CITY IN SCENES

MOMENTUM OF PLACE,
PEOPLE IN MOTION:

2011
Cities are made of scenes. Scenes that reflect how people move, congregate, pause, and adopt behaviors in the urban environment. These are the patterns that inspire our cityscapes.

***
Characters make entrances and exits from the stage of reality just as cities trace the contours of civilizations through time.

The currents of trade, conquest, and knowledge have, for millennia, propelled the history of the Mediterranean Basin. The people, architecture, and urban landscapes of its eastern port Beirut reframe, like a prism, the stories that have accrued on this land throughout the centuries.

Meditative and introspective, the Solidere Annual Report 2011 observes how people inhabit the spaces of Beirut city center. Just as the photography and text shed light on the trajectory of the built environment – its reconstruction, development, and future, so too does the Annual Report contemplate character and how individuals constitute architecture and place.

Seasoned photojournalist Ziyah Gafic captures the latent dialogue between people and architecture. His camera turns quietly around the corner to eavesdrop on soft chatter in a garden. He peers up an outdoor staircase to follow the clacking of heels. He tracks the rhythms of children gallivanting by the sea, professionals pacing to a business lunch, and employees performing the routines of the everyday. Gafic’s images, in a circumstance of scenes – about camaraderie, negotiation, patience, jubilation, memory, and uncertainty. The scenes evidence a paradoxical relationship to the built environment, a link as delicate and tenuous as it is deeply rooted in a complex history.

Whereas Gafic focuses on exterior and open spaces, Miguel Ángel Sanchéz communes with subjects through his renowned portraiture in the intimacy of a studio. Dozens of people who work and live in Beirut city center, people from various walks of life, sat before the camera of the Spanish sculptor cum photographer in spring 2012. His portraits are painterly and highly theatrical. In each image, an individual becomes a character – of Beirut, the Middle East, the Mediterranean Sea, and altogether the series conveys a constellation of identities, the refracting of a city.

Sunlight to back light, sidewalk to stool, architectural patterns to textures of skin, the geometry of urban infrastructure to the shapes of a facial expression: the Solidere Annual Report 2011 considers how the tides of history, of urban development, and of daily life find expression in the interrelationships between people and Beirut city center.
In the 1960s and early 1970s, Beirut stood as a beacon of modernity and tolerance, attracting tourists from around the world. At the same time, the city's legacy in trade and commerce helped confirm its role as the financial center of the Middle East.

The Lebanese war left the city center, the central arena of the conflict, reduced to rubble. When peace and stability returned in 1991, it was hard to imagine how nationals who had emigrated abroad, businesses that had established elsewhere, and tourists who had flown to other destinations would ever land on its shores again.

However, Lebanon’s economy remerged, fueled by a national recovery and development program based on public investments and a liberal economic policy to attract and stimulate both local and foreign investment. The vision, legislative, and preparatory steps for the development and reconstruction of Beirut city center started in 1992, and in 1994 a group of strategic thinkers, urban designers and planners, engineers and architects, craftspeople, legal minds, and financial specialists was entrusted with the task of rebuilding the heart of the country’s capital city.

The dream took off on Martyrs’ Square, an important site to the people of Beirut and Lebanon. A concert for the country’s national phenomenon Fayrouz drew an audience of more than 30,000. Beirut city center started to breathe new life. Construction began.

Restoration took the forefront by preserving as much of the distinctive architecture and cultural elements as possible. Through the years, archeology, heritage buildings, basalt and ancient street grids, green open spaces, and view corridors have been married with contemporary infrastructure and architecture, resulting in a dynamic environment.

There have been drastic changes in the world of real estate development. Too often, the end-user’s experience is no longer the focal point of urban development. The world is becoming populated by places that ignore local culture, traditions, and geography – places that have no identity of their own – places that all feel the same.

Solidere’s ambition and success focus on creating unique experiences for people that exceed expectations whatever the development, whether it is a city, public garden, or leisure destination. The long-term vision remains to nurture, improve, and manage a project beyond its completion because of the underlying belief that great places attract people, today and tomorrow.

