

NEWS RELEASE: THE COUNCIL FOR EUROPEAN URBANISM (CEU) AND SOS PARIS

Expert Groups Warn about Towers in Paris

Proposed towers likely to damage long-term sustainability, local identity, economic viability

For Immediate Release

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PARIS AND NEW YORK, March 21, 2012: Tonight at the National Arts Club in New York City, the Council for European Urbanism (CEU), an international NGO dedicated to sustainable urban development, and SOS Paris, the Paris architectural preservationist organization, together announced the results of the CEU's study of the three high-rise towers the Paris City Council proposes for the 13th, 15th, and 17th arrondissements of Paris.

Except for a period after World War II, new towers have always been banned in mid-rise Paris. After negative public reaction to the 1973 Tour Montparnasse, strict height limits were enacted again in 1977, and they lasted nearly 40 years. In July 2008, however, the Paris City Council revoked the ban and authorized construction of six tower projects, including the three projects that have already been moving forward, which are those the CEU studied.

The CEU white paper reports their team of experts found:

- The City's claims that new tall buildings are needed to achieve adequate numbers of housing units are unsupported. In particular, the CEU found no evidence that such projects will add a greater number of housing units than might be achieved with traditional mid-rise Parisian buildings.
- Claims for economic growth may be modestly supported in the short term, based upon the City's own assumptions, but they are counter-balanced by likely greater long-term damage to the economic attractiveness of the city.
- Claims that tall buildings will promote sustainability are unsupported, since the buildings utilize experimental approaches to sustainability and, at the same time, evidence for sustainability on a larger urban scale is small.
- Towers will create a visible alteration to the skyline, impacting the economic value of the city's heritage tourism industry.
- These tall buildings may be in violation of Article 6 of the Venice Charter, which is intended to conserve monuments such as the historic center of Paris.
- The proposed projects follow a "CIAM Modernist" model of urban structure that is in marked contrast to the fine-grained, human-scaled, structure of the traditional center of Paris. Claims that the new structure is more "authentic" in a "modern age of sustainability" are without merit.
- The City of Paris could achieve its announced objectives without building towers and, in addition, the sites it has chosen could be far better utilized.

Finally, the white paper urges that an international conservation body such as UNESCO, ICOMOS, or the World Monuments Fund should commission a major review of the likely social,

economic, and environmental consequences of the proposed tower projects in Paris.

The CEU's white paper arises out of a fact-finding visit to Paris and meetings with SOS Paris, in October, 2011. At that time, a group of CEU and SOS Paris members toured the sites of tower developments at Clichy-Batignolles in the 17th arrondissement and Paris Rive Gauche in the 13th arrondissement, and then held a joint meeting.

“We are delighted to receive the findings of the CEU,” said Jan Wyers, a long-time resident of Paris and Secretary-General of SOS Paris. “The City Council's proposals for towers make a number of claims about sustainability and economic development, and we are glad the CEU evaluated those carefully. We cannot afford to make a terrible mistake that will leave future generations much poorer, in more ways than one. That would certainly not be a ‘sustainable’ strategy.”

The Paris controversy about towers follows similar citizen opposition to new towers elsewhere in Europe. Criticism of the proposed 100-story Gazprom tower in low-lying Saint Petersburg helped to force that project out of the historic city center, and controversy has also surrounded the 72-story “Shard” tower in London.

The Full Study Is Available at: <http://www.sustasis.net/CEU-Paris.html>

About the Council for European Urbanism (CEU) <http://www.ceunet.org/>

The Council for European Urbanism (CEU) is a network of members comprising academic researchers, professional architects, urban planners, government officials, concerned citizens and others, dedicated to the well-being of present and future generations through the advancement of humane cities, towns, villages and countryside in Europe.

The CEU believes that European cities, their environs, and countryside are threatened by development trends which cause:

- **waste of natural and cultural resources**
- **social segregation and isolation**
- **the expansion of monofunctional uses/ single use zones**
- **the loss of local, regional, and national uniqueness and cohesion.**

The Council for European Urbanism is committed to an evidence-based approach to design and development, informed by research, and by the lessons of history, embodied in the successes and failures of European urbanism.

About SOS Paris, Paris preservationist organization

<http://sosparis.free.fr> (French) <http://tinyurl.com/SOSParisNet> (English)

Founded in 1973 to oppose President Georges Pompidou's plan to build highways along the banks of the Seine, SOS Paris has defended the historic beauty of Paris for nearly 40 years. Exerting its 1,000 members' special competence in tracking building permits and other government actions, and relying on the broad reach among French journalists of its quarterly members' Bulletin, SOS Paris refuses to let politicians and technocrats diminish Paris outside public view. SOS Paris, often in concert with other preservationist organizations, has forced the government to suspend many destructive projects, including a North-South tunnel underneath Paris with many exits in the city center, a stadium in the Bois de Vincennes and, most recently, selling the Hotel de la Marine, a national gem on the historic Place de la Concorde, used as Navy headquarters for many years, to a commercial developer of hotels.

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