

Iconic curtain raiser

glass

While the future of the façades industry is looking bright, with 'a number of large contracts on the drawing board', Gardner points out that the timing of these projects remains under wraps for the moment.

"There are definitely exciting prospects in the pipeline," he reiterates.

Delivering iconic buildings proves that South African companies are capable of tackling the most complex curtain-walling projects in the world, he states.

Discussing some of the trends impacting the façades industry Gardner notes that, as architects focus on producing landmark developments, there has definitely been a move away from delivering the traditional straight-line developments, with the focus on more eye-catching, iconic, buildings.

"As façade specialists we play a leading role in upfront design development aspects and ensure that what architects want will work. In addition to industry knowledge we have a professional team of engineers able to deliver to specified designs."

Moreover, development trends are leaning heavily towards delivering energy-efficient green buildings.

Despite the economic slowdown Grinaker-LTA's façades division has been kept relatively busy, and has two large projects on the go at any given time.

"We are geared up to do work across the African borders and offshore work as well." Grinaker-LTA was involved in delivering the façades for the Bank of Mauritius.

In rising to the challenges presented by architects, the façades industry has, over recent years, delivered a host of striking, iconic buildings. Nearing completion are a number of buildings, including Alice Lane Towers and Central Park in Sandton, that are breathtaking in their unusual design. The façades sector is also reflecting the impact of the economic slowdown, and, while it lags the rest of industry by a couple of months, there are definitely vibrations in the project pipeline of more 'exciting developments in the near future', Grinaker-LTA Façades general manager, Colin Gardner, tells Nelendhre Moodley.



Investec Building in KZN.

PROJECTS

On completion the Alice Lane Office Towers project in Sandton will be "the most iconic curtain-walling job" that Grinaker-LTA's façades division will have undertaken to date, reports Gardner.

This 20 000m² office park development consists of two large towers, North and South, with six basements on each tower, two ground floors below each tower. The south tower is 15 storeys while the north tower is 12 storeys.

The building's striking façade is achieved with the use of patterned white, grey, dark-grey and black panels.

The façades contract, valued in excess of R50m, is nearing completion, with the last top of the north tower completed and the company in the process of topping out the south tower.

A project of this magnitude and design complexity certainly has its fair share of challenges, and at Alice Lane Towers these included interfacing the design elements with the considerations of manufacturing and building technology and the requirements of future maintenance activities, such as cleaning a curve from a swing scaffold.

Currently under construction is Protea Place in Fredman Drive, Sandton, a contract on which Grinaker-LTA Façades started design last year. Protea Place has a unitised façade, with the inclusion of architectural cladding materials in some feature elevations. A focal point of the façade is a small radius corner, where curved glass is used to create a round intersection between two elevations. Practical challenges on the project have included very limited site space for deliveries and storage, and the complexity of working without scaffolding.

Grinaker-LTA's façades division recently completed the Investec head office in Umhlanga Ridge in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The R10m, six-month contract involved providing just over 3000m² of glazed curtain-walling and shop-front systems for the main contractor.

The scope of work on this project included three of the building's elevations being fully glazed in a combination of flush-glazed single and double-glazed panel systems, a wrap-around terrace shop-front on the uppermost floor; sidelights to the



Bank of Mauritius.

staircases; a clerestory roof window running the full length of the structure, and a top-hung 600m² planar screen over the main entrance and triple-volume atrium of the building.

The rest of the cladding zones were shared with both marble and granite finishes.

The project was completed in April. ■



Alice Lane Towers.