

Munich (EXPO REAL), 24 October 2006

## **EXPO REAL**

### **DIFA-AWARD 2006 for Europe's best quarter goes to Aker Brygge in Oslo**

**Quarters in Chemnitz and Leipzig awarded 2nd and 3rd prize in this property competition / Special award for the Schipperskwartier in Antwerp**

The DIFA-AWARD 2006 for Europe's best quarter goes to Norway: At the EXPO REAL commercial property show in Munich, the Aker Brygge district of Oslo was awarded this hotly contested property prize for offering the highest quality of life in Europe. Established by Hamburg-based DIFA Deutsche Immobilien Fonds AG, the competition also recognised the Neue Mitte quarter in Chemnitz and the Am Karl-Heine-Kanal area of Leipzig as exceptional inner-city regeneration projects, placing them 2nd and 3rd respectively. The Schipperskwartier development in Antwerp received a special award for its integrative approach to town planning. A total of 75 completed quarters from around 50 towns and cities in 16 European countries submitted entries for the DIFA-AWARD 2006. The winners of this second Europe-wide comparison of quarters share 40,000 euros in prize money.

This year, the DIFA-AWARD recognised outstanding urban development projects which have enhanced the built environment by offering stimulating work and living space and boosting visitor numbers. "High-quality projects such as Aker Brygge – which foster a strong identity and combine old and new architecture in a creative way – give our cities the edge they need to attract more workers, tourists and investment capital," says Dr. Frank Billand,

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DIFA Management Board and international jury member. "Aker Brygge, a classic conversion project, is exemplary in the way a strong alliance has been created to boost Oslo's growth."

### **New city centre for Oslo**

In the Norwegian capital, the revitalisation of disused industrial areas began in the late 1970s, well before similar activities got under way in Germany in the late 80s and 90s. The shipyards of Aker Brygge lost their importance when the production of offshore drilling platforms increasingly moved to the country's west coast. New uses for the area were sought and construction work on one of the most important projects for the future of this port city began in 1984. The planning objective of creating a truly urban quarter while retaining the character of the former port district has definitely been achieved: In the shape of Aker Brygge, the city has gained a new centre which is enjoyed by Oslo residents and visitors alike. "Quality of life is enhanced by a successful mix of uses together with an exciting blend of architecturally impressive new buildings and converted landmark properties," says Dr. Billand. The area now attracts six million visitors a year, with the new city centre providing more jobs than during the shipbuilding days.

### **Recognition for vibrant urbanity in Eastern Germany**

Two projects in Germany were identified as examples of particularly successful development policies, with the Neue Mitte quarter in Chemnitz and Leipzig's Am Karl-Heine-Kanal area being awarded second and third prize respectively in the 2006 competition. The jury noted that a vibrant centre has been realised

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in Chemnitz in just eight years, creating a successful combination of retail and office space, restaurants, housing, cultural and leisure facilities together with a highly distinctive urban identity. The jury particularly commended the way the history of Chemnitz has been treated by integrating existing cultural monuments into the new city centre. Referring to the Am Karl-Heine-Kanal quarter in Leipzig, the jury likewise highlighted the fact that a vibrant urbanity had emerged which was enhanced by a careful balance of uses. Business partners helped implement an ambitious project in Leipzig that was notable for a sympathetic approach to revitalising the city's waterways.

The expert jury presented a special award to the Schipperskwartier in Antwerp. Today, the crime rate in the Belgian port's formerly notorious red light district is virtually nil. The apparent incompatibility of various uses has been successfully reconciled thanks to the city's active involvement: Town planning measures and public investment, private investment in the form of new build activity and renovation have, in the jury's opinion, made a unique contribution to rehabilitating and stabilising the quarter.

Hamburg-based DIFA Deutsche Immobilien Fonds AG, a property fund manager and member of the Union Investment Group, established the DIFA-AWARD in 2001. This bi-annual prize is awarded to European real estate projects which have made a lasting contribution to urban quality of life. The DIFA-AWARD enjoys international recognition among local authority decision-makers and property market players who are committed to sustainable urban development in Europe.

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**An overview of the 14 best-placed quarter projects in the DIFA-AWARD 2006 – examples of successful urban renewal, regeneration and growth in Europe – can be accessed online at [www.difa.com](http://www.difa.com).**

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