

Sandton going green - but not with envy

A hundred years ago Sandton was Johannesburg's "market garden". Some 50 years later, Barry Bristow, the head town planner described it as a "community of 30,000 whites and 15,000 horses".



Today Sandton has evolved into a major financial and commercial hub that started with the opening of Sandton City in 1973 and the relocation of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange from the Jo'burg CBD in 2001.

Now many of SA's biggest companies are have headquarters in Sandton: they include several banks and law firms, insurance and legal firms and a plethora of other organisations. With the opening of the Sandton Gautrain station in 2010 the area's popularity has grown and several significant new developments are under way. And, although the area will never again be a leafy suburb, many of the new developments aim to "green" Sandton the 21st-century way.

In December, Liberty Holdings and Pareto (with 75% and 25% ownership respectively) approved a R450m investment for the refurbishment of the Sandton Twin Towers office complex on 5th Street.

Restoration of the building, which forms part of the Sandton City complex, began in January with initial work on the external façade and the demolition of existing finishes. A centrally located glass atrium will link the two towers from top to bottom and the complex will be renamed Atrium on 5th. Other enhancements include a redesigned lobby with lifts that will incorporate glass and marble finishes and a green *living wall*.

"Our vision is to create the first four-star Green Star SA rated commercial building in the Liberty Portfolio," says Giles Pendleton, managing director of developments at Liberty Properties.

"To achieve this we are complying with various requirements from the Green Building Council of SA (GBCSA). These include following a specified methodology, keeping records of what we recycle or salvage, how we dispose of building waste from the refurbishment and so on.

"Achieving this goal is ambitious, given that we are refurbishing an existing building and not building a new one. We want to demonstrate that achieving a green rating on an existing building can be done," Pendleton says.

The anticipated date of completion of Atrium on 5th is some time in the final quarter of 2014.

Meanwhile, not far away on the corner of Alice Lane and 5th Street, property development company Abland was recently awarded a four-star Green rating by the GBCSA for the design of its R1.7bn mixed-use development, which is a three-phase project the company owns with Standard Bank and Pivotal Property Fund.



The redeveloped site will see the construction of three new office towers linked by a central landscaped piazza. The first 18,000m² building, which borders on Fredman Drive, is currently under construction, and will be completed and occupied by August. The second complex, situated on the Alice Lane side of the property, will provide 16,000m² of space that will be ready for occupation in September 2014. The final building will be completed in 2016.

"This is the first building that Abland has attempted to obtain a (green) rating on," says Lorraine McHugh, marketing co-ordinator at Abland.

"The rating was given after just one round of questions by the GBCSA, which is unheard of. We obtained all 52 points that

we targeted - 45 points are needed for a four-star Green rating. It is one of very few multi-tenanted commercial buildings to be Green Star rated," she says.

Location to amenities such as public transport and facilities within the building, such as the gym and coffee shops, play a significant role in achieving the Green Star SA rating.

The complex is designed to maximise natural light and provides green features such as energy-efficient lighting and air-conditioning systems. It will be finished with paints, adhesives and carpets that are low in volatile organic compounds.

The building will also be one of the first in SA to negotiate a "green lease", which, says Abland, is vital to ensure that green buildings live up to their promise and operate at optimum levels.



But, while in Sandton four-stars are the rating *du jour*, just down the road in Rosebank, Standard Bank recently achieved a five-star Green SA rating. Bank employees - about 5,000 of them - are due to move into a R2bn "green building" in May.

The glass-walled building, on the corner of Oxford and Bolton roads, comprise two buildings with nine and 11 floors respectively. It has a R40m gas-powered energy-saving tri-generation plant that will allow the bank to light, heat and cool the building, saving between 10% and 15% in energy costs.

The building also has facilities to capture rainwater, which should reduce water demand by 50%.

But the cherry on the top are the 422 indigenous trees that will be planted in and around the complex, promising, at least metaphorically, to put some of the leaves back into a green and leafy suburb from yesteryear.

Source: *Business Day* via I-Net Bridge

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