

Construction KENYA SHOWCASE



JULY-SEPTEMBER 2022



NASHON OKOWA **A Project Manager's Quest** **to Change the Industry**

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UHURU LAUNCHES MULTIPLE PROJECTS AS HE LEAVES OFFICE



A FEW days to the end of his final term, President Uhuru Kenyatta launched numerous projects initiated during his tenure. In a whirlwind tour of the country, the president inaugurated multiple projects, sometimes launching five in a day.

In Nyeri County, Uhuru opened the New Chaka Railway Station, the rehabilitated Thika-Nanyuki MGR line and the Chaka Industrial Hub and

Market in Kieni. In Othaya, he opened the Mwai Kibaki Level 6 hospital and its 2.6 million litre a day oxygen production unit. He also inspected the ongoing dualling of Kenol-Marua road that is currently 75 percent complete. Earlier, in Mombasa County, President Kenyatta commissioned several infrastructural projects – the new Ksh 4.5 billion Makupa Bridge, the offshore Kipevu Oil Terminal and the Liwatoni Fisheries Complex. He was

also in Western Kenya where among other projects he commissioned the Kisumu Shipyard and Kisumu Railway Station. In Kiambu, the president commissioned the Kshs 24 billion Karimenu II Dam in Gatundu North, a Vision 2030 flagship project.

Another major project launched was the Nairobi Expressway.

88 NAIROBI MAKES STEADY PROGRESS

CONSTRUCTION of 88 Nairobi, a condominium skyscraper which when complete will be one of the tallest buildings in Africa, is proceeding rapidly and is now at 34th floor level. Lordship Africa's Jonathan Jackson recently told a local journalist that all studio apartments had already been sold, signaling the immense interest

the exclusive development has attracted since construction started.

Apart from apartments and penthouses, 88 Nairobi features a restaurant, a convenience store, 24-hour concierge services, gym and spa facilities, as well as a helipad among others.



MI VIDA APARTMENTS AT GARDEN CITY NOW READY FOR OCCUPATION



THE FIRST phase of Mi Vida Homes is complete and ready for occupation. At the official launch on July 29, 2022, Managing Director Samuel Kariuki praised the project team for delivering on time despite the challenges posed by Covid 19.

“Despite most of the execution phase being disrupted by the Covid 19 pandemic, we completed the

project in 21 months with the desired quality level and zero fatalities,” said the Chief Executive.

Mi Vida is a middle-income housing development located within Garden City, one of Nairobi's premier Live, Work and Play communities. It is a joint venture between Actis, a global investment firm focused on the private equity, energy, infrastructure and real

estate and Shapoorji Pallonji Real Estate (SPRE), the real estate arm of one of India's largest conglomerates. The project kicked off in 2019 and was aimed at addressing the shortage of affordable middle-income housing that continues to plague the country. Already 60 percent of the units have already been purchased. Mi Vida is also offering rental options.

At the launch, Mr Kariuki said that the second and third phases would commence soon. “For any developer, this (completion and launch) is the proudest moment”, he said, noting that trust and credibility were critical elements in the real estate sector. “Mi Vida Joint Venture partners have committed at least Ksh 12 billion in the overall investment rollout”, he added.

Mr Kariuki further revealed that land had already been acquired in other areas near Nairobi where additional homes would be built.



SYMBION TO UNDERTAKE 5000-UNIT SOCIAL HOUSING PROJECT IN DR CONGO

ONE of Kenya's largest and best-known architectural powerhouses, Symbion, has landed a deal involving

the construction of 5,000 housing units in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Symbion will execute the work as part of a consortium to realize the massive social housing development project.

According to Symbion, the consortium intends to use the latest construction technology to minimize project costs, time and materials. “We look forward to delivering a great development that will serve as a steppingstone expanding our services to the Francophone countries,” says the group.

Symbion has offered services in several other countries in Africa.

NASHON OKOWA: PROJECT MANAGER'S QUEST TO RESTORE ORDER IN INDUSTRY

Construction Project Manager Nashon Okowa is a man on a mission. He believes he has a duty to bring sanity to the construction industry even if it means rubbing some the wrong way.

By FRANCIS KARANI

Nashon Okowa is direct and to the point. He takes no prisoners. At barely 36, the outspoken Project Manager has become a leading voice in the construction industry, sometimes coming across as abrasive and controversial. He has no apologies to make.

“Look, there’s no substitute for honesty and integrity”, says the author of *Don’t Buy That House*, a handbook that examines the pitfalls faced by home buyers who fail to undertake due diligence before committing their hard-earned money in off-plan homes.

In an industry choking with maladies in the form of work shortcuts, abdication of responsibility and even outright dishonesty, Okowa appears to be fighting a lone battle where even regulatory bodies and associations with bigger muscle have not had much success. But he is undeterred.

“I am cognizant of the fact that I won’t be here forever”, he says. “But I want to leave a mark so that people know someone tried to change things in this industry.”

As a director at Beacon Africa Consultants, a Construction Management firm, and the immediate former chairman of the Association of Construction Managers of Kenya (ACMK), Okowa is probably well positioned to champion

integrity not only in his profession of Project Management but also the larger construction industry where his profession is domiciled.

But Who is Nashon Okowa?

“I was born and brought up in Muhoroni in Kisumu County; I’m the third born in a family of six – four boys and two girls,” he tells *Construction Kenya Showcase*. “I had a strict upbringing and my parents were both teachers although my father became a politician at some point.”

