

Publication: Real Estate Life
Date: Sunday, April 01, 2018
Page: 47

PROPERTY INVESTMENT



South African developers are turning to building sustainability as a key sales opportunity and the right thing to do for the planet; here's a look at some of the leading consultancies and buildings in this area

The main lobby of Sasol Place, designed by Paragon Architects. The Green Star rated building has an indigenous rooftop garden, a fitness centre, several restaurants and an art gallery.

CHASING

GREEN STARS

TEXT Georgina Guedes PHOTOGRAPHS Supplied

This material is not for sale or retransmission due to copyright.

PROPERTY INVESTMENT

South Africa is an emerging leader in the global green building movement, according to the World Green Building Council's Annual Report 2015/2016, with 61% of local firms reporting that they expect more than 60% of their projects to be green by 2018.

In December 2017, the Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA) announced it had reached the milestone of 300 certifications on African soil (at the time of going to press, they had achieved 370). The 300 certifications amount to R85 billion of property greened. Taken together, these buildings, sites and developments save enough energy to power the equivalent of about 30 000 households and provide the daily drinking water needs for 550 000 people every year. Their carbon emissions savings are the equivalent of taking 130 000 cars off the road every year.

"The GBCSA is blessed to have close to 1 000 members who clearly understand the benefits of and need for green building, says GBCSA CEO Dorah Modise. "We applaud all of these companies who remain committed to their sustainability journeys and acknowledge the obvious financial benefits of green building in a challenging economic climate."

Green Star SA is a voluntary environmental rating system that evaluates the environmental design and construction of buildings. Green Star SA tools have been developed to provide the property industry with an objective measurement for green buildings and to recognise and reward environmental leadership in the property industry.

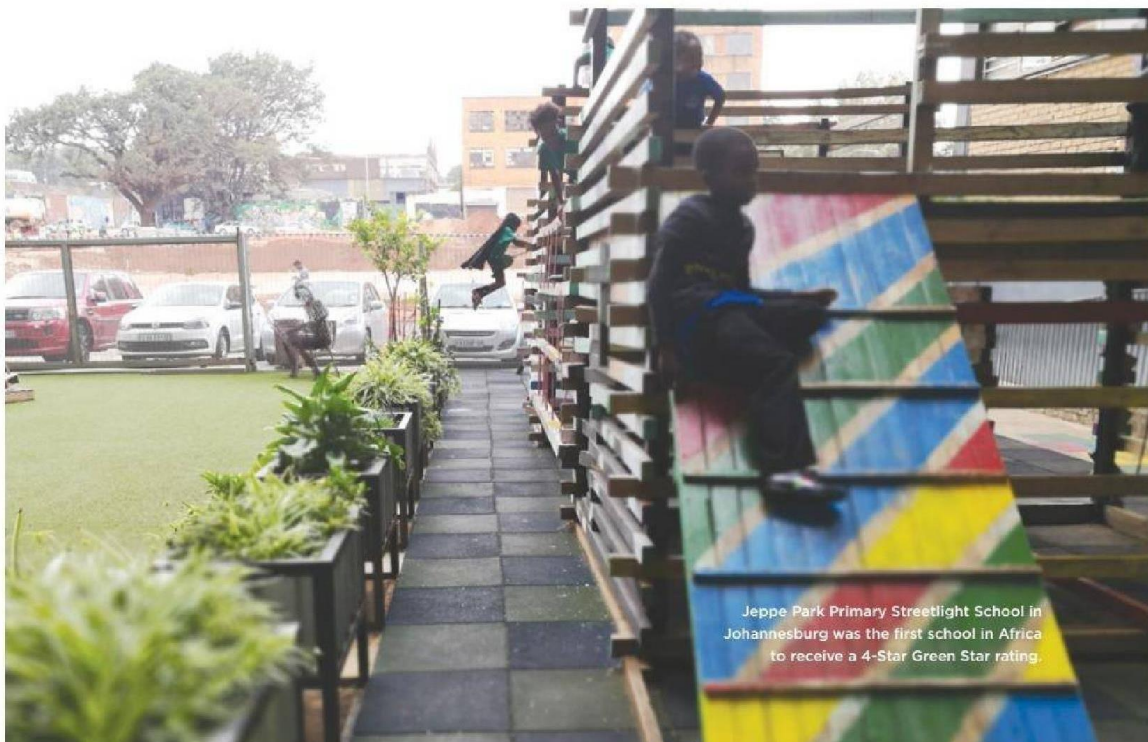
The 250th building that was GBCSA-certified was Jeppe Park Primary Streetlight School in Johannesburg. It received a 4-Star Green Star SA Interiors rating, showing that not only affluent individuals or big developers can create sustainable spaces.

Streetlight Schools is an innovative low-cost primary school model that focuses on enquiry, collaboration, exploration, relevance and use of technology to teach and learn.

"The pursuit of green-building certification was born out of the fact that we were already incorporating many principles of sustainability in the school's interior fit-out, and it allowed us to include many more initiatives into the design, particularly around improving the indoor environmental quality to create a better learning environment," says Melanie Smuts, CEO and Founder of Streetlight Schools.

Solid Green Consulting became active in the early stages of the project by contributing its expertise to have the school Green Star SA rated, leveraging its network of suppliers for donations of materials, and donating financially. Warren Gray, partner at Solid Green, says the intention is for the company to continue its involvement in the initiative as the model is replicated and rolled out.

"Jeppe Park Primary is the first school in South Africa to apply for a Green Star SA rating", he says. "Because of this vision, the innovative educational model, and the fact that the school will be a living laboratory for green education and construction in the same space, people have been very willing to donate materials and professional expertise."



PROPERTY INVESTMENT

Alice Lane Phase III is a mixed-use development in the heart of Sandton, with a 4-Star Green Star SA Office V1 Design rating. It was developed by Pivotal Property Investment Fund and Abland, and designed by Paragon Architects.



THE FINANCIAL CASE FOR GREENING

Green building is good not only for the environment but also for the bottom line. According to Hugh Fraser, architect and media manager at Paragon Group, tenants are now demanding that buildings are either Green Star rated or at least designed according to sustainable design principles. "We are moving from a period of 'nice-to-have' to 'non-negotiable' sustainable design," he says. "Fortunately, this mindset is changing fairly quickly."

There are a number of design interventions that can be made early on with minimal cost that will have immediate benefits, such as installing LED lighting, motion detectors on lights, rainwater tanks and grey-water recycling systems.

However, Hugh cautions that "green" design can be "a law of diminishing returns as one approaches high-cost benefits for perhaps a reduced recovery, as for example with high-performance glazing. Every aspect requires input from a specialised designer."

Another factor that clients need to consider is that a "green" rating increases a building's value. "Certainly, a Green Star-rated building, or at least a sustainably-designed building, would increase its value, because running costs are likely to be lower. It is more difficult to convince a client to convert from 4-Star Green Star to 6-Star Green Star, but fortunately there are enlightened clients out there," Hugh says.

Retrofitting or refurbishing existing buildings for sustainable purposes poses a challenge, as some elements are integral to the construction, such as floor and wall insulation.