



LIGHTING THE WAY: The new Standard Bank building in Rosebank, Johannesburg, which so far has cost R 2.7-billion to build

Pictures: KEVIN SUTHERLAND

New landmark gets five green stars

MONICA LAGANPARSAD

THERE is a new kid on the green block — at the corner of Bolton Avenue and Oxford Road in Rosebank, Johannesburg.

Standard Bank's colossal new glass and steel building now dominates the skyline of the trendy suburb's business district.

Having earned kudos as one of the city's greenest new landmarks, the R2.7-billion building will be home to about 5 000 workers by year end.

The bank's bosses had hoped for a four-star green rating, but the Green Building Council gave it a cool five stars in February based on its design.

According to Rory Roriston, head of real-estate asset management at Standard Bank, the 65 000m² building has a west wing with nine floors and an east wing with 11. They are separated by a central atrium.

It boasts a fully automated window blind system — linked to a rooftop "weather station" allowing for sunlight tracking.

"You've got to watch your air-conditioning power so it's not just about light," Roriston said. "A lot of power goes into air conditioning, so we've come up with a solution on the glass facades that actually improves our air-conditioning standards and gives us a better green building status."

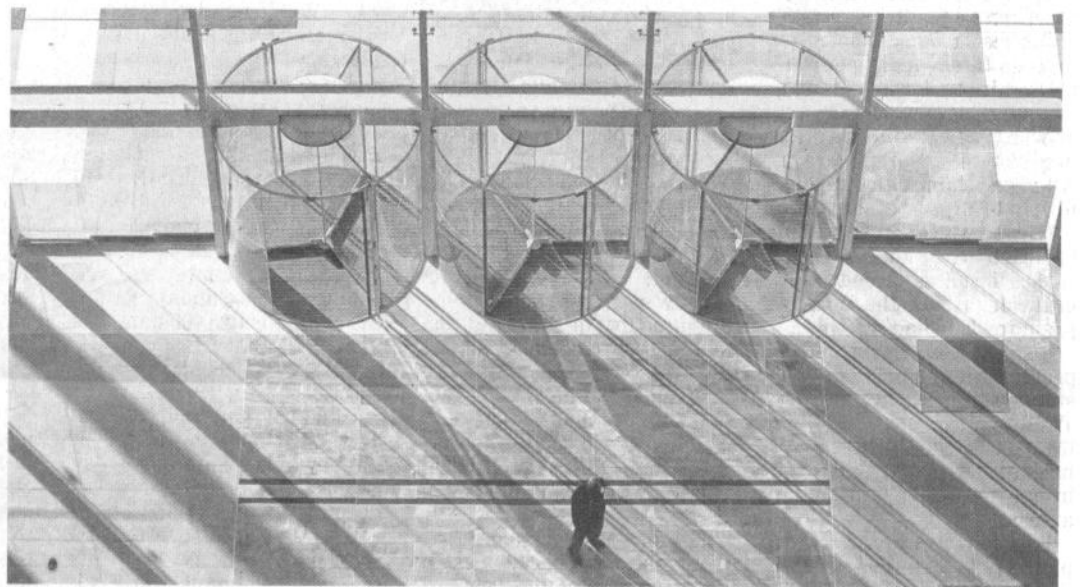
Standard Bank's head office in the Johannesburg CBD houses 15 500 employees, but the 5 000 in its investment and business banking units will be moving to Rosebank.

The new building uses a gas-powered tri-generation plant to convert gas to electricity, which then supplements power for lighting, heating and cooling.

This system will generate about 1MW of electricity — enough to power about 200 suburban homes — and the remaining 5MW required will feed off the electricity grid.

However, Roriston said the gas generator would power the building's lights at night.

Heat generated from the gas plant will be cooled down and



DOORS OPEN: The entrance to the new Standard Bank building spills light into the foyer

filtered into the air conditioner to reduce energy consumption.

The lead architect, Xavier Huyberechts from GLH and Associates Architects, said the

design represented the bank's philosophy.

"The idea was to improve contact between the inside and outside, where we actually lowered the boundary between office space and the outside element."

Huyberechts said the building was designed around a central atrium. Vertical escalators were positioned along the atrium and this would give visitors to the building a sense of its energy and buzz, Huyberechts said.

Other green features include sophisticated lighting controlled by sensors to switch on only when someone enters a room.

A wooden deck on the fourth floor competes for the best views in Rosebank.

"Green is not just about energy. The people inside also play a role. It is about the quality of air inside," Huyberechts said.

He added that the air-conditioning system used superior

technology that flushed in fresh instead of recycled air.

"It takes the air from outside for the building rather than pooling that which is recycled. It gives you a sense of being outside."

Outside, more than 400 indigenous trees as well as flower gardens, grass and a linear water feature with granite rocks recycled from a quarry create a leafy boulevard.

Roriston said the concept was to create an open public space to match the suburb. The garden will be irrigated by a system using harvested rainwater.

One will not find waste-paper baskets under the desks because the staff will be encouraged to use designated recycling bins.

The bank is aware of the burden of the extra traffic brought into the suburb and hopes to get some of its staff to use the Gautrain or brave Oxford Road on their bicycles.

SA's top 10 eco buildings

THE Green Building Council of South Africa, established in 2007, rates commercial properties in categories that include the quality of the indoor environment, the use of energy and water and the construction materials. Buildings are certified at the design stage and again at completion. Green status has been awarded to 32 buildings in South Africa. Ratings range from four stars for "best practice" to six stars for "world leadership".

South Africa's top 10 green buildings are:

- Vodafone Site Solution Innovation Centre in Midrand, six stars at the design stage;
- The Department of Environmental Affairs head office in Pretoria, six stars at the design stage;
- No 1 Silo at the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town, six stars at the design stage;
- Upper Grayston office park in Sandton, five stars on completion;
- Millennia Park in

Stellenbosch, five stars at the design stage;

- Absa Towers in the Johannesburg CBD, five stars on completion;
- The Sisonke district office in Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal, five stars at the design stage;
- The Nedbank Falcon building in Menlyn Maine, Pretoria, five stars on completion;
- The Aurecon Century City building in Cape Town, five stars for its design; and
- Standard Bank in Rosebank, Joburg, five stars for design.