

PERFORMANCE  
REVIEW

# BLACK RIVER PARK: NORTH SCORES



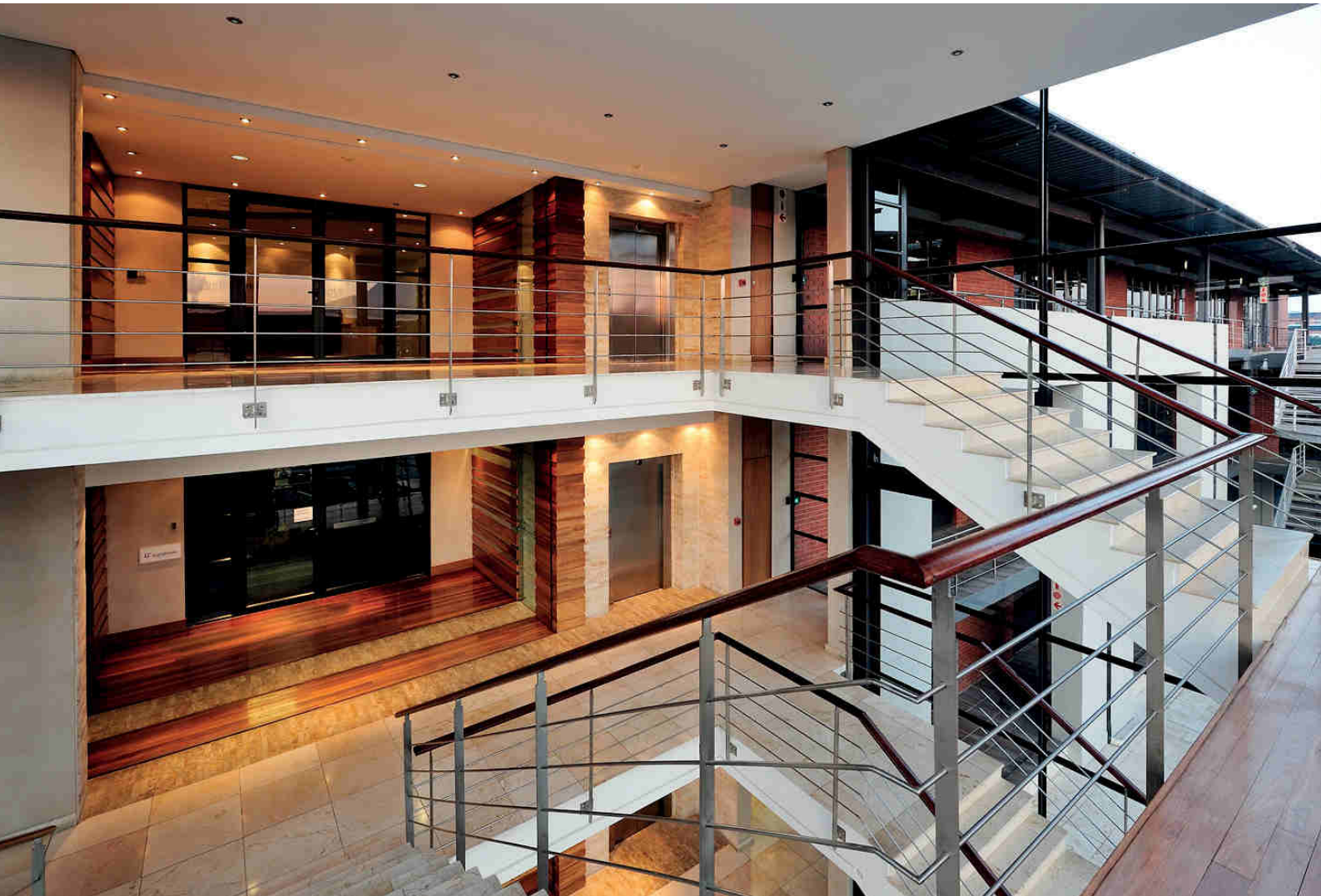


# PARK 5 STARS

Getting South Africa's first existing building Green Star SA certification proves that Black River Park in Cape Town has a "better product" to offer, says office park co-owner PJ Rabie. He is of the firm conviction that the sustainability initiatives put in place make sound financial sense and create a better working environment.

