

Nobel Center architectural competition

Summary of Stage 1

Background

Ever since the Nobel Foundation was established in 1900, there have been plans for a Nobel Prize building where the Nobel Laureates and their achievements could be presented to the general public.

Under an agreement between the Nobel Foundation and the City of Stockholm in December 2011, the idea of a public building for the Nobel Prize will now become a reality. The City of Stockholm is providing a site on the Blasieholmen peninsula in central Stockholm where a new Nobel Center will be built to serve as a meeting place in the spirit of the Nobel Prize. At the initiative of the Nobel Foundation, a company known as Nobelhuset AB has been established in order to implement the building project.

The cost of the Nobel Center is estimated at a total of SEK 1.2 billion at 2011 cost levels. Thanks to donations from the Erling-Persson Family Foundation and the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation in June 2013, much of the financing for the Nobel Center has been secured. Together these donors are contributing SEK 800 million.

The Nobel Prize, the achievements and life stories of the Nobel Laureates and future prospects in the Nobel Prize fields serve as a rich source on which the Nobel Center will base its activities. The Center will be open to visitors, with spaces for exhibitions, school programmes, events, meetings, a library, restaurant and shop, as well as parking facilities. The building will also house a large auditorium, where the annual Nobel Prize Award Ceremony can take place. In addition, the Nobel Center will serve as the home of the Nobel Foundation and the activities that the Foundation initiates for research, knowledge development and digital media. The ambition is to make the Nobel Center one of Stockholm's most attractive destinations, with at least 600,000 visitors per year.

Competition assignment

Aim of the competition

Through Nobelhuset AB, in June 2013 the Nobel Foundation announced a two-stage invitational architectural competition. The aim of the competition is to produce a proposal for a new building to house the Nobel Center and to identify the architect who can develop and implement the project over the next several years in close cooperation with the client.

Submission requirements, Stage 1

The first stage of the competition covered the main concept, general allocations and design of the building and its relationship with the surrounding environment.

Those who submitted proposals were asked to enable the jury to assess the contextual, architectural and organisational qualities of the project, with the following main objectives:

- To find a solution for the approach of the Nobel Center to the urban context and the waterfront
- To find the concept for the overall architectural design of the Nobel Center
- To present the principal functions of the Nobel Center and their relationship to each other
- To demonstrate how the Nobel Center can contribute new values or strengthen the existing values of the Blasieholmen peninsula in a way that compensates for the changes in the urban landscape that the project will represent

Implementing the competition

Selection of competing architects

During the autumn of 2012, Nobelhuset AB initiated a process for selecting the architects who would be invited to participate in the competition. There was an ambition to achieve a breadth among the architects, with internationally well-known names as well as smaller offices. Swedish and international contacts with a good knowledge and overview in the field suggested names of 170 architects who might conceivably have suitable experience to design the Nobel Center. After writing to all of these architects and inquiring whether they were interested in participating in the competition, Nobelhuset AB finally received 142 Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from architects spread across 25 countries and four continents. A specially appointed evaluation committee was then assigned to review all the EOIs that had been submitted, based on the following criteria:

- Design talent
- Knowledge and experience of working in an intricate urban environment where the natural setting and the historical context must be considered with sensitivity
- Practical ability to develop the project in close cooperation with the client over a long planning process

Twenty architects were invited to personally appear before the evaluation committee, and twelve selected architects were then recommended by the committee as participants in the competition.

The evaluation committee consisted of:

Anders Nylander (Chairman), M.Sc.Eng., Former Managing Director, Atrium Ljungberg

Olov Amelin, Museum Director, Nobel Museum

Siv Malmgren, Managing Director, John Mattsson AB

Karolina Keyzer, Architect, SAR/MSA, City Architect of Stockholm

Klas Ruin, Architect, SAR/MSA, Spridd Arkitektur AB

Kaarin Taipale, Architect, SAFA, Helsinki

Peter Ohrstedt (Secretary), Architect, SAR/MSA, Project Director, Nobelhuset AB

Competition structure and participants

The invitations were sent out to the selected architects on May 24, 2013 and the competition began with an initial seminar in Stockholm during June 13-15, 2013. One of the offices that were invited to participate withdrew (Herzog & de Meuron) and eleven architectural offices thus finally became competition participants.

The invited architects participating in the competition are:

Kim Herforth Nielsen, 3XN Architects, Denmark
Bjarke Ingels, BIG Bjarke Ingels Group A/S, Denmark
David Chipperfield and Christoph Felger, David Chipperfield Architects Berlin, Germany
Johan Celsing, Johan Celsing Arkitektkontor AB, Sweden
Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, Lacaton & Vassal Architectes, France
Lene Tranberg, Lundgaard & Tranberg Arkitekter A/S, Denmark
Marcel Meili and Markus Peter, Marcel Meili, Markus Peter Architekten AG, Switzerland
Rem Koolhaas and Reinier de Graaf, OMA, Netherlands
Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, SANAA, Japan
Kjetil Thorsen, Snøhetta Oslo A/S, Norway
Gert Wingårdh, Wingårdh Arkitektkontor AB, Sweden

By the end of the Stage 1 competition period on September 30, 2013, all eleven architectural offices had submitted proposals that were approved for assessment by the jury.

During the first stage of the competition, the proposals were submitted under anonymous mottos. The jury was entrusted with selecting two to five proposals, which will be invited to continue to Stage 2. After that, the anonymity of the proposals ended. During the rest of the competition process, this will enable the jury both to listen to presentations by the architectural offices behind the proposals and convey the opinions that the jury reached during their Stage 1 assessment. It will also open the way for a well-informed public discussion.

