

Foster and Partners wins Competition to Design a New Center for Hangzhou

Words and Photography Foster + Partners



Each zone celebrates the city's relationship with water.

Foster + Partners has won the international competition to design a new center for Hangzhou, the capital of China's Zhejiang province. The master plan creates a green and interconnected mixed-use quarter at the heart of the Yuhang District.

Gerard Evenden, Head of Studio, Foster + Partners, said: "We are delighted to have won the competition to design a new center for Hangzhou, a beautiful city with nature at its heart. Our design stemmed from extensive public consultation – and is about developing a sustainable new urban quarter, which establishes new connections with nature and makes it a part of people's everyday lives."

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Bruno Moser, Head of Urban Design, Foster + Partners, said: “The masterplan is organized around a 2.5-kilometer central axis that runs the full length of the site, from north to south. The axis intersects with different bodies of water, generating five distinctive zones with unique characteristics. Each zone celebrates the city’s relationship with water in various forms, from streams and lakes to canals and wetlands.”

Extensive landscaping along the central axis creates a leafy spine that guides people through the district. Green space also bookends the site with a new public park to the north and a new cultural hub that sensitively connects with a wetland to the south. Cultural landmarks – such as a public library, an exhibition hall, and galleries – are located along the full length of the axis. This allows people across the district to access a rich arts and culture program.

Massing gradually moves towards the central axis to respect the site’s natural surroundings and create a busy urban center with a dynamic skyline. Building density also increases around public transport hubs to encourage sustainable travel across the city.

Across the site, public transport responds to the needs of local users and connects seamlessly with the city’s wider infrastructure systems. The master plan provides a multilevel infrastructure network and a diverse range of ‘last mile’ transport options, such as shared micromobility, autonomous pods, shuttles, and water transport.

The low-carbon masterplan conserves existing wetlands and incorporates sustainable strategies – such as passive massing and rainwater reuse – to positively contribute to Hangzhou. The project aims to achieve China’s 3-star green rating and LEED and WELL Community Gold certification. Martin Castle, Senior Partner, Foster + Partners, said: “Our masterplan creates a balanced 24-hour district where people can live, work and play. We provide a rich mix of public amenities – including offices, nurseries, sports facilities, and a shopping center – close to vibrant, human-scale neighborhoods.”

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The concept merges nature and urban life.

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Center and above: focusing on the connection with nature.

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A convenient network of public amenities.

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The master plan focuses on an interconnected mixed-use quarter at the heart of the Yuhang District.

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Connecting with the city's infrastructure systems.