

# The opportunity for the real estate industry starts with the people on the ground

 By Jessica Tennant 18 Nov 2016

Design Mission Africa, organised by IDE Consulting Services, is currently under way at the Sandton Convention Centre, bringing together stakeholders of the real estate industry to solve trade challenges, discuss sustainability issues and encourage investment. Three key points covered over the two days include efficient building measures, visual appeal and quality standards in terms of product and process.

The first day of the summit saw Nana Kwame Bediako, President, founder and CEO of Pretonia City (the first energy city Africa) and WondaWorld Estates in Ghana deliver a keynote address on '*Creating the new Africa: How the establishment of symbiotic relationships between industries will enable Africa to redefine real estate development*'. He mentioned five things developers need to consider at the beginning of a project, namely location, city and property management, industrialisation, innovation, and gentrification. The key takeaway was to start at the end user's needs – to live, work, play and pray – and develop around the community's lifestyle. "First sell the lifestyle," he said. "Then think about the development."



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Adding to the keynote, a panel discussion on '*Exploring new opportunities and benefits for improving buildings environmental performance in Africa*' featured Mike Aldous from Green Building and Sustainability Services, Shiree Dark of Darley Interior Architectural Design (DIAD), and Vere Shaba of Shaba Green Building Solutions.

Darley also emphasised the importance of being involved from the beginning, and similarly for Aldous, the focus is on having an integrated efficiency outlook, looking at buildings holistically over the course of their lifespan.

## Sustainability challenges

Darley has seen an increased awareness around sustainability and green spaces as living environments. "The focus has moved towards the whole package," and the value is in the building's durability and longevity, she said.

A major challenge is that it's more expensive to be green. "Developers shouldn't be penalised for creating a green product which is what's happening now. Instead, they should be rewarded, said Darley, pertaining to the support of manufacturers and suppliers to keep costs down where possible, policies to be put in place, and government incentives, or "we will have to find new ways to implement our visions".

Aldous believes there's a huge benefit to having a framework to guide your sustainability objectives. He suggests implementing policy at a baseline, and thinks that having a list of minimum requirements would raise the bar.

Knowledge and sponsorship are other major barriers, added Shaba. There needs to be a mind shift – an understanding that the benefits outweigh the percentage of expenditure on sustainable materials in the long-term.

Back to Darley's point of being brought in from the beginning, Shaba thinks it would be more cost effective if the greening process is implemented from the conceptual stage. She believes that if consultants are first informed of the client's needs, then the industry would catch up. "The opportunity really starts at the client's end," she said, and in this way, people can contribute to their own sustainability.

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