

Top SA architects honoured at national architectural awards

By Nolwazi Ndhlovu

The who's who of the architectural world in South Africa (SA) gathered at Shine Studios in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, on 02 September 2016.

The purpose of the ceremony was to present the 2015/16 Corobrik South African Institute of Architects (SAIA) Awards for Excellence in Architecture to the leading experts of the profession.

In his keynote address during the awards dinner, Public Works' Director-General (DG) Mr Mziwonke Dlabantu shared with the audience the initiatives that the Public Works sector was implementing in line with its constitutional mandate, which focuses on the provision of conducive accommodation and facilities in which user-departments render their services to the people of South Africa.

"To deal with the entrusted mandate, the Public Works sector comprises a National Department of Public Works, with 11 Regional Offices, and nine (9) Provincial Public Works Departments. Although all are mandated constitutionally to deliver on the accommodation requirements, the focus of our national Department is to address the requirements of national competencies such as Higher Education, Mineral and Energy Resources Management, Safety, Security, General Government Administration Departments, and Justice, while the Provincial Public Works attend to provincial competencies such as Health and Education at the provincial level," the DG stated.

"Furthermore, as you may be aware, the national Department is also a custodian of both the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) and, through that, the Councils for the Architectural, Engineering, Project Management, Valuation and Quantity Surveying Professions. Under the supervision of the Minister of Public Works, there is a close working relationship with the CBE and all other built-environment Councils to ensure Government's broader agenda is achieved, inter alia, in relation to transformation, economic growth and job creation.

"The intention is to replicate the best practice throughout the family of the Public Works sector to achieve commonality, efficiency and effectiveness in the sector business and operations. These initiatives are underpinned by the Department's 7-year Turnaround Strategy that is in its 5th year of implementation. At the heart of this, is the operationalization of the PMTE (Property Management Trading Entity) which is responsible for the core business of the Department – being the provision of accommodation to Government and management of the state's property portfolio in a manner that is prescribed in the Government Immovable Asset Management Act, Act 19 of 2007 (known to us as GIAMA).

"Key to optimally realising the value of this portfolio, additionally, will be the development of a strategy around the utilisation of its vacant properties which amount

to approximately 13,000 land parcels and 1,900 buildings of varied nature and usage. All available options will be investigated, including the identification of those properties that could benefit government programmes such as human settlements, land reform, and the requirement for student accommodation, among others.”

According to the DG, the Department would avail opportunities for the letting of some of the vacant properties to the public and private sectors (with a view to generating income to secure and maintain the portfolio), as well as availing properties to emerging black and female entrepreneurs in the construction and property sectors. The initiative would build on the 100 properties identified in 2015/16 for allocation to Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) property developers, and would also avail similar opportunities to property management and letting agencies, the DG noted.

He went on to say that the Department would also focus on enhancing best practice amongst national and provincial departments to avail surplus assets to one another so as to derive improved efficiencies in relation to improved utilisation of immovable asset portfolios and reduction in potentially unnecessary capital expenditure. “Where properties are identified as having no utilisation potential, a disposal option, among others, will need to be considered,” Mr Dlabantu elaborated.

In closing, the DG stated that there was a need for a closer working relationship between the Departments of Public Works and the built environment professions, including the architectural professions, if all these wonderful initiatives are to be realized.

“Our doors are open for engagement on matters of mutual interest. The outcomes of this kind of engagement will certainly benefit not only the built environment profession, but will also have a positive impact on the socio- economic development of the entire country,” said Mr. Dlabantu