

## **Beyond green – socio-economic factors added to green building ratings**

*Cape Town, October 2013:* In a pioneering move, the Green Building Council SA (GBCSA), with sponsorship from Old Mutual Property, is set to launch a new PILOT Socio-Economic Category (SEC) for Green Star SA rating tools, which aims to recognise the socio-economic achievements of green building projects.

The new PILOT SEC will be launched at the GBCSA's annual convention in Cape Town on 17th October 2013. Registered green buildings will be invited to test it in PILOT phase for at least 12 months, after which it will be updated and launched as a Version 1 Category. Projects that achieve a rating for the SEC PILOT will get additional recognition for this, alongside their Green Star SA rating.

Moving beyond the traditional 'green' assessment criteria for buildings, the GBCSA views the inclusion of social and economic factors as important to address broader sustainability issues, which are particularly relevant for South Africa and other developing countries. Societal challenges such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education and skills, and poor health can all be addressed, to some degree, through the process of designing and constructing green buildings.

"In the same way that Green Star SA tools have inspired transformation towards 'greener' practices in the property industry, we hope that this Socio-Economic Category will encourage a mindset change around the socio-economic upliftment potential of building projects," says GBCSA CEO Brian Wilkinson.

South Africa's SEC will have seven possible credits under Green Star SA. These focus on: employment creation; economic opportunity; skills development and training; community benefit; empowerment; safety & health; and mixed income housing.

"As an organisation committed to responsible business practice, we are proud to be associated with the launch of this venture and believe social imperatives in property development and management are extremely important, as are the environmental issues," says Old Mutual Property CEO Peter Levett. "This aligns with Old Mutual's dedication to being leaders in environmental, social and governance matters in all its investment activities."

A diverse Technical Working Group of 18 people spanning public and private sectors worked alongside the appointed consultants, Aurecon, to help develop benchmark metrics and assessment measures for the new Socio-Economic credits. A 10-person peer review committee also contributed their expert views.

Development of this category has taken place in an international context, as the need to introduce socio-economic factors into green building rating systems has been recognized globally. On behalf of the World Green Building Council, the GBCSA has also led the creation of an 'International Framework', which can be adapted for local use in other developing countries. This resource document was informed by a 15-strong multi-country advisory panel, including views from the international green building community, and was also funded by Old Mutual Property.

"These credits address some of the burning issues facing developing countries worldwide.

They have typically not been dealt with by existing rating tools, but are an important part of the broader concept of sustainability. Much interest has been expressed and we're hoping that the market will respond favourably," says Bruce Kerswill, GBCSA Non-Executive Chair, and initiator of this project.