

Green building groundswell taking hold

By  Donia Kamstra

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Dissatisfied urbanites increasingly experience carbon emissions, resource indulgence, aching infrastructure and the resulting gridlock, disempowered local economies and degradation. The specialisation of property and construction industries to alleviate these issues and drive better sustainability practices has been fragmented.



Sergey Nivens

In order to drive meaningful change, a more integrated approach to the process is needed. As the green building groundswell takes hold, we expect to see several trends strengthen in 2017.

SA property and construction players committing to greener practices

Developers recognise a social and value system adjustment in the market and are moving towards a holistic approach and greener built environment. Larger property groups, in particular, have begun to seriously address green criteria and use green expertise as a selling point, placing pressure on other developers to come on board.

Increased local adaptation and use of standardised green rating tools

There has been noteworthy take-up of green rating tools by mainstream developers, asset managers and government stakeholders. They are also being successfully adapted to specific country contexts.

Project managers developing regenerative and integrated design process skills

Regenerative and integrated design processes require a whole new skillset to weave sustainability concepts into projects, working collaboratively with our natural systems. Project managers are becoming more skilled at complex facilitation processes, responding to multiple stakeholders, technological complexity, statutory constraints and variable economies.

Renewed focus on the 'spaces' and areas 'between' buildings within a defined precinct

Increased emphasis is being given to the quality and functioning of the 'spaces' and areas 'between' buildings. Precincts can be formally defined by common values, particular service and operational agreements or land ownership. Citizens will

be able to take more and more responsibility of their own neighbourhoods and local councils will support formalised eco districts to be self-regulating.

Developers buy into the business case for green building

With increasing utility costs, potential carbon taxes and stricter regulations, developers have realised the need to futureproof their assets through building certified green buildings that can attract and retain better tenants paying higher premiums.

Innovative green buildings can be delivered at a price comparable to conventional buildings and investments can be recouped through operational cost savings and, with the right design features, create a more productive workplace. The development and implementation of complex life cycle costing methods continue to be key to providing compelling 'motivation'.

Tenants demand green to fulfil CSR requirements

Increased market demand and clear financial rewards, coupled with mounting government regulations and shareholder pressures, provide multiple incentives to own and occupy high performance green buildings. SA tenants are increasingly using their certified green buildings occupancy as a way to support their CSR responsibilities.

Environmental and social economies create momentum

In addition to the financial economy, mechanisms for trading in other economies will become more tangible and diverse. This is already visible in corporate social responsibility programs, carbon credits and energy rebate programs.

Development trends mirror contemporary social challenges. With these trends becoming real possibilities, cities can re-emerge as places of social cohesion and wellbeing. We are seeing a societal departure from the self-serving framework towards making the connection between the success of the whole and our own wellbeing. Pioneering property practitioners are tuned into this trend and will continue to evolve the implementation of green.

ABOUT DONIA KAMSTRA

Donia Kamstra has a 22-year track record in the property industry that includes a number of high profile developments. She has worked with property and construction solutions company Profica since 2006 in a variety of roles that have included client development manager, project manager, and championing the company's sustainability focus as a technical working group member of the Green Star SA rating tool. Kamstra's areas of specialisation are project development, facilitation and conceptualisation.
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