

Honourable Minister, Distinguished Guests, Members of the Press, the Trinidad & Tobago Institute of Architects welcomes and supports the launch of 'Trinidad & Tobago Building Source Ltd.'

This initiative is a welcome contribution to the construction sector, building as it does on the model first established some 15 years ago by the TTIA via the TTIA Diary & Sourcebook which evolved over the years to become the 'go to' resource for Architects. In fact we were in the process of transforming our TTIA Sourcebook into an interactive website, when we became aware of this initiative and have since put our support behind it.

By using the latest information and communications technology, Trinidad & Tobago Building Sources will provide data on available products and services for design professionals, clients and the general public. It will also function as a showcase for our manufacturers and suppliers to launch new building systems and products, which can be accessed by markets in Trinidad & Tobago, Caricom and beyond.

The design and construction of the built environment requires the close collaboration of architects and designers with suppliers and specialist sub-contractors. The resource provided by Trinidad & Tobago Building Source will reinforce and develop these relationships further. In addition, from 2014 onwards all TTIA members are required to participate in an approved programme for Continuing Professional Development. This includes furthering our knowledge of new building products and technologies, so this comes at a particularly suitable moment for our profession.

Trinidad & Tobago Building Source should assist the effective and efficient collaboration between architects and suppliers by providing a substantial and interactive database on the performance, appearance cost and availability of both well-established and innovative, new materials, products and components - all backed up with 'local know how' and experience of how these products have performed over time in our environment.

The delivery or procurement of buildings – and by that I mean their design, construction and management - has changed dramatically in the past 30 years in the following ways:

Timelines have shrunk substantially;

Applied Technology has grown exponentially;

Buildings or components of buildings have become much more sophisticated;

Public Sector Clients and Private Developers demand record time delivery and tightly controlled costs;

Users require spaces offering high performance, flexibility, comfort, and security;

The Built Environment is expected to comply with internationally recognised Building Codes to ensure public health and safety, universal access and sustainability;

CT and CAD technology being actively employed building components;

Innovations such as BIM (building information modelling) and techniques of environmental modelling and performance are transforming the process of design and its potential.

Procurement of building projects thus requires considerable knowledge, intelligence, co-ordination, integrated planning and careful thought.

We as architects are trained to direct these processes and we depend upon the knowledge and expertise of suppliers, not only in the provision of products and services but also for taking responsibility in the form of providing the necessary warranties, guarantees and back up for the application and employment of the products and services they provide.

In Trinidad & Tobago, thoughtful building solutions are very often compromised by compressed timelines for design and inadequate briefs, the results of which can be seen all around us. Despite pressures to provide 'immediate' responses, It is critical that sufficient design time is allowed to ensure practical, effective and responsive design solutions which offer value for money, which enhance our experience of living and which provide effective and safe working environments – all key to a sustainable future.

We need to ensure that the significant human, material and financial resources that are required to construct buildings are used to maximum effect.

In order for us to build up our capacity nationally, all stakeholders need to work closely together to ensure that we develop appropriate building solutions for our climate, lifestyle and labour force. Buildings are expected to perform for more than 50 years and create the environment in which we work, travel, live and play.

The construction industry accounts for very significant percentage of our economic activity and the health of this industry is an essential component of our continuing national development and drive for diversification. Architects play a significant and leading role in shaping the environment and in the development of the construction industry.

For initiatives like TTBS to fulfil their potential, the sector, which it serves, must be active. Our government has a critical role in setting the context in which this happens.

We would like to take this opportunity to highlight four action items, which would have a positive effect on the industry:

1. Enactment of fair, transparent Procurement Policy & Legislation for all areas of public expenditure, including an independent and well-resourced oversight function;

2. Ensuring Acts as they relate to Architects, Engineers, and Surveyors & Planners are properly enforced to protect the public interest;
3. Forward thinking and progressive Planning Policies – and here we must congratulate the Honourable Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development for the work done under his tenure to develop the National Spatial Development Strategy and the Planning and Facilitation of Development Bill;
4. Adoption of appropriate internationally recognised Building Codes with accompanying legislation, so that these can be enforced.

It is the national interest to have a well-designed and sustainable built environment, which offers a healthy environment for all of our citizens.

The TTIA applauds Trinidad & Tobago Building Source's exciting and welcome venture and we look forward to your continued success in the years to come.

Thank you.

Jenifer Smith
President Trinidad & Tobago Institute of Architects
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