

The snowball effect



"In tough times, development project proposals can be pipe dreams," says Chris Bam, who is currently celebrating his Cape Town architectural practice's 20th year and Level 1 B-BBEE rating. "It's getting them off the ground and delivering them that's the real deal."

And that's what he's good at, with Bam Architects currently notching up more than R600-million's worth of new building projects in almost every commercial and large-scale residential category all over Cape Town in a recession that refuses to go away. Other projects on the drawing board could bring the count up to R1-billion.

Part of the Bam success is maintaining impetus. "If you manage to buck the recession, each new project creates a powerful snowball effect that keeps you going,"

he says. It also means that when finance is made available for a development project right now, it has to work harder to bring an acceptable investment return. The combination of an experienced developer and professional team is a good start."

Bam's projects are in prominent places in greater Cape Town, from the striking ocean-side apartments in Blaauwberg to innovative commercial and industrial buildings in the northern areas of Epping and Philippi.

Currently, at the Tyger Valley Waterfront, two Bam Architects-designed buildings – one already completed and the other still under construction – account for R400-million. The recent Virgin Active Health Club redesign in the area is another successful project.



*MAIN PICTURE AND INSET
Newly completed AAA-grade office block for
Ingenuity Property investments Ltd anchored
by Glacier and designed by Bam Architects
photo Wieland Gleich – ARCHIGRAPHY.com*



The completed building at the Tyger Valley Waterfront is an office building for Ingenuity Property Investments, as headquarters for Glacier by Sanlam. The second building is a 10 000m² AAA-grade building for The Integrity Property Fund developed by Omnicron, to be completed in August next year for anchor tenancy by WorleyParsons.

This is what Chris calls "the last piece in the puzzle" at the Tyger Valley Waterfront. Its design, with a dramatic single column-supported wing, allows visual contact with the waterfront for passers-by. "It feeds into the vision by the City Planners for a CBD

node where pedestrians are the primary consideration and parking visibility is reduced."

Creative landscaping of the site emphasises the interface between the building and its environment.

Keeping a connection with waterside projects, Bam Architects is also completing the last of three buildings in Century City for the Rabie Property Group, where the commercial component, Quays, shares space with two residential projects, Quayside and Quay North. Here too, the firm was responsible for the design of the Virgin Active Health Club.



Chris Bam

One of Bam Architects' core competencies is the design of industrial buildings used as dedicated distribution centres for the retail industry. Among these are projects for Redefine, South Africa's second-largest property group. "And our diversified portfolio shows a versatility that we nurture to ensure we are prepared for any major project, whatever the proposed use, whether corporate head offices, health and leisure, industrial or multi-residential."

Chris heads up the practice with a team of highly qualified and experienced professionals. "We work hard to retain our small-firm ethos with a capacity for very big projects," he says.

The underlying philosophy of Bam Architects is based on service, creativity, functionality, practicality and commercial viability. "A building project needs to come in on budget and on time. It must result in a final product with that intangible creative edge to 'sell' it both to the client and to the tenants," says Chris.

He recognises that commercial projects are driven by tenants, who he believes have educated opinions about what is good in a building and what will best serve their needs. Buildings that don't meet current criteria for low environmental footprints and do not have the right green credentials are already at a disadvantage. "Tenants know the value environmentally conscious designs have in mitigating their long-term location-cost increases," he says. "Our focus is on meeting and exceeding the SA Green Building Council's star ratings for our projects, both in their design and as-built, with the assistance of specialist consultants. If a building doesn't have a green star rating, it is already obsolete."

The practice also strives to meet the highest standards in its business dealings, and even though it is a relatively small enterprise, Bam Architects has a Level 1 B-BBEE rating because of its commitment to transformation. "Our positive rating also benefits our clients in terms of their own B-BBEE procurement criteria," says Chris.

From its headquarters at The Palms Decor and Lifestyle Centre in Woodstock, a major redesign project undertaken for Wetherlys 13 years ago and now owned by Omnicron, Bam Architects is having a major impact on the infrastructure of Cape Town and its urban landscape.



TOP Horizon Bay mixed-use development for Swish Property Group
 ABOVE Aquarius mixed-use development OPPOSITE TOP New
 AAA-grade office development for The Integrity Fund and Omnicron,
 anchored by WorleyParsons OPPOSITE MIDDLE Quayside apartments
 in Century City for Rabie Property Group BOTTOM LEFT, RIGHT and
 BELOW Virgin Active Health Club Tyger Valley

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