

# Builders

*Magazine*

Feature

**Serene  
Park**

October-November 2021

# S&P SYLDON & PARTNERS

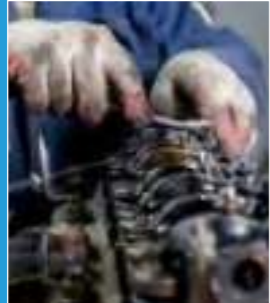
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Syldon and Partners is a wholly Kenya owned limited liability firm established in May, 2000 in Kenya to undertake consultancy services in design, installation and maintenance of Electrical, Mechanical Services and Management Information Systems (MIS), Civil and Structural works.

There are two directors, Eng. G.N. Olando – Managing Director in charge of all Electrical Services and general management of the firm. Eng. Calleb Olali is Director in-charge of mechanical services. Other core staff members include Assistant Electrical Engineer John Ruddy Munda and Assistant Mechanical Engineer Felix Ollando.

Eng. H.S Roopra, Eng. Peter Chege are associates of the firm and backstops Eng. Olando and Eng. Olali in all electrical and mechanical assignments respectively. Eng. Victor Ongewa and Eng. Cyrus Njungu are associates in-charge of power sub-stations and transmission/distribution lines respectively.



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# TWIN FALLS CITY



Twinfalls city; not just a name but an iconic and symbolic of the two natural ridges formed by the seasonal water way cutting across the estate and hence the name. Twinfalls City is located along Kangundo road at Malaa Shopping Centre. It is a very prime location since it touches Kangundo Road (B63: KENHA). Construction works are being undertaken by Mintvilla Housing, a Kenyan-based developer of integrated lifestyle communities offering exceptional value to aspiring home owners. The company has established itself at the forefront of residential property

development in Nairobi, through the runaway success of its flagship project, Savannah Estate.

This property is being developed in a 20 acre mixed use development that comprise of modern contemporary designed residential bungalows, mansionettes, a shopping complex, petrol station and a recreation area. This thus is intended to be a multipurpose and self-sufficient kind of development thanks to the vast piece of land and a strategic prime location fit for the luxurious residential units.



Architectural design



Almost complete unit



Three bedroom bungalow. Show house – front entrance.

Construction of the first 18 units is at an advanced stage, the electrified perimeter fence as well as the road works and other supporting infrastructure which includes and not limited to:

- \* Electrified Perimeter fence currently

- \* Commercial area
- \* Recreational area
- \* Borehole water



Ongoing construction works on the ground.

The project is projected to be completed and hand over of these homes done by the 3rd Quarter of 2021. Upon completion, the Twinfalls city will be a blend of homes with distinct profiles as per the owners preference as depicted below.

1. Bungalows ( 3 Bedroom Bungalows Master Ensuite)– 5.9M

- 3 Bedroom with flat roof
- Own compound with garden
- e and dini

- Open plan kitchen with pantry
- Cabro paved roads and parking
- Entry porch
- Spacious kitchen yard
- In-built wardrobes
- Customizable interiors
- Bore-hole
- Recreational area
- Perimeter wall with electric fence

chosen two routes. One is the off-plan



Ready units

2. Mansionettes (3 Bedroom Mansionettes with Servant Quarter)– 7.35M

- \* 3 Bedroom with flat roof
- \* Master Ensuite with large balcony
- \* Cloak room
- \* Own compound with garden
- \* Lounge and dining area
- \* Open plan kitchen with pantry
- \* Cabro paved roads and parking
- \* Entry porch
- \* Spacious kitchen yard
- \* In-built wardrobes
- \* Customizable interiors
- \* Bore-hole
- \* Recreational area
- \* Attached SQ
- \* Perimeter wall with electric fence

3. Bungalows ( 3 Bedroom Bungalows Master Ensuite with Servant Quarter)– 6.25M

- ✓ 3 Bedroom with flat roof
- ✓ Own compound with garden
- ✓ Lounge and dining area
- ✓ Open plan kitchen with pantry
- ✓ Cabro paved roads and parking
- ✓ Entry porch
- ✓ Spacious kitchen yard
- ✓ In-built wardrobes
- ✓ Customizable interiors
- ✓ Bore-hole
- ✓ Recreational area
- ✓ Perimeter wall with electric fence

# Builders' Magazine

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### Contributions

The editors welcome news items, press releases, articles and photographs relating to the Construction Industry. These will be considered and, if accepted, published. No responsibility will be accepted should contributions be lost, damaged or incorrectly printed.

