

2023 the year for property businesses to take charge of their impact

By [Ulana van Biljon](#)

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For property businesses to grow, our economy must grow. There is still a long way to go and many challenges to face in achieving a thriving society and a more sustainable future.

The commercial property sector impacts the lives of every South African – it is the malls we shop in, the offices we work in, and the factories and warehouses that create and carry the goods we use daily.

When you consider that the global real estate sector is estimated to generate about 40% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions, a lot can be done better. A big change is needed.

Property companies have the potential for big impact. But just thinking about how much needs to be done worldwide is overwhelming. It can be difficult to know where to begin, however our property sector often leads the way and is an enabler of other sectors.

Role of leadership

This observation by Simon Sinek is a great starting point: “Leadership is not about being in charge. Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge.” Property companies are increasingly embodying this sentiment. Last year, we saw more focus on introducing initiatives with tangible impacts into property businesses' daily operations and decision-making.

And many small impacts ultimately add up to a big impact.

If 2022 is anything to go by, in the year ahead, we expect to see even more property sector players sharing in and contributing toward better impacts on the world around us.

For those wanting to join the drive for genuine impact, here are “five Cs” to help make a difference:

Concentration

To find a solution, you first need to pay attention, acknowledge the problem and understand the challenges. Listening and empathising are the keys to positive impact.

Commitment

Change isn't easy. Making a difference requires committing to a clear purpose. Setting specific goals ensures that you make good progress towards them. More property companies are setting ambitious targets to operate in a more resource-efficient way.

Contribution



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Share your knowledge and skills. Give your time and resources. Become a mentor. Nurture your business relationships. Help others; it lifts them up and gives us a sense of fulfilment, connectedness and meaning.



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Collaboration

An exciting trend is the move towards more partnerships and collaborations to find impactful solutions, whether for sustainable energy or job creation. We achieve more by working together with others to share the responsibility of contributing to a more sustainable future. Get involved – in your industry, community, peer groups and innovation. Shared action for a shared purpose creates shared value.

Cheerleading

Acknowledge others' ideas and vision for a better way of doing things, and inspire them into action.

For South Africa to remain resilient in 2023, property industry leadership is becoming more focused than ever on building robust relationships with communities, partners, peers, and the environment.

ABOUT ULANA VAN BILJON

Ulana van Biljon is chief operating officer of Emira Property Fund. She has over 27 years of experience in the property industry, specifically in retail, property and asset management in both private and listed environments. Van Biljon is responsible for the asset and operations management of Emira's property portfolio. She won the Standard Bank Top Woman Awards in the property category in 2019.

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