

Project: Smart Growth

“IMAGINE a city with Venice’s canals, New York’s Central Park and the broad tree-lined boulevards of Paris. And how about the colorful shopping bazaar of Marrakesh, Morocco; the pocket gardens of Savannah, Ga.; and an opera house like the one in Sydney, Australia? Throw in a world-class hospital, convention center and schools, and a sustainable design, and you might think you’re lost in a SimCity video game. But such a real-life metropolis of glass, steel and grass is rising on the western coast of South Korea, 40 miles from Seoul, on 1,500 acres of landfill that just a few years ago was water. It is called New Songdo City, and its backers envision it as a major new financial and business hub for northeast Asia.” (Cortese)



Developed by Gale international, a premier international real estate investment and development company, New Songdo city aspires to be the “Gateway to Northeast Asia,” a new destination city for global business. At the same time, Gale has embraced the challenge to create a greener, more livable, and more sustainable city than any other in modern history. The South Korean government has designated the area as a free economic zone, a bilingual city (Korean and English) where foreigners can own land, run schools and hospitals, and escape government taxes and bureaucracy. Part of the effort to internationalize the city is to build a seven-mile bridge that will link New Songdo to Incheon international airport. Guiding the vision are smart-growth principles relating to density, transit-proximity, environmental preservation and pedestrian-friendly design proven to deliver the highest quality of urban life. At the same time, planners and engineers are working to see that every element of the built environment, from offices to

Project: Smart Growth

schools, and houses to hospitals, maximizes energy efficiency and minimizes the city's carbon footprint. (Cortese)



The New Songdo City development is garnering massive international attention not only because of its sustainable practices, but also the fact that it is the largest private real estate development in history. (Clements) Songdo is located on a man-made island about the size of mid-town Manhattan; this \$25 billion project will include 50 million square feet of office space, 30 million square feet of residential space, 10 million square feet of retail and 10 million square feet of public space. When completed in 2014, it is estimated New Songdo will be home to 65,000 people and that 300,000 will work there. Gale began constructing the \$25 billion, 1,500-acre Songdo International Business District in 2004 in a 70/30 joint venture partnership with POSCO E&C. Songdo is located along the coast of Incheon, 35 miles southwest of Seoul, and will be linked directly to Incheon International Airport by a 7.4 mile highway bridge. (USGBC)

The master architects of New Songdo City, Kohn Pederson Fox, are relying on an incrementalist method of adapting established, often Western urban models and applying them to Korea. Lead designer James von Klemperer, FAIA, calls this model “reference and hybrid.” The fact that New Songdo is being built from scratch is “an architect’s dream” and is a drawing board for a master planned city built around sustainable principles. New Songdo uses a bilaterally symmetrical city (New York) as an urban

Project: Smart Growth

master text in many ways. Its Central Park is modeled after the original, one group of buildings KPF is working on is referred to as New Songdo's Rockefeller Center, and Von Klemperer compares another part of the development to Battery City Park. A water taxi service is similar to the canals of Venice, Sydney is represented by a waterfront cultural center reminiscent of Jorn Utzon's, Sydney Opera House, and Hong Kong (the original Asian city of international commerce) is reflected in the city's link to its airport.

(Mortice)



Von Klemperer says the mega-block, car-dependent development seen in Seoul is not an appropriate model for New Songdo City, where smaller-scaled mixed uses are designed to make the city walkable and sustainable. The goal for New Songdo was to put together the best practices for every building type, and, thus, the development patterns of the world's best cities (including New York) emerged as models. (Mortice)

Thus, despite Korea's car-focused urban development patterns, New Songdo City is designed for Manhattan-style walkability. Beyond water taxis, there will be shuttle services to the airport, bus services, and three stops on Seoul's subway line. A complex gray water and black water processing system will harvest methane from black water and use it in power plants. A pneumatic trash collection system will improve waste processing efficiency, and the city's Central Park will be landscaped so that maintenance is as low-impact on the land as possible—all of which will pay added sustainability benefits in land- and fossil-fuel-poor Korea. Water is recycled citywide, energy produced locally, and the Central Park is planted with low-maintenance native plants and trees,

Project: Smart Growth

according to Mr. Gale. There will also be bicycle paths and pedestrian areas, and 40 percent of the city is reserved for parks and green space. (Mortice)



Perhaps the most interesting aspect of New Songdo City is the fact that it is seeking LEED certification for an entire city. By its very design - the result of a ground-up, master plan based on sustainability principles - Songdo will be an environmental standout not only in Asia, where many urban areas are in a state of environmental crisis, but the world. The New Songdo City International Business District has been accepted as a pilot project by the U.S. Green Building Council for its LEED for Neighborhood Development pilot program, the first rating system for neighborhood design. Songdo IBD is by far the largest project outside North America to be included in the 18-month pilot program. (USGBC)

Also, according to James von Klemperer, "Songdo IBD is the first instance of foreign ownership of Korean land in the post-war era. As such, its sustainable initiatives have the power of an international effort. This promotes a synergy, bringing together the best policies of two worlds. Korean advanced water infrastructure, U.S. LEED-ND program goals, local transport networks, and foreign hydrogen bus technologies are good examples of what can be implemented to achieve this global blend."

As a Korean and American, I am proud and excited that a model city of sustainability is being built where my parents were born. It amazes me to this day the transformation South Korea has gone through since the war and the progress that it makes every day. Hopefully the New Songdo City development will turn out to be much more than unique project, but rather a benchmark with which future cities will be compared.

Project: Smart Growth

U.S. Green Building Council In The News Details. Clements Joe. 31 July 2007. United States Green Building Council. 9/20/2008.

<http://www.usgbc.org/News/USGBCInTheNewsDetails.aspx?ID=3299>

Cortese, Amy. "An Asian Hub in the Making." *New York Times*. 30 Dec 2007. 20 Sept. 2008.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/30/realestate/commercial/30sqft.html?ei=5124&en=e1909eb78cd6ea68&ex=1356670800&partner=permalink&exprod=permalink&pagewanted=all>

Helping Create a New City - And a New Vision for City Life. Whitman Strategy Group. 9/20/2008. <http://www.whitmanstrategygroup.com/songdo-city.html>

Mortice, Zach. "New Songdo City Looks Back at the New World for Older Urban Models." *AIA Architect*. 25 July 2008. 20 Sept. 2008.

http://www.aia.org/aiarchitect/thisweek08/0725/0725d_songdo.cfm

New Songdo City Wins Sustainable Cities Award. 16 June 2008. Whitman Strategy Group. 9/20/2008. <http://www.whitmanstrategygroup.com/new-songdo-city-speech.html>

Remarks by Christine Todd Whitman 8th World Congress, Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. 4 Mar 2008. Whitman Strategy Group.

9/20/2008. <http://www.whitmanstrategygroup.com/new-songdo-city-speech.html>

U.S. Green Building Council In The News Details. 31 July 2007. United States Green Building Council. 9/20/2008.

<http://www.usgbc.org/News/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?ID=3291>

PICTURES

<http://www.experientia.com/blog/uploads/2007/03/songdo.jpg>

<http://vestnik.tripod.com/imagesn/songdo-2.jpg>

http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3183/2632472827_97aa2c62b8.jpg?v=0

http://farm1.static.flickr.com/196/474294356_4417c9e843.jpg?v=0

http://farm1.static.flickr.com/112/307585351_be27e9f853.jpg?v=0

http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2076/2259854180_54f3cd64ca.jpg?v=0