



MEDIA RELEASE

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YOUTH AND PROPERTY TEAM UP TO CREATE INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS FOR THE FUTURE

Since October 2017, the Youth in Property Association (YIPA) has been teaming up with the Western Cape Property Development Forum (WCPDF) to provide underprivileged learners with the opportunity to shadow individuals in the Cape Town property industry and transform the sector from the youth up.

The YIPA Job Shadow Programme is held in partnership with the WCPDF and UCT100UP, the latter being a project run by the University of Cape Town which targets school learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to coach them towards university access.

According to Chairperson, Monedi Lefakane, YIPA was started in 2017 by six black students who were studying towards property-related degrees at UCT: “We started the organisation in order to transform the property sector and ensure that young people are actively involved through our initiatives of education, employment and entrepreneurship. The property studies degree is extremely untransformed with only 13 of the 146 students being Black in 2016. We identified that this was amongst the core reasons why the property sector as a whole is untransformed, because young black people are unaware of property as a career and entrepreneurial route.”

Vice-chair of YIPA, Steven Fine, who is also integrally involved with the programme adds: “We then decided to start YIPA, which focuses on empowering young people in property and increasing the awareness and access of young black people to the sector.”

The job shadowing partnership with the WCPDF and the UCT100UP programme in turn enables YIPA to expose the industry to learners even before these learners leave high-school, in order to grow skilled labour and create an entrepreneurial pool for this sector.

As the convenor of the WCPDF's Internship Programme, Dacre Hattingh – a development manager with the Eris Property Group – says the programme is vital for the property industry: “Transformation is taking too long. This is, in part, because we are trying to transform the sector from the top down and focusing on those previously disadvantaged individuals who have already made it into the sector. However, there are simply not enough black professionals coming into it in the first place to have a meaningful impact on transformation. We therefore need work from bottom up and expose learners to the property industry when they are considering their options for tertiary education or even just deciding on a career.

“By influencing the learners in a positive way, we can encourage them to look past the bricks and mortar to actually see the engine room that creates and maintains property assets. This is what YIPA strives for and it is a great initiative that the WCPDF wholeheartedly supports.”

The first two programmes, run in October 2017 and April 2018, saw a total of 38 learners from various Khayelithsa schools involved in the UCT100UP programme to be exposed to a number of the most prominent property companies in the Western Cape. With interests across the full spectrum of the industry, these have to date included project management companies Mitchell du Plessis Associates (MDP) and Alwyn Laubscher and Associates (AL&A), engineering company Aurecon, developers Multi Spectrum Property (MSP) and the Rabie Group, property investment and asset management company Aria Property Group and the Green Building Council of South Africa.

The experience of hosting the learners has been eye-opening on all fronts, notes Hattingh: “Several of the participating companies had their eyes opened to the difficulties the learners have had to deal with at such a young age, especially growing up in an area like Khayelitsha. I think this awareness helps highlight the unusual dichotomy that South Africa finds itself in where we almost have two separate worlds coexisting. The initiative is breaking barriers on both sides by highlighting the plight many South Africans have to endure while providing a glimpse into the real business world of the property sector. All of the companies that have participated to date have had positive experiences and would like to be involved going forwards.”

With the next programme happening from 3 to 4 October, chairperson of the WCPDF, Deon van Zyl, is calling on all Cape Town-based property companies to consider getting involved: “The property development process is complex and technical. Those involved tend to forget the multi-faceted nature

of our industry and how we ourselves entered this 'world' in the first place. This programme offers industry players the opportunity to help young people get a glimpse of this world and experience a totally new one. It also offers industry the opportunity to meet the new generation for which it should be planning and delivering property products.”

Having himself trained in architecture and urban design, and currently a director at AL&A, Van Zyl adds: “Having participated in both previous job shadow events, I’ve not only been humbled by the tenacity and drive of these young people, but I’ve also realised how little time our industry spends in really understanding the needs and wants of the next generation. I would like to challenge other industry bodies to follow suit and create, if they have not already done so, a job shadow programme like this one.”

Talking about the WCPDF’s own hopes for the job shadow programme, Hattingh concludes: “Ultimately, it would be great if we could extend the programme further to be able to provide bursaries to those who have shown a keen interest to study further towards a property-related degree or diploma. While the programme is still very young, there are a lot of opportunities for further interactions with the learners. For now, though, the focus is to at least get the learners exposed to property and give them some inspiration to consider this sector for their vocation.”

Property companies wishing to participate in the October Job Shadow Programme can email Kim Kilpatrick on admin@wcpdf.co.za or call 021 461 0411.

Issued on behalf of the Western Cape Property Development Forum (WCPDF) by:

Dacre Hattingh, Convenor of the WCPDF Internship Programme

Contact: dhattingh@eris.co.za

Mobile: 082 443 3290 or call the WCPDF landline: 021 461 0411