

SWA Group Project Awarded Prestigious 2008 Urban Land Institute Global Award for Excellence

Beijing Finance Street's Design Recognized as an Innovative Model for the Country

SAUSALITO, CA, November 6, 2008 – SWA Group project, Beijing Finance Street, was selected as one of five winning developments in the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Global Awards for Excellence competition, widely recognized as the land use industry's most prestigious recognition program. SWA projects have been honored with four ULI Awards for Excellence in the past three years (previous winning projects include Victoria Gardens, Hangzhou Hubin Redevelopment and Luohu Station). Earlier this year, Beijing Finance Street won the Business Week/Architectural Record China Award.

The competition is part of the Institute's Awards for Excellence program, established in 1979, which is based on ULI's guiding principle that the achievement of excellence in land use practice should be recognized and rewarded. ULI's Awards for Excellence recognize the full development process of a project, not just its architecture or design. The criteria for the awards include leadership, contribution to the community, innovations, public/private partnership, environmental protection and enhancement, response to societal needs, and financial success.

Just blocks from the Forbidden City, Beijing Finance Street establishes a new nerve center for China's booming economy. This city within a city—35 city blocks organized along a central, meandering green space—creates a new, influential model for the country with a sustainable and transit-oriented, mixed-use district for the financial leadership of China.

SWA was invited by the building architect, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), to prepare landscape master planning and implementation documents. The master plan is based on a sustainable approach, which emphasizes the public's enjoyment of the space. SWA's work paralleled that of SOM and integrated urban design and landscape architecture into the overall design's physical and cultural structure. Approximately 30% of the project is located over a garage and required special accommodations for planting depths and waterproofing needs.

The 2008 Global Awards for Excellence winners were selected by a jury of renowned land use development and design experts: Jury Chair, Jeremy Newsum, group chief executive, Grosvenor, London; Ronne Hackett, managing partner, The Clarett Group, New York; Ian Hawksworth, managing director, Capital & Counties, London; Marilee Utter, president, Citiventure Associates LLC, Denver; Yasuhiko Watanabe, senior advisor, Mitsubishi Estate Company, Ltd, Tokyo.

The winners were announced during the ULI fall meeting in Miami. "The Awards for Excellence program celebrates the creativity, vision, and best practices in land use," Newsum said. "These projects not only represent the best of the best, but demonstrate a relevance to the communities in which they are located."

The 2008 global winners were selected from 20 world-wide finalists, all of whom were winners in their region: The Americas, Europe and Asia Pacific. The global awards jury evaluated these projects with additional criteria, including: innovative concepts that can be emulated around the world; strong urban design; response to the surrounding environment; and design that contributes to a livable, sustainable development that demonstrates relevance to the needs of the community.

Historically, Beijing's gardens have been secluded, growing behind imperial walls or private residences. The Beijing Finance Street development changed that. Focused on a central park known as "the heart" of Western Beijing, the 100-acre project provides generous open space and a functional court for the district. Referencing traditional Chinese garden design, the development's architecture and landscape are artfully woven together. Building facades are often reflected in the landscape's water features or tree patterns. By replicating the built forms, these natural design elements help give the area a unified face.

The Beijing Finance Street's design concept—architecture inside landscape and landscape inside architecture—is a contemporary interpretation of the “borrowed landscape” tradition. The design incorporates “borrowed landscape” concepts in four specific ways: scenery overlapping scenery; gardens within gardens; water cascading and water reflecting; planting and the changing seasons. Through its unique combination of contemporary landscape design and traditional Chinese garden philosophy, the Beijing Finance Street Park creates an international destination that reflects the city's cultural identity.

SWA Group (www.swagroup.com), established in 1957, is an international landscape architecture, planning and urban design firm. Corporate headquarters are in Sausalito, CA. Other California offices are in Laguna Beach, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Additional offices are in Dallas, Houston and Shanghai. Since its inception, SWA Group has worked in over 50 countries, and its projects have garnered more than 500 awards.

The Urban Land Institute (www.uli.org) is a nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Established in 1936, the Institute has more than 40, 000 members representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines.

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