Solidere has built a strong track record in creating places that hold long-term value for society as they respond to their context, culture, and climate – places where people want to be.

Over time, Solidere has received many requests from governments, municipalities, landowners, and investors around the world to help them emulate what was accomplished in Beirut city center. After defining its strengths, the Company sought out opportunities across an extended region through its global arm, Solidere International, and its subsidiaries.

Solidere International is a limited company in shares established in 2007 under the law of Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC), with a paid capital of USD 700 million. Solidere owns 39% of Solidere International.

Today, Solidere is one family of individuals and values that builds – and sustains – Places for Life.

Solidere is a joint-stock company with an initial capitalization of USD 1.82 billion, of which USD 1.17 billion were contributions in kind of property right holders and USD 650 million cash subscriptions following an oversubscribed Initial Public Offering (IPO) after the retirement of some 17 million shares in 1997. The Company’s capital currently stands at USD 2.40 billion.
Dear Shareholders,

Within the context of these transformational and eventful times, adaptability, proactivity, and diligence are key principles that drive our business. The Company on solid financial grounds and continues to deliver positive results while we remain focused on investment programs at home and abroad. As shared with you last year, our strategy is driven by sustainable shareholder value creation; we continue to add value to our land bank while remaining focused on diversification efforts through income-generating projects, geographic expansion, and assessment of new business lines.

The 2011 year saw Beirut city center further asserting its position as a regional destination and a thriving meeting point that has reinvigorated the capital and improved the quality of life. Following the inauguration of the southern part of Beirut Souks in 2010, the launch of Zaitunay Bay and the expansion towards the new Waterfront District opened a new horizon to the Mediterranean Sea. We strive to maintain this momentum as we anticipate the completion of several major new developments and nurture the growth of cultural and leisure attractions in the city center.

The Company reported net consolidated profits of US$ 158.8 million in 2011. The drop from the previous year is the result of a decrease in recognized land sales, which amounted to US$ 342 million compared to US$ 557 million in 2010, however at a higher profit margin due to greater sale prices. The four land sale transactions that materialized during the last quarter of 2011, combined with previous deals recognized during the year, encompass almost 67,000 sq m in built-up area. Moving forward, investors’ interest, particularly in the waterfront, remains high based on future potential and a strong belief in the country’s positive medium and long-term prospects, and several deals are in the pipeline.

Rental income increased as anticipated to US$ 49.9 million from US$ 41.2 million in 2010, and we expect this figure to keep on rising with the delivery of the northern part of Beirut Souks and other real estate projects. At the same time, charges on rented properties decreased by 2% from US$ 27 million to US$ 21 million as significant savings in maintenance and other property-related costs were achieved in spite of increasing property taxes and depreciation. In addition, the Company’s overall and administrative expenses decreased by 10%.

Accounts and notes receivable rose by 19% to US$ 111.3 million, and together with a cash balance of US$ 174.1 million, this more than offset the short-term bank facilities of US$ 220 million. The land bank, equivalent to 1.88 million sq m of built-up area, holds an estimated market value of approximately US$ 8 billion, while our portfolio of properties carries a net book value of US$ 444.6 million, with an estimated market value of US$ 1.2 billion.

According to financial results, the total net asset value of the Company is a multiple of current book value. Therefore, the listed share price, which dropped to around US$ 14 at the end of 2011, reflects an imbalance, whereby the Company’s shares are trading at a highly undervalued price relative to their true net asset value. This is mainly due to uncontrollable factors such as the current regional instability and subdued global economic climate that have resulted in a wary investor base and slower macroeconomic growth.

