

A facelift can do wonders

Due to a lack of tenants in an increasingly tight market, property owners are opting to refurbish their existing assets, with the aim of attracting new investment.

“We’re finding that property owners are focussing on maintenance. Refurbishment at present is mostly market- or tenant-driven, or a combination of the two,” says Keron Muller, senior architectural technologist, Paragon Group.

While the main benefit of refurbishment is usually perceived as cost-saving, this is not always the case.

“Sometimes costs can be higher due to the quantity of remedial work required, often usually only identified during the actual construction phase. Generally speaking, refurbishing an asset is a great way to facelift and maintain it, if this is done correctly,” Muller asserts.

An example of a recent refurbishment project undertaken, is 155 West Street in Sandton. The original brief was to upgrade the façade, add an entirely new three-storey atrium with a roof terrace and skylight above, and a full ground-floor upgrade with common meeting rooms and a coffee shop, as well as an upgrade to the P1 parking level, with changing rooms, showers, and facilities for cyclists.

Additional briefs were given to upgrade the internal finishes to a modern standard, and to allow for multi-tenanted floor plates.

Establishing a new identity for what was perceived as the “old Discovery building” was a priority. The goal was to achieve this in a cost-effective yet impactful manner, especially considering that 155 West Street is located on a prominent, high-traffic road, and in close proximity to many of Sandton’s

key landmarks such as the Sandton Gautrain Station and Sandton City.

Sustainability was a key requirement, with design improvements in response to the new SANS204 energy legislation resulting in a four Green Star rating from the Green Building Council of South Africa. The most dramatic alteration to Eastgate 20 was elevating it by two storeys, so it no longer rests in the shadow of the adjacent highway vehicular flyover.

Says Paragon Architects South Africa (Pasa) director Thulani Sibande, “The design concept of ‘a box out of a box’ led to a layered and refined architectural design, with crisp edges and folded planes defined by hard glass and tiling finishes to the façades. The volumes were important in this site location, where the building is seen as a three-dimensional object from a variety of different vantage points and heights, and by motorists travelling past.”