His parents wanted him to be a lawyer. However, he lost his father before joining university and so it was his mother who was behind the push to get her son into the legal practice. Okowa managed to get grades for admission to the Law course at the University of Nairobi. However, he felt that since he was right on the cut-off points, chances of being selected were low due to competition for admission into the coveted program. “I could have joined Moi University for Law but I wanted to study in Nairobi as Eldoret was too close to home”, he reveals.

“So, when the window to revise university choices opened, I changed my selection from Law to Construction Management.” His mother was unaware of this development.

Interestingly, Okowa had little clue as to what the course entailed. Nobody in his family was in the construction industry, so he would be plunging into the unknown. “I knew construction, but it was the management part that attracted me”, he says. And so, the young man enrolled at the University of Nairobi for a degree in Construction Management in 2007, becoming part of the very first students to graduate in the then new course. But there was a problem. “If I had known what this course entailed before enrolling, I would not have taken it and would not be a project manager today!” he says of the drawing skills requirement of the Construction Management program, adding that this is the same reason he despised Geography. But looking back, Okowa now admits that if he was asked what course to choose today, he’d choose the same course without hesitation. In fact by Third Year, he wanted to be a project manager and nothing else.



Addressing guests at ACMK Students award gala dinner.

At the University, Okowa became the Construction Management student representative to the students professional body and was later elected as President of the Construction and Real Estate Students Association. He graduated in 2011. Unlike many graduates who immediately find themselves constantly doing what is colloquially known as “tarmacking”, Okowa had two job offers in quick succession. He attributes this fortune to his student leadership stint and interaction with the industry while at the University.

“My first job was with a contractor”, he says. “I lasted one month. But you’ll never see that in my CV”, he chuckles. Okowa did not want to work with a contractor. “I wanted to be a professional. I wanted to be in the office, I wanted to put on suits.” But the need to have a source of income to pay his bills forced him to accept this first job. While still working for the contractor, Okowa applied for project management jobs and was fortunate to be accepted by Trident Estates Limited. “So, at the end of that first month, I left and took the new job.”

It was here that he cut his teeth in project management. He worked in numerous projects in Kenya and around

East Africa, rising to the position of Senior Project Manager. He would stay at Trident until 2017 when he left to manage his own firm, Beacon Africa Consultants. He had already registered the firm and had even secured some jobs while still at Trident.

One person who was not impressed by the decision to quit employment was his mother. “By the time I was leaving Trident, I already had a family, with one daughter”, says the father of two girls. His mother wondered how he could take the risk to resign at that delicate stage. But Okowa was not looking back. “It’s the risk-takers who succeed in life”, he says.

What Drives Okowa?

“This is our country, this is our profession, if I don’t do these things, who will?” poses Okowa. “If my daughter is going to be in the construction industry, and I know she will, I want to hand over an industry that is better; an industry that has

“This is our country,
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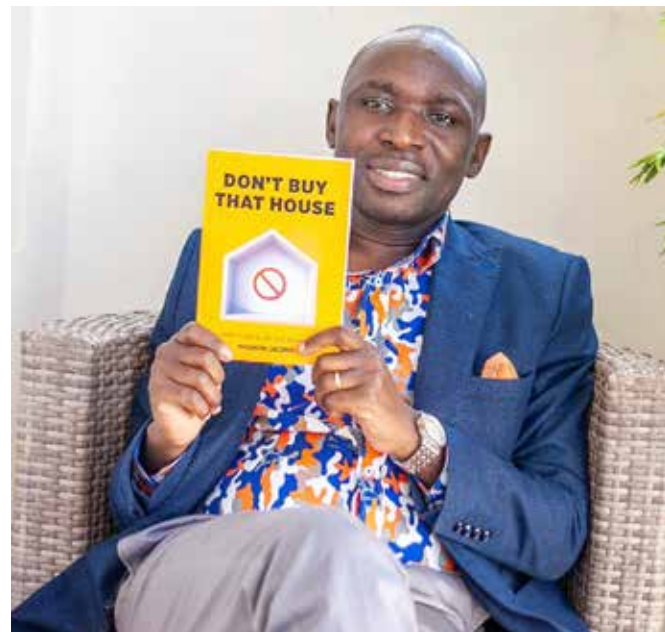
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Nashon Okowa on a site visit.



With a copy of his recent book, "Don't Buy That House".



Addressing Octagon Africa annual property investment conference in Mombasa.

“In countries ahead of us such as South Africa and the UK, we have professional project managers whose sole concern is how the project is executed.”

integrity, because that is lacking in this sector.” It is these things that give him sleepless nights, he says.

In 2014, Okowa was at the forefront of efforts to form an association of construction managers. “When we came out of university, there was no such association. We had associations for architects, engineers, quantity surveyors but none for our profession.” He says as part of his efforts to make the industry better, he teamed up with like-minded professionals to form the Association of Construction Managers of Kenya. He was its second Chairman. “As I took up the position, I vowed to make it very hard for the person who would come after me”, say Okowa. “I wanted to perform”. He assumed leadership with a membership of 71 and by the time he stepped down recently, the association had about 842 members.

He outlines several achievements during his tenure, noting that he came in at a time when few people knew ACMK. “Now, everybody knows the association. There’s hardly any table in the industry where we don’t sit at.” He says the ACMK has done immense work to educate the public on the need for project managers. In addition, ACMK has engaged with students at the various universities offering Construction Management, offering training and career guidance among others. “We constantly engage the lecturers, appraising them of current trends in Construction Management.”

