

## PARAGON ARCHITECTS SA TO PROMOTE ARCHITECTURE AS A CAREER OPTION IN RURAL SCHOOLS



PASA Director, Thulani Sibande

An awareness campaign is being developed by Paragon Architects South Africa (PASA), part of the Paragon Group of architecture and interior architecture companies, to counter the lack of awareness about the architectural profession, the critical role it plays in the development of South Africa and its potential to offer viable career paths in rural areas.

PASA has been awarded a Level 1 Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) rating for 2018, reveals Director Thulani Sibande. The Paragon Group is currently heavily involved with the University of Johannesburg's (UJ's) Graduate School of Architecture (GSA).

This is the youngest architecture department in South Africa, having grown from 76 students in 2016 to approximately 115 in 2018. Here the Paragon Group has had visiting professorship status, with experienced staff members presenting guest lectures.

Sibande highlights that the next step of this programme is to focus on schools in rural areas. "We are looking to target learners from Grade 10, as by Grade 12 they should largely have made up their minds about



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their future career paths. We need to make learners not only aware of the importance of architecture in society, but how it is a perfect combination of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects."

In 2018 PASA invited select groups of learners from various schools to a guided tour of the Paragon head office in Sandton, Johannesburg, where they experienced first-hand how an architecture and interior architecture group functions on a daily basis.

"It is also important that learners become aware of major architectural trends such as the debate around building efficiencies, as well as the advent of Building Information Modelling (BIM) and how this is revolutionising the design space," Sibande comments.

He adds that South Africa still has the lead over the rest of Africa in terms of contemporary architecture and technological innovation. "We are finding that, as we become more involved in the rest of Africa, this gives us an ideal opportunity to inculcate best-practice as it has been nurtured back home."

An exciting project for the Paragon Group in Africa at the moment is Habitat Apartments in Kilimani, a 24-storey, 160-unit mixed-use apartment tower in conjunction with Design Source of Nairobi. Under development by Ekco Investments, the project is scheduled for completion by mid-2020.

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