

Rating tool for Public and Education buildings extensively tested

The latest green building rating tool launched by the Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA), the Green Star SA - Public & Education Building (version 1) Rating Tool, was first put through its paces in an extensive pilot project carried out on a number of public buildings in South Africa and is now freely available in digital format.



GREENING PUBLIC SPACES

Funded by the Construction Industry Development Board (cidb), an agency of the National Department of Public works (DPW), this latest tool enables the GBCSA to rate public spaces, such as community centres, libraries, museums, places of worship, indoor sports centres, entertainment, exhibition and convention centres and public transport terminal buildings, regardless of whether these buildings are publicly or privately owned. The rating tool extends to Education buildings, such as schools and tertiary education facilities.

As with the other Green Star SA rating tools, the Green Star SA – Public & Education Building rating tool assesses the environmental attributes of new or significantly refurbished building developments. The tool assigns a Green Star SA rating to the building as a whole on the basis of its design and rewarding sustainable building design attributes.

“What’s exciting about the Public & Education Building rating tool in particular, is that we are now seeing a move into a much broader range of buildings, where government will play a significant role,” says Brian Wilkinson, CEO of the GBCSA.

FROM A MUSEUM TO A UNIVERSITY

Prior to the launch of this latest tool, the GBCSA put the pilot version of the Public & Education Building rating tool through its paces on a few projects across the country in order to improve and streamline it for the South African market. These projects emanate from both the public and private sector. One such pilot project was the Grahamstown National English Literary Museum (NELM).

Marloes Reinink, sustainable building consultant from Solid Green Consulting, who handled the testing of the Public & Education Building rating tool pilot for this building explains that the first step undertaken was a workshop with the entire team to define the Green Star SA strategy for this project and to assist with the preparation of the relevant documentation.

“Because this project was only in its pilot form, there were a number of queries and a lot of communication with the GBCSA - which significantly helped the Technical Consultants that were developing the tool to implement improvements,” says Reinink. “The initial goal was a 4-star Green Star SA rating. However, after the workshop it appeared that the project would be able to target a 5-star Green Star SA rating.”



SOME GREEN INITIATIVES AT THE GRAHAMSTOWN NATIONAL ENGLISH LITERARY MUSEUM (NELM):

- Large 'green' roof over the Archives, assisting constant temperature control
- Rainwater collected and reused for toilet flushing
- Xeriscape garden with endemic landscaping design
- Building is not fenced off and outside areas open to the public throughout the day
- Education is a focus point, live metering display and educational posters in the entrance of the building

Another building that took part in the pilot period was the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) Business School.

Andy Kopelowitz, an engineer from Arup, handled the pilot project for NMMU and explains that going through a pilot process is not vastly different to pursuing a Green Star SA rating under a finalised tool. "There is the constant management of the Green Star SA process during the design stages, and specialist input into specifications and design items to ensure that the intention of the project to meet the Green Star SA requirements is achieved."

"The Green Star SA Accredited Professional (AP) was in regular contact with the GBCSA, raising various queries, most often relating to how compliance with a credit is measured and how certain aspects of the 'fine print' in the Technical Manual related to our particular building type."

PUTTING THE TOOL THROUGH ITS PACES

"The purpose of a pilot project is to test the tool and target pilot certification, and this means that we were required to raise any issues with the GBCSA," says Kopelowitz.

"The project was required to submit formal comments on the tool to the GBCSA for consideration, and these comments, plus the numerous queries which were submitted as they arose, assist the Council in ensuring that the final version 1 of the tool is succinct and robust."

SOME GREEN INITIATIVES AT THE NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY (NMMU) BUSINESS SCHOOL:

- Rain water is harvested and used for 100% of toilet and urinal flushing, and allowance for irrigation.
- Major materials are being sourced locally (concrete and masonry).
- A minimum of 70% of waste generated during construction is being sent for recycling or being re-used.
- Bicycle facilities are being provided for staff and students.
- Topsoil is being preserved for re-introduction on site once construction is completed.
- Low-VOC paints, carpets and adhesives have been specified to reduce indoor pollutants.

GREEN STAR TOOLS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE TAKE-UP OF GREEN BUILDING PRACTICES

"The ongoing strategic expansion of available rating tools by the GBCSA is being driven by the demand for increased coverage of the property sector and the acknowledgement of unique environmental issues attributed to specific building types," says Manfred Braune, Technical Executive - GBCSA.



The Public & Education Building (version 1) rating tool Technical Manual is available for the first time in digital format and as a free download to GBCSA members and students. Non-members can anticipate paying R700 for the manual. The rating tool and related documents are freely available on the GBCSA website.

“Green Star SA establishes a common language for the industry and importantly, recognises and rewards excellence in environmental leadership.

Rating tools have been instrumental in marking the mainstream take-up of green building practices in a number of markets worldwide, and South Africa is following this trend,” concludes Wilkinson.

Visit www.gbcsa.org.za for more information on Green Star SA rating tools.

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