

Press release

21 December 2007

Foster + Partners presents a new mixed-use destination for Moscow

Foster + Partners Crystal Island development has been presented to the Moscow Public and Architectural Council and has been granted preliminary planning approval. Conceived as a city in a microcosm, Crystal Island is an unprecedented, compact and diverse urban quarter. Situated on the Nagatino Peninsula, edged by the Moscow River, it is located only 7.5 km from the Kremlin. Rising from a large public square, the entire development is enclosed within a vast tent-like superstructure, with one of the tallest inhabited buildings in the world at its heart. A new emblem on the city's skyline, the scheme offers panoramic views over Moscow from a viewing platform at its apex.

Crystal Island will be a major urban destination, with a range of cultural, exhibition and performance facilities. Its mix of hotels, serviced apartments, offices and shops is designed to maintain a dynamic and animated public realm throughout the day. Residents are able to work and live within a densely planned area where every amenity is within easy walking distance. Mixed-use also presents a strong case for energy balance, with individual components using energy at different times, while reinforcing the breadth of economic and social activity of the area.

The tent-like superstructure rises to 450m, and forms a breathable second skin and thermal buffer for the main building, shielding the interior spaces from Moscow's extreme summer and winter climates. Providing accommodation that is flooded with daylight, this second skin will seal itself in winter to minimise heat losses, and open in summer so that the interior can be cooled naturally. Efficient energy management is at the heart of the design, with strategies including on-site renewable and low-carbon energy generation.

The buildings form spirals upwards in converse directions to form a diagonal grid, and the spiraling geometry extends throughout the project into the park. The scheme is integrated into a new park landscape, which provides a range of activities throughout the year, with cross country skiing and ice skating in the winter.

Norman Foster said: Crystal Island is one of the world's most ambitious building projects and it represents a milestone in the 40 year history of the practice. It is the largest single building in the world, creating a year-round destination for Moscow and a sustainable, dynamic new urban quarter. It is a paradigm of compact, mixed-use, sustainable city planning, with an innovative energy strategy and smart skin which buffers against climate extremes.

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