

ADDRESS TO COUNCIL ON THURSDAY 27 JULY 2023, AT TSHWANE HOUSE, BY CURRENT PIA PRESIDENT, CLAIRE McCUSKER, I.T.O. s130(1)(B) OF THE MFMA, WHEN THE ANNUAL REPORT IS TABLED IN REGARD TO MATTERS PERTAINING THERETO.

Good morning, thank you for giving the Pretoria Institute for Architecture an opportunity to address this council. The Pretoria Institute for Architecture is a Voluntary Organization representing 537 members in the Architectural Profession. A majority of our members work within the Tshwane Municipal region.

The Construction industry in South Africa is an important role player in job creation. At this year's Residential Investment and Development Conference the following statistics were discussed. On average 40% of a project's cost is allocated to labor. As many as 18 jobs are created per R1Mil spent on labor. Development spend directly translates into jobs. However, the rate at which developments within the City of Tshwane are unlocked to provide these job opportunities is disturbingly slow.

The importance of having a thriving Construction industry which provides jobs, grows the economy, and encourages investment into Tshwane is indisputable. We should be investigating every opportunity to cut red tape and encourage developments. However, an application for even the smallest building plan takes months, while a project requiring rezoning takes years. If projects are not approved with expediency and diligence, these projects get shelved by investors, banks, companies and public entities. Not only is this damaging to a project's feasibility, but extended delays lead to the cancelation of the project and loss of development opportunity.

The Pretoria Institute for Architecture has been actively engaging with the City of Tshwane over the past 6 years to try to find solutions to the many problems plaguing the Building Control and Town Planning Offices. These efforts have for the most part fallen on deaf ears. Last year May, we compiled and submitted a memorandum of concerns with a subsequent meeting with the then mayor Randal Williams. Since this meeting, we have engaged several times with the council at various levels to try resolve the pressing issues our members are experiencing on a daily basis. However little progress has been made.

Many of our concerns would be resolved if the City of Tshwane implemented an Online Submission and Approval system that allowed for files to be tracked throughout the process. The importance of this system goes beyond convenience, it is essential if we are to create an environment that is transparent, accountable, and free of corruption. The 19th of December last year a media statement from the mayor's office pronounced that this online system was functional. While a small portion of the Town Planning application process is in place, no online system is currently functional for the Building Control Office. With the dire state of the 7 Regions Building Control Office's, it is no wonder this is a difficult task to complete.

The Tshwane's Building Control Offices are underfunded, under resourced, with outdated equipment, and unsuitable facilities. The service at these offices are often effected by power failures, water interruptions, IT systems offline, and even facilities closed as they do not comply with the minimum Health and Safety standards. Even when open for business its common to find the staff not at their stations due to many factors, leaving projects files at a standstill as there is no one else who has the authority to review or approve the drawings.

It is our opinion that both the Town Planning and Building Control Offices require restructuring. These departments are top heavy with layers of managers, however vacant posts go unfilled on

lower levels. This seriously impacts the ability of the departments to engage with the public and complete their tasks. The capacity of the officials is further reduced as many are not correctly trained or qualified for their role. As the Capital City of South Africa Tshwane should employ the best registered Professionals to not only reach the current deliverables but the City's sustainable goals. Where are the Professional Engineers and Architects this city desperately needs?

I would like to stand here and share with you the real data that would underline the lack of performance by these departments, however the last time the Building Control and Town Planning Office disclosed the number of applications approved was back in 2018. A lack of transparency and accountability prevents us from knowing the details. Nevertheless, the effects are obvious to our Architectural members. Most Architectural companies in Tshwane are small to medium enterprises who do not have the cashflow to carry a project for months, or even years, without being able to invoice due to delays in planning approvals. They are at the mercy of a dysfunctional system that is seriously impacting their livelihoods and the feasibility of doing business.

We appeal here that you consider this coming years budgetary spend, and prioritize the Construction Industry. Urgently addressing the following:

1. Implementation of the full Online Application and Approval process.
2. Address the vacant posts and fill them with capable and qualified registered Professionals, both Engineering and Architects.
3. Review the performance of both the Building Control and Town Planning Offices and implement new structures that will ensure service delivery, providing transparency and accountability.
4. Engage on a regular basis with the public and organizations like the Pretoria Institute for Architecture to find solutions. Respond to all communication and take action, including a response to the PIA's memorandum submitted to the Mayor directly last year September.
5. Allow the public access to the Legal department to meet to discuss differences in legislative interpretation, so that we can avoid developments being cancelled due to a difference of opinions.

As Architects we are taught to listen with purpose, look for opportunities for social justice, be sympathetic to the environment, responding to an ever-changing context and climate, and above all solve complex problems. We are part of the solution; all we need is to be allowed to contribute.