

AUB Master Plan short-listed for prestigious Agha Khan Architecture Award

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The American University of Beirut's Campus Master Plan has been short-listed by the Agha Khan Architecture Award independent jury panel which will announce the final award recipient in October 2010.

Established in 1977, the Agha Khan Architecture Award is one of the most sought-after recognitions for architectural and development projects.

The AUB project was one of 19 on the shortlist which was announced on May 25.

The other nominees include projects which range from a textile factory in Turkey to a school built on a bridge in China, located in 16 Asian, African, and European countries with Muslim communities.



The AUB master plan was developed to shape and guide the development of the university's century-old campus over the next 20 years. It provides architectural, landscape and urban design guidelines to serve the existing and future needs of the university. It articulates an integrative landscape plan that demonstrates a subtle use of topographical conditions to enhance the existing landscaping. The plan is committed to abiding by LEEDS guidelines and certification in new buildings while prohibiting intrusion into the forest-like middle campus, preserving it as a sanctuary for indigenous plants and both native and migratory birds. Moreover, the plan advocates social responsibility, which forms an essential part of education at AUB: active civic engagement, through seeking to form partnerships with the immediate neighborhood to revitalize what was once a vibrant and diverse intellectual urban space; yielding back small portions of AUB land for public use and enjoyment; and developing a campaign to create Lebanon's first permanent non-smoking ban, within our campus walls.

"The Agha Khan award is the most prestigious award recognizing architectural excellence in our region, and it is an achievement by itself to be short-listed from among an impressive list of submissions," said Samer Maamari, AUB's vice president for Facilities and Planning. "We should feel great pride to see that the AUB Campus Master Plan has been acknowledged to be in line with Agha Khan's ideology, ... by stimulating and responding to people's cultural and spiritual expectations."

"The AUB Master Plan has been developed with a keen sense of the unique topographical situation of our university within the urban environment of Beirut and its historic role in serving as a beacon for responsible citizenship," said AUB President Peter Dorman. "If a university education produces tomorrow's leaders, we believe that the best way to achieve this goal is through example—to show what is possible, through the academic, environmental, and social realms."

The review of projects and the selection of award recipients is carried out by an independent and pluridisciplinary jury that brings together specialists in such fields as history, engineering,

philosophy, architectural conservation, and contemporary arts, as well as practicing architects, landscape architects and urban planners. Among the 2010 nine jury members are world-renowned specialists such as French architect Jean Nouvel, Chinese landscape architect Kongjian Yu, and Indian sculptor Anish Kapoor.

"The Award's objective is to encourage architecture that reflects the pluralism that has always characterized Muslim communities. There are no fixed criteria for the type, nature, location or cost of projects to be considered," said the Agha Khan Development Network website.

"The Award's mandate is different from that of many other architecture prizes: it selects projects—from innovative mud and bamboo schools to state of the art "green" buildings—that not only exhibit architectural excellence but also improve the overall quality of life," said a press release posted on the AKDN website.

In October 2010, jurors will select the award recipients and determine the apportionment of the US\$ 500,000 prize fund. According to AKDN, since the success of a winning project may be the product of a joint effort, the jury apportions prizes among the chief contributors of each project—architects, other design and construction professionals, craftsmen, clients and institutions. The final award recipients will be announced at a ceremony to be held at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar in October 2010.