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8 September 2015

### **Africa's revolutionary new Isabelo Smart Bench typifies core philosophies of urban redevelopment**

Johannesburg's leading inner city regeneration developers have welcomed today's launch of Africa's revolutionary new Isabelo Smart Bench as epitomising many of the core philosophies of urban redevelopment.

A first for the continent, the bench launched at The Grove Square in Braamfontein, is designed as a stand alone entirely solar powered, free Wi-Fi hotspot, complete with USB charging points and easy seating, that can help attract and bring life back into public spaces.

The innovative bench is already proving a popular meeting place as users can simply sit down, connect to the "Isabelo free Wi-Fi" network with their smart phones and get connected. Those carrying their own USB cables can also charge up their phone batteries while enjoying the free service.

Instantly recognisable by its iconic Wi-Fi graphics, the space age concrete bench houses super hi-tech solar and Wi-Fi technology that also supports leading software for running location specific digital market research.

Said Mr Ndumiso Davidson, CEO, of South Point the largest property developers in student housing outside universities: "We are excited to be partnering with the team from Isabelo, as its Smart Bench concept dovetails with our strategy to rebuild Braamfontein as an inclusive, multi-dimensional and student-friendly live-work-play destination district.

"The Isabelo Smart Bench also ticks a lot of the urban redevelopment boxes that drives South Point. These include mixing technology, education, connectivity, innovation and social interaction – all packaged in a compact, sexy design."

Davidson said the Bench's location on The Grove Square was also perfect, as the company had originally conceptualised the piazza as a modern "village square" for the district.

"The bench adds an extra 'dwell' dimension to the site and entrenches Braamfontein as South Africa's innovation hub where daring concepts and brands come to get life and inspiration."

A prototype of the smart bench was launched earlier this year in the famed Maboneng Precinct, which is also well known as a playground for urban innovation in the inner city.

Jonathan Liebmann, founder and CEO of Propertuity, the company behind the development of Maboneng Precinct, said the Isabelo Smart Bench epitomised the core philosophies of Maboneng in terms of "activation of the street, innovation and accessibility for all".

'It was a great addition to our growing neighbourhood and has been a well used tool for both locals and visitors, ' said Liebmann.

Propertuity's marketing department were the first to use the bench as a tool for collating valuable location specific market research to assist with making better decisions for further development in the area.

Danielle Bolton, head of Marketing at Propertuity, said the bench offered a great opportunity for Maboneng to harness foot traffic in and out of the city, especially when trying to obtain a good cross section of South Africa's diverse population.

"Depending on where the bench is placed it is possible to hone in on specific demographics in a unique and affordable way that can encourage positive brand engagement," said Bolton.

Louise Meek, the founding director of the Isabelo Smart Bench said the bench was designed with the intention of public spaces and providing 100% public access to the Internet.

"In this way Isabelo aims to reduce the digital divide in African cities and create inclusive, vibrant public spaces where everyone feels welcome to sit down and get connected.

Meek said South Africa has 23 million smartphone users, equating to a population penetration of over 47%. After Nigeria and India, South Africa ranks third, in terms of the mobile percentage of total Internet traffic, which is currently at 57%.

“This means more people browse the web off their mobile phones than off PC’s or tablets. As such, this ranks South Africa higher than many other developing countries on the mobile traffic scale.

“This could explain why Isabelo seems to have a magnetic effect on users who flock to the bench daily to enjoy the free services,” said Meek.

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**For more information please contact**

Louise Meek

[m] +27 828411647

[e] info@isabelo.co

[w] www.isabelo.co

