About the Council

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Are we doing enough?
Inside

News and Events

02 This Issue
Daniel Safarak, Editor

04 CTBUH Latest
Javier Quintana de Uña, Chief Executive Officer

06 Global News
Highlights from the CTBUH Global News archive

Features

20 Tall Buildings in Numbers
The CTBUH Awards Program: 20 Years

50 Talking Tall: Peter Wynne Rees
Keeping the Beehive Thriving

54 Talking Tall: Hanif Kara
Towards the Extraordinary, via the Interdisciplinary

Research

12 CTBUH 2022 Conference Special: Tall Excellence

24 Engineering the “Cactus Towers”
Jens Fussing

30 The UnTower: Forging an Adaptable Design for Evolving Real-Estate Conditions
Matthias Olt & Jill Jago

38 Solar Glazing for Tall Mixed-Use Buildings: Prospects for Policy and Performance
Jan Whittington, Feiyang Sun, Sofia Dermisi & Qing Shen

46 The Movement Toward Intrinsically Fire-Safe, Rationally Optimized Structures
CTBUH Fire Safety Committee

CTBUH

58 Reviews
Review of new books in the CTBUH Library

59 CTBUH on the Road
CTBUH events around the world

60 Meet the CTBUH
Abbas Aminmansour, Zhendong Wang, Richard (Mu) Li & Kirk Harman

63 CTBUH Organizational Member Listing

“Today’s state-of-the-art is tomorrow’s empty lease.”

Olt & Jago, page 30
There is no doubt that today is a period of radical change in how we define “excellence” in architecture. The measurement of success for a tall building has always been more than its height; we are seeing the establishment of many new standards that attempt to delineate this more specifically. The AIA, LEED and WELL programs each have their own standards, and the focus has begun to shift away from looking solely at the fulfillment of a client’s ambitions, to the building’s role in the life of its inhabitants and the community it anchors.

This presentation examines a series of case studies and works in progress that trace the emerging approaches to measuring “tall excellence.” These projects consider the wellness of a building’s inhabitants as an important measure of their quality. Examples include the Kunming Greenland Tower, which incorporates systems that promote access to the landscape and fresh air, appropriate to the climate of the city. The success of the neighboring community as an important factor of measurement; the BDT Chicago Tower is an example designed to be a strong catalyst for the revitalization of its neighborhood. Additionally, the

“The size of the building, the size and amount of development have got almost nothing to do with density, so I would say that we need to be looking at these things in much more detail. We want to be looking at how much life is in a place.”

– Peter Wynne Rees, Professor of Places & City Planning, University College London
We cannot truly advocate for sustainable vertical urbanism or claim to have achieved “Tall Excellence” without addressing what that means for all people. The focus is often on the views of the majority, to the detriment of the under-represented, and while efforts are happening, much work remains to be done towards achieving a more inclusive, diverse, and intersectional AEC industry and practice. In recognition of this critical role, CTBUH formed the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee in 2020.

Members of the EDI Committee will present the work they have started in identifying three early initiatives. First, the need to collectively measure and understand the state of equity, diversity and inclusion practices in both individual organizations and in the wider industry. How to address the complexities of defining appropriate metrics for the Council’s large and globally diverse membership? Second, the committee seeks to identify actionable strategies that members can pursue with CTBUH, such as participation in chapter activities, panels, presentations, and awards that encompass EDI strategies. The third initiative is the creation of an Excellence Award, proposed as part of CTBUH’s highly regarded Awards program, that focuses on encouraging and recognizing these practices. Its purpose is to celebrate impactful and replicable practices in member firms’ operations and projects, and the purposeful engagement in inclusive practices that promote equity and diversity. The aspiration is to encourage a greater interest from members and provide further discussion on the proposed initiatives.