Okowa also cites legislative achievements. As an association, they contributed to drafting a bill that was intended to

regulate the sector with clear guidance on who could be allowed to practice as a Project or Construction Manager. Unfortunately, the bill, pushed with the help of the then Nominated Senator Sylvia Kasanga who is an architect, did not manage to go through the Senate process before the General Election.

On the widely known but hardly-talked-about unease between Architects and Project Managers, Okowa brushes this off as a problem of people who are averse to change and efficiency. “We are in country where 87 percent of projects delay”, he says. “No developer borrows money to have their project delayed. Admittedly, it is not easy to finish a project on time. But if we want to develop, if we want to change this country, we must finish projects on time and within budget. This is what we are after. The people that are complaining (about project managers) are used to that delay.” He says some architects do not take the pressure from project managers well. “Yet, we only have 365 days in a year. If we lose a day or two, the contractor has to recover or will claim. That is the fight and it’s a good fight for our industry.”

Okowa however notes that some of the conflicts are largely driven by ego. Some architects could also be hesitant to accept professional project managers, having acted in that capacity themselves, he says. “In countries ahead of us such as South Africa and the UK, we have professional project managers whose sole concern is how the project is executed.”



Nashon Okowa mentorship program mentees 2022.

Don't Buy That House

Don't Buy That House, Okowa's book that literally hit the market earlier in the year, is by far the most damning indictment of the state of affairs when it comes to home ownership in Kenya, particularly through the off-plan model. In this book, Okowa dishes out blunt advice to prospective home buyers, challenging them to do adequate due diligence before committing their money into the purchase of homes. It is a book that would shock people who have already bought houses but are experiencing problems midway. Okowa spares no one. Not the homeowners, not the developers, contractors or even fellow consultants. To start with, the author states that the bedrock of any successful real estate company "has to be a pristine name built on impeccable brand ethics. The first step before deciding to buy a house off-plan has to be at the history of the developer."

He goes on to caution that people have lost money to non-existent companies, some of which are not even registered. "I know it seems obvious that a company carrying out development projects in the country would undoubtedly be registered, but hear me out...this industry is full of laughable stories reminiscent of fiction movies but they are painfully real stories." Okowa urges buyers to check every detail. "Tick every box", he repeatedly implores customers to save them from regret later. He cites numerous cases of stalled projects, unplanned and illegal developments, projects executed by quacks, unfavourable buying terms

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and many other dangers that stare at the complacent home buyer.

He says failure to undertake due diligence has resulted in financial ruin for many buyers. He notes that some developers are crafty and capitalize on the ignorance of buyers for the sole purpose of committing them to the purchase. By the time they realize, they have lost their money or are under serious financial problems. Okowa urges buyers to interrogate every aspect of the project including project financing, qualifications of the project team, building approvals and a host of other criteria. If they are unsatisfied with any element, he advises them to walk on to another project. "It is surely not the law of God that you must live in perpetual misery."

Granted, the extensive due diligence that Okowa recommends appears a gargantuan task for many. And he acknowledges this. But he is firm that this is not an excuse for not carrying out these background checks as some of them can easily be done online or tasked to a professional.

Asked if he get anxious that developers may deny him jobs because of his hard-hitting book, Okowa is unbothered. "I work for honest developers; so I don't mind offending those who are dishonest."

