

NOTES ON KEY ARCHITECTURAL IDEAS FOR THE SMU CITY CAMPUS BUILDINGS

Given the task of defining an appropriate architectural expression for buildings in the SMU City Campus, we have sought to respond with energy and conviction to the uniqueness of the brief and the uniqueness of the setting. We believe the ideals outlined below will be a unique group of buildings for SMU. No superficial gestures, no scenery making, no window dressing. To us the quality of any form of architectural expression (and particularly that of a university campus) is dependent on marrying the outward expression of the activities taking place within, with a sense of delight in handling its surface quality – its materials and textures.

Architectural ideas applying to all buildings

Linking themes of architectural expression between buildings in the SMU City Campus:

- Campus at the Park Edge

Responses to the landscape setting of the SMU City Campus:

- (a) Existing Rain trees are preserved where possible along street frontages to shade the main pedestrian routes. Buildings are therefore always seen against a foreground of trees with the park landscape beyond.
 - (b) Elevations adjacent to the park have a delicate 'green' skin of plants growing on a light stainless steel framework spaced a meter off the curving walls. Plants grow from planters fixed back to the walls at each floor level. The system provides screening shade to glazing and sets up an inter-play between these buildings and their landscape setting.
 - (c) Three Tiers of Landscape - Concourse garden courts; Open ground floors; and fifth floor roof gardens act as both a lung to individual buildings and collectively as a signature for SMU's 'Campus in the park'.
- Elevations to Street Facades reflect the form of the activities within as described below:
 - (a) Open ground floors give views to the courtyards within, and the park landscape beyond. Informal student activities and retail cafes on the open ground floor will further inject vibrancy to the city-campus life.

- (b) Teaching Rooms on 2nd and 3rd storeys create rippling facades which follow the horseshoe plan form of the classrooms.
 - (c) School Suites on the 4th and 5th storeys are expressed as planes of glass that step out to provide shelter and shade. They act as a crown to the teaching floors below and reflect the needs of flexible faculty offices. The glass will be shaded by sunscreens on some elevations.
- The Roof is swept up to bring daylight deep into the plan from the courtyard side. Its double skin protects the buildings from direct solar radiation. The outer roof is articulated as an overlapping sequence of tiles, a reference to the form of traditional Singaporean tiled roofs.
 - Courtyards create deep, sheltered light wells and provide a hub to the activities of each building. Concourse, ground and 2nd Storey balconies revolve around this important central landscape space. An avenue of trees helps to shade the court and lock each building in to the campus as a whole.

Architectural ideas particular to individual buildings

School of Information Systems / Campus Centre

- The entrance is established as one side of an asymmetrical pairing with the School of Economics and Social Sciences on Bencoolen Street.
- Steps climb up to the park from the concourse level responding to an axis taken from the formal façade of the History Museum.
- A pavilion on the top floor of the South Wing of this building is set in the roof garden and addresses the museum axis while creating intimate gardens and balconies overlooking the park.
- The SE corner of the Bras Basah wing has a pale pre-finished, pre-cast paneled façade that acts as a frame to the view corridor between the Arts Museum and the History Museum. It is designed to terminate this wing with a strong civic gesture. When seen collectively with the Queen Street wing of the Li Ka Shing Library.

- The broad steps between the concourse and the park create an informal amphitheatre for students using the concourse facilities. These steps are sheltered by the upper floors of the building to encourage informal activity and they allow the routes that follow the edges of the park to flow and connect naturally with the concourse level.
- The courtyard is open-ended towards the park responding to the extended view and reflecting the more central public activities of the School of Information Systems / Campus Centre.

Li Ka Shing Library

- The wall of the Li Ka Shing Library entrance façade is paired with the entrance to the School of Accountancy across the realigned Stamford Road – forming a civic place as a threshold to the SMU City Campus.
- The taxi drop-off /VIP entrance presents visitors alongside the Queen Street wing with open-shaded routes through to the park beneath the library floors above. A shaded spill out space occurs outside the ground floor restaurant.
- Out of respect to the Arts Museum building, and in response to its importance as a cultural landmark, an axis is taken from the center of the symmetrical front façade running through the open-ended courtyard of the library. Open views at ground level; from the main entrance balcony on the 2nd storey; and from the foyer at each floor above – focus on the museum and the new pool over the MRT station in the foreground.
- Windows on the façade facing the park create study spaces on the 3rd and 4th storeys intended to give students the feeling of working “in” the park.
- The “green” façade of the library wing frames the above window façade wall.

School of Business

- The Stamford Road façade creates a broad pedestrian place at ground level off the busy thoroughfare of Stamford Road. While being wider than the entrance facades to the other SMU buildings and being set out to a different geometry, we have used a familiar language of architectural expression so that this building is clearly associated with SMU.
- The North wall above the service yard has a planted skin which follows its concave form and shades the offices and teaching rooms within.

School of Accountancy

- The West wing of the School of Accountancy responds to its park setting in a similar way to the Li Ka Shing Library and the School of Information Systems / Campus Centre wings described above. Together with the planted walls of the library it forms a 'green' gateway to the park.
- The concourse rises up with broad, shaded seat -steps to cross the canal to the South. This will eventually become the central approach to the School of Accountancy in a later phase.
- The South façade is broken down into tall pillars faced with pre-finished, pre-cast panels. These shade the spaces within and give an appropriately formal response to the public pedestrian route over the canal into the park.

School of Economics and Social Sciences

- The wall panels of the entrance façade are shaped to create a formal entrance space when paired with the School of Information Systems / Campus Centre opposite. People arriving from Bencoolen Street or coming up from the concourse will feel they are entering a civic space. This space establishes a threshold between SMU and the city. At night these entrance walls will be lit up as a beacon for the university in the city.