

# Sustainable construction takes flight in South Africa

**PETER FELDMAN**

SOUTH Africans are increasingly conscious of the “going green” philosophy and searching for ways to make their homes and offices more environmentally friendly.

US-based firm McGraw-Hill Construction undertook a *World Green Building Trends* survey and concluded that South Africa’s green buildings would increase three-fold from 16 per cent in 2012 to 52 percent by next year. The report also said a total of 60 percent of firms surveyed reported future green commercial developments by next year.

One of the largest property owners in South Africa is Growthpoint, which is

acutely aware of its impact on the environment and continues to expand its environmental commitment.

Dr Werner van Antwerpen, a sustainable development expert at Growthpoint, explained that “green” building incorporated design, construction and operational practices that significantly reduced or eliminated the negative impact on the environment and people.

He said “green buildings” were energy and resource efficient and environmentally responsible.

Van Antwerpen said the company was committed to sustainability and wanted to reduce the impact on the environment by promoting responsible development. “For that reason all our

new and major refurbished buildings are designed to have a Four Star Green Star rating or higher from the Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA).”

In addition to developing new buildings, Growthpoint is addressing its existing portfolio stock.

All new and existing buildings that the company developed and operated, he said, would reap the benefits associated with green principles.

“From a business perspective, green buildings make good financial sense, as they have lower operating costs that benefit both the tenant and the landlord, while increasing staff productivity in a healthier work environment,” he said.

Asked whether he felt South Africa was far better off in establishing sustainability compared to other regions in the world, Van Antwerpen said: “The concept of sustainability in the built environment is a much newer one in South Africa compared to other countries like Australia, the UK and the US. Sustainability has only really taken flight in South Africa over the past five years.”

This news comes as the third bi-annual AfriSam-South African Institute for Architects (SAIA) Awards for Sustainable Architecture honours architects and the buildings they created (see article above about the winning entries).

Fifteen entries were earmarked to

compete for the top award this year.

Of the nine provinces, Gauteng showed it was at the cutting edge when it came to creating sustainable architecture for the future, with three commercial buildings and four residential properties among the Gauteng entries that the judges nominated.

For the first time, AfriSam and SAIA will mount a free exhibit at the Joburg City Library from October 10-23 to showcase the finalists, which will include a curated educational programme. Grade 6 and 7 pupils from across Joburg will participate in an interactive morning of exploration, designed to highlight the importance of sustainability and how it affects their lives.