

Success stories - EMA Architects

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– **Anthony Erb**, *EMA Architects*

Sectional title, cluster homes for contemporary modern living aimed at the upmarket middle-income group; priced at R1.3million per unit. Each unit is open plan, yet secure with upstairs and downstairs, and a choice of a number of bedrooms and bathrooms. Placed on 1.1 hectares, unit sizes average around 116 sqm, with a 36sqm garage with their own garden.

Project: Highbury Bryanston

Why Revit?

Partners Bill Morris and Anthony Erb are an unusual blend of old-school methods and new blood in the architectural field. Focussing their talents on residential developments, this team completed a total of 450 units in 2004 and are set for the same capacity in 2005. Previously using Autodesk R14 they moved to Revit following a suggestion from a colleague who had experienced a Revit demonstration by Cadplan.

"My first reaction when I saw Revit for myself was 'wow'," says Anthony. "After years of not upgrading our software, we decided for the first time it was worth making the technical leap onto a software product that could really made a difference to the way we worked.

"While Bill has 42 years experience in the field, I am a young architect when it comes to the assembly of buildings. Revit forces me to address those issues early on and provides a huge injection of talent from my side when it comes to structuring a building at that level - Revit teaches you what is expandable and what isn't."

Anthony is currently running two development projects simultaneously on Revit, which both feature A, B and C style mirrored units.

"With my first project on Revit I managed to get used to thinking from a Revit perspective and got my working drawings out to Council within two weeks - this gave me huge confidence in the software itself as I was doing both the design drawings and the schedules. The next project took me two days - a huge jump in pace. Any new software is scary at first, if you don't know how to structure your time but the leaps it has enabled me to make have been amazing.

"I believe Revit is the way buildings are going to be documented from now on. The schedules are structured, we are able to give more information to the developer earlier on in the project, there is more control on costings and the assurances provide added security to the developer. There is also no redrawing; Revit is literally modelling it as you design. Revit also prods you to make construction decisions early on.

"When I start a project now I have that creative, excited energy and amazingly at the end of the design process it has manifested into full construction drawings. That is the beauty of working in an updated model. The beginning is intensive but the entire project roles out as one entity."

Revit Implementation

"Often when you are faced with deadlines, all you can think about is having to produce something for the client and the last thing you want to tackle is unfamiliar software.

Fortunately for me, I simply took the decision that it was what needed to happen now, there was never going to be a good time. I put myself in a bubble and I immersed myself in implementing Revit.

"It took me 6 weeks to gain confidence in setting up drawings. I am now at the other end of the scale: I find AutoCAD very frustrating to work with. It is just not the type of intelligence I now need, and it is a huge waste of time. Revit is a very neat and structured package: it

aligns text with designs, it formats a structure to documents and any changes are updated automatically. No more scouring through drawings which for me it means there are no blind spots which are going to catch me by surprise further down the line.

"I most enjoy the usefulness of being able to work in two screens as I am modelling a building. I am really seeing how the building is being assembled at every level. It is most rewarding to literally see how your building is being built in the electronic version. Efficiencies gained have been time and neatness. There are a lot of design conventions which have been built into the software, so while you are modelling the rigour of how you are drawing is conveying the information into the model. Revit does this quickly and ties it altogether with phenomenal accuracy."

Anthony had the required hardware and so there was no need to upgrade his equipment.

The way forward

"We are incredibly busy at the moment," says Anthony, "and Revit is impacting on our quality output with the amount of information and formatting required for drawings. Revit ties it altogether and gives me the confidence and peace of mind - and speed - which is so essential. With Revit we have more time, which means we can take on more work. It is a choice we made, either to invest in technology or more human resources. I chose technology. Making the leap to Revit was the best thing we ever did. More is done with less.

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"In the past we would get a brief from a client, we then had to produce, pre-empt and create the client's concept, which he had in his head, but had no language with which to express it. Ultimately you would end up trying endless options out.

"When you are designing with Revit you are using a 3D tool to show your ideas. When a

client sees a 3D design at the design resolution stage they engage far more easily.

"Revit's quality of the drawings speaks volumes - there is so much more information and fine tuning allowed in the architectural process itself. If you want a section, you draw a line and there it is. All information is contained in the model and readily available at the click of a button. This means you are passing on more information to the contractor, and there are less queries and insecurities on site.

"Revit is the next generation of CAD - it would be a mistake not to move onto it. It is going to reinvigorate the architectural industry by gathering creators around a powerful architectural software tool that puts direction back in architect's hands - you are now modelling both time and information.

"I believe Revit is an incredibly well-priced product when I look at the value and efficiency it has brought to my business."

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