

# Cape Town business park awarded first "existing building" green rating

As part of the Green Building Council of SA's (GBCSA) new Green Star SA Existing Building Performance (EBP) pilot tool, the 18,675m<sup>2</sup> North Park at Cape Town's Black River Park in Observatory is the first to have been recognised with a 5 Star GBCSA EBP certification.



Black River Park, owned by Leaf Capital and Joubert Rabie, has made it their mission to secure green certification for the entire 75,000m<sup>2</sup> office park - one of the largest business parks in the Western Cape. The park, consisting of a North and South Park, is home to more than 110 companies, including the GBCSA's head office and SAPOA's Western Cape offices.

The EBP rating tool, sponsored by Nedbank Corporate Property Finance, was launched by the council in August (2014). It recognises excellence in the performance of existing or older buildings where green building innovations have been introduced to make the building more sustainable, reducing their impact on the environment.

## A significant milestone for the GBCSA

"The awarding of our first-ever Green Star SA EBP rating to a building within the Black River Office Park is a very significant milestone for the GBCSA, Misplon Green Building Consulting and the green building movement in SA," comments Brian Wilkinson, CEO of the GBCSA.

"We want many more owners of buildings to follow the example set by Black River Office Park. With this first EBP rating awarded, the GBCSA will go on a big drive advocating the case to get existing buildings to be retrofitted with green innovations, as these buildings make up the large majority of buildings out there," he adds.

Up until recently GBCSA's Green Star rating tools have focused largely on the design and construction of new buildings and major refurbishments - all with a design and construction elements. This had very little focus on ongoing building operations and management. The suite of current new building and major retrofit tools were aimed at only about 2% of building stock, while the newly released Green Star SA EBP tool addresses the remaining 98% of the building stock.

This existing building rating tool enables the effective measurement of a building's environmental performance in relation to its operation and management. It provides indicators to ensure that the building's environmental performance is efficiently maintained or improved upon over time. The new EBP rating tool is significantly differentiated by the fact that buildings can get a 1-6 star certification with this tool and the rating is valid for a period of three years in order to ensure continued efficient operation and management of the building.

## **At the forefront of sustainable commercial real estate**

Black River Park has been at the forefront of sustainable commercial real estate for over a decade and this certification confirms the strength of the management team and their commitment to sustainability. The EBP certification of a building within the park marks the completion of the first stage of Black River Park's drive to get all the office buildings at the park certified.

Black River Office Park, together with Misplon Green Building Consulting, is now in the process of preparing submission packs to secure green ratings for the remaining buildings.

### **Some of the green initiatives that have been undertaken for the building at the park to secure the EBP certification include:**

The installation of the Southern Hemisphere's largest rooftop Photo Voltaic System which produces electric power from sunlight. This 1.2MW system is being used to supplement and reduce the electrical load from the City's electrical grid. It produces around 1.9GWh of electricity per year, enough to power over 1000 average-sized houses. This equates to between of 20-30% of total amount of energy used in Park, and reduces the peak demand by around 18%. It is also the first commercial project to be allowed to feed back into the grid and be remunerated for it.

- Energy efficient lighting has been installed throughout common areas of building and is currently being rolled out into tenant's premises through a joint financing initiative.
- Ecologically friendly gardens, including a vegetable garden and fruit orchard, are maintained with borehole water pumped on site. Recycling of all garden waste is also done onsite to create mulch.
- The park engaged with a new recycling focused waste contractor in order to reduce the amount of solid waste going to landfill and improve recycling. This is aided by the procurement and placement of recycling bins around the park to encourage sorting of waste from the source and minimising contamination.
- Indoor air quality was a major focus with temperature, humidity, CO and CO2 tests being undertaken. This was done in conjunction with natural and artificial lighting tests.
- Shopfronts with performance glass dominate the buildings' façade in order to maximize views to outdoors for building users. This visual connection to the external environment in combination with floor to ceiling heights in excess of 3.5 meters, has the benefit of reducing eyestrain for the building occupants and contributes to a better working environment.
- Cycling and shower facilities were made available to tenants in the park's Crossfit Gym, to encourage alternative modes of transport and a healthy and active lifestyle.
- Education and raising awareness of greening initiatives through talks, interviews and presentations. Publication of this Building User's Guide which includes procurement and purchasing of paints, carpets, adhesives and sealants for maintenance and fit-out work.
- Standard cleaning consumables have been exchanged with an environmentally friendly range of cleaning products and equipment
- Implementation of a storm water management plan to recognise site related practices which limit the disruption of natural

hydrology, minimise pollution and site deterioration.

- Development of a hard services management plan to encourage environmentally sensitive hard services maintenance practices that reduce the environmental impact and improve ecology value.

While Wilkinson commended the efforts of Black River Park, he urged both the private sector and government to now also look more seriously at securing green ratings for existing buildings through the GBCSA's new certification tool.

"If we want to make a bigger positive impact in making buildings more sustainable and green, existing buildings need to be targeted. Our innovative 'existing building' rating tool aims to drive the transformation of these buildings to become more sustainable spaces," he says.

"There are many older or existing buildings that can get green makeovers. Building owners need to take the initiative and show green leadership like the owners of Black River Park have done. Greener buildings are becoming more attractive to both tenants and potential investors, due in large part to their triple-bottom line commitments to not only profit and social sustainability, but environmental sustainability.

"The EBP rating tool is directly aimed at the operators of existing buildings, with key focus directed at portfolio managers, owners, facilities managers and tenants. The role of the tenant is considered key to a building's operations and thus the rating tool will also serve as a tenant awareness instrument as tenant buy-in is essential for significant uptake of the tool. Our Green Lease toolkit is a key component in the owner tenant relationship in order to set up a win-win agreement," concludes Wilkinson.

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