We have recently begun to focus our attention on the Waterfront District with the intention of completing infrastructure and landscaping within three to four years. We are distinguishing the district with several developments and initiatives that significantly enhance its connectivity to the rest of the city center. On the one hand, Zaitunay Bay launched its quayside restaurants, which have been bustling with activity, with the yacht club planned to open its doors in 2013. On the other, the district has become a major pedestrian outlet and a destination for sports enthusiasts and outdoor family recreation. Beirut Exhibition Center has also become a pillar of the regional art scene. Moving forward, the Waterfront District’s appeal will continue to increase as we anticipate the opening of several other entertainment and leisure projects in the coming twelve months.

Beirut Souks, now in its second year of operation, has become a regional and national shopping destination. The number of visitors has increased substantially, due to an effective communication strategy, the organization of festive events, a regular stream of activities, and cultural exhibits in its Venetian. This has led to continued interest from existing and new tenants to operate within the Souks. Enhanced as a further magnet of the Souks, the Entertainment Complex with its fourteen movie theaters is set to open in early 2013, and the design of the Department Store, also a Souks anchor, is underway.

Beirut city center has become a national and regional shopping destination. The number of visitors has increased substantially, due to an effective communication strategy, the organization of festive events, a regular stream of activities, and cultural exhibits in its Venetian. This has led to continued interest from existing and new tenants to operate within the Souks. Enhanced as a further magnet of the Souks, the Entertainment Complex with its fourteen movie theaters is set to open in early 2013, and the design of the Department Store, also a Souks anchor, is underway.

The Company continues to develop new revenue-generating assets that add value to the land bank. To that effect, we are assessing a number of projects designed by world-class architects – these include a state-of-the-art office building, residential development, hospitality attraction, and mixed-use development.

The year also witnessed Beirut city center as a destination for cultural and artistic events, refined gastronomy, and nighttime entertainment. Various one-round-stretch events were scheduled, and several new outlets have been launched by Solidere and other operators featuring renowned international chefs.

Furthermore, the Heritage Trail, which links the city’s various archeological and historical sites along a 2.5-km circuit, will be launched in 2012. These assets, essential

A Word from the Chairman

Nasser Chammaa
Chairman and Chief Executive

***
As we assess all these achievements, we remain diligent in steering the Company forward according to sound strategies and practices on all fronts, mindful of the existing geopolitical currents. Looking at the coming period, the management team has also developed plans to address additional softening of the market if regional events continue to exert a negative impact on demand for real estate products. We continue to appreciate the central role of our stakeholders in supporting our endeavors in making Beirut city center a place where people want to work, live, and visit.

NASSER CHAMMAA
Chairman and General Manager
July 2012

Solidere International’s main investment efforts are focused on the Saudi Arabian market, where it is currently involved in several residential projects and in negotiations between two others. At the same time, the company commenced execution of phase one of the Al Zorah waterfront development in the United Arab Emirates, which consists of two hotels, high-quality recreational facilities, and an international grade golf course. Al Zorah remains well-capitalized and is pushing through with infrastructure works, which have seen the completion of two marinas, the parkway, and the road connecting the project to the Emirates Road.

While it continues to evaluate new development opportunities in the Middle East, North Africa, and around the Mediterranean Basin, the company is moving forward with the Hamra Development in Lebanon, where it has obtained the authorities’ approval on the master plan. It also established Solidere Honey, a new line of business in response to the high regional demand for private and public-sector affordable housing. In that regard, Solidere International acquired a sizeable plot of land in Saudi Arabia that will be dedicated to affordable communities, in line with the Kingdom’s government agenda.

Solidere’s diversified fields of activity and its extensive reach have led, in 2011, to a rebranding exercise and consolidation of the identity across all entities while maintaining their legal distinctions. This timely move reflects the Company’s maturity and is an important facet in its future: that the diversity of our business, activities, and operations will increase while we remain true to the principles and values underpinning the Solidere brand that have enhanced the Company’s strong reputation.
Cities are made of scenes. Scenes that reflect how people move, congregate, pause, and adopt behaviors in the urban environment. These are the patterns that inspire our cityscapes.
The city accumulates with time

Mountains inch through eons, the moon turns with the ebb and flow of the Mediterranean Sea, and the urban dynamism of Beirut pulses by the second. Architecture shifts through decades. The city accumulates with time.
Extensive public space and sound urban planning have set the context and guided the overall Master Plan.

