

WeDesign2016 Conference to change urban thinking radically

The WeDesign2016 Conference, taking place in Durban on 8 July 2016, features Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan as one of the keynote speakers, joined by international speakers, Felipe Leal, immediate past Minister of Urbanism for Mexico City and Kelvin Campbell, chair of Smart Urbanism in London.



Hosted by the KwaZulu-Natal Institute for Architecture (KZNIA), the prime objective of the conference is to put the radical transformation of our cities, towns and villages at the very top of the national agenda and embed it in the popular and collective consciousness. Also on the podium is an impressive line-up of South African business and property specialists and leading practitioners in urbanism, architecture and urban planning.

“It is clear that widespread, vibrant and sustainable economic growth and accessible opportunity is central to meaningful job creation, poverty reduction and narrowing of the wealth disparity gap. These are essential to attract financial investment, build social stability and significantly reduce non-renewable natural resource consumption,” says Ruben Reddy, president of the KZNIA.

Conference organisation committee member, Andrew Makin from DesignWorkshop, says, “Almost every South African is preoccupied with the single, important question of how things will realistically and radically improve in our country, but the answer might be in a very different place to where we are all looking.

“South Africa is currently estimated to have just 0.5% economic growth, which is a generous way of saying zero. It means only one thing. Joblessness will increase, poverty will deepen, inequality will widen and social antagonisms such as unrest and crime will worsen. The future is dramatically less optimistic than it was any time between 1994 and today.

“Physical distance is ‘enemy number one’ of infrastructural efficiency. Idea sharing, which leads directly to innovation and job creation, public service provision and social cohesion, especially for small entrepreneurial business, could turn 0.5% to 5%. If this does not become the single gathering nation vision of all our efforts, there is zero chance of a better future for any of us in South Africa.”

Other speakers exploring the potential of a comprehensive National Spatial Revolution [NSR] in South Africa include:

- Malijeng Ngqaleni, head of intergovernmental relations of The National Treasury
- Musa Mbhele, deputy city manager, head of urban renewal of the City of Durban
- Paul Wiggers, design leader of the Urban Design Framework for the Inner City of Durban
- Edgar Pieterse, head of African Centre for Cities
- Michael Deighton, md of Tongaat Hulett and president of SAPOA

“By removing so many of the physical and spatial barriers between current reality and a prosperous, egalitarian, stable, safe and secure South Africa, we can radically transform into a sustainable powerhouse of economic opportunity, underpinned by cohesive social networks and celebrated in compellingly vibrant centres of unique urban cultural expression. We invite interested parties to join us on this paradigm-shifting journey,” says Reddy.

For more information, [click here](#) or call Kubash on +27 (0) 31 201 7590.

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