

Originally the site of a large family home, Inner Circle is now arguably one of the most attractive buildings on the Sandton CBD skyline.



Inner Circle – An iconic profile

By Clare Matthes

In August 2007 construction started on this 17 storey commercial office block which involved seven levels of parking and ten office floors. With state-of-the-art technology, maintained systems and recyclable materials, Inner Circle embodies sustainable architecture.

The Inner Circle is one part of a commercial development that comprises two buildings, one of which is a medical building and the second, the office tower.

The building includes four mini towers linked by a central service core. These four towers open up the building to natural light and reduce the deep space often associated with office towers of this size, where more light and heat are paramount.

Another benefit of the four mini towers is the possible accommodation of multiple tenants and 12 corner offices, a popular commodity in commercial office towers of this magnitude.

The first level of the office tower is a triple-volume space and includes a massive terrace which overlooks the suburbs. It can easily be utilised for staff functions or as an office restaurant.

The entire ground floor level is designed as visitors parking and there is a visitor's security reception for the entire building, thereby providing superior security for the occupants of the building.

Architect Mark Oates of Oates Architects believes that the scale of this building works well within the environment. "We were only allocated so much space, otherwise we would have built a much bigger structure," he comments.

Extensive effort went into researching materials and technology that would be environmentally responsible and energy consumption was the main issue in the design of The Inner Circle.

"We did vast amounts of research into different variants of glazing and glazing techniques," says





Mark. "Part of the glazing was highlighted with cast aluminium bands to give the façade depth. In line with the global initiative towards environmental sustainability, glass is considered a reusable and sustainable material."

The glass was chosen with temperature and light control in mind, reducing reliance on electric lights and air conditioning. AGI ME 10 reflective laminated glass with backing spandrels and Eclipse Advantage high emissivity, double glazed glass were combined for optimum savings. The ME 10 offers solar control with 74% heat reduction and Eclipse Advantage prevents up to 70% of heat from entering the building.

The building incorporates a building management system (BMS) advanced enough to limit building electrical demand and control water wastage. Electrically efficient lifts and low energy light bulbs also save electricity.

Lighting and the control of the heat and cooling management were as important as the water management in the building. Buildings of this size usually have a geyser per floor but solar panels on the roof heat the water, allowing for only one geyser in the entire building. Waterless urinals were also installed to save water.

A single-pumped reticulation system drives water through the building in a continuous loop to the heating panels, making hot water accessible immediately.

The building also boasts its own power plant with an uninterrupted power supply, in case of those ever looming power failures. The mini plant should have enough power to supply both buildings with electricity.

With the vast amounts of glass, an obvious question would be the one of maintenance and upkeep. "Glass is a low maintenance material as it does not need to be repainted or have cracks fixed on a continuous basis," says Mark. "The materials we recommend for cleaning are all environmentally friendly."

"We saw huge potential in the site with the opportunity to increase the bulk to capacity," says Iain Douglas of Edge Properties, the developers of the building. "It may not be the tallest building or a skyscraper," admits Iain, "but it certainly has a significant impact on the skyline and has some of the most high profile neighbours in Sandton, such as Rand Merchant Bank, Investec Bank and China Construction Bank."

"Testament to the strong management team and the skills of the professional team involved," adds Lawrence Azar, business development manager of Edge Properties, "was the fact that such a large building, given all of its construction challenges and the close proximity that it was built to finely calibrated medical equipment housed in the oncology centre, was completed within seven days of its scheduled date of completion, which is generally unheard of in SA terms."

Inner Circle graces the Sandton skyline with poise and really stands out from the rest. *il*