

Many interior designers choose to manage risk and make themselves more marketable by diversifying their areas of practice. But more are branching out geographically, as well — from Eastern Asia to Western India to the Middle East. *Perspective* has identified five cities spanning the globe that boast vigorous expansion and burgeoning building activity.

While each city has its own unique culture and style, there are common threads that join them together from an interior design standpoint. Sustainability is a major driver in all of the selected cities. “Every company we’ve worked with in these locations is committed to making sure our design solutions are as sustainable as we can push them,” says Jaime Velez, IIDA, Principal in the Interiors Group of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in Chicago.

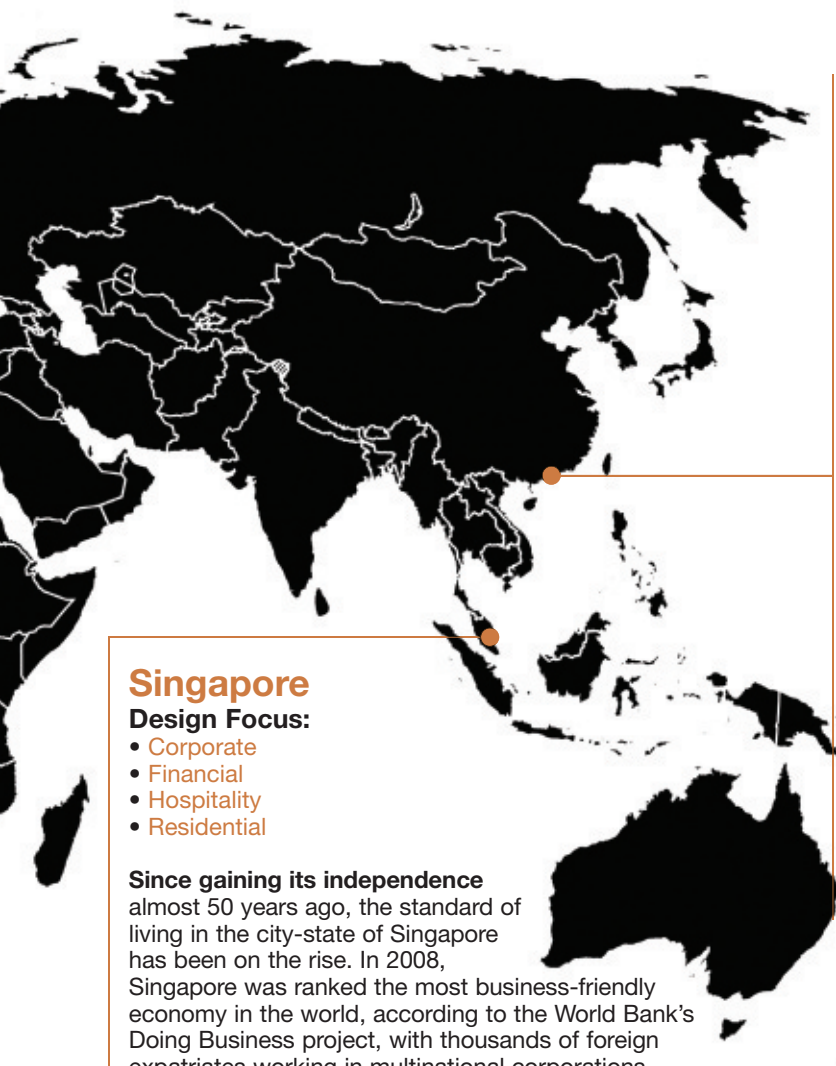
Each city also boasts a vibrant economy with deep-pocketed developers who are willing to spend money on “forward-thinking solutions,” Velez says. “They’re not as bottom-line oriented as U.S. businesses are at the moment.” Another area of common ground: diverse workforces, often with equal numbers of foreign and local employees on staff. That demands keen design sensitivity to cultural and religious differences.

Perhaps the most common thread of all? No matter the city, where there is substantial new construction growth, there is likely a high demand for interior designers and the services they provide.



By Deborah Silver

Around the World



Singapore

Design Focus:

- Corporate
- Financial
- Hospitality
- Residential

Since gaining its independence

almost 50 years ago, the standard of living in the city-state of Singapore has been on the rise. In 2008, Singapore was ranked the most business-friendly economy in the world, according to the World Bank's Doing Business project, with thousands of foreign expatriates working in multinational corporations.

- **In 2007**, Singapore's economy grew 7.5 percent, reported Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his 2008 New Year's address. The government expected the economy to grow as much as 6.5 percent in 2008.
- **Its construction sector** expanded 20 percent in 2007, with demand jumping 46 percent, primarily a result of record high private-sector demand. New hotels, office buildings, residential condominiums, shopping malls and industrial facilities are all in demand.
- **The largest jump** in service industries in 2007 came from the financial services sector, up 17 percent, largely offsetting a slowdown in the manufacturing sector.

Guangzhou, China

Design Focus:

- Exhibition
- Hospitality
- Institutional

Also known as Canton, the port city of Guangzhou, the eighth most populous city in China, is rapidly becoming an economic powerhouse. That status will be ensured in six years, when a major \$12.6 billion railway connecting the less-developed Guizhou Province's capital of Guiyang in China's southwest to Guangzhou is completed.