Ministry of Taxes
Baku, Azerbaijan
Completed: 2021, height: 168 meters, stories: 32
Function: government
Award Categories: Best Tall Building 100–199 meters; Structural Engineering

The Ministry of Taxes embraces the energetic city of Baku, the capital and largest city of Azerbaijan. Located on the western coast of the Caspian Sea, the city experiences high seismic activity and high winds, which led to an innovative structural design for the tower. The building is one of the tallest structures on Heydar Aliyev Avenue, a major street in the city, and has a unique spiraling design that optimizes solar heat gain and spectacular views.

The building provides the ministry with a new office headquarters to house employees under one roof, guided by cultural responses, sustainable concerns, and its highly visible location. The design consists of five cube forms of varying size, where each floor is rotated 1.2 degrees with respect to the floor below to create a smooth curve up the tower, resulting in a distinctive spiraling design. The lower four cubes house five floors of office space, and the top cube includes private one- and two-bedroom guest suites for visiting dignitaries, as well as a formal restaurant. The stacked cubes are independently cantilevered from a circular central core, and each volume is separated by a column-free green roof terrace that provides distinct separation from the next cube. Laced throughout the tower are indoor/outdoor green spaces—including skygardens at the top of each cube—promoting access to the outdoors while providing natural environments adjacent to workspace, fresh air, and social places for employees and visitors alike.

Vertical Urbanism & Sustainability – Opportunities & Challenges
Session 1G: Vertical Sustainability: Design and Engineering for the Environment
Thursday, 10 November

Building a high-rise is particularly important in dense urban areas where land is a limited and highly valued resource. In this context, tall buildings offer a viable solution, and not only from an economic perspective.
Tall Buildings in Numbers

CTBUH Awards Program: 20 Years

Twenty Years of Recognizing Tall Excellence

The CTBUH Awards program honors projects and individuals that have made extraordinary contributions to the advancement of tall buildings and the urban environment, and that achieve sustainability at the highest and broadest level. Winners in all categories present their projects at the CTBUH 2022 International Conference, held in-person in Chicago on 9–12 November 2022, where the overall winner in each category is announced.

Timeline of the CTBUH Awards Program

This timeline evaluates the number of awards recognized each year and type of award. Throughout the years, awards have been given in over 20 categories for Best Tall Building, Urban Habitat, Innovation, Renovation, Interior Design, Construction, and Engineering.

CTBUH Awards, by Type (2002–2021)

- Best Tall Building: 266 (49%)
- Global Icon: 1 (< 1%)
- Innovation: 42 (8%)
- Individual: 80 (15%)
- Urban Habitat: 37 (7%)
- Specialty: 91 (17%)
- 10 Year: 24 (4%)

Between 2002 and 2016, CTBUH Award winners were recognized at the Annual Awards Symposium and Ceremony. In 2017, this format was changed to a multi-day Tall + Urban Innovation Conference, with the inaugural edition occurring in May 2018.

In 2010, Burj Khalifa won the Global Icon Award. It is still the only building to receive this unique distinction.

The 2022 Award winners are announced at the Awards Ceremony & Dinner, 11 November 2022.

The first five iterations of the CTBUH Awards Program only recognized individuals, not buildings.

Lynn Beedle receives first CTBUH Award (Later the Lynn S. Beedle Achievement Award).
Where is Tall Excellence Located?

The following graphics evaluate the location of CTBUH Award-winning projects. The number of awards in each region can vary, depending on the award category. For example, projects in Asia have received 38 percent of all Best Tall Building Awards (101), but have received a staggering 65 percent of all Urban Habitat Awards (24), with Singapore garnering 27 percent (10) alone.

Location of CTBUH Award Winners

This map evaluates the location of all Best Tall Buildings, Specialty Awards, Urban Habitat Awards, and 10 Year Awards. Projects that have won in four or more different categories are highlighted on the map.

1 Specialty Awards include: Performance Awards from 2014 through 2016; Construction Awards from 2018 to present; Façade Engineering, Fire & Risk Engineering, Geotechnical Engineering, Interior Design, MEP Engineering, Renovation, and the Structural Engineering Awards from 2019 to present.