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- ↗ Recreational area
- ↗ Commercial area
- ↗ Ready title deeds



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From Mintvilla Housing CEOs desk, John Muchiri, "One of the biggest challenges and impediments facing Kenyans living in Kenya and the diaspora is identifying and acquiring quality and safe investments in the housing sector.

At Mintvilla Housing, we recognize these challenges and we have made it our mission to make the process easy, transparent and accessible for Kenyans locally and in the diaspora to own homes in their motherland; to ensure this, we have come up innovative financing options.


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process of acquiring property legally, the available options and most viable Investments in the Kenyan Housing Market. It is now possible for you to follow the right path in making homeownership a reality, courtesy of Mintvilla Housing as your trusted guide.

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# Kenya's Construction Sector Expected to Recover This Year

Nairobi — Kenya's construction sector is expected to recover this year on the back of the government's continued implementation of investor-friendly reforms as well as large-scale infrastructure projects aimed at boosting regional integration and economic diversification.

This is according to a report by Deloitte which reveals that the sector's growth is expected to ramp up to a growth of 6.3 percent this year.

The sector contributed about 6 percent to Kenya's GDP and supported more than 221,000 jobs annually in both the public and private sector on average over the past five years.

During the period, the sector also experienced year-on-year growth of 7.8 percent on average but is estimated to have slowed down to 1.3 percent real growth in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged through the sector's activity.

According to the report, the residential and commercial construction sub-sectors were most affected while public infrastructure construction sub-sector strived to maintain growth momentum, supported by public spending.

Key impediments witnessed in 2020 included supply bottlenecks, reduction in labour and constraints on financing.

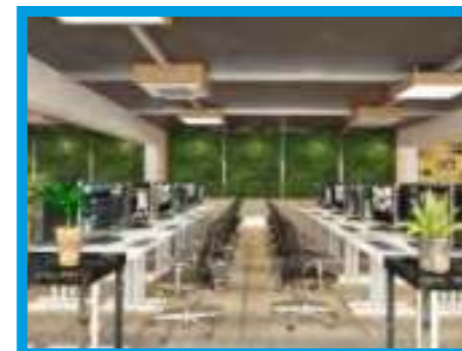
"Residential and commercial construction were the hardest hit sub-sectors in 2020 with the latter being worse. This is brought to perspective by the decline in value of non-residential building plans approved by the Nairobi City County by about 90 percent on average in 2020. On the other hand, the value of residential building plans approved by the Nairobi City County declined by 75.8 percent on average," the report states.

## Road to recovery

"2021 brings with it new hope of recovery in the sector as the Kenyan government continues to remain committed in implementing investor-friendly reforms and driving large-scale infrastructure projects aimed at boosting regional integration and economic diversification," the report states.

It however warns that efforts to reign in expenditure, as well as growing scrutiny of the financial sustainability of Chinese-funded infrastructure projects by (largely by the Kenyan Government) and Chinese lenders to curb Chinese infrastructure will weigh on the construction industry's medium-term recovery.

Additionally, the need for fiscal consolidation given high levels of debt is expected to constrain public infrastructure investment in the medium term and slow down the construction industry's growth.



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# How Symbion Conquered the Coastal Landscape



## **Naurus Beach Apartments**

Few architectural firms in Kenya have managed to build a strong brand like the Symbion Consulting Group (SCG). Boasting a rich history spanning four decades, Symbion's footprint is evident in some of the most iconic projects not only in Kenya but across eastern, central, and southern Africa.

For Titus Kipsang, who recently took over as Symbion Group Chairman, the success of the firm is largely enshrined in the principles of its founders. To the founders, among them renowned architect Jon Cavanagh, the practice was always bigger than individuals. In fact, when many firms rotate around a few partners, Symbion shuns the personality-driven models and espouses the ability to deliver outstanding projects and services. "For us, the practice is bigger than any of us," says Kipsang, adding that a clear philosophy to grow talent and award hard work has catapulted Symbion to among the top architectural firms in Kenya.

Operating under the SCG, the practice has different units that operate autonomously from a management perspective but consolidated under SCG board. Each of the units has its own management although overall leadership is provided by the Directors. "We have a group board where I am the chairman. We congregate as a group of directors and shareholders under SCG to do the overall review of the business," explains Kipsang.