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**PHOTOGRAPHY** MIKE CARELSE





Unlike the other rating tools offered by the GBCSA the Existing Buildings Tool puts building operation and management in the limelight.

“We have found that green space is becoming increasingly important for both local and international tenants. ‘What are your green credentials?’ is fast becoming one of the first questions potential tenants ask,” says Black River Park facilities manager Matt Rich. “Tenants are starting to be mindful of the environmental impact of a building, and are looking for the benefits that a green space offers such as lower operating costs and increased productivity of their employees.”

Rabie says getting the certification has provided a market talking point where it can be tough to differentiate your offering. “We want to be known as the greenest office park in South Africa,” he says.

“Tenants who represent international companies want sustainable buildings, and often need sustainability credentials for triple bottom line reporting. Being able to provide that and get certified for our efforts, gives us a competitive advantage.”

## PIONEER EFFORT

Black River Park’s North Park received its 5 Star Green Star SA rating in October 2014, under the Existing Building Performance (EBP) pilot tool. The other seven buildings at Black River Park South Park are registered as pilot EBP projects, and either a 4 or 5 Star rating is targeted.

While greening of new buildings is imperative to lessen the environmental impact of the built environment, sustainably managing the existing building stock is where significant efficiencies and savings can be made.

The Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA) says the EBP rating tool provides indicators to ensure a building’s environmental performance is efficiently maintained or improved upon over time. Buildings can achieve a certification between one to six stars with this tool, and the rating is valid for three years.



**NUTSHELL**

Location • Observatory, Cape Town

Size • 18 675m<sup>2</sup> North Park

Owners • Leaf Capital and Joubert Rabie

Tenants • Over 110 tenants

Performance period reviewed • March to August 2014



A vegetable garden and fruit orchard was established in an unused area of the courtyard, where tenants can grow food.

**PEOPLE IN FOCUS**

Unlike the other rating tools offered by the GBCSA this one puts building operation and management in the limelight. Instead of interacting with architects and building contractors, the existing building performance certification process requires interaction with property managers, facilities managers, tenant liaison managers, on-site staff, tenants and landlords.

Rabie notes increased interaction with tenants has been the biggest benefit of pursuing the rating because getting this certification requires buy-in from everyone. “We have had tremendous feedback,” he says. “The tenants understand the process and want to be a part of the journey. As a landlord, it’s easy to become disassociated from your tenants but this has boosted relationships and tenants now have greater sense of belonging.”

“This performance rating focuses on management and the relationship between the landlord and the tenant,” says green building consultant and

accredited professional on the Black River Park certification, Sally Misplon. “It is measured over a performance period. For this type of rating, data and practices are documented and measured over a performance period (three to 12 months) and then reported on. One gets rewarded for continuous best practice.”

To ensure the best result, Misplon was permanently based at the property management office, and exposed to real time decision-making.

Misplon notes one of her highlights of the six-month performance review period was the decision to plant a vegetable garden and fruit orchard in an unused area of the courtyard, where tenants could grow food. This decision scored innovation points. The event turned into a special occasion that took place on Mandela Day and featured a live broadcast with local radio station KFM making it one of their LEADSA initiatives. The event facilitated thinking about sustainability with tenants.



Home to the largest rooftop solar system in the southern hemisphere, Black River Park has implemented a programme of greening that has empowered office workers and built awareness around sustainability.





## GETTING CERTIFIED

Rabie says the certification is an acknowledgement of continued efforts over the last eight to ten years. Opened in 2004, Black River Park was constructed with many sustainability features as standard. Performance glass and blinds for glare are but two such features.

Greening initiatives, such as the installation of the largest rooftop solar system in the southern hemisphere and a borehole were considered sound business decisions before the decision to pursue the rating was made.

