

From design to deconstruction, green building gains momentum in SA

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Legaro Properties is no stranger to the green building industry with the lifestyle and commercial property developer scooping last year's GBCSA Award for highest rated green building in South Africa for its 78 Corlett Drive development in Melrose North, Johannesburg.



78 Corlett Drive

It's continued to embrace green building and sustainability principles in its developments as more and more of its clients see sustainable development as an environmental and economic imperative to their businesses.

Designed by Italian architect Enrico Daffonchio, luxury residential development The Emerald Hyde Park is the latest addition to Legaro's portfolio. Decked with both minimalist and environmentally conscious features and fittings, it has already been awarded an Edge green-star rating by the GBCSA. According to Michele Brookes, managing director of Legaro, the concepts of sustainability and community were central to the design process for the development which has set the benchmark for future projects.



The Emerald Hyde Park

We asked Brookes for her take on the green building sector in South Africa, what are some of the current trends, and what's driving the shift toward sustainable development.

■ *What primarily makes property green?*

Brookes: The green building design we implement on our developments is the practice of creating structures and using processes that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout the building's life cycle, from the design, construction, operation, maintenance and renovation to the deconstruction of that building.

Our design approach is an effort to improve the mental and physical health of human beings by ensuring cleaner indoor air, reducing harmful chemicals, improving daylight systems, improving daylight exposure. It strives to protect and restore the site and surrounding environment. Categories included in the design development are rainwater harvesting, light pollution, construction activity pollution, using products with low volatile organic compounds emissions, reducing energy consumption, finding solar solutions.

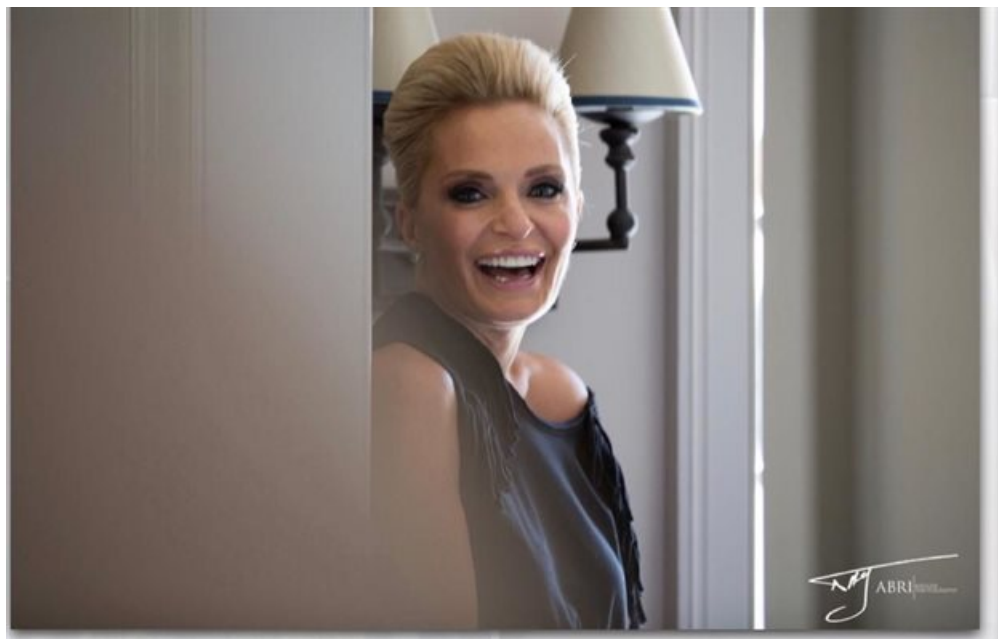
We believe that property is 'green' if its impact on the direct and broader environment is minimal, and the physical health and mental happiness of the occupants is carefully considered.

■ *What are the current trends in the green building space?*

Brookes: An increasing percentage of professionals, currently at 47%, expect 60% of their projects to be green. Clients are seeing a 10% or greater increase in asset value for new green buildings compared to traditional construction methods. Requests for energy analysis on the design are more frequent to optimise daylight use which is crucial for green building design. Urban farming has made its mark in cities all over the world, and the Mother City shows examples of urban farming

@ 44 Wale Street. The idea of net zero carbon buildings is starting to pick up, and Edge certification for building and developments are becoming a standard in Johannesburg.

From our architectural firm's perspective, we have always designed sustainably. The extent of how sustainable the end results have been has depended on the clients mainly, and we have been very fortunate in this respect.



Michele Brookes, managing director, Legaro

■ ***Has there been a notable rise in demand for green property development in recent years?***

Brookes: Yes, we feel that both developers and end users are more aware of the benefits of sustainable design and there is a gradual and constant increase in demand for green buildings and developments.

■ ***To what do you attribute this?***

Brookes: The current economic climate is pushing the consumer to find alternative ways to spend their incomes more wisely. The recent years of naturally receiving less rain has pushed consumers to invest in rainwater harvesting methods. The same can be said for the power supply to residents and business, making them explore solar solutions for power and to go off the grid completely.

I think it is due to a combination of awareness about climate change, as well as the fact that a lot of 'off-the-grid' features are actually practical in Africa, where services are sometimes absent or unreliable.

■ ***How would you describe the green building sector in South Africa at present – is it gaining substantial momentum, or do we still have a long way to go?***

Brookes: We believe that the green building sector is increasing steadily over an annual period. Investors are seeking our services as the consumer is seeking the quality of life it brings. We do believe there is always room for improvement, as one never stops learning. It's definitely gaining momentum!

■ ***Net zero, do you think it's possible by 2030?***

Brookes: It will only be possible if it becomes a regulatory item in the national building regulations. Right now it is dependent on the demand from investors and consumers. It is possible only if driven by government as well as the private sector. Interestingly, both rely on the general population for their survival, so let's wait and see.

■ ***What is your outlook for the green property development space going forward?***

Brookes: We envisage a substantial increase in the green building design industry should the economy improve, while current ongoing climatic change is promoting green building design and sustainability. We are very excited about the development of new technologies which are in turn reducing costs and making this trend more economically viable.

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