## **Likoni Mall, one of the projects by Symbion's Mombasa office**

Until this year, Kipang was the founding managing director of Symbion Mombasa, the unit that he was responsible for establishing in 2005 before it grew to be an independent company in 2010. For Symbion, the desire to have a presence in Mombasa had always been overwhelming owing to the nature of the coastal clients and the fact that addressing the needs of the Mombasa market from Nairobi was somehow difficult. For this reason, the firm wanted to replicate its success in offering services cutting across architecture, project management, interior design and master planning and urban planning in the coastal region.

"Before we set up in 2005, coastal clients perceived Symbion as remotely removed as a partner," explains Kipsang. He adds that in Mombasa the market is structured in a manner that close relations, like being friends, largely dictate the aspect of trust which in effect translates to getting jobs. "This emanates from the Arab way of doing business that is largely driven by personal relations," he notes.

Symbion's entry in Mombasa, which was through the acquisition of an existing practice, was a game changer. At the time, the firm's turnover was nothing to write home about and the ambition was to grow the practice and conquer the entire coastal strip comprising Mombasa, Malindi, Lamu and even parts of Tanzania. For this to happen, the practice needed to reflect the coastal ambience even

internally, with the current Managing Director Abdunnassir Mohamed, hailing from the Coast.

Effectively, the Mombasa practice became an autonomous limited company in 2010 with the mandate to service the region. Though Symbion ventured into a region with established practices, some of which were owned by people from the region, it went there with a penetrative strategy. This was anchored on bringing a new, nay international, mindset to the architectural space away from what the region was not getting. The second component of the strategy was offering an international service at local pricing to make it affordable. The third component, which was critical, was the opportunity to enrich the architecture. Clients in Mombasa were not getting real value because most of the firms were a one-man practice and lacked a team of professionals to input ideas into a project in order to make it world class.



## **Whitesands Hotel auditorium by Symbion Mombasa**

"Symbion established a studio design approach to project designs. A team of experienced professionals were always available to thoroughly review projects in order to make them stand out," says Kipsang. He adds that the resource base, with experience spanning 50 years of practice, offers clients the advantage of technical interrogation of projects thus ensuring that each product developed at Symbion Mombasa has been thoroughly reviewed, interrogated and developed.

By all accounts, the decision to establish an independent practice in Mombasa was a masterstroke. Here was a region with vast

opportunities in sectors like hospitality, port-related business and trade, which was also closely linked to the port. "We saw the opportunities and our intentions were to service the market at a very close angle," avers Kipsang.

The hospitality industry, in particular, presented vast opportunities. Congregating under the auspices of 'sun and sand', the industry was witnessing significant growth owing to the fact that Kenya was grappling with a substantial deficit of bed nights, a challenge that had ripple effects on the tourism sector. Current estimates show Kenya has a deficit of 2,000 bed nights which translates to about 20 hotels. With the coastal region being the heartbeat of tourism, it thus meant that investors would want to put up the majority of the hotels in the region.

With a presence in Mombasa, coupled with years of experience and having built the necessary connections, it meant that Symbion was strategically placed to service clients in the region. Indeed, the firm boasts many projects with some of the recently completed including Sarova Whitesands refurbishments, Pride Inn Hotel refurbishments, Likoni Mall project that was completed in December 2020 during the thick of the Covid-19 pandemic, New Gen Plaza in Voi and Baobab Plaza in Kilifi completed in June 2021.





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Notably, Symbion Mombasa's footprints are not only in the hospitality industry. The firm has also undertaken several office blocks projects, residential apartments, was involved in the expansion of Bandari College that is owned by the Kenya Ports Authority and has also undertaken many other port-related projects.

### Baobab Plaza in Kilifi

Although Kipsang reckons that the projects that Symbion Mombasa has been involved in are all remarkable in their own rights, the refurbishing of

Whitesands and Pride Inn hotels were quite outstanding for the firm. "We are proud of all these projects. Each of them celebrates different strengths that we have within the Symbion brand," he notes. He adds the firm has undertaken modest jobs to huge projects worth as much as KSh4 billion.