Proposals submitted during Stage 1 are receiving a fee of SEK 200,000 and those continuing to Stage 2 will receive SEK 400,000.

Jury, administrators and experts

The jury assessing the competition proposals consists of eleven individuals with expertise in architecture, museum activities, construction and real estate matters and Nobel activities – a broad range of specialised knowledge that is of value to the Nobel Center. The jury was appointed by Nobelhuset AB after a dialogue with the Nobel Foundation.

The jury consists of the following eleven individuals:

Lars Heikensten, Ph.D., Executive Director, Nobel Foundation (Chairman of the Jury)
Olov Amelin, Ph.D., Museum Director, Nobel Museum
Lars Drangel, M.Sc.Eng., Ramsbury Property AB
Marika Hedin, Ph.D., Museum Director, Vasa Museum (newly appointed Director, Museum Gustavianum, Uppsala)

Gunnar von Heijne, Ph.D., Professor of Theoretical Chemistry, Stockholm University, former member of the Nobel Committee for Chemistry
Karolina Keyzer, Architect, SAR/MSA, City Architect of Stockholm
Anders Nylander, M.Sc.Eng., Former Managing Director, Atrium Ljungberg AB
Harriet Wallberg, M.D., Ph.D., Professor, Former Vice-Chancellor, Karolinska Institutet
Per Wästberg, Writer, Member of the Swedish Academy

Professional judges appointed on the basis of recommendations from the Swedish Association of Architects:

Inga Varg, Architect, SAR/MSA, Partner, Rosenbergs Arkitekter AB
Elizabeth Hatz, Architect, SAR/MSA, Lecturer, Royal Swedish Institute of Technology

Juhani Pallasmaa, Professor and Architect, SAFA, has served as a special advisor to the jury.

In addition, the following outside specialists have assisted the jury with technical, environmental and financial assessments:

Cost estimates: Projektbyrån, Jonas Hellström
Environment and energy: Bengt Dahlgren, Berth Olsson
Spatial estimates: Ahrbom & Partner Arkitektkontor, Pär Ahlbom

The jury's secretariat consists of Peter Ohrstedt, Architect, SA/MSA, Project Director, serving as rapporteur and Elsa Thambert, Project Coordinator, serving as secretary to the jury.

During the anonymous phase of the competition, Eva Windrup, Nobel Museum, served as competition administrator, ensuring anonymity, handling the envelopes containing name labels and serving as a link between the jury and the competitors.

The competition brief

The Nobel Center Architectural Competition Brief, 2013-06-12 was distributed to the competitors during the initial seminar that began on June 13, 2013. Attached to the brief was a publication entitled "Blasieholmsudden and the surrounding waterfront. Conclusions: Historic and Spatial Qualities", compiled by the Stockholm City Planning Administration.

After a dialogue with the competitors during the initial seminar, on June 27, 2013 the list of requested documents to be submitted was enlarged to include, among other things, a scale model. At the same time, the competitors received a revised version of the scope of the competition area.

The competition brief and all of its appendices have been available in English and digitally downloadable by the competitors.

The competition brief without appendices has been available to the general public for downloading from the project's official website, www.nobelcenter.se.

The competition brief was developed with input from and the endorsement of the Board of Nobelhuset AB and was approved by the competition jury.

Timetable and deadlines

- Initial seminar, Stage 1: June 13-15, 2013
- Submission deadline, Stage 1: September 30, 2013
- Announcement of the jury's decision, Stage 1: November 15, 2013
- Initial seminar, Stage 2: November 2013
- Submission deadline, Stage 2: February 3, 2014
- Announcement of the winner: April 2, 2014 (preliminary)

Proposals assessed in Stage 1 of the competition

Eleven proposals were submitted by the deadline for Stage 1 of the competition. The competition administrator made sure that the documents submitted were labelled with a motto and that there was no obvious information that could break their anonymity. All the sealed name labels were placed in safe storage by the competition administrator.

The proposals that were submitted are listed below by their mottos, without any ranking:

- Butterfly
- Landing Seagulls
- Nobelhuset
- A P(a)lace to Enjoy
- Nobel Sphere
- Prism
- "We believe in the capability of a structure to engage activities and beings; to create society"
- The Space Between
- Beyond 1210
- Archipelago
- A Room and a Half

The work of the jury

The jury held an initial one-day meeting and three two-day meetings for Stage 1 assessment.

At the third meeting of the jury, the results of technical, environmental and cost assessments were presented.

At its fourth meeting on November 1, 2013, the jury decided which proposals should be selected to participate in Stage 2. After the statement of the jury had been signed, the envelopes containing name labels were opened by the competition administrator.

Assessment criteria

The jury's assessment of the competition proposals was based on the following criteria, listed in no particular order:

Architectural Design

- The building's design with regard to its surrounding urban environment and the large-scale cityscape
- The connection to and design of surrounding land and waterfront areas
- The design of the building's exterior and interior as a symbol for the Nobel Prize
- The design of and solution for the large auditorium with its specified functions
- The experiential qualities of the interior and exterior

Functionality

- Fulfilment of internal planning specifications
- The building's floor plan and ease of orientation
- The usability and flexibility of the facilities

Feasibility

- Estimated total project costs in relation to the given cost ceiling for the project
- Operating and life-cycle costs
- Buildability, robust and reliable technical solutions
- Design that takes into consideration the cultural and historical value of the site and national interests
- Design to meet the strict demands of the BREEAM environment rating system