



## CEO Year End Message

### Looking Back, Moving Forward: A Message from Neil Gopal

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, I find myself reflecting on what an extraordinary journey 2024 has been for SAPOA and the broader property sector in South Africa. This year was not just about numbers, policies, or property assets; it was about people—young professionals finding their footing, communities transforming, and a collective vision for a better future taking shape. Every step we've taken has been a testament to the resilience, innovation, and commitment of our members and partners.

### Advocacy

SAPOA continues to take great strides in ensuring that its members are continually kept informed of all relevant property legislation, practices and changing trends in the commercial property industry. It is a feat that we are committed to improve to ensure international best practice.

We are unrelenting in our pursuit to ensure that we participate in and/or contribute to the enactment of laws that directly or indirectly impact on the property industry and that, while such laws may be in place, we remain vigilant and act appropriately and decisively where there is contravention of such or of the spirit and intent of the Constitution. This ensures protection of the interests of our members.

The SAPOA Legal Committee is instrumental in helping achieve critical advocacy successes and giving a voice to the commercial property industry.

### Building Stronger Communities Together

The underperformance of the City of Johannesburg and many other cities in SA poses significant risks to businesses and the economy as a whole. The infrastructure in some parts of Johannesburg is in a state of disrepair, and visible with respect to malfunctioning traffic lights, deteriorating water infrastructure, water supply challenges, potholes, inadequate electricity distribution infrastructure, high crime rates, hijacked buildings, etc

The consequences are evident in that these challenges increase the cost of doing business but also impact negatively on the value of property.

#### **SOUTH AFRICAN PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION NPC t/a SAPOA – REG NO 1966/008959/08**

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If the trajectory continues then potential investments will be lower, and those businesses already based within the city will continue to face disruptions that increase operational costs and further the flight of capital to other centres (local and offshore).

We have been engaging with the likes of BUSA, BASA, the Mayors Office, the MJCCI, the Midrand Developers Forum, OUTA, JPOMA etc to explore how business interventions can be effectively coordinated and scaled up to achieve maximum impact.

This year, we intensified efforts to foster sustainable development through research and collaboration. Our precinct management initiatives have already shown how improved infrastructure and governance can revitalize neighbourhoods, attracting investment and, more importantly, hope. For instance, Cape Town's central business district now boasts a property value of R43 billion, a testament to the power of strategic management. This growth isn't just about financial metrics; it's about creating vibrant, thriving communities where people want to live, work, and invest.

Precinct management is more than a strategy; it's a commitment to excellence. We have seen how focusing on infrastructure, security, and service delivery can transform a city's prospects. It's about ensuring that urban spaces are not just functional but also aspirational. These successes serve as blueprints for other regions and reaffirm our belief in the power of well-managed, inclusive urban development.

### **A Commitment to the Next Generation**

One of the most rewarding parts of my role is witnessing the spark of potential in future leaders. Through SAPOA's Property Development Programme (PDP) and bursary fund initiatives, we have seen incredible talent emerge. This year, the PDP welcomed its most diverse group yet, with a record number of women graduates. Watching them grow and bring fresh perspectives to our industry reminds me why we do what we do. These graduates are not just entering the workforce; they're entering it equipped with the knowledge, confidence, and drive to redefine the future of our sector.

Our internship programme, which saw over 80% of participants secure permanent roles, isn't just about filling positions—it's about creating opportunities for young South Africans who may not have had a foot in the door otherwise. Seeing their passion and determination is both humbling and inspiring. These young professionals represent the future of our industry, and their success stories underscore the importance of investing in



education and professional development. They are proof that with the right support, talent flourishes, and potential turns into tangible success.

### **Empowering Through Education**

Beyond internships and PDP initiatives, SAPOA's bursary programmes continued to support deserving students across the country. This year alone, we funded the education of over 100 students in property-related fields. Many of these students come from underserved communities and are the first in their families to attend university. Their stories are testaments to resilience, and their achievements remind us that education remains the most powerful tool for transformation.

To further bolster our educational efforts, we expanded our partnerships with leading universities and technical institutions, ensuring that our programs remain relevant and forward-thinking. These collaborations have not only enriched our curriculum but have also fostered a sense of community and shared purpose among educators, students, and industry leaders.

### **Collaboration Makes the Difference**

None of this happens in isolation. Our partnerships—with industry leaders, educational institutions, and other organizations, have proven that real change requires collective effort. This year, we tackled tough conversations around land reform, urban development, and economic inclusion. Progress is never easy, but it's always worth it when we see tangible improvements in our cities and lives touched by our work. Collaboration is not just a strategy; it's a core value that drives everything we do. We know that the challenges we face are complex, and no single organization or individual can solve them alone. By working together, sharing knowledge, and leveraging our collective strengths, we can achieve so much more.

The SAPOA Annual Convention served as a powerful reminder of this. It brought together industry leaders, academics, and policymakers to address critical issues such as governance, climate resilience, and economic growth. Together, we explored the rising costs of insurance due to climate change and underscored the need for innovative solutions. These discussions were not just theoretical; they were grounded in real-world challenges and aimed at finding practical, actionable solutions. The spirit of collaboration



and the exchange of ideas that characterized the convention is something we must carry forward.

### **A Future We Build Together**

As I look ahead, I see more than challenges—I see potential. Our new President, Itumeleng Mothibeli, has a vision for an industry that doesn't just shape skylines but shapes the future of our country. His call to invest in education, innovation, and inclusivity is one we must all answer. Itumeleng's vision is one of growth and transformation. He understands that true progress is measured not just by economic indicators but by the impact we have on people's lives. His leadership will undoubtedly take SAPOA to new heights, and I am excited to see where his vision takes us.

To our members, partners, and the entire SAPOA family—thank you. Your dedication and belief in our shared mission fuel everything we do. Every success we've achieved this year is a testament to your hard work and commitment. Together, we have laid the foundation for a stronger, more inclusive property sector, and I am confident that the best is yet to come.

Let's carry this momentum forward and continue building not just structures, but a stronger, more inclusive South Africa. Here's to a 2025 filled with new opportunities and even greater achievements.