For Symbion Mombasa, the underlying factor in a majority of the projects has been the need to blend modern and tradition exquisitely. This emanated from the fact that the East African coast has always had distinct architecture. "It is true that the East African coast has a very rich architectural heritage. This is because of the great mix of cultures and the unique climate," avers Kipsang. He adds that Symbion has been very keen in the preservation of the coastal heritage. This it does by consistently and intentionally utilizing all the elements on projects. "We borrow heavily from this rich heritage to create architecture that is environmentally sound," he explains, adding that even where modern architecture is desirable, the firm ensures that it borrows from motifs and design elements that help set these modern buildings in context with the locality. Apart from preserving the rich coastal heritage, Symbion has also been deliberate in conserving the ecosystem. While environmentalists and

conservationists have raised concerned that new projects are destroying the region's ecosystem, Symbion has taken the middle ground in ensuring that while environmental conservation is critical, solutions can be found to ensure that projects are not stopped.



### Nauru Beach Apartments

The fact that Symbion is well established in the coastal region means the firm is always the first call for clients. In effect, Symbion is well placed to take advantage of upcoming opportunities in the region. Some of these opportunities include the opening up of Lamu as a second port city, something that allows for acceleration of growth and demand of building infrastructure in the entire strip between Lamu and Mombasa. The firm also sees opportunities in Kilifi and specifically Vipingo which is an industrial and tourism destination. Moreover, the blue economy promises the greatest and most untapped opportunities for growth of both the country's economy and the building sector.

"The standard gauge railway, which some are currently viewing as a reason for the deterioration of the economy of Mombasa, sits with a great opportunity if the country can manage to generate return cargo that will replenish the clearing and forwarding as well as port related industry", reckons Titus. He adds that the special economic zones of Dongo Kundu and the others already earmarked in the 2030 economic blueprint have the potential to uplift the coastal economy.



Despite achieving phenomenal success, Symbion's operations in Mombasa have not been without challenges. Top on this has been sourcing and obtaining adequate skill sets to operate successfully and on a long-term basis. "Most of the talented, skilled staff are from up-country and who may not have a long-term intention of being at the coast," says Kipsang. The other challenges are related to the economy which continues to remain vulnerable to external factors like security, Covid-19 related instabilities and tourism related vagaries. Challenges notwithstanding, Symbion is determined to continue cementing its

leadership in the architectural sector at the coast. According to Titus, the firm is determined to become an unquestionable authority in design innovations and creative thinking making significant contributions to the economy of the region.



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# Resilience of a Steel Manufacturer Amid Pandemic



**Mr Avraj Bhachu, Director, Accurate Steel Mills Limited**

*As Covid-19 continues to ravage the country, we asked ACCURATE STEEL MILLS Director AVRAJ BHACHU to share his reflections on the pandemic.*

**Covid-19 hit Kenya in the first quarter of 2020. Please tell us the immediate effect on your operations following the initial restrictions.**

I think that pre-Covid, the Kenyan economy had grown quite well, and consistently so over the last decade. A larger demand has obviously meant an increase in competitors entering the market, but the last 12 months have been very challenging. We have seen a huge decline in demand during this challenging period, but we see this as temporary and expect the market to be resilient and bounce back.

**Did you make any staffing adjustments like other firms?**

As a commitment to our staff, Accurate Steel Mills ensured that we retained the majority of our staff and ensured that there were no salary deductions that were implemented during this entire period in a show of continued commitment to the people of our great country.

**Globally, there were massive disruptions in supply and demand including huge delays and high prices. How did these affect Accurate Steel Mills?**

Raw materials are commonly sourced from China, Japan, Turkey, India, Korea, South Africa and Egypt for our products. As steel is a cyclical market, one often finds that cyclicality also shows itself within freight rates and availability. In periods of market lows, freight rates are very competitive and there are many more players in the market.

However, as is currently the case, with a market high (or in today's scenario, an "extreme" high), material variability is hugely scarce as suppliers choose to supply themselves domestically first, leaving a shortfall for international supply. With greater demand, freight rates also increase as competition for vessel allocation presents a real challenge.

