of urbanisation was important for 144 Oxford, and to optimise this link the team challenged themselves to create better streetscape environments.



The reinforcing steel used in the project has a recycled content of more than 90%.

allows for a superior interior environment by mitigating against the potential increase in energy consumption. This is coupled with the fact that blinds have been installed throughout the building's office areas, in order to reduce discomfort from glare and/or natural daylight. The façade goes one step further in that it is also modular in design and can be completely dismantled and reassembled elsewhere.

KEEPING IN SYNC

Occupant comfort is emphasised in many ways in the building, with the most unique feature perhaps being the use of circadian lighting design. "This innovative lighting design helps the body maintain its natural internal 'clock' – known as its circadian rhythm, by mimicking the light intensity and colour of natural daylight," says Rob Gravette, development manager at Growthpoint Properties. "The lights have two different coloured LED fittings installed, providing both warm and cool light, which are tuneable in order to provide the required light output to match the natural daylight conditions."

Further to taking occupant wellbeing to the next level, 144 Oxford hits all its sustainability goals out



An internal view of 144 Oxford focusing on the high-performance glazed façade.

the ballpark, De Klerk says, “by simply focusing on fundamental principles: reduce energy, reduce water use, and provide the best indoor environment possible.” The building has a no-smoking allowed policy, and mechanically-ventilated spaces regulate thermal comfort. Paint, adhesives, sealants and carpets were required to meet maximum total VOC (volatile organic compound) levels as per the Green Star specifications. There is a formalised waste management system and recycling, and along with cyclist facilities (lockers, showers and changing rooms), moped/scooter and fuel-efficient vehicle parking bays have been provided. Renewable electricity is generated through photovoltaic panels on the roof, and the reinforcing steel used in the project has a recycled content of more than 90%.

Getting the basics right with water-reduction methods meant low-flow fittings, rainwater capture (rainwater from the roof is collected in a 200 000-litre storage tank to be used for flushing of toilets and urinals), a comprehensive water metering strategy (38 meters in total) connected to the building management system, air-cooled chillers and drip irrigation and moisture sensors and automatic controllers for landscaping, resulting in a 62% water saving. The indigenous plants used in the landscaping play their role in reducing water requirements. Water from routine fire protection tests is captured, stored and recirculated to facilitate the reuse of potable water.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

A development of this magnitude does not come about without its tribulations. Strydom explains that the site’s location posed construction challenges, with the Gautrain servitude cutting through the site and restricting the allowable construction methodology to

The use of glass is not just for aesthetics. Extensive façades allow maximum light to penetrate the building and create a bridge between the interior and exterior. Internal spaces feel bigger and well lit and create an overall better working environment with views to the exterior.

be used. “Further to this, logistics were challenging as no lay-down area was available on site. This meant all façades were pre-fabricated off-site and installed on delivery.”

Gravette points out the fact that the site is also located next to a residential suburb, with two schools and three hotels in very close proximity, which required a high level of community liaison, especially in terms of access to the site and noise levels. “Fortunately, Growthpoint was able to establish and maintain good working relationships with the local residential association and hotels,” he says.

Strydom adds that ongoing interaction with all members of the professional team was of the highest level, and that resolving issues together was very satisfying. Gravette agrees, saying that the consultants and contractors were highly competent and committed. “Together they were more than capable of rising to the challenge of delivery a class-leading development that is set to be a landmark building for years to come.” +



In prime position at the gateway to Rosebank, T44 Oxford is directly opposite the landmark Hyatt Regency and a short walk from the Rosebank Gautrain station and other public transport which is plentiful in this pedestrianised area.



DID YOU KNOW?

Building owners report that green buildings – whether new or renovated – command a **7%** increase in asset value over traditional buildings.



