

GO CHINA - ZHENGZHOU

Status a boost for sector

Economic role heralds a wave of development. Reports by Wilson Lau

PROPERTY

Zhengzhou's property sector has been reinvigorated over the past year after Beijing reaffirmed the city's status as the economic hub of central China.

Massive infrastructure projects related to airport logistics and the linking of manufacturing zones have either been planned or are under construction. The projects aim to ease the transfer of manufacturing capacity from coastal regions towards populous inland cities such as Zhengzhou.

This government initiative is expected to provide a major boost to Zhengzhou's market for commercial and residential developments.

The grand opening of the Zhengzhou Greenland Plaza skyscraper in September last year in the new Zhengdong central business district captured a great deal of attention from the city's business community.

The developer is Greenland Group, a Fortune 500 company. The architect of the tower is the world-renowned Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) of the United States.

The 280-metre Zhengzhou Greenland Plaza, the city's tallest so far, has a gross floor area of 240,000 square metres. This mixed-use project consists of office space, a five-star hotel managed by the Marriott Group, a shopping centre, viewing deck and clubhouse located on the top floors. The dramatic form of the tower tapers slightly as it rises.

"We conceived the building as a classical column," says SOM design director Ross Wimer. "Its iconic image comes from this timeless form - adapted with cutting-edge, 21st-century technologies to create a building that expresses our time."

These innovations include a heliostat that crowns the building and reflects daylight throughout the hotel atrium. "Like the solar screening, the heliostat is a scientifically-derived element that enhances the experience of daylight for the building's users," Wimer says.

Together with two recently completed mega-structures of modern architecture - the Zhengzhou International Convention and Exhibition Centre, and the Henan Art Centre - Zhengzhou Greenland Plaza helps



Zhengzhou Vanke City comprises commercial blocks and residential buildings arranged around an expanse of greenery.

establish Zhengdong as the city's new commercial and cultural convergence point.

An increasing number of residential projects in Zhengzhou emphasise healthy living by embracing green concepts. Leading mainland developer Vanke recently unveiled two large-scale projects in the city. Meijin Luxe Class is located east of Zhongzhou Avenue and around 4.6km from Zhengdong central business district, with

connections to the Zhengzhou East Railway station and the subway line. The 65,000-square-metre residential project is surrounded by green landscapes.

The second project, Zhengzhou Vanke City, is located at the intersection of Science Avenue and the Fourth Ring Road. It will have a gross floor area of 3.2 million square metres, featuring commercial blocks and residential buildings spread around a vast expanse of greenery.

Upon completion, the project will accommodate more than 30,000 households over the next decade.

The main objective of the landscaping at Zhengzhou Vanke City is to create a distinctive identity for the arrival plaza in a post-industrial context where the topography is generally flat. This marks the development of an entirely new town, says Brandon Huang, principal of Locus Associates, the Hong Kong-based

architectural firm that designed the sales gallery for the project.

"The interweaving paths of the front plaza encapsulate the large flow of pedestrian traffic. Along with a series of elevated landforms, the landscape seeks to echo the multifaceted crystalline architectural façade. This constructed topography serves to augment the flat site into an ever-changing landscape experience for visitors," Huang says.

MELIÁ TO RIDE COMMERCIAL BOOM

Anticipating a surge of commercial activity in Zhengzhou, Meliá Hotels International (MHI) has announced the opening of two new properties in the city.

The Inside by Meliá will open in June 2015, while the Meliá Zhengzhou is slated to open in January 2016. The hotel group, whose headquarters are in Spain, has more than 90 hotels globally.

The two hotels will be in a complex of three buildings in the city's new business district. One building will house the Inside, while the other two host the Meliá Zhengzhou. The two properties will provide 933 rooms and meeting facilities together, including one grand ballroom for more than 900 participants and other multifunctional meeting rooms.

According to the group, the Inside is a modern, urban lifestyle brand that

focuses on "100 per cent atmosphere, service and pure delight". Inside hotels are premium properties located in city centres that provide

professional business service, state-of-the-art communication tools and tailored short- or long-stay packages.

Meliá Zhengzhou will also feature

the group's VIP experience, called "The Level", that offers a private lounge with open bar, exclusive room accommodation, special in-room amenities and the finest service.

The group says these two brands in Zhengzhou aim to meet the needs of a city where 80 per cent of tourism demand is related to business. They hope to raise their range of facilities and service culture to a new level.

Bernardo Cabot, vice-president of Meliá Hotels International Asia-Pacific, says Zhengzhou was chosen because it is the second-largest city in central China and a major transport hub that is now taking advantage of a high-speed railway service.

He says this is part of the group's expansion strategy in key Chinese cities, which include Xian and Jinan this year, Tianjin in 2015, and Chongqing in 2016.



An artist's impression of MHI's two new hotels in Zhengzhou.