

Press release

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Redevelopment of the Washington Convention Center site breaks ground

CityCenter DC, a new mixed use low carbon masterplan on the ten-acre site of the former Old Convention Center in Washington DC started construction this week. It is one of the largest urban redevelopments in the USA. Foster + Partners has designed four new buildings in addition to the masterplan, which brings together hotels, offices, apartments, restaurants and a wide range of shops.

The site, which was previously enclosed by the vast single volume of the Convention Center, borders the main city axis of New York Avenue, with views towards the White House. The masterplan breaks the site into smaller, pedestrian blocks and bridges new connections between the historic, predominantly residential neighbourhoods to the north and the commercial office developments to the south. Rooted in the distinctive urban identity of the city, the design reinstates and expands the original 18th century alleyways between the blocks. The tree-lined avenues, complete with classic Washington globe street lights, are re-planted with local species to integrate seamlessly with the historic context.

Designed to be human-scaled, in contrast with the imposing scale of the surrounding blocks, the volumes step down from ten storeys at the perimeter of the site to frame a central plaza, where the streets and pathways converge. A new public park, designed by Kathryn Gustafson, in the north-west corner of the site further extends the public realm and features a landmark fountain.

The high density, mixed-use scheme will create a low-carbon, pedestrian-friendly quarter and the masterplan is designed to achieve LEED Neighborhood Development Gold. The landscape, office and apartment buildings are oriented according to the path of the sun and incorporate green roofs to absorb water the scheme aims to recycle 100 percent of the water used on site.

David Summerfield, Design Director at Foster + Partners, said:

CityCenter DC is one of the most significant urban developments in the United States today and we are honoured to be designing a low carbon masterplan for such a prominent site. Our design has evolved through detailed studies of the city's climate and streets the new buildings will integrate with their historic context and create a unique place to live and work, as well as a major new civic space and amenities.

Notes to editors:

At the entrance to the central plaza, a glass jewel box a flexible, transparent space suitable for a shop or café provides a distinctive new meeting point.

Just as the massing of the buildings within the development breaks down the super block scale prevalent in Washington D.C., the design of the facades goes further in breaking down the mass of the buildings and articulating their different functions externally.

The office buildings incorporate lightweight aluminium louvres and a vertical shading system of screened

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glass and aluminium. The apartment buildings, with their concrete columns and sliding horizontal louvres, are differentiated by a more solid feel.

The apartment interiors are designed by Foster + Partners and many of the condominium units also feature generous balconies and terraces, which are individually designed by Kathryn Gustafson.

At ground level, there is a variety of shops, cafes and restaurants. These retail areas are grouped according to their function, with H Street specialising in destination retailing, alleyways lined with specialty shops, and, restaurants, designer and boutique brands concentrated along I Street.

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