“We firmly believe that in the long term or short term, the initiatives we have put in place make financial sense,” says Rabie. “You have to be able to

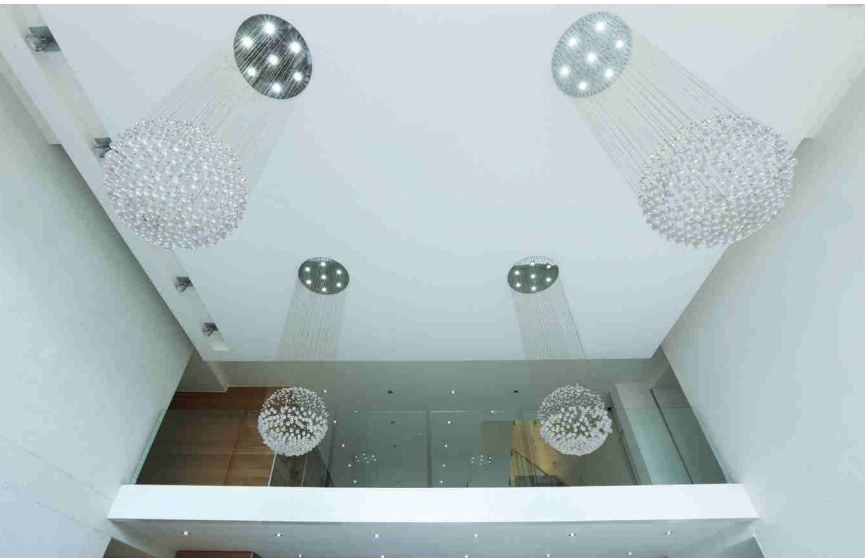
take a little risk sometimes, and this can save costs in the long run.”

Hence the cost of getting certified was largely administrative. “You can select what points to go for, which will impact your costs, and you can determine how much you are willing to spend on greening initiatives,” he says.

The solar system, vegetable garden and borehole costs will be recouped as the capital expenditure earns a return. The solar system is low-risk. The borehole cost about R140 000 and was recovered in 12 months. Initially, it was not considered incredibly risky, he adds.

“This rating is very much about adapting behaviour. It is not very expensive, but requires awareness and changing habits,” says Mislipon.





Attractive, energy efficient lighting features in all the common areas and will be rolled out into tenant premises.

## THE PAPER TRAIL

Rabie encourages people intent on pursuing an EBP rating not to underestimate the time required to get the rating. “The scope and volume of work really is extensive. It was a full-time job for two people for six months. Meetings with 110 tenants takes time and one should be prepared for that. There were 1166 pages submitted for the certification.”

Misplon notes extracting the information at times could be a challenge, but now that those processes are in place it will be easier. With the rating tool, the technical manual explains exactly what interventions are required, or could be pursued.

Drawing up green policies and management plans is a substantial task, as is ensuring they are subsequently implemented.

Misplon established a green travel plan; a pest management plan; a sustainable procurement policy and plan; sustainable green cleaning plans; a waste management plan; and a legionella risk management plan. With a contribution from Black River Park management, Misplon also drafted a stormwater management plan, and a hard services management plan.

As a combined effort, Misplon and the Black River Park team drew up green leases for tenants and management, developed a building user guide, building operations manual, and a maintenance plan. An indoor air quality programme was also drawn up

and indoor environmental quality testing was done in all offices.

“Putting policies in place doesn’t cost any money. It requires changes in management and raising awareness,” says Misplon. It has often been stated building sustainable buildings is the easy part; it is ensuring they are correctly operated and well-managed that poses the challenge.

The emphasis has certainly been on raising awareness, greater interaction, communication and education among all who work at Black River Park’s North Park. Energy and water consumption information is shared, and monitoring and measuring is important, as is setting targets. The green lease may not be a legally binding contract, but it has to be meaningful, and there are rewards and penalties built in to keep interaction sustained and people motivated to participate.

The change in consciousness among tenants at the office park is difficult to quantify, explains Rabie. There has been so much conversation and education among tenants, teaching them about indoor environmental quality, carbon dioxide and how to use the air-conditioner more efficiently. “Some office managers just didn’t understand, so this process of education and communication has actually empowered office managers,” he concludes.