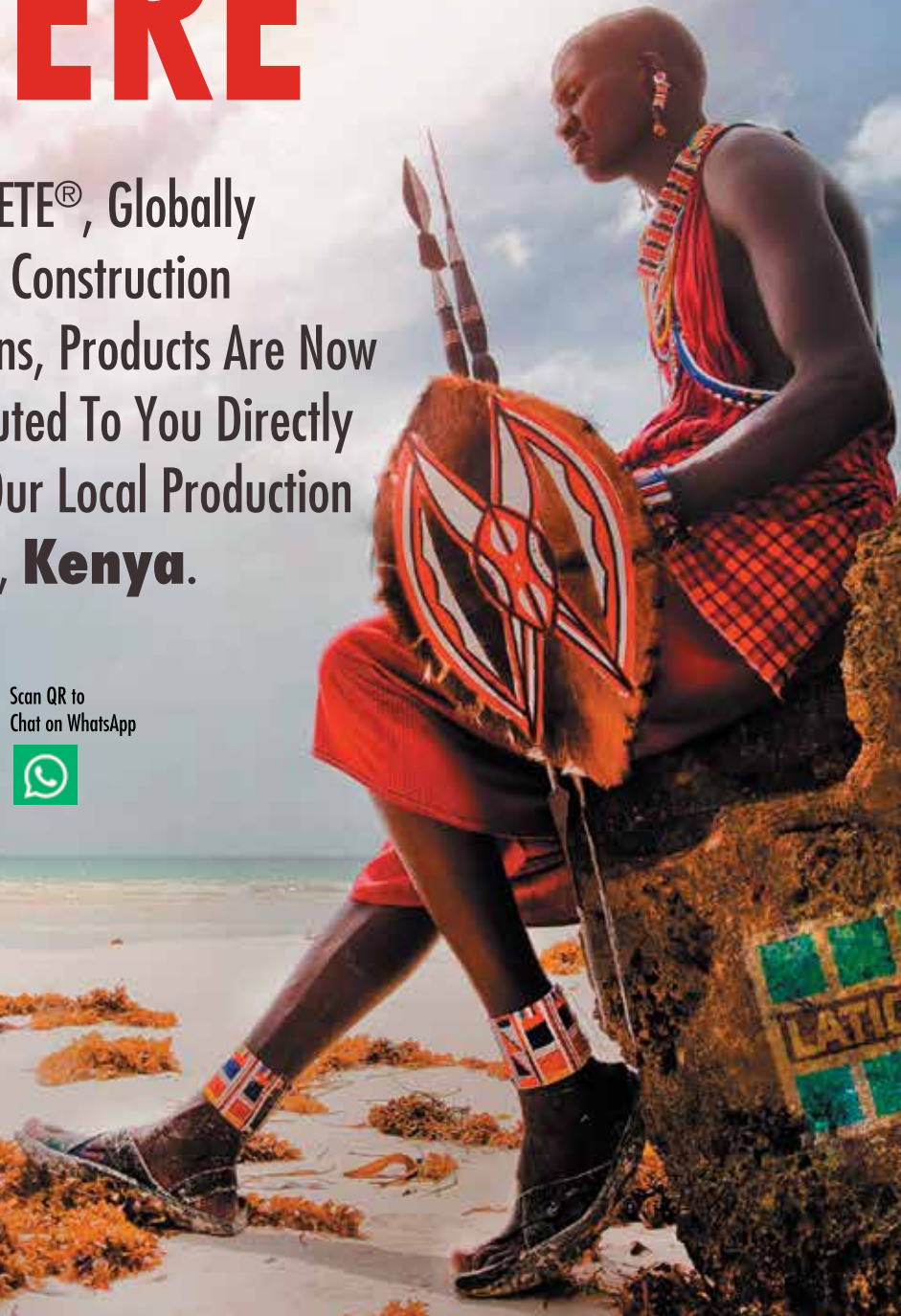


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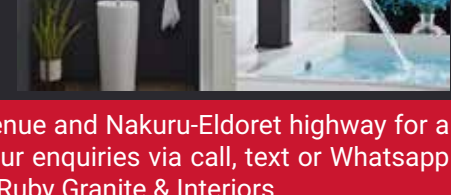
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AAK DURACOAT AWARDS 2022: RCMRD COMPLEX RECOGNIZED

In this year's AAK Duracoat Awards for Excellence in Architecture, The Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), an office complex in Nairobi designed by Architects Peter Njeru and Kelvin Salasya of Ecotecture, was cited for its creative passive design, winning Best in Sustainability Award. We look at what contributed to this recognition.



Background and Project Brief

The Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), a multinational organization, desired to relocate its headquarters and main operations to a more modern office complex with green building design. The institution conducted a feasibility study to develop a masterplan development that makes the best use of the existing site, which measures approximately 9.5 acres and is located along Kasarani-Mwiki Road. The feasibility study concluded that the best use of the site would be to establish the headquarters complex as part of a larger modern Business Park of approximately 8 building blocks. The development aspired to create spaces that would instill passion and autonomy

in the staff through modern workplace design that is enlivening, accommodating, and comfortable to the users.

The business park, designed by Ecotecture Limited, will house the RCMRD Headquarters, a cutting-edge conference center, modern hotel blocks, and Class A lettable office spaces.

The entire project development is being carried out using a phasing strategy. Phase one, which is currently complete, focuses primarily on the headquarters, RCMRD Complex, and all attendant facilities, as well as associated external infrastructure such as parking, lush green landscaping features, and civil works.

Architectural Features

The project primarily includes administrative offices for the RCMRD Centre as well as large, open-plan offices for the center's staff. The open plan offices cover approximately 350sqm and have a 2m wide corridor with glass and aluminum-framed partition walls. To support the client's desire for green concepts, the design philosophy carried the green from the exterior into the interior spaces. The exterior spaces feature a large spanning and well-manicured green kikuyu grass with clustered flowers and shrubbery, as well as relaxation tree-shaded garden spots to serve as break out spaces. Architects **Peter Njeru** and **Kelvin Salasya** intended to incorporate this social design aspect in order to achieve a Live-Work-Play balance for facility users.

An expansive central fountain area was also designed to serve as the proposed business park's central spine while providing a lavishly grandiose walk through to the RCMRD complex bordered by member state flags. The interior spaces, on the other hand, have potted or vase plants/vegetation adorning most of the public spaces and offices. The complex's main entrances are two automatic frameless glass doors with welcoming signage. A multivolume void overlooks one side of the main entrance lobby, which is adorned with a beautiful mural titled 'The Tree of Life' that decorates the walls around the void.

The other side, which serves as the main entrance, has a





dramatic effect of daylighting caused by multiple square fenestrations overlooking another multivolume structure.

The Architects also prioritised fire safety in their design, so the building has emergency fire escape staircases on both sides, as well as strategically placed fire escape doors and other firefighting equipment such as a hose reel and fire extinguishers.

The design also includes an exquisite 500-square-meter terrace on top of the building for hosting cocktails and other open-air events, as well as a shaded serving terrace counter. This terrace provides beautiful views into a greenery of trees on one side and a well veiled distant view of the Thika Highway, a fantastic scenic design achievement that was envisioned by the Architects, from the design conception.

Duracoat Awards for Excellence in Architecture 2022

The project was honoured with a Best in Sustainability award at the Duracoat Awards for Architectural Excellence 2022 because it largely employed green design standards during the conception stages. The client also upholds green values and environmental consciousness, commissioning the Architects to design environmentally sound and resource-efficient developments. As a result, the ultimate

goal of the design and project execution was to have as little impact on the environment as possible.

The Architects met these aspirations by conceptualising architectural forms and designs along the key parameters of environmental design. In this regard, the building has implemented a number of green design measures in order to create a sustainable structure that is a viable candidate for top green star ratings. These measures include passive design strategies that promote resource efficiency by increasing the use of natural lighting and ventilation through large windows, narrow plan layouts, and clustering of functional core services to reduce the Complex's operating and maintenance costs when fully commissioned and operational.

