

Press release

14 February 2006

New Holland Island Redevelopment

Foster and Partners have been named as the winners of the New Holland Island Redevelopment competition, it was announced today. The triangular shaped self-sustaining island will provide 7.6-hectares of mixed-use cultural development including an indoor theatre, conference facilities, galleries, a hotel, shops, apartments and restaurants, with a flexible outdoor arena at its heart. The project will regenerate the eighteenth-century New Holland Island, presenting a unique opportunity to transform the city of St. Petersburg into the foremost venue for performance and visual arts in the world.

The winning proposal reflects a creative dialogue between old and new. The remarkable historic structures on the Island, originally built for timber storage, will be reinvented as hotel and retail space, and complemented with a range of new amenities for the visual and performing arts. A complex of office space, housed within a new continuous block on the perimeter of the site, which completes the triangle, will make the island an ideal venue for business as well as pleasure. Using a sophisticated system of natural ventilation and an energy strategy that maximises the insulating properties of snow and the cooling potential of the surrounding canals, the island will be entirely self-sustaining.

Following the contours of the existing dock basin, the outdoor arena will be unified beneath a dramatic roof and surrounded by boutiques and restaurants with views across the water. Used variously for open-air performances, flooded for regattas, or frozen to provide a skating rink, the venue culminates in a glowing cupola that subtly rises above the height of the surrounding buildings. The existing rotunda contains a 400-seat state-of-the-art auditorium, with space for a public concourse below. A more intimate space than the amphitheatre, this venue will accommodate traditional theatre, performance, opera and dance. The building formerly known as the Blacksmiths House will be home to a gallery space for the visual arts and public exhibitions.

The scheme also provides the infrastructure to connect with the city at the urban scale. New bridges and routes will be created to tie the island into a wider cultural quarter that includes the Mariinsky Theatre and the Hermitage Museum to establish a thriving, sustainable centre for the arts. The island will become more permeable and accessible, encouraging pedestrian access and creating a prominent gateway into the site from the major city artery of Nevskiy Prospect.

New Holland Island will be both a major tourist centre and a self-sufficient city district. It will have the regenerative power to lift the fortunes of the surrounding areas of St Petersburg, while locking itself into the heart of one of Europe's most dynamic cities.

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"I am honoured and delighted to have this opportunity to make a dramatic intervention in the cultural life of the city. We aim to help St Petersburg to exploit the extraordinary legacy of its urban structure and historic buildings and to establish an arts quarter that will reinvigorate the city and consolidate St Petersburgs position as an international tourist destination."

Norman Foster, Founder and Executive Chairman

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