

# Green building movement gaining momentum in SA

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AL GORE upset the world when he made the documentary *The Inconvenient Truth*, but it put the critical issue of global warming in an unprecedented spotlight. Now the green building movement is sweeping the world as part of the property industry's moves to make a difference in reducing CO2 emissions, or its so-called 'carbon footprint'.

This was one of the resounding statements made at the recent 12th African Shopping Centre Congress in Durban, by Bruce Kerswill, executive chairman of the Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA).

Kerswill is regarded as the driving force behind the establishment of GBCSA, having travelled the world to see "what is being done, to learn and to look at best practice" by green building organisations in countries that have been at the forefront of the movement, like Australia and the United States.

"In South Africa the green building movement is also gaining momentum with our country set to host its inaugural Green Building Council of South Africa Convention & Exhibition in Cape Town in November," Kerswill said at a session, titled 'Green Imperatives', at the African Shopping Centre Congress at Durban's International Convention Centre.

"With backing from major players in the property and construction industry, like Old Mutual and Growthpoint Properties, we are gearing up for the launch of the industry's first environmental rating system, Green Star SA, which is being formally launched at the convention. This is going to be a landmark development in terms of the green building campaign in South Africa," he added.

Kerswill said that following the establishment of the GBCSA and increasing support from the industry, a clear indication of the growing green building awareness in the country was the fact that the GBCSA website was getting more than 1 000 hits.

He said GBCSA had received more than 220 comments on the planned Green Star SA rating system



GREEN Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA) executive chairman, Bruce Kerswill (right), with international environmental specialist advising the GBCSA, Michelle Malanca, at the recent 12th African Shopping Centre Congress at Durban's International Convention Centre.

PICTURE: SUREN NAIDOO

for buildings and had already secured more than 100 applications for membership to the organisation.

Kerswill said while Al Gore had truly put the issue of global warming in the international spotlight, in South Africa it had not been seen as the emergency issue that it should have. However, he said government, for example, recently announced moves to reduce CO2 emissions in South Africa by half by 2050.

"All other industries have to come to the party in reducing CO2 emissions or its carbon footprint. In the property sector, for example, studies reveal that buildings produce up to 40% CO2 emissions. In a green building, energy consumption alone can be decreased by between 40-70%," said Kerswill.

Modelled on rating systems in the UK, USA and Australia, Green Star SA is a voluntary environmental rating system that aims to transform the property market via industry initiative.

"It is a holistic approach," said Michelle Malanca,

an international environmental specialist advising the GBCSA and currently working with it to get the rating system ready for the SA launch.

"It looks at key issues of energy and water, but includes factors like environmental air quality, transport and ecology. The benefit of Green Star SA is that it combines technical robustness with ease of use," she said.

Green Star was originally developed for the Australian property market, which shares a similar climate with SA, and it evolved from the initial systems designed in the UK and the US. The advantage is that, as a second-generation tool, it draws from the original UK and US systems and builds on several years of experience in Australia and New Zealand.

According to Nicola Douglas, chief executive officer of GBCSA, international experience shows that certified green buildings collect higher rentals, enjoy stronger occupancy rates and perform better in terms of operating expenses.



THE inaugural Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA) Convention & Exhibition 2008 will see 12 of the world's leading specialists on green buildings presenting a range of information on the subject.

The event will take place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from November 2-4, 2008.

The convention will also feature an exhibition, which will showcase an extensive range of green building technologies, products and services that are available in South Africa.

"This Convention is a chance to get right up to speed in one sweep, to be inspired and informed by some of the most accomplished international practitioners. It's on par with some of the best conferences worldwide and we're expecting over a 1 000 delegates," said Bruce Kerswill, executive chairman of the GBCSA.

While the Conference provides the inspiration, the exhibition will provide the solutions – a challenge in SA is finding suppliers of 'green' products and services.

"The exhibition provides the opportunity for suppliers to showcase their products to a targeted and interested audience. We would like to invite the providers of services and products to take a stand and show off what they've got.

"We're looking at services such as energy efficient products, alternative energy, water efficient fittings, recycled material products, non-toxic materials and other green building

components, as well as consultancies and other service providers.

"This is an opportunity to get focused exposure to a top audience of developers, consultants, builders and corporates," said Kerswill.

The convention programme includes topics like the response of the built environment to global warming, the world-wide green building movement, costs and benefits of green buildings, and South Africa's energy crisis. It will also cover international and local case studies, and provide practical guidance on green building techniques.

Speakers among several high-profile international delegates include:

□ CEO of the US Green Building Council, Rick Fedrizzi, regarded as one of the pioneers of the green building movement;

□ Jamie Lerner, ex Mayor of Curitiba in Brazil and ex President of the International Union of Architects, who is world-renowned for his pioneering work in the design of sustainable cities;

□ Che Wall, Mechanical Engineer and one of the world's most accomplished green building professionals.

□ Kevin Hydes, sustainability specialist, Vice-President of the global Stantec consulting group and current President of the World GBC;

□ Romilly Madew, CEO of GBC of Australia; □ Robin Mellon, Technical Manager of the GBC of Australia.

□ Lindsay Parnell, President of Interface Flor Europe, an inspiring company aiming for zero waste and a zero carbon footprint.

**For more information on the Green Building Council of South Africa. Visit [www.gbcsa.org.za](http://www.gbcsa.org.za) or contact 021 659 5990 or, email [info@gbcsa.org.za](mailto:info@gbcsa.org.za)**