RCMRD complex features a quadro-volume atrium at the center to enhance stack ventilation and natural lighting. Additionally, the corridors are open-ended with top louvered walls for enhanced cross-ventilation. The facades have shading devices and 'breathing ducts' for solar control.

The building is also designed to derive most of its energy production from renewable sources or 'clean energy' such as solar. The Architects also designed for a sustainable living and working environment by providing green landscaped areas for relaxation and break-out spaces as well as enhanced visual appeal. The RCMRD complex also takes advantage of recycling systems

and rain water collection that is stored in a massive underground water tank.

At the same time, the Architects also employed Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies through demarcated routes using trees and shrubs as well as proper street lighting. The development is also geared to promote sustainable mobility and transport such as cycling and walking through its extensive spaces with organically patterned footpaths. Additionally, as a CPTED strategy, advanced security systems are put in place both via high tech security checkpoints, car surveillance and by CCTV cameras located at strategic points of the Business Park, RCMRD complex and shared facilities.

Sustainable Standards – Finishing, Lighting and other Fittings

The offices are spacious and open plan with bright colored low VOC paint finishes and aluminium framed glass partition walls where subdivision is required. Each floor is fitted with kitchenettes for preparation of light meals, while some offices are fitted with shower cubicles. The offices also feature LED lighting to save energy. A combination of gypsum and acoustic ceiling gives the spaces an exciting effect and a level of acoustic control. The corridors have pendant lighting and LED lighting as well.

The complex also houses a conference hall that can be condensed and enlarged with movable sliding and folding doors depending on the use. A condensed conference

room can house 50-80 people while when enlarged the conference room can accommodate about 200 people. The conference room features a gypsum ceiling with undulating curvature features with interesting LED lighting interplay that will be an enthralling spectacle for the users.

Challenges Encountered by Project Team

The major challenge was dealing with sun shading of the building to reduce internal heat gain. This is because of the proposed layout of the business park; the RCMRD Complex is the only building that has its long axis, unfortunately oriented in the East-West direction due to site constraints. However, as an environmental design measure, the Architects resolved this by use of balconies and horizontal fins as sun shading devices which tremendously reduces direct sunlight into the building. Additionally, the exterior facades are predominantly painted in light colours to help in reflecting solar heat hence mitigating on the internal heat gain.

Impact of the AAK Duracoat Award on Team

According to the architects, the recognition has served as a morale booster to the design team and hopefully to many clients out there who would want to uphold green building design standards. "At least it shows we, the design team, have been heading in the right direction and hope one day to even go bigger and win international award as well."

"Our task and mission is now focused to delivering more green buildings for clients, with improved innovation, uniqueness and reliability."

PROJECT TEAM

Client: **REGIONAL CENTRE FOR MAPPING OF RESOURCES FOR DEV'T.**

Project Manager: **LEEDS ENGINEERING COMPANY LTD.**

Architect: **ECOTECTURE LTD.**

Civil and Structural Engineer: **KAMARA AND ASSOCIATES LTD**

Mechanical and Electrical Engineer: **BISON CONSULTANTS**

Quantity Surveyor: **COSTENG CONSULTANTS LTD.**

Main Contractor: **POLISH CONTRACTORS COMPANY LTD.**

Sub-Contractor (Electrical): **PHILAFE ENGINEERING LTD.**

Sub-Contractor (Plumbing): **PLUMBING SYSTEMS LTD.**

Landscaping Sub contractor: **GREENERSOL LTD**

Lift Specialists: **SCHINDLER GROUP**

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ZIMA HOMES PROMISE OF AFFORDABLE QUALITY LIVING

As the clamour for affordable homes in Kenya continues, many home developers are convinced that this is the new growth area and have embarked on projects to attract potential home owners through a combination of low prices, good design and high quality finishes.

Zima Homes is the latest organization to enter the affordable homes segment with its apartments project at Wangige, about half an hour by road from Nairobi. Nestled along the Western bypass, Zima Homes is touted as the

place to be, with every detail thought through sustainable design. As a subsidiary of BuildX Studio, an Architectural, Engineering and Construction firm, Zima Homes is in a particularly advantageous position to not only produce quality and modern designs but also to ensure the project is executed professionally.

According to the developer, Zima Homes offers the highest standards of healthy and sustainable design. The scheme offers a lot of space between the buildings, allowing for natural lighting and ventilation of every

apartment. Units are aesthetic and functional, and put their users' well-being at the center. Residents have access to ample outside spaces including a large courtyard, a recreation area and an accessible rooftop. There are four types of units beginning from Studio to 3-bedroom apartment. The studio is currently on offer at Ksh 1.7 million, one bedroom at Ksh 2.5m, 2 bedroom at Ksh 3.4 m while the three bedroom duplex goes for Ksh 3.55m. The payment plan is 20% upon signing letter of offer, 20% upon signing Lease Agreement, 50% during construction and 10% upon project completion.



THE PURPLE TOWER

ANOTHER GEM FROM PURPLE DOT INT.

Purple Tower is a mixed-use development located along Mombasa Road in close proximity to the Nairobi Central Business District (CBD), Upperhill, Westlands, Industrial Area, Wilson Airport and Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA). The EDGE-certified building features premium offices built to international Grade A specification, showroom/retail space, food and beverage space and conferencing facilities.

Purple Tower showcases a cube designed in spirit of Vastu principles, with an open atrium 'Brahma' in the center that runs the full height of the building for increased cross ventilation and ample sunlight.

