



# Sisters are doing it for themselves

**Nancy Zhang**

**T**hirty years of sister cities relationship has created a good environment for San Francisco businesses in Shanghai. The future for knowledge- and technology-driven companies from the area looks bright on this side of the world. As China's economy grows, Shanghai business investment in San Francisco is also increasingly anticipated.

"Historically the Bay Area of San Francisco was the gateway for trade and Chinese immigration in the United States," says Brenda Foster, president of AmCham Shanghai. "Therefore the relationship between the two cities, cemented by the sister cities relationship, would naturally play a major part in Sino-US relations since normalization 30 years ago."

According to Foster, when the

relationship was first established Shanghai looked to San Francisco for investment. But now San Francisco is increasingly looking to China for investment. Government agencies such as ChinaSF have been established to this end.

"Just as Shanghai wants to be the headquarters for US companies, so San Francisco wants to become the headquarters of choice for Chinese businesses," says Foster.

An increasingly important business trend is the emergence of the green technology industry. In "The China Greentech Report 2009" compiled by AmCham Shanghai in conjunction with consultancy PricewaterhouseCoopers, China's green tech market is expected to be worth US\$1.3 trillion by 2013. As one of the leading technology centers in China, Shanghai is set to be the focal point for the world's green tech growth.

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In addition to green industries, other knowledge-driven fields such as biotech, medical sciences and IT are also set to take off.

A major reason for this is the concentration of institutes of higher education in San Francisco such as UC Berkeley.

"The history of academic exchange of students and faculty has built up comfortable relationships that allow partnerships in business

using advanced technologies. In this respect San Francisco has become a model for other cities to follow," says Foster.

An example of a San Francisco company doing well in China is architecture firm Heller Manus. The firm was first inspired to be a part of China's growth story when its president, Jeffrey Heller, visited Shanghai in 2004. In 2006 they won a competition to design an office tower, the Eastern Harbor International Tower on Daming Road, Shanghai.

"The Shanghai-San Francisco cities relationship has been invaluable to our firm's growth," says Heller. "As a result of the long standing sister cities relationship, including the services of the Bay Area government and outreach organizations such as ChinaSF, we have been able to establish credibility with important decision

makers in China and greatly accelerate and expand our relationships and business profile here."

Today their 2006 project is nearing completion and has been awarded LEED Gold precertification — a rare achievement for high-rises in the city. (LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design and is a widely used standard for green buildings in the US and internationally).

Green and environmental design is a central concern in all the firm's projects and, according to Heller, this focus has given the firm a great deal of recognition from Chinese partners and governments, and room for growth in future.

"Our sustainable design philosophy has meshed extremely well with the policies of the Chinese government. The prospects for our company in Shanghai are immense," he adds.

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