

Firms friendly to environment, employees and consumers

By WANG JINHUI
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Companies in Xiamen now take energy conservation and sustainability as key strategies in their development.

Developed by Philippines-based SM Group, one of the leading shopping malls in the city has maintained a low-carbon concept since it opened in 2001.

"We are not only looking for the present customers, but also future ones," said Ronald Allan Brosas, assistant vice-president of SM China.

"We always make sure that the energy, air and water we consume meet the highest environmental standards," said Brosas.

Last July, the group installed solar panels at SM City Xiamen and SM Lifestyle, two high-end shopping malls in the city.

It is the first integrated photovoltaic effort at shopping centers in Xiamen and the only one to get funding help from the Fujian provincial government.

The effort was named "The 2013 Best Community Project" at the third China Charity Festival in January.

With an annual capacity of 1.28 million kilowatt hours, the solar systems are expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 1,000 tons annually.

"The solar panels function partly as a temperature controller of the buildings," he said.

The average temperature of a roof with solar panels is 7 C to 8 C lower in summer than roof without them, which in turn decreases a building's internal temperature by 2 C to 3 C, he said.

"We are able to save energy and improve efficiency," said Brosas.



SM Group has rooftop solar panels on its shopping malls in Xiamen.



Tastylife strives to expand the process of sustainable food by contributing to the health and needs of our customers."

WU WEILING
FOUNDER,
XIAMEN LEWEI TRADING CO

The group is also famed for an Earth Hour event in its 53 shopping malls worldwide every year.

Currently, SM has five malls in Chinese cities including Xiamen, Zibo in Shandong province, Tianjin, Changzhou and Yangzhou in Jiangsu province.

Another pioneer contributing to the city's sustainability is Xiamen Lewei Trading Co, a supermarket chain and e-commerce operation with the brand name 'Tastylife'.

Founded in 2010, the com-

pany offers imported organic and non-organic food for foreigners in Xiamen.

"Tastylife strives to expand the process of sustainable food by contributing to the health and needs of our customers," said Wu Weiling, founder of the company.

"We advocate the concept of 'farm to table,' which means providing green ingredients and the best food to our consumers. By doing this, they know how the food is produced," said Wu.

It also shows that every step in the food chain is organic, he said.

"We encourage farmers to use biological fertilizers or non-chemical approaches in sowing and planting, which I think is a growing trend in China and overseas," said Wu.

The company has its own farms in Xiamen and Quanzhou in Fujian province.

"We are planning more organic farms to meet the diverse demands of high-end customers," he said. Jan Laegaard Broni, general manager of Alu Rehab Co Ltd, a

Norway-based company specialized in tailor-made wheelchairs and accessories, said to achieve sustainable growth in Xiamen his company has maintained a progressive health and safety policy since it arrived 13 years ago.

"We adopt a 'people-oriented' strategy in management, and I have tried for many years to get our workers and employees voluntarily to use protective means in the work environment.

"They are encouraged to wear safety glasses, earplugs and shoes in workshop," said Broni, who is also the chairman of the Danish Chamber of Commerce in South China.

"Chinese history gives Xiamen an advantage in business environment and market transparency, and I am confident of the future growth," he said.

Broni said the company chooses materials that are recyclable, and applies high ethical standards in keeping relationships with suppliers, customers and local government.



PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The "Beautiful Xiamen" initiative started last September is designed to create an even more appealing environment for travelers, investors and local residents.

'Smart', sophisticated Xiamen

Already one of the nation's most advanced cities, it is increasingly wired for a high-quality future, **Hu Meidong** and **Li Fusheng** reports.

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One of the most livable cities nationwide, Xiamen in the southeastern coast of China's Fujian province is revitalizing itself into a top destination offering visitors from home and abroad a slow pace of life, shining subtropical sun, fresh seafood and fashionable malls.