**The pandemic situation has not stabilized here in Kenya and even globally. In fact the new Delta variant poses a new challenge. Do you foresee difficulties in your industry in the days ahead?**



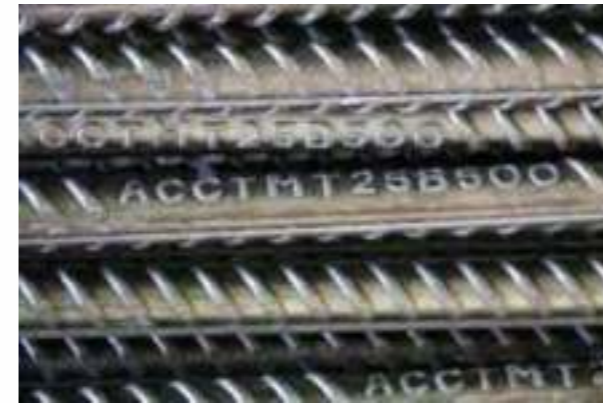
These images are an artist's impression



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Yes, the new variants pose a continued risk to the health of all Kenyans, and we encourage everyone to ensure they remain vigilant while we rise through this as a country. The industry continues to be faced with huge costs of materials, and we foresee this trend of high prices carrying on until the end of the year due to huge material shortages and fewer vessels travelling towards our borders. I think the difficulty facing the steel industry in the months ahead is not only the temporary challenges, but the longer-term shift of the market towards reducing carbon emissions and sustainable production. This means that our traditional long term supply partners are imposing export taxes and purchase of carbon credits is becoming ever more difficult. We may see this trend carrying on well into the next few years and even as manufacturers, it is always difficult to forecast exactly how large this long-term effect would be.



**Reinforced steel bars manufactured by Accurate Steel Mills**

**Many organizations appear to have adjusted to the turmoil caused by the virus. What kind of changes has your company made in order to sustain production and continue serving the market despite the uncertain environment?**

It has not been an easy challenge to sustain. We have had to arrange for additional credit facilities to cater for the higher cost of raw materials but are committed to be adequately stocked for the market, while at the same time ensuring that our quality is of the highest standard as we stay true to our brand strength and that of the entire Bhachu Group of

Companies.

Some private companies have been doing their part to help in the national effort to tame Covid-19. We understand you provide free medical grade oxygen. Please shed more light on this.

CSR is a very important factor for us. One of our most recent projects is a collaboration with the Nairobi Metropolitan Services L3 Hospital, which has been commissioned to provide healthcare to the residents of Kwa Reuben slum. This project is a major step in the right direction, and we have teamed up closely with NMS to work on the surrounding structure, walls and car park area development. All construction that we are providing is free, but more importantly, a continued gesture of our determination to help this community.

As you rightly mention, we also availed all of our external Oxygen capacity and have sent a direct communication to NMS to avail free refilling of Oxygen cylinders to all hospitals in the vicinity. We are KEBS approved and have all the additional purification devices to ensure the medical grade of the oxygen required is well maintained.



**Mild steel angles from the company**



# In need of Container Home or Business Premises? Containers Kenya are Experts



## A converted cargo container in transit. (Image: Containers Kenya)

There are countless numbers of empty, unused shipping containers around the world just sitting on shipping docks or yards, taking up valuable space. But in recent years, Kenyan entrepreneurs have found use for these containers in a big way. So much so that they now import the containers directly.

Around the country and even beyond, more and more people are turning to cargo containers for homes, offices and other business premises. Everywhere one looks, especially in urban and peri-urban areas, one is bound to see immaculately modified containers serving as offices, restaurants, stores, cold storage and all kinds of business premises. Some have even customized them to become homes. A newer concept is Airbnb conversions, which are becoming a hit with both domestic and foreign tourists.

In Kenya, there are several companies that design and customize containers to the client's desire. Containers Kenya is one of the biggest and most established companies in this sector. They consider themselves the market leaders in the container conversion industry not just in Kenya but Africa at large.

"We are specialists in container fabrication and conversion. We can convert a container into any design a client may present provided space will allow," states the company.

We asked BELLAH WANGA, the company's Director of Public Relations and Sales, to shed more light on her company and the container business in general.



## Bella Wanga, Director of Sales & Publicity, Containers Kenya

Why did you venture into the containers business?

The ever-increasing demand for affordable housing and storage units.

How do you go about designing homes and business spaces using containers? What are the steps when a potential client is interested? When you are trying to acquire a container house, these are some of the factors to consider:

### City County Permits

Similar to a traditional houses, there are specific permits that you have to acquire before you get

the container to your location. This depends on your locality's regulations, and the prices will vary significantly.

### Site preparation

If you are planning to install your shipping container home, you will need to check the nature of ground, if its terrain is rocky or muddy, you will have to spend some money to make the ground suitable for the container to be placed.