Amenities include high speed passenger elevators – 4 serving offices, 2 serving the basement and parking silos as well as 1 dedicated goods/service lift, 24-hour

manned security, CCTV surveillance, secure entry/exit points, dedicated ODF (optical distribution frame) room for easy multiple fiber internet connectivity to offices, conferencing facility for 12 to 240 pax and a grab-and-go café at reception.

The developer is Purple Dot International. According to the company's General Manager Jiten Kerai, the Purple Tower "presents a timely and strategic proposition for both local and regional investors in the Kenyan property market." He adds, "With its innovative building design, EDGE Certification and locational advantages, the mixed-use development truly embodies our core business model with respect to socially responsible investing, giving discerning investors an opportunity to diversify their investment portfolio with a property that delivers higher ROI (Return on Investment) over time."

Purple Dot International has put together an impressive project team that includes Design Partnership Ltd, US-based architects DLR Group, Metrix Integrated Consultancy, Cost Studio Ltd, Urban Green Consultants and Bosch East Africa.



We are proud to be associated with Purple Dot International on the Purple Tower Project

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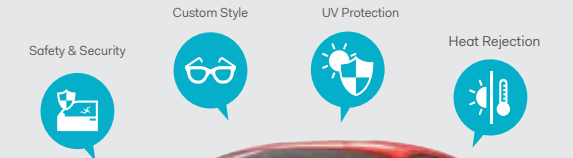
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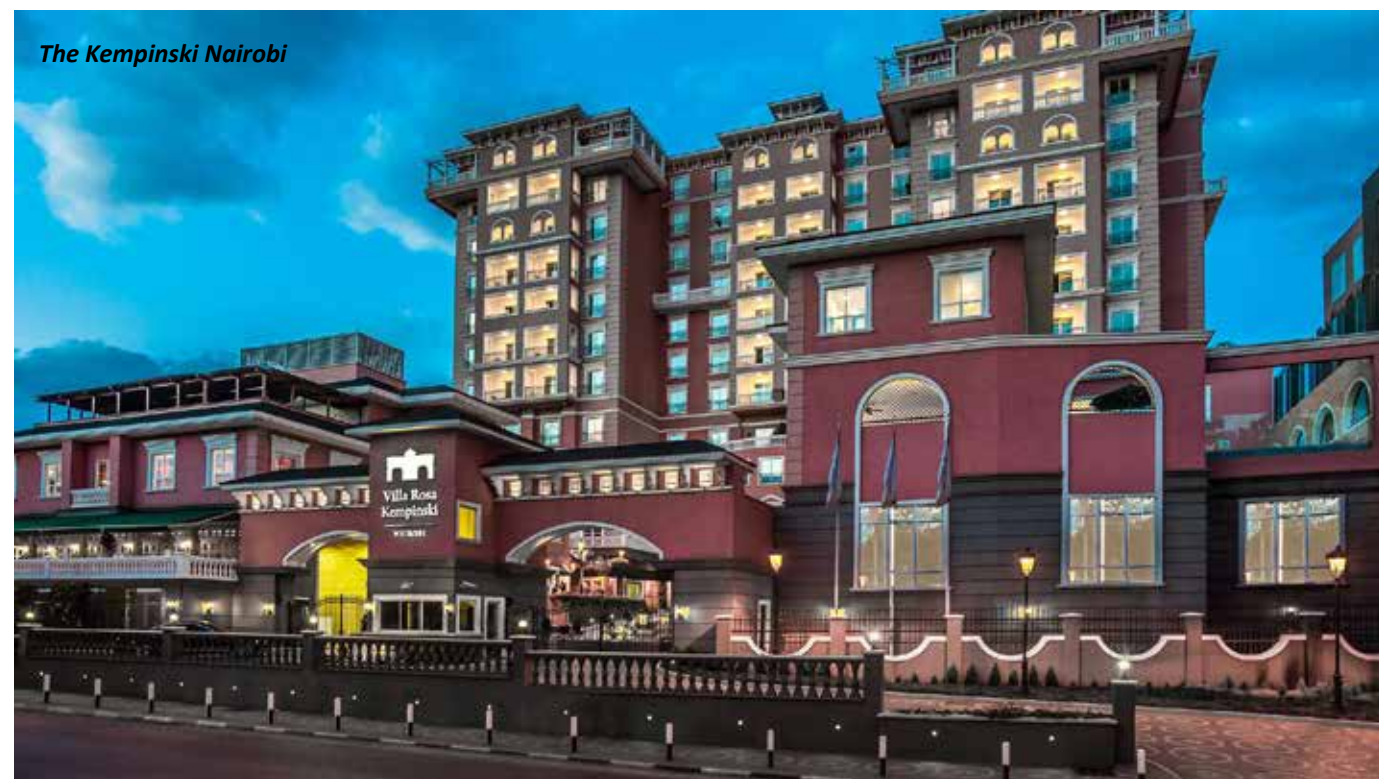
SHAPING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The firm has undertaken projects in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, South Sudan, Botswana, Mozambique and Seychelles and maintains a regional presence with offices in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kampala.

When the history of architecture in Kenya is finally written, the name Symbion will be firmly engraved therein. For it is incomprehensible to discuss the architectural sector in Kenya without mentioning Symbion Architects and the role the renowned studio has played in shaping the built environment in this country and beyond.