"The city mixes the local Minnan traditions with modern elements, and integrates its natural resources and culture into urban development," said Huang Guobin, head of Xiamen's tourism bureau.

Surrounded by foothills, plateaus, rivers and blue sea, the 1,573-square-kilometer city on west of the Taiwan Strait was one of China's earliest trading ports. It was forced open to international commerce in 1842.

In 1980, the central government approved it as a special economic zone and expanded the area to 131 square kilometers two years later.

Today's Xiamen has developed into a thriving port, popular investment port and a vital transport hub connected to 80 countries and regions around the world.

As a logistics and distributing center in southeast China, the city links the

46.6
million
tourists last year

Yangtze River Delta, Pearl River Delta and the eastern coast of the Taiwan Strait, and plays a key role in boosting the economic development of the region.

Xiamen is also home to thousands of overseas Chinese, foreigners and more than 20 ethnic groups including Miao, Zhuang, Shen, Man and Gaoshan.

Its geographic advantage, strong economy and historical heritage have endowed the city with diverse styles, experiences, and both Western and Eastern relics, Huang said. "The temperament of the city is inclusive, quiet and romantic."

Different from other coastal cities in China, Xiamen opens all its beaches to tourists, and no buildings taller than 7 meters are allowed to be built at the beaches, he said. To preserve the natural environment, the local government requires all heavy industries to locate outside the city, Huang said.

Last year, Xiamen received more than 46.6 million tourists, up 13 percent from 2012. Revenue generated by tourism industry reached 62 billion yuan (\$10.16 billion), accounting for 9 percent of the city's total GDP.

More than 24.5 million people visited the city in the first half of this year, up 13.6 percent year on year, with revenue surpassing 34.28 billion yuan.

Among all scenic spots in Xiamen, Gulangyu Island has the highest tourist density, totaling 9.72 million per square kilometer last year.

"The island is a symbol of Xiamen's historical vicissitude and also represents its marine civilization," said Huang.

After the first Opium War in 1840, foreign intruders occupied Xiamen, and started to build telegraph offices, banks, shipping companies, churches and consulates in Gulangyu.

In the following century, the island turned into a semi-colony of more than 10 foreign countries including the Britain, France, Spain, Japan and Germany.

That disgraced history is today replaced by scenes of thriving businesses, mixed cultures, beaches, pianos, winding lanes, specialties and more than 1,440 varieties of architecture.

Renamed as the "Museum of Thousands of Countries", Gulangyu Island will be a candidate for listing as a World Heritage site list in 2016.



Local residents vote on issues that matter to their community.

Communities for life and leisure

By WANG JINHUI
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Lu Zhaofang never thought the shabby residential area of Siming district in Xiamen could one day become his new home for life and leisure.

But Jiuzhuxiang, one of the oldest residential areas in Zhenhai community, has undergone great changes and been renamed the "Golden Dream Residence".

"Those changes are not only about house renovation or infrastructure, but also remarkable details made in our living environment," said the 75-year-old, who has lived in the area for more than 25 years.

"In less than one year, we could no longer see scenes such as derelict grounds, potholed roads, dirty walls or garbage sites.

"They have been replaced by sport facilities, flowers and trees, delicate balconies and cultural corridors," said Lu.

Han Xinwei, a resident in the neighboring Ruiquan Resort in the community, said she also feels comfortable in her new environment.

"With surveillance cameras in every corner, our community reported zero robbery cases recently.

"More importantly, the chaos of private cars has been tackled thanks to more than 35 new parking lots," she said.

The improvements in Jiuzhuxiang and Ruiquan are two examples of the "Beautiful Xiamen" project begun last June. The project aims to build Xiamen into a modern and livable city with natural beauty and cultural charms. "The initiative to renovate the Zhenhai community is in line with the core of the project,

which is to create a better life for local residents," said Su Jiangzhen, Party secretary of the community.

Built in 1980s, the community is home to more than 300 households. More than 80 percent of the buildings have had no property management for many years.