- **Guangzhou will host** the 16th Asian Games in 2010. That means a slew of construction projects are in the works, including the Zhujiang New Town Core Area, the Guangzhou Opera House, the Guangzhou New Library and the second phase of the Guangzhou University City, not to mention a 136-acre athlete village.
- **To accommodate** the expected increase in tourists for the games, the city expects to double its current number of five-star hotels to 24 by 2010.
- **The city is in the comment phase** for the design of the Guangzhou International Commodity Exhibition & Trade City, which is expected to be China's largest trade center. When completed, it will house more than 62 million square feet of space.
- **When complete in 2010**, the Pearl River Tower, constructed and designed by SOM, will be the world's most energy-efficient corporate tower. The high-tech building will be a net-zero-energy skyscraper at 71 stories and 2.3 million square feet.



Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Design Focus:

- Mixed-use
- Corporate
- Hospitality
- Retail
- Transportation

Although the economy of Dubai was built on the back of the oil industry, revenues from oil and natural gas currently account for less than 6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP); most comes from trade, real estate and financial services. No matter the source, construction in and around Dubai is thriving. “Dubai is where the majority of our focus has been for the last two years because of its tremendous rate of growth,” says Robert Forest, AIA, LEED AP, Partner with Chicago-based Adrian Smith+Gordon Gill Architecture, whose current projects in Dubai amount to an estimated \$15 billion. Dubai also will soon boast the world’s tallest building, the Burj Dubai, to be completed in 2009.

- **Tourism will represent** an estimated 30 percent of the UAE’s GDP by 2015. To accommodate the influx, the city of Dubai plans to build as many as 50 hotels by then.
- **Construction of the massive** Dubai World Trade Centre is currently under way. When completed in 2010, it will include 2.6 million square feet of office space, more than 613,000 square feet of hotel space and more than 215,000 square feet of retail space.
- **In 2007**, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Dubai’s ruler, launched the Dubai Strategic Plan. Its goal is to sustain double-digit economic growth and achieve a GDP of \$108 billion by 2015 by creating new sectors of growth in tourism, transportation, construction and financial services.
- **The Sheikh** has mandated that all new buildings in Dubai follow international standards of sustainable design. The emirate has created a green building council, which is in the process of setting its own sustainability standards for the city’s buildings.
- **The retail explosion** in Dubai, currently home to 6,000 franchise holders in the retail sector, will lure more international and local brands into the region and help the franchise market grow by more than 20 percent annually, according to a report by Dubai-based consultant FranExcel.



Shanghai, China

Design Focus:

- Corporate
- Financial
- Hospitality

Shanghai's recent growth is remarkable by any standard, with the port city rapidly becoming Asia's biggest transport and commerce hub. Its ever-expanding skyline has earned it a reputation as a center for distinctive architecture and innovative design. While the city has long been the target of expansion, Shanghai is "reclaiming its historical stronghold as the hub of commerce in China and the gateway to Asia," according to MasterCard. Says Forest, "We've targeted it as an important place to be as an architecture and design firm."

- **Total office space** grew to 140 million square feet in 2008 from about 16.1 million in 1990, and is expected to increase to as much as 183 million square feet by 2010.
- **Investment in real-estate** development climbed 3.8 percent in the first half of 2008, according to Shanghai's municipal statistics bureau.
- **To accommodate** the expected influx of 70 million visitors to the World Expo 2010, as well as the city's continued growth as a commercial hub, hoteliers are flocking to Shanghai. Regal Hotels International recently set up its first regional office, Regal Hotels Management (Shanghai) Ltd., in the city. Other hoteliers moving into Shanghai include WORLDHOTELS AG, Wyndham Hotel Group International and Peninsula Hotels, which is returning after an absence of several decades.
- **Shanghai is ranked ninth** among worldwide centers of commerce in terms of financial flow and emerged as the 24th most influential center of commerce in the world, ahead of Beijing (No. 57), according to the 2008 Worldwide Centers of Commerce Index conducted by MasterCard. That translates into a sprawling skyline of new commercial office towers.

Mumbai, India

Design Focus:

- Corporate
- Financial
- Hospitality
- Mixed-use

Mumbai, the capital of the Indian state of Maharashtra, is a bustling metropolis experiencing astronomical development. "Mumbai is literally growing from the ground-level up," Forest says. "That growth is bringing the city into the 21st century at full speed." The city — the target of November terror attacks that killed at least 174 people — not only houses India's major financial institutions, including the Reserve Bank of India and the Bombay Stock Exchange, it also is home to the country's thriving information technology and film industries.

- **The average annual growth** of the Mumbai metropolitan area from 2006 to 2020 will exceed 2.3 percent. By 2020, its population is expected to reach nearly 26 million; by 2050, the United Nations predicts Mumbai will surpass Tokyo as the world's largest city.
- **Mumbai will add** more than 3,000 hotel rooms in the next three years to accommodate the city's rapid rise in tourism, according to the report "India Digest 2008" by global hotel investment service company Jones Lang LaSalle Hotels. Foreign visitor arrivals in 2007 grew to a 10-year high of 5 million.
- **Given the city's position** as a commercial hub, business travel is the key factor behind the growth in visits to Mumbai. The city is ranked 48th overall among the world's top commerce centers, according to the 2008 MasterCard Commerce Index.
- **By 2020**, Mumbai will be among the top 25 richest cities in the world. To accommodate that status and its rapidly growing middle and upper classes, the city needs hotels, commercial structures and residential high-rises.