Indeed, numerous major landmarks in Kenya and the

larger East Africa region bear Symbion's signature. From hospitality to high-rise commercial complexes, health to education, residential to mixed use developments, Symbion has featured constantly. The firm has undertaken projects in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, South Sudan, Botswana, Mozambique and Seychelles and maintains a regional presence with offices in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kampala.



The Kempinski Nairobi

On 8th September 1980, two architects, Peter Derek Thomas and Jon Antony Cavanagh, came together to establish an architectural practice that would later outgrow them to become the big name that it is today. From the humble design partnership, Symbion is now recognised as one of Sub-Saharan Africa's leading architectural practices, providing core services that include: Architecture, Interior Design, Project Co-ordination, Project Management, Design Management, Value Management, Information Management, Contract Management, Independent Technical Audits and Urban Planning. It has an enviable portfolio that puts it right in the league of the big players, having served more than 200 public and private clients.

Symbion and its team of skilled project managers, architects and interior designers together with specialist consultants are able to offer comprehensive design services from the initial feasibility study through to the completed contract on all types of work ranging from

small one-off extensions to large commercial, health, hospitality and residential developments.

According to Managing Director Arch Mutua Mutuku, the firm has "a depth of knowledge and expertise afforded by a cumulatively widely skilled team where each team member brings a different perspective to the solution of a brief, which provides for high quality, professionally delivered multi-layered solutions to client requirements. This in turn ensures value to the client through the lifetime of the project." The firm also leverages on cutting edge technology, acquiring latest software and hardware for its team to remain ahead. Symbion is a fully CAD-based operation, using ArchiCAD, AutoCAD, Autodesk Revit, Sketch-up and 3D Max.

Symbion projects in Kenya include the 5-star Villa Rosa Kempinski Hotel, The Social House and many others spread across hospitality, education, commercial and residential segments.



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We are proud to be associated with Symbion Architects in this important feature of highlighting the projects they have been doing in the built environment.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT ROOFING

LESSONS FROM MARKET LEADER

By JOHN NJIRAINI



An employee of MRM explains one of the company's roofing products.

Mabati Rolling Mills (MRM), one of the country's leading providers of building solutions and a leader in roofing recently unveiled an elaborate campaign to stimulate growth in its premium steel tile roofing products segment.

MRM's brands include Versatile, Orientile, Zentile and Elegantile roofing tiles.

The company has built a reputation as the market leader in the roofing tiles market through high quality products that are unmatched in terms of beauty, durability and cost efficiency. The products are available in both gloss and

textured finish, come in different colours and offer much longer life span.

In Kenya, metal roofs remain the most popular with the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics data showing that about 90 percent of houses in Kenya have a metal roof. For decades MRM has been a market leader in offering the market metal roofing solutions from aluminum coated silvery finish that is used to make Dumuzas sheets, coloured coated sheets in different profiles or double coated textured finish. The company boasts a wide range of colours available for homeowners to choose. Having succeeded in the metal roofing market space, the

company is determined to push penetration in the steel tile roofing sheet market that is still relatively small at about 10 percent. Through the tiles campaign, MRM is not only pushing to consolidate its market leadership but also push the growth of the tiles roofing market. Over the next two to three years, the company hopes to see the tiles roofing market increase to at least 25 percent.

"The market will grow and there will be space for everyone but for us it is important we grow our market share without compromising on quality considering that many suppliers have come into the market offering cheaper products but the quality is low," said CEO Manish Mehra. He added that the fact that the newcomers are offering low quality products and cheaper rates has created a distortion in the market, with consumers being the biggest losers.

While making customers understand and get to appreciate the importance of quality in choosing roofing solutions, MRM will also use the campaign to educate the market on the different specifications of its different steel tile roof solutions. Also of importance will be the need to advise clients on the pricing aspect. "People often forget that cheap is expensive," notes Mehra, adding that for MRM, the quality of the product should be the determining factor in pricing.

MRM believes that it is critical to consider factors such as roof slope, which may eliminate some roofing options, particularly if the slope is low, and weather proofing, which has to do with the current weather conditions. When making that significant investment, the temperature, amount of rain, and need for ventilation must all be taken into account.

Other factors include roof installation, which is always a concern because the structural framing of a roof is only designed to carry a certain amount of weight, and durability. This is critical because installing a roof is an expensive and disruptive job. Thus, it is usually worthwhile to pay more for materials with longer life spans, especially if you plan to stay in the house for an extended period of time. Choosing cheaper products is frequently a mistake.

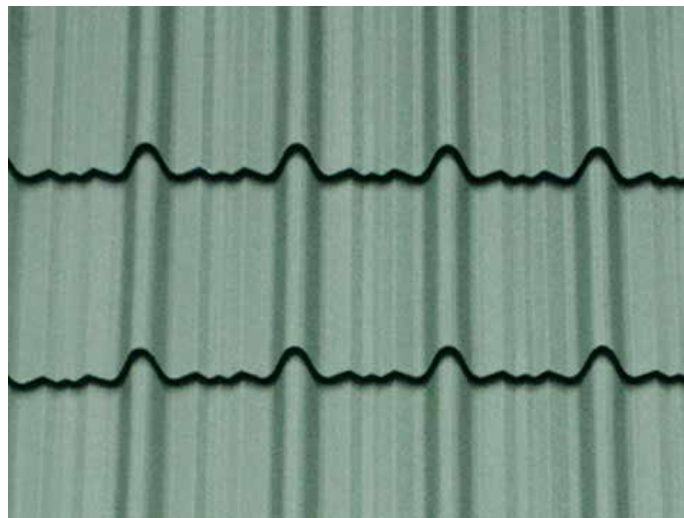


MRM CEO Manish Mehra

THE ROOF AS FACTOR IN HOME OWNERSHIP

It is the dream of every Kenyan to own a home. Yet, if statistics are anything to go by, this dream continues to be elusive to the majority. According to government statistics, home ownership in the country has remained relatively low at 21.3 per cent in urban areas compared to other developing countries such as South Africa at 53.3 per cent.