## SUSTAINABILITY FEATURES

- 1.2MW solar system produces around 1.9GWh of electricity a year (about 20%-30% of the park’s total energy requirement).
- First commercial project to feed back into the grid in Cape Town and be remunerated for it.
- Energy efficient lighting has been installed throughout common areas and is being rolled out into tenant premises through a joint financing initiative.
- Indoor air quality tests including temperature, humidity, and CO<sub>2</sub> as well as natural and artificial lighting tests.
- New recycling focused waste contractor was appointed.
- Recycling bins procured and placed around the office park.
- Shop fronts fitted with performance glass
- Cycling and shower facilities
- Green pause areas such as the vegetable garden display energy and water consumption information.
- A Building User’s Guide
- Green leases
- Implementation of a stormwater management plan.
- Ecologically friendly gardens, including a 140m<sup>2</sup> vegetable garden and fruit orchard
- Irrigation supplied via borehole on-site.
- All garden waste is recycled

## SOURCEBOOK

**Owners** • Observatory Business Park • [www.blackriverpark.co.za](http://www.blackriverpark.co.za) • Leaf Capital and Joubert Rabie • PJ Rabie • 021 812 2735

**Green building consultant** • Misplon Green Building Consulting • Sally Misplon • [www.misplon.co.za](http://www.misplon.co.za)

**Landscaping** • Paradigm Garden Concepts • [francesc@pgc.za.net](mailto:francesc@pgc.za.net) • 021 552 1289

## MISPLON TAKES GREEN BUILDING TO NEW HEIGHTS



Sally Mispion is a confident combination of youthful enthusiasm, creativity and knowledge. She scooped the accolade “Rising Green Star” for 2014 at the GBCSA’s Green Leadership Awards.

Mispion was also recognised for her efforts as the Green Star SA Accredited Professional on the project awarded the country’s first Existing Building Performance (EBP) rating – the Black River Office Park’s North Park in Cape Town.

Born and raised in Cape Town, Mispion graduated from the University of Cape Town with a BSc in Property Studies. Her Honours thesis, *Drivers in the Adoption of Green Building Principles in Private Schools in South Africa*, was a clear indicator that she was to be involved in the greening the property industry.

After four years in property management at Eurocape Holdings and Quenet Corporate Property, Mispion established her own green building consultancy. She completed the GBCSA’s accredited professional course for new builds in 2013, and was appointed as the green building consultant on the Black River Park project in November 2013. She has since completed the GBCSA’s accredited professional course for existing buildings.

Mispion assisted in developing the EBP rating tool as part of the voluntary technical advisory group. Currently, she is training to become an assessor for the EBP rating tool.

After securing the rating for the North Park and submitting the rating for the South Park, Mispion knows the office park inside out. It seems natural and fitting that she has established her consultancy, Mispion Green Building Consulting, officially founded in 2014, at Black River Park.

When discussing the project she says, “Being based at the building made a world of difference – it was efficient and time saving, and made things a lot more streamlined. It also meant I understood exactly how things worked and allowed for much greater involvement on the project”.

In addition to getting the rest of Black River Park certified, she is working on the Cape Quarter Lifestyle Centre, targeting an EBP Green Star SA pilot rating. “As a green building enthusiast, I was certainly very enthusiastic to be involved. Two of my strengths are project management and strategic planning, which makes the process much easier to tackle, especially with larger projects,” she says, adding that one of the principles green building consultants learn is that the “greenest building” is one that already exists - and one must therefore focus on ensuring these buildings perform as efficiently as possible.

As a green building consultant specialising in existing buildings, Mispion project manages the process of getting buildings assessed on their current sustainability and efficiency levels, and sets out the challenges facing owners and occupiers, providing recommendations and helping with the implementation of any retrofitting or refurbishment.

Mispion believes that the EBP rating tool will become instrumental in the green transformation of the built environment in South Africa and will be essential in proving greening credentials within the industry and potential tenants.

“Now, more than ever before, people in the commercial property space are looking to take steps towards reducing their impact on the environment. Not only will this tool encourage hundreds of existing building owners to adopt sustainable principles, but it also offers a structured way for building owners to focus on these green initiatives and to be recognised for their environmental accomplishments. All of which will inevitably have massive positive effects on the green efforts in South Africa,” she adds.

Sharing an anecdote from the site about how the maintenance team has fully embraced the green cleaning materials procurement policy and now seems to take pride in their greener work ethic, Mispion appreciates the impact her job has on people and in turn, the environment.

“It’s great to see how my work has changed the way people think and work,” she says. ☺