



AWARD-WINNING PROJECTS

The top honour in this year's AfriSam-South African Institute of Architects Awards went to the Alexander Forbes Headquarters in Sandton, designed by Paragon Architects and Paragon Interface, in the built work category (far left).

Commended in this category was House Jones in Hurlingham, Joburg, designed by ERA Architects (left).

Green buildings scoop awards

PETER FELDMAN

GAUTENG buildings reaped honours at this year's AfriSam-South African Institute of Architects (SAIA) Awards for Sustainable Architecture announced in Joburg this week.

The top honour went to a Sandton building, the Alexander Forbes Headquarters, designed by Paragon Architects and Paragon Interface, in the built work category.

Commendations in this category went to three other Gauteng properties: the Seed Library in Alexandra township, designed by Architects of Justice; Monaghan Farm near Lanseria, Gauteng, submitted by Claude Bailey Architecture & Design on behalf of Clewer Development Trust; and House Jones in Hurlingham, designed by ERA Architects.

Cape Town's Unisa Phase 2 in Parow, designed by Michele Sandilands Architects, was also commended.

A second award, in the category of works of social importance, including research, went to Vukuzakhe by Koop

Design in Durban, which examines urban development in the Municipality of eThekweni, while Collis & Associates received a commendation for research into concrete recycling in Cape Town.

The Alexander Forbes Headquarters, which has already been confirmed as a Four Star Rated Green Building, employs 2 500 people. It has been occupied for two years and the accommodation impact was designed to reduce any negative impact on water, energy and waste, the architects say.

The role of louvres, skylights, glazing and scallops assists with light while reducing the impact of heat and, at street level, the building edge is softened with xeriscaping (water-wise landscaping), indigenous trees and plants.

Stephan Olivier, AfriSam's chief executive, said: "In acknowledging this building as the recipient of the AfriSam-SAIA Award for Sustainable Architecture for 2014 in the built category, it is hoped that the Alexander Forbes Headquarters will provide a beacon of inspiration, not only as a place to work, but also as a worthwhile contribution to the urban fabric of Johannesburg and

human experience in the area."

A different aspect of sustainable architecture was confronted by Architects of Justice which was asked to design library facilities for a school in Alexandra. Their solution, the Seed Library, is an intervention that addresses the wholesale recycling of buildings in society and offers a possible prototype using shipping containers. This commended project may also be adapted in other contexts across South Africa where similar conditions exist.

"The Seed Library explores the balance between providing much-needed facilities and investigating other avenues of architecture, which recognise that, sometimes, not building more may be the best solution," said Sindile Ngonyama, president of SAIA and chair of the adjudicators' panel.

Monaghan Farm, a lifestyle estate of about 500 hectares immediately north of Lanseria, is a gated community based on food security which is aligned to nature conservation, rather than golf-estate principles.

Commenting on this project, Olivier said: "Monaghan Farm speaks to socie-

tal issues and explores a unique opportunity in an anthropologically sensitive area. It is celebrated for its ability to analyse an existing situation and offer a variety of solutions for sustainable lifestyles, while still keeping close to a suburban experience."

The fourth commended project is House Jones, located in Hurlingham, Joburg and designed by ERA Architects. It has a multitude of systems to generate and store energy, save water and reduce waste, which makes it possible for the house to exist entirely off any municipal grid. This project has been extended into a small wetland, which greatly enhances the site.

In addition to the facilities offered, a rigorous programme of recording data is in place, allowing for analysis, which will provide valuable information for future developments in housing.

"The determination of the owner of this house to free his family from the vagaries of local authority energy and water supplies resulted in a building whose equipment may be unattainable to most, but offers empirical solutions, in part to all," said Ngonyama. "House

Jones should be lauded for standing up and being counted, and the passage of time will evaluate its contribution to alternatives in this era of over-consumption."

The prestigious bi-annual awards were first introduced in 2009 to recognise outstanding achievement in sustainable architecture as well as create public awareness and debate on architectural issues.

There are two entry categories – one for built work and the other for works of social importance, including research. Entries are evaluated against a range of criteria, including people upliftment and planet rejuvenation.

This year, for the first time, AfriSam and SAIA have mounted an exhibition to showcase the winning projects and finalists. The exhibition, which runs from October 10-30 at the newly renovated Joburg City Library, is also free to the public and is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and Saturday, 9am to 1pm. The exhibition reflects the underlying ethos of the awards and is constructed entirely out of 100 percent recyclable paper and cardboard.

PROPERTY WATCH

New owners not liable for debt

THERE has been great concern about the transfer of rates and taxes debt incurred by previous owners to new owners in recent months, but a high court decision has clarified that a new owner would not be liable for the debt of a previous property owner.

Andrew Bembridge, the director of property and real estate for ENSAfrica, said that the Gauteng Division of the High Court has now confirmed that the interpretation of the municipalities was incorrect in handing down a judgment in the matter of Perregrine Joseph Mitchell v City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality.

The judgment, handed down on last week, said the following:

"A successor in title to a property does not become a co-principal debtor regarding the principal debt to the municipality and is not liable for the payment of historical debts incurred by previous owners or occupiers of the property. In other words, current owners are not liable for the debts of previous owners;

"The security of the lien held by the municipality was extinguished by the transfer of a property to a subsequent owner;

"The outstanding debt owing by the previous owner, remains owing by that owner. It is unaffected by the transfer of the property to a new owner. So it remains due by the owner that incurred the debt to the municipality."

Accordingly, Bembridge said, unless and until this judgment is reversed, the equitable situation, as property owners would reasonably expect, has been restored. Any person who has been forced to pay a debt incurred by a previous owner should immediately be refunded by the municipality concerned.

The problem arose when inefficiencies in the