

Live Easy pioneers SA's next-generation 'impact housing' trend

City Press

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TRENDING

To date, there have only been a handful of times when an event so big happens that it changes the entire fabric of society.

The Covid-19 pandemic is one of those events that calls for a change and creates new ways of living. While so much was lost, the pandemic pushed innovative thought in improving ways of life and making things more accessible.

When the president called for a stay-at-home order, many were forced to work from home.

In South Africa, nearly 13% of the population lives in informal dwellings. These include back yard shacks, shacks in informal settlements or homes that are constructed from things such as corrugated iron, wood and nondurable materials.

For many, this made the reality of working comfortably from home inaccessible. That is, until now, as Live Easy pioneers the next generation of impact housing that is creating the opportunity for young people to make the most out of our new reality.

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Live Easy recognised the need for young, upwardly mobile citizens to have access to safe, affordable, inclusionary formal housing within high-demand urban areas, and has been seeking to change lives for nearly a decade.

Impact housing continues to grow and morph into a new way of life that many are considering. The trend of informal renting continues to prevail through Live Easy, in which cash-strapped young South Africans are able to rent a bed in a shared room or small flat in the absence of any other dignified, cost-effective accommodation.

Progressive in its approach, Live Easy also identified the opportunity presented by this housing model to radically empower and uplift first-time formal renters.

Co-founder Jeffrey Froom explained, “We develop and manage affordable residential accommodation. We have become a household brand for people looking to start out and rent on their own, or the person out there looking to save money on rent without compromising security and lifestyle. It’s so exciting and rewarding when you can clearly see what needs to be done and then go out and actually build it.

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“Back in 2014, a typical two-bedroom flat was divided into small bedrooms with a curtain as the divider. A person would be staying behind the curtain, another one in the lounge, and a third and fourth person in the other bedroom. All sharing a common bathroom and kitchen. Each person a self-sufficient, working class man or lady paying rent, but not enough rent to live on their own.

“We developed a unit that would be affordable, small and self-contained, so the person staying behind the curtain could now live on their own, with dignity and pride. Once they move in, they have instantly moved up.”

For the young working class, trying to branch out on their own and create a sustainable life, starting out can have its own set of difficulties, but when we consider the social inequalities through means such as black tax, the Live Easy structure becomes all the more important. Live Easy continues to bridge the gap and prioritise those who need an extra push in climbing the economic ladder.

“We want to show young people out there that you do not have to be at the top of the income-earning pyramid to live in a unit that offers all the luxuries and amenities.

Live Easy is the place where it all starts; we give you a taste of what it means to start off on your own, in an affordable nano-unit with co-working and living space that is needed to succeed and push forward. We want young tenants to feel proud of staying in Live Easy,” said Froom.

While their units are still exclusively found in Johannesburg and Pretoria, they are expanding at a rapid rate, showing the true success of their initiative. With spaces that offer board rooms, break-away rooms and even, in some, small lounges for tenants to wind down in the comfort of their building, Live Easy is adapting quite beautifully to a life that works hand in hand with the reality the pandemic has brought on.

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“We are always talking and debating among ourselves to take the concept of a Live Easy nano-unit, with all its affordability and amenities, and spread it across South Africa. We are always developing and creating new styles and trends, and cultivating new ideas.

Our latest developments now have 24-hour work spaces, break-away rooms and boardrooms. All common areas have superfast, free Wi-Fi, and we have introduced small lounges in which tenants can sit and relax while on their laptops or phones. We realise these young professionals now need a place to work from home, and so we even have back-up power and solar systems to ensure every young professional can work proficiently.”

Their latest development takes place in the heart of Johannesburg. Marshalltown is an area buzzing with creative energy and young people – this makes it the perfect place for a nano-living set up.

Live Easy has gone on record stating that it is one of their biggest developments to date, hosting more than 500 nano-units.

Froom closes by saying, “We are counting down the days. It will have a rooftop garden on the 20th floor, which will allow tenants to see the beautiful city and highway views. It will also have a gym, a coffee bar and a beauty parlour. It will be the most affordable one-bed lifestyle unit ever. I am excited because we are making the lives of young professionals easier, especially in a country like South Africa, where it is needed.