Solidsere’s distinct interdisciplinary team pioneered a framework for the rebirth of Beirut, and after more than fifteen years of reconstruction and development, the historic Mediterranean city soars. The renewal of Beirut city center has come to exemplify a successful model of inner city regeneration. Restoration of heritage buildings in the historic core, coupled with the preservation of archaeological remains and town-scape features, gives the city center a distinctive architectural character. New infrastructure has enabled contemporary real estate development, while extensive public space and sound urban planning have set the context and guided the Master Plan.

The master planning task that preceded Solidsere’s formation entailed a survey and the identification of a number of structures that could be preserved. The plan required that those of heritage value be faithfully restored to their original external fabric, while others were permitted some flexibility, including limited structural additions. All building interiors, however, were largely free from constraints and have generally been designed with a progressive outlook. Solidsere took the lead in the restoration process, and affirmed that heritage buildings can survive and create value provided that they are adapted to the needs of contemporary life and business.

To enable reconstruction and new real estate development, Solidsere’s initial undertaking was the implementation of quality infrastructures. These encompass underground power, storm drainage, sewage, domestic water, telecommunications and broadband networks, street lighting, and irrigation, among other components. Infrastructure works have also included a ten-year program of environmental reclamation, harbor works, and sea defense installations to international standards in creating the Waterfront District, the city center’s new extension toward the Mediterranean Sea.

Above ground, public spaces and roads have been designed for a human experience. Tree-lined sidewalks, pedestrian walkways, energy-efficient lighting, archaeological parks, and a number of open and green spaces make the area an ideal place to live, work, and play. The road network, including the Ring Road and main axes, have been designed to accommodate traffic flow and encourage safe pedestrian activity. Existing street alignments that radiate from the historic core have been preserved, and new streets have been created. Moreover, view corridors to sea and mountains have been maintained along wide streets, major public spaces, and low-rise building zones.

The city center is conceived not as a single, homogeneous central district but as a cluster of city quarters or sectors. Informed by natural boundaries in the topography, street patterns, past neighborhood structure, and concentrations of preserved fabrics, it comprises ten sectors – eight in the Traditional City Center and two in the Waterfront District. Each sector has its own detailed plan and regulations, as well as its own unique character.

To reinforce this variety of architectural and urban identities, and to replicate a natural city development process within a compressed timeframe, the Master Plan is subject to mixed-use policies. They are defined in sector regulations allowing land use to remain as flexible as possible to meet evolving developer and end-user needs.

A vibrant, well maintained city center has emerged, one that accommodates a high-quality, mixed-use built environment with a recognizable regional identity, attracting international interest, investors, residents, businesses, and visitors.

The Beirut city center Master Plan covers a total surface area of 191 hectares with a target floor space of 4.69 million sq m: 49.8% residential, 27.7% office, 8.5% mixed-use, 6.3% hotel, 3.8% cultural and governmental, 3.2% retail, and 0.7% religious.
Solidere’s procedures for design and development control have become a hallmark of the Company’s modus operandi as they ensure the long-term protection of land and property values. These controls are effectively coordinated in the Development Briefs issued for each parcel and made legally binding in their land sale contracts to developers. High-quality design is assured through a pre-selection and listing of approved local and international architects for each individual parcel, and developers are encouraged to run design competitions between chosen architects.

Development control and quality control regimes address a range of issues from architectural design to safety and anti-seismic reinforcement. They are regularly updated in accordance with international best practices and are mandated in Development Briefs. The Company ensures quality control and conformity with these standards by carrying out inspections on all projects from concept to completion.

Tight controls are maintained on the specification and workmanship of all external building fabric and material. Developers are required to commission approved technical controls to sign off on structural and building services design, fire safety, energy performance, and other technical aspects. They also must ensure compliance with international standards.

