Council on Vertical Urbanism

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ZIN in No(o)rd Named 2025 Best Tall Building Worldwide by the Council on Vertical Urbanism

Award-winning projects redefine the future of cities, demonstrating global shift to sustainable vertical urbanism

Chicago—The Council on Vertical Urbanism (CVU)—formerly known as the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH)—has named ZIN in No(o)rd, located in Brussels, Belgium, the Best Tall Building Worldwide for 2025. The recognition was announced at the organization's annual international conference, in Toronto, Canada, which convened thought leaders and practitioners from around the world to explore how urban density, when designed responsibly, can serve as both a climate solution and a social framework for thriving communities. (A complete list of categories and winners appears below.)

The 2025 Award of Excellence program honored more than 100 outstanding projects that exemplify innovation in design, engineering, sustainability, and community-building. Collectively, these projects illustrate the emergence of vertical urbanism as a defining global paradigm, one that integrates architecture, infrastructure, ecology, and equity into the vertical dimension of the city.

"This year's winners demonstrate that vertical urbanism has come of age," said Javier Quintana de Uña, CEO of CVU. "These projects go beyond creating efficient buildings; they create ecosystems. They show that we can design upward not merely for density, but for regeneration, reducing carbon, restoring nature, and enriching the social life of cities in the process."

ZIN in No(o)rd: **A prototype for regenerative density**

Selected from entries across 24 countries, ZIN in No(o)rd was recognized for its transformative reuse of a 1970s-era office complex into a mixed-use vertical ecosystem combining workspace, housing, hospitality, and public amenities. The project embodies the tenets of vertical urbanism—verticality, sustainability, livability, and innovation—by knitting together new and existing structures within an energy-efficient, carbon-conscious framework.

The design extends the urban street life vertically, introducing terraces, gardens, and public spaces throughout the tower's height, while a highly efficient double-skin façade, passive ventilation system, and integrated photovoltaic elements reduce operational energy use.

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Additionally, 85% (in mass) of the existing structure, including cores and basements, was retained, and more than 60% of the material of the project has been reused on site or elsewhere, representing a major reduction in embodied carbon and setting a benchmark for large-scale adaptive reuse in Europe.

“We envisioned ZIN as a vertical neighborhood that redefines how existing buildings can live again…where people work, live, and connect in a continuous urban ecosystem,” explained John Eyers, CEO of Jaspers-Eyers Architects, which led the ZIN in No(o)rd project. “To have this vision recognized by CVU affirms that sustainable density is not just a design strategy, but a cultural and environmental imperative for cities worldwide.”

The 2025 Award of Excellence winners collectively reveal how tall buildings are evolving from isolated architectural statements into integrated vertical districts, urban systems that produce energy, manage resources, and foster community. From carbon-conscious construction and biophilic design to vertical mobility networks and mixed-income housing, this year’s projects represent a new generation of high-density development that is both adaptive and inclusive.

“The shift from tall buildings to vertical urbanism is not symbolic, it’s systemic,” noted **Shonn Mills**, CVU Board Chair and Director at WWM. “We’re now seeing projects that connect green and blue systems, support biodiversity, promote public access, and integrate transit and social infrastructure vertically. These are not towers standing apart—they’re urban frameworks that enable better living in less space.”

In addition to the Best Tall Building Worldwide award, winners were announced in multiple height, regional, and functional categories, each highlighting a distinct facet of performance, from structural innovation to adaptive reuse and urban habitat integration.

2025 Award of Excellence category winners

- Best Tall Building Worldwide: **ZIN in No(o)rd**, Brussels, Belgium
- Best Tall Building (under 100 meters): **Sirius**, Sydney, Australia
- Best Tall Building (100-199 meters): **ZIN in No(o)rd**, Brussels, Belgium
- Best Tall Building (200-299 meters): **Karlatornet**, Gothenburg, Sweden
- Best Tall Building (300 meters and above): **Merdeka 118**, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Best Tall Building Americas: **Ontario Court of Justice, Toronto**, Canada
- Best Tall Building Asia: **The Henderson**, Hong Kong
- Best Tall Building Europe: **ZIN in No(o)rd**, Brussels, Belgium
- Best Tall Building Middle East & Africa: **Ciel Tower**, Dubai, UAE
- Best Tall Building Oceania: **1 Elizabeth**, Sydney, Australia
- Urban Habitat Award: **CIBC Square 1**, Toronto, Canada
- Future Project Award: **Vertical Landscapes**, Tokyo, Japan

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- Construction Award: **One Bloor West**, Toronto, Canada
- Repositioning Award: **PENN 2**, New York City, United States
- Innovation Award: **(Re)Euston—Towards Concrete Reuse at Scale**
- Structure Award: **One Bloor West**, Toronto, Canada
- Façade Award: **The Henderson**, Hong Kong
- Systems Award: **Punggol Digital District**, Singapore
- Space Within Award: **Booking.com City Campus**, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Award: **495 Eleventh Avenue**, New York City, United States
- 10-Year Award (joint winners): **Shanghai Tower**, China & **Sky Habitat**, Singapore

The Award of Excellence: A Global Platform for Vertical Urbanism

The CVU Award of Excellence program recognizes built and proposed projects that advance sustainable vertical urbanism through innovation, integration, and social responsibility. The program celebrates not only architectural achievement, but the full spectrum of disciplines: engineering, construction, urban design, and policy, among numerous others, that shape the modern city.

Submissions were solicited globally earlier this year, with representatives from each shortlisted project presenting to multidisciplinary juries convened at the Toronto conference. The juries comprised leading experts in design, engineering, construction, and urban systems from around the world. Overall category winners were announced and conferred last night at an awards ceremony and dinner, the culminating event of the 2025 conference.

“This year’s competition reveals the profound transformation underway in how cities are conceived,” added Quintana de Uña. “The best tall buildings are now civic assets—urban infrastructures in their own right—designed to sustain and inspire future generations.”

About the Council on Vertical Urbanism

The Council on Vertical Urbanism (CVU) is the leading global nonprofit dedicated to advancing tall buildings and responsible density in cities worldwide. With a network of hundreds of thousands of professionals across disciplines, CVU drives engagement, innovation and transformation in the built environment through research, policy, events and a global awards program. From defining the world’s tallest structures to pioneering vertical urbanism as a philosophy and practice, CVU is shaping the sustainable, resilient and livable cities of the future. For more information, please visit **verticalurbanism.org**.

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