

Joburg Property Company - JPC

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JOHANNESBURG. Joburg Property Company (JPC), managers of the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) property portfolio, have been instrumental in the conceptual design of the Council Chamber which was inspired by the Tswana word “Lekgotla”, an outdoor meeting space which is circular in form. Three awards later proves that this is not just a building but an iconic work of art!

Last year the Council Chamber was awarded the 5 Star Green award which recognizes excellence in South Africa for environmental leadership and this was just the beginning of the awards. This was a unique award in the area of public service and education developments.

Joburg Property Company has also been awarded the Public Services Development award by the Africa & Arabia Property Awards which are the largest, most prestigious, and widely recognised programme throughout the regions and will be honoured at the Africa & Arabia Property Awards at The JW Marriott Marquis Hotel, Dubai on the 7th September for this project. They will compete against the best property professionals across the Asia Pacific region to be recognised in the Public Services Development category.

The International Property Awards, in its 26th year, are open to residential and commercial property professionals from around the globe and celebrates the highest levels of achievement by companies operating in all sectors of the property and real estate industry. An International Property Award is a world-renowned mark of excellence.

The Africa & Arabia Property Awards are judged by an independent panel of 70 industry experts. Judging focuses on design, quality, service, innovation, originality, and commitment to sustainability. The judging panel is chaired by Lord Caithness, Lord Best, The Earl of Liverpool, and Lord Thurso, members of the House of Lords in the UK Parliament.

There were 14 entries in total for Africa and Arabia for the Public Service award and this was split over 10 countries/emirates and the Johannesburg Council Chamber made it to the top!

The JPC has been further honoured when it was shortlisted in the Other Developments category for the South African Property Owners Association (SAPOA) Innovative Excellence in Property Development Awards because of the very nature of the building and its purpose and it was no surprise that at the SAPOA Convention, Exhibition and Awards Ceremony held on the 22 June in Cape Town, they received the prestigious award in this category. Up against some strong competition including the Destiny Conference Centre (Kempton Park), the Isivivana Centre (Cape Town), Menlyn Learning Hub (Pretoria) and The Waterfall Public Transport Facility (Midrand-Johannesburg).

June has truly been a momentous month for the JPC to be awarded prizes both nationally and internationally for the Council Chamber.

More about the Council Chamber

Conceptually, the essence of Lekgotla is that anyone is allowed to speak and no interruptions may be made during the process. As in all African culture, the drum has been used for centuries to call those from surrounding areas to come together for social gatherings or for important meetings. Therefore the Council Chamber comes together at the north end of Rissik Street, reminding those that gather inside to make important decisions, who they are representing and why they have been selected to be there.

The Chamber has been designed in such a way that it provides seating capacity for 361 councilors and 158 seats in the gallery for the public and media – 80 seats more than is currently required, in order to cater for future expansion. The state-of-the-art audio-visual and delegate system is fully programmable and completely customisable to be updated in line with any future changes in the way that the Chamber operates. 500 jobs were created from the surrounding communities.

The form itself is that of a transparent drum, as mentioned earlier – a cylindrical structure enveloped entirely by a glass façade with vertical glass fins covering the curved outer skin of the building. The glass building envelope enables an uninterrupted visual link between the indoor and surrounding outdoor spaces. This allows the outside world to have a visual connection with the building's occupants, which is symbolic of a constant dialogue between the public and municipal officials

The architect therefore wanted to celebrate African principles of space making, while incorporating smart technologies and green building systems. The open air Piazza alongside that encourages the local community to come together and enjoy the various aspects that have been built for their leisure and enjoyment such as the outdoor gym, children's playground and chess set, there is little that has not been covered.

The art that was selected for the inside of the building has in its simplicity and design, has been selected to ensure that a story is told from past and present using not only art forms but also different forms of material from copper to steel, from canvas to glass. As the years go by the story will still be told in the way that it should be that of the journey of Johannesburg and its residents to that of freedom within the city.

One of the unique features of the building was the Council Chambers Totem Art Competition 2016 (open to both young and old, professionals and hopefuls) invited artists to submit drawings, paintings and prints that told a unique story about their community and their community's history. The winning designs have been translated into wooden totems placed inside the Council Chamber building. To stand a chance of being selected, citizens were encouraged to base their designs on the overarching theme of warmth and inclusivity at the new Chambers. More importantly, their totems needed to embody and represent the distinctive stories of the inhabitants of their respective communities. From over 500 entries, 134 winners were selected. The youngest entrants were of a pre-primary school age; and the oldest were mature adults. As permanent fixtures woven into the fabric of the Council Chamber's design, these totems will stand as testaments to the people of Johannesburg and their heritage.

The building stands tall and proud and those that work and live in Johannesburg are reminded every day of the emerging skyline that is changing within the Johannesburg CBD and that we will once again have a city that is visited by millions of tourists every year.