The relatively low rate of home ownership in Kenya is attributed to among other factors high land prices, high initial transaction cost such as the initial deposit required to access mortgage, lack of credit risk information for those in the informal sector leading to their exclusion, high interest rates for mortgage loans, lack of real estate finance to fund large scale developments, and low income levels which has made it hard to service loans.



Some of the profiles offered by Mabati Rolling Mills.

One major factor that has often been overlooked is the failure to start the journey for home ownership at an early age. In fact, according to Manish Mehra, Mabati Rolling Mills (MRM) Chief Executive Officer, young people getting into the job market have the opportunity to plan well in advance and achieve the dream of owning a home by making the decision early on. "We are telling young people that we can help them plan the journey of home ownership," he says, adding the strategy is developing a workable plan with all the metrics in place.

As an integrated building and construction solutions provider, MRM has for over six decades accumulated substantial experience not only in the manufacture

of products but also in being a trusted adviser on matters of homeownership. Indeed, as the leading manufacturer of roofing solutions, and other products, the company has helped many Kenyans realize the dream of homeownership.

According to the company, the journey to the beautiful house starts with a great looking roof because the roof is said to be over 40 percent of the exterior look of the house. While understanding the roof material type and roof design is important, the most critical decision is on the quality of the steel or tile that is used to make the roofing material a home owner eventually buys.



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IS YOUR PROJECT GOING OVER BUDGET? THIS IS HOW TO TELL

By UDDI BENKIFF AWINDA

According to construction industry experts, the number one reason for construction projects stalling is that they go over budget. An overbudget project is most likely the result of an error or omission during the project planning phase.

A stalled project will not only cost you more money in terms of lost opportunity costs and budget increases, but it may also have an impact on the final quality of the construction. As a result, it is critical to ensure that your building project does not stall at any point during the construction process.

If you have meticulously planned the entire project and have included the appropriate experts, you can be confident in your ability to complete it on time and within budget. As a result, it would be even more disheartening if you had meticulously planned your project as a client and still fell short.

So, if you are currently working on a project or are about to begin one, keep the following key points in mind at all times. These will allow you to keep track of whether you are on budget or not.

Going Above the Project Baseline

Every project has a baseline that provides a benchmark

of the cost, scope, and schedule at any particular time. Note that this could be any nature of the project, from the simplest residential dwelling, a landscaping project, or even a large, multi-disciplinary project such as commercial real-estate development.

The project baseline is pre-defined and tells the project manager or owner if key performance indicators are being met at any given time, and not just at the end of the project. For example, if the baseline is a graph set from cost versus time, if the actual slotted values of cost-versus-time produce a graph above the pre-set baseline, you'll automatically know that you are going above the budget.

If You Have Gone Over the Maximum Time Limit Allotted for the Project

This one is simple. Assume that you have exhausted your expected expenditure at specific milestone times, or even at the end of the allotted project time and the works are still not complete. This is a sure indicator that you are going above budget with your project.

If You Have Made a Significant Alteration to the Original Design

Any changes to the original design must be documented and reflected in the new project costs for commercial projects involving a large project team composed of architects, engineers, and so on. However, it is not uncommon for changes to the original build to be made and not documented in smaller residential and non-commercial projects. This will have an effect on the overall cost of the project.

Assume you're building a house with the original design assumption for the foundation being a stable murrum subgrade. If you come across a different, less stable foundation on-site, such as clayey or black cotton soil, this will be a significant change to the original design, and you can expect to go over budget.

If You Have to Pay for Damaged Liabilities

Damaged liabilities in this regard are anything outside of the apportioned and approved costs that you may have to pay as

FEATURES

a client or as a contractor. If, say, you build on a road reserve (maybe as an error or omission), you may not only have to pay for the costs of pulling down your structure but you may also be forced to pay a fine to the authorities. Thus, you can expect to go over budget even if a remedial measure is to be taken before the situation escalates.

If You Realize a Costly Mistake Too Late

An error in design or construction can cost you a lot of money in the long run. Design errors usually involve the structure and are expensive to fix, especially if the project has advanced significantly. These may include the foundations, structural elements like beams and columns, or even the roof truss.

While mistakes in design and construction are common, they can be avoided by hiring an experienced team rather than “doing it” yourself. Leave each task to a qualified professional, such as an engineer or quantity surveyor, to reduce the likelihood of such an experience.

If Your Project is not Quite Coming Out the Way You had Hoped

If your project looks great on paper but the actual build looks shabby or even like a different project entirely, expect your costs to exceed your budget. This may occur if, for example, you are building remotely and have delegated project management to someone else (for example, those in the diaspora who use family members to build for them). If the project appears to be less appealing than you had hoped, it may not be practical to abandon it entirely. Making any new amendments, however, will result in a shooting of your original budget.

What's The Best Way to Stay within Your Budget?

Before beginning any construction project, hire the right team and always seek professional advice. The expert fees may appear high in the short term, but they may save you time, money, and disappointment in the long run.

While mistakes in design and construction are common, they can be avoided by hiring an experienced team rather than “doing it” yourself. Leave each task to a qualified professional, such as an engineer or quantity surveyor, to reduce the likelihood of such an experience.

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