

Press release  
Thursday 22 August 2019  
UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 10.00AM GMT

## **LAUNCH: TORANOMON-AZABUDAI TOKYO HEATHERWICK STUDIO DESIGNS A GIGANTIC PLANTED PERGOLA TO CREATE A NEW DISTRICT IN THE HEART OF THE CITY**



Visualisation of the east side of Toranomon-Azabudai, Tokyo.  
Pergola structure, landscape and podium architecture by Heatherwick Studio with towers by PCP.  
Render © DBOX for Mori Building Co.

Construction has begun on an innovative redevelopment of the Toranomon-Azabudai district of Tokyo. A ground-breaking ceremony was held on August 5 2019 and the project is due to complete in March 2023. It is Heatherwick Studio's first project in Japan to go into construction.

Situated in the Minato City of Tokyo, the studio has designed the public realm and lower-level podium architecture, landscaping and retail for the site which includes a generous 6,000m<sup>2</sup> central landscaped square. Overall, the scheme includes a mix of office, residential, retail, a

school and a temple, all set within a new vibrant piece of urban topography to achieve Mori Building Company's ambition of creating an exceptional public district for the city. Around twenty-five to thirty million people per year are expected to visit the area.

Working with a complicated, irregular-shaped plot spanning more than eight hectares, the studio has sought to bring harmony and to create a distinctive identity that is particular to Tokyo. The team devised a pergola-like system scaled up to district proportions to organise and unify many different elements of various sizes. In this way, the design allows for significant green space both at ground level and climbing up the podium buildings, without sacrificing connectivity to the ground. Echoing the natural forms of the project's valley setting, the undulating structure rises like a gently sloping hillside before puncturing the ground to allow natural light to pour deep into the basement retail zones.

Traditional Japanese crafts have also been referenced such as the *Edo kiriko* glass etching technique to ensure the project feels distinctively Tokyo from even the smallest, human-scale details.

**Thomas Heatherwick, Founder of Heatherwick Studio, said:**

*"It's been very exciting working on the Toranomom-Azabudai project and much of our effort has been focused on designing the public spaces that everyone will experience when they spend time in this new area. As many new developments around the world can be harsh and sterile we wondered if we could provide a more human-centred alternative by integrating surprisingly intense quantities of planting and greenery."*

*"As a way of combining an architectural construction system with significant amounts of nature we developed the idea of a garden pergola scaled up to district size. This concept has allowed us to bring an overarching logic to an eight-hectare piece of Tokyo whilst also making space for facilities such as housing, shops, hotels, spas, a school and a temple within the sections framed by the grid."*

**Neil Hubbard, Group Leader at Heatherwick Studio, said:**

*"It's been a remarkable period over the last four years to work with Mori Building Company, to create this new part of Tokyo – going beyond the norms of typical large mixed-use developments to create something meaningfully embedded within the city."*

*"Our design for the project responds to the layering of Tokyo; the juxtapositions of scale and the character of buildings that draw the eye upwards. Set within a natural valley, we have chosen to accentuate that topography through our design, creating an undulating arrangement that uses a pergola-like structural system to create a variety of landscape spaces, from hidden gardens to sunken courtyards. Weaving and flowing through the scheme, a family of pavilions emerges from the grid of the pergola. Rather than focus on one single impression, we hope to encourage exploration by creating hundreds of moments to be revealed and discovered."*

**Download media pack:**

<https://heatherwick.egnyte.com/fl/37LwieFTJH>

## Heatherwick Studio Project team credits:

### Core team:

Founder: Thomas Heatherwick  
Group Leader: Neil Hubbard  
Project Leader: Michael Lewis  
Project Manager: Etienne de Vadder

### Project facts:

Client: Mori Building Company Ltd

Site area: 8.1 hectares approx.  
Ground area: 63,910 m<sup>2</sup>  
Green area: Total site green area 24,000 m<sup>2</sup>  
Central plaza 6,000m<sup>2</sup>

Height of Pergola: 43m, 6 floors below ground, 7 floors above ground

Sustainability: RE100 international environmental standard;  
Japan's first zero-emission neighbourhood;  
Aims to achieve WELL Building Standard

Construction start: August 2019  
Expected completion: Spring 2023

-ENDS-

### Media enquires

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## Notes to Editors

### About Heatherwick Studio

Heatherwick Studio is a team of 200 problem solvers dedicated to making the physical world around us better for everyone. Based out of our combined workshop and design studio in central London, we create buildings, spaces, masterplans, objects and infrastructure. Focusing on large scale projects in cities all over the world, we prioritise those with the greatest positive social impact.

Working as practical inventors with no signature style, our motivation is to design soulful and interesting places which embrace and celebrate the complexities of the real world. The approach driving everything is to lead from human experience rather than any fixed design dogma.

The studio's multi award-winning completed projects include Zeitz MOCAA, the conversion of a disused grain silo into a new museum for contemporary art in South Africa; a 16-storey landmark for Hudson Yards known as the Vessel; the Learning Hub at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University; and the UK Pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo 2010.

The studio is currently working on approximately 30 live projects in ten countries. Projects under construction include a new park and performance space, Pier55, in the Hudson River, New York and a new major headquarters for Google in both King's Cross and Silicon Valley (in collaboration with BIG). The studio is also working on the design of Changi Airport's new Terminal 5 in Singapore (with KPF) which will add an initial capacity of up to 50 million passengers per year.

[www.heatherwick.com](http://www.heatherwick.com)