"So we established a self-management system under which residents are entitled to select their own representatives who are responsible for making decisions, supervision and negotiations," he said.

Su said that democracy and communication play a vital part in advancing the renovation in the community.

"At the beginning, it is difficult to make everyone satisfied with the changes. To get everyone involved, we use surveys and micro blogs to listen voices from all sides," said Su.

Authorities in Xiamen, Fujian province are advocating a sustainable development model to guarantee a better quality of life for residents by transforming the local economy, improving management systems and adopting environmentally friendly policies.

Known as "Beautiful Xiamen", the strategic plan was proposed last September and has already shown its appeal to foreign capital.

The city's contractual foreign investment in the first five months totaled \$1.76 billion yuan, nearly 88 percent of the goal set for the year.

A number of key projects are still under negotiation, 45 of them foreign-funded with a total potential investment value of \$5.4 billion, according to the government's website.

Officials said the improved business environment makes it easier to pass administrative procedures, aided by the Xiamen administrative service center that became operational in late 2012.

Housing more than 1,100 clerks from 96 government departments, the center examines applications in terms of economic value, construction and social impacts as well as demands on public resources.

It has 600 items on the service list, more than 94 percent of the city's total public and administrative services. It handled 1.6 million applications in 2013 and received more than

10,000 people on the busiest day. One senior official called the center's efficiency as one of the "biggest highlights" of the city government's work in the past two years.

The government is also making Xiamen a "smart city" after integrating high-tech systems and encouraging the use of information.

Among the many initiatives is the city's WeChat social networking account used to provide residents with timely information from various departments.

Its first administrative WeChat account — called the Xiamen Smart Traffic Control Center — began operation in January 2013.

The first and the largest of its kind in China, it now has more than 252,000 followers.

Xiamen is also one of the first cities to build a 4G Wi-Fi network in China.

Some 95 percent of local residents are expected to have access to the wireless network by 2015 whether they are at home, in an office or aboard public transport vehicles.

"Use of information relies on investment and marketing. But the content we provide is most important," said Liang Feng, an official from Xiamen municipal government. "We will provide our residents with complete information experience centers and let them decide what they actually need. And an after-sale service system will also be established."

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million
invested in the city's information infrastructure last year



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REN GUOYAN
CHIEF PLANNER,
MUNICIPAL PLANNING BUREAU

impetus to the creative industry in the coming years.

As the city makes rapid economic progress, the city's environment and heritage are under protection.

"Our ancestors have left us many precious buildings that constitute an important part of the childhood memories of people born in the city and we are working out plans to preserve them," said Ren Guoyan, chief planner of the Xiamen Municipal Bureau of Planning.

In Licang district alone, more than 200 volunteer teams with more than 30,000 participants are helping protect the environment since the Beautiful Xiamen plan was proposed.

City officials said Xiamen will develop more advanced one-stop public service systems and give



A group of businesspeople from Taiwan consider investment opportunities in Xiamen.



Despite the achievement, Xiamen officials say it is not the time to rest. Instead, they will further strengthen their efforts to realize long-term plans.

One goal is to make the city "an example of beautiful China by the end of 2021", the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party.

The plan calls for the average annual disposable income of urban residents to reach 65,000 yuan (\$10,712), that for rural resident to hit 25,000 yuan and the per capital GDP will rise to \$25,000, double the 2012 level. The average life expectancy will increase to 81.

From that baseline, local authorities will move on to establish the

city "as an example of the Chinese Dream in 2049", the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

By then the city aims to be at the same level with its peers in developed countries in terms of GDP, living standards and other indicators.

Other goals in the plan include

making Xiamen an internationally well-known garden city, the center of southern Fujian province, the gateway to Cross-Straits communication and "an open city filled with happiness".

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Xiamen is famed for its picturesque setting, investment-friendly climate and close bonds with Taiwan.