

Socio-economic achievements acknowledged by GBCSA

The Green Building Council of Southern Africa (GBCSA) has launched a new PILOT Socio-Economic Category (SEC) for Green Star SA rating tools in Gauteng, which will recognise the socio-economic achievements of green building projects.



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Sponsored by Old Mutual Property, the new category is a world-first with the GBCSA taking the lead to develop this set of socio-economic criteria for building rating tools focused on a developing country context, as well as an international framework for adaptation in other developing countries, in association with the World Green Building Council.

Critical move

Old Mutual Property MD, Peter Levett, said he was delighted to be associated with such a progressive initiative. "The introduction of the PILOT Socio-Economic Category is a critical move towards building a more sustainable property development environment in the developing world. We applaud the Green Building Council South Africa for leading the way in the quest for a more positive socio-economic impact from the property industry."

Registered green buildings are invited to test the SEC in the PILOT phase, which will last until December 2014. Projects that achieve a rating for the SEC PILOT will get additional recognition for this, alongside their Green Star SA rating.

Development of the SEC is a pioneering move that takes the GBCSA beyond assessment of traditional 'green' criteria for buildings. The inclusion of social and economic factors is important to address broader sustainability issues, which are particularly relevant for South Africa and other developing countries. Societal challenges such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education and skills, and poor health can all be addressed, to some degree, through the process of designing and constructing green buildings.

Upliftment potential

"In the same way that Green Star SA tools have inspired transformation towards 'greener' practices in the property industry, we trust that this Socio-Economic Category will help facilitate greater realisation of the socio-economic upliftment potential of building projects," says GBCSA CEO Brian Wilkinson.

The SEC has seven possible credits under Green Star SA. These focus on employment creation, economic opportunity, skills development and training, community benefit, empowerment, safety and health, and mixed income housing.

"It has been a complex task to produce this set of options for objective assessment criteria for socio-economic interventions on building projects," explains Special Projects Manager, Sarah Rushmere from GBCSA. "Fortunately we've had great help from a range of experts and stakeholders spanning both public and private sectors. Along with the appointed consultants Aurecon, there was an 18 person broadly-constituted technical working group, and a further ten person peer review committee and 11 other organisations also contributed their expert views."

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