2 Some projects recognized in the CTBUH Awards, particularly projects in the Urban Habitat categories, represent multi-building complexes. In these cases, statistics from the tallest building in the complex were taken.
CTBUH Fellow: Abbas Aminmansour

Abbas Aminmansour is a member of the Structures Concentration faculty and Chair of the Building Performance Program of the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the CTBUH’s International Journal of High-Rise Buildings (IJHRB) as well as a past Chair and current member of the Chicago Committee on High Rise Buildings (CCHRB).

What does it mean to you to be elected a Fellow of the Council?
CTBUH is the premier global organization in tall buildings and urban habitat. To be recognized by the Council as a Fellow is a high honor for me and I am most grateful for this recognition.

How did you get involved with the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat?
I was the founding managing editor of CTBUH Review. My University of Illinois colleagues, Professors Mir Ali, Paul Armstrong, and I published the first few editions of the Journal. But the first major CTBUH event that I attended was the Venice workshop in 2010. That is where I met current President Antony Wood and CTBUH Research Manager Dario Trabucco. I made a few recommendations at the Venice workshop, which the Council followed up on later. One idea was providing seed funding for research, and the other was an international student competition.

What do you think is the most interesting development in tall buildings in your profession or line-of-work?
For me as a professor, it is offering courses and programs that help develop future professionals in the field. My academic unit, the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois, now offers multiple courses in the design of tall buildings. We even offer a certificate program in the design of tall buildings. My hope is that we continue to have graduates that will become movers and shakers in tall building design, as we have before.

What consumes your professional time these days?
As an educator, my goal is to get students interested in and excited about design and construction of tall buildings and their impact on the urban environment. Luckily, both CTBUH and its sister organization, CCHRB, have multiple activities that benefit students. Last month, I took 12 students to Chicago to attend the CCHRB’s annual seminar. They were all so excited to meet and learn from major figures in the field.

Since 2003, I have been offering a course at the University of Illinois with help from CCHRB, called Integrated Design and Construction of Buildings. The course showcases design and construction of some of the most monumental tall buildings around the world. We are fortunate to have as our guest presenters some of the globally recognized professionals in the field.

What do you think the world can learn from your city or the United States when it comes to tall buildings?
Chicago has been and continues to be a major center for design of tall buildings. Many of the new tall buildings are still designed by US firms, whether it is architectural, structural, MEP and fire safety, or other design disciplines. I expect that Chicago and the United States will continue to play this important role for years to come.

What is your vision for your next year of service at the Council?
Council CEO Javier Quintana de Uña has indicated that he intends to develop global activities that the Council Fellows play a major role in. I look forward to participating in and contributing to the activities of the Council in any way I can.

CTBUH Fellows: Abbas Aminmansour

CTBUH Fellow: Zhendong Wang

Zhendong Wang, PhD, has been an enthusiastic academic supporter and collaborator of CTBUH for many years. He is a China National First Grade Registered Architect, and a Professor and Doctoral Student Supervisor at College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University, Shanghai. He has assisted with Academic Affairs at the CTBUH China Office, and is a Co-Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of High-Rise Buildings (IJHRB).

Wang is active in various CTBUH committees, including the Expert Chinese Translation Committee (2014–Present), the Tall Building Academic & Teaching Committee, as a member (2018–Present), and the Future Leaders Committee, Shanghai, as a board member (2017–Present). He has been active as a presenter, juror and session chair at conferences for the Council. Wang also plays an important role in supporting the CTBUH Research and Academic programs, which give students and researchers the opportunity to showcase their work on a global platform.

Professionally, Wang focuses on the research of mixed-use complexes and tall buildings, as well as collaborative development of dense urban habitat. He authored the books Research on the Contemporary Mixed-Use Complex and Research on the Synergy of Mixed-use Complexes, and has published more than 50 papers on this subject area. He has also hosted or been involved in numerous large public building and urban design projects.

During the past 14 years, he was chosen as a representative from Tongji University to support architectural education at Xinjiang University, and has published more than 20 teaching research papers. He has led students to win more than 30 national and international design competitions.
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ISSN: 1946 - 1186