On bushy grounds, you will have to clear the bushes and make the ground leveled, thereafter either use pillars or do a slab.

### Delivery

Within Nairobi the 40ft container transportation will cost you between 25,000 to 30,000 while a 20ft 15,000 to 20,000. For longer distance it will cost you more depending on the accessibility and location.

### Stock availability

The majority of shipping containers are sourced from China, and when stock is limited, prices increase. The vice versa also applies, and that is why you ought to know the perfect time to procure. For instance, during the Covid-19 Pandemic, factories shut down for some months and this made the prices of containers to shoot up.

### Do you have in-house interior designers?

Yes we do.

### What are the sizes available for homes and businesses?

Containers currently available in the Kenya market come in two sizes, 20ft & 40ft:

20ft – Length 20ft, Width 8ft, Height 8.6ft

40ft:  
High Cube – Length 40ft, Width 8ft, Height 9.6ft  
Low Cube – Length 40ft, Width 8ft, Height 8.6ft

We have 40ft Length 8ft Width and 9.6 ft Height which we call the high cube and 40ft Height and 8ft Width which is referred to as the Low cube 8.6ft and 20ft standard.



## Finishing touches to a converted container (Image: Containers Kenya)

### What are the average prices of homes/office units?

20ft open plan between 570,000 to 600,000 while 40ft is 980,000 to 1Milion.

### What would you say are the main benefits of container homes/working spaces?

Here are reasons you should consider building a container home.

**Easy to use and to construct – containers are very easily modified.** You can attach multiple containers, build in doors and windows, and modify the interior and exterior all very easily. This is one of the

reasons so many people are building homes with containers. Because they can be stacked on top of each other and put together without much difficulty.

**Affordable.** As much as you will want to build a traditional house in future, you will still be saving money by using a shipping container. In this sense we take the stress from you and make it easier for you as you don't have to deal with fundis.

**Fast building time.** This is one of the greatest benefits of using shipping containers for your office or home. Building a house the traditional way can take up to more than a year. This is not the case with shipping containers which can be done in 21 days or even less. With shipping containers, the basic structure of the home is already in place so, there are much fewer building materials to be assembled.

Once the shipping containers are shipped to your location its plug and play (you start using or living inside the container). This makes the whole process easy. In other scenarios like if we are using only one container, it usually takes less than 21 days.

**Durable.** Shipping containers are designed to hold large amounts of cargo safely and securely. They also are built to be stacked on top of each other on cargo ships. Because of these factors, shipping containers are incredibly durable and strong. When using shipping containers to build a house, you can rest assured that your home will be able to withstand anything any harsh.

**Portability.** Shipping containers are easy to be shipped, easy to transport. Their unique size is specifically tailored to be carried by large trucks and transported regularly down roads and highways. This is a huge benefit when you are building your home as you can get them delivered easily.

**Container homes can easily be moved to a different location of one relocates.**

There are far more benefits to using shipping containers to build a home than mentioned here. With shipping containers, you can quickly, easily, and affordably build a unique and beautiful home using the design or the plan you have on that shipping container.

*Have you seen a growing uptake of the same?*

Yes especially offices, business stalls and homes.

**What are the challenges in this business?** It's capital intensive and there are also site constraints. Containers are largely found in the urban periphery; therefore sometimes, you deliver a container before you have seen the site but when you get there, the desired location of the container is inaccessible. Another challenge is the proliferation of brokers in the business.



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# The Residency



The Residency at Kirawa Road was exquisitely designed by celebrated architect Katherine



Mung'au (Top 40 under 40) to offer contemporary units that appeal to discerning

buyers, investors and renters. The development has five units on each floor; 2 spacious three bedrooms, and three options of two-bedroom units (all with ensuite masters,



and guest washrooms). All the units feature engineered wood flooring for living areas and bedrooms and come with a master ensuite &



guest washroom. Kitchens come fitted with a premium gas stove and oven, as well as modern cabinetry. Bedroom units all come fitted with wardrobes whilst the bathroom areas feature imported ceramics and plumbing fixtures. The Residency is located on Kirawa Road, off Peponi Road, in Kitisuru. It is 15 minutes to Westlands & Gigiri, and stands at the intersection of Nairobi's most affluent commercial node, Westlands, and Gigiri, its diplomatic node.



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