Solidere has also formulated sustainability strategies with emphasis on green technology, recycling, environmental remediation, and energy conservation. The aim is to enhance environmental standards, lower energy demand, and reduce operational and maintenance costs. The Company incorporates these standards in its real estate development and encourages third-party developers to apply them in the Traditional City Center. For the Waterfront District, planned as a model project of sustainable urban development, a minimum entry has been mandated in Development Briefs issued for each parcel.

After delivering completed infrastructure and public domain to the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), Solidere provides assistance and supervision when and where needed. It remains in charge of the maintenance of open spaces, including the irrigation network and landscaped areas. Damage that occurs to public property around the city center is documented and reported to municipal authorities, and when commissioned, repair works are carried out at cost.

In cooperation with city center residents and property owners, Solidere has implemented a multitude of services that enhance the city center experience, in addition to the ones offered by the Municipality of Beirut. These include security surveillance, door-to-door waste collection, street and sidewalk furniture cleaning, and pest control, as well as a CCTV surveillance system, which is being installed to cover all parts of the city center.

With regard to the built environment, the Company plans and controls the quality of real estate development and maintains, operates, and manages its properties, as well as third-party properties, on a contractual basis. It cultivates long-term relationships with clients, be they developers, owners, or tenants. The aim is to maintain an upward curve to property value while ensuring a functional commercial environment.

In that regard, Solidere estimates professional facility management added-value services that ensure quality standards of living and equip properties with high-tech amenities and modern services, with a vision to continuously enhance the experience.

Furthermore, two regulations were issued to improve the city center image as a whole and maintain the architectural value of its real estate. One is the Quinquennial Maintenance Program, which requires the refurbishment of the external envelope of all city center buildings on a five-year recurring basis.

Regulations prepared for the city center are designed to incorporate parking spaces within building plots by their developers and provide adequate parking to serve the uses of each project. The standards assume the gradual introduction of effective public transport within the city. In addition to these dedicated parking facilities, a significant number of public car parks are planned.

Among those provided by Solidere, the completed Beirut Souks car park has a capacity of some 2,300 spaces and an adjacent car park with a capacity of around 400 spaces is under construction below Khan Antoun Bay Square. Serving the Pol-Aleyeh area are the four-level Weggan Street car park with 198 spaces and another four-level parking lot below Harbor Square, which provides 120 spaces. Furthermore, in accordance to an agreement with the state for the operation of Beirut Marina, Solidere completed in the first half of 2012 the construction of a 400-space car park underneath the Corniche Road, adjacent to Zaitunay Bay and Beirut (Western) Marina.

The Master Plan also envisages three major underground public car parks under both Martyrs’ Square and Raed El Solh Square and near the Grand Serail, none of which has yet been implemented. In 2010, the Municipality of Beirut resolved to cancel the parking planned under Raed El Solh Square due to archaeological finds while the Council of Ministers resolved to prepare the tendering of the Martyrs’ Square parking as a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) project and assigned this task to the CDR. The BOT bid file is being prepared by the latter’s consultant, Khaldi and Alain, in coordination with the Municipality of Beirut, and a public bid is expected to be launched after the completion of the bid file in 2012. The design of the underground Martyrs’ Square car park, planned to accommodate around 2,000 spaces, is taken into account Solidere’s guidelines, which were developed by the urban consultant Renzo Piano Building Workshop (Italy) and transport planning consultant One Arup International (UK). The guidelines consider the integration of the remains of the Petit Serail on site, the proximity of the car park to the proposed Beirut City History Museum, north of Martyrs’ Square, and the landscape for the square.

Two other parking facilities are under study in the Waterfront District, one beneath the Corniche Road and another beneath the planned city park in the Waterfront District, to provide 1,200 and 800 spaces respectively.

Pending the completion of sufficient underground parking spaces, several vacant lots are used as temporary surface parking lots. These currently provide up to 1,000 spaces in the Traditional City Center and another 1,000 spaces in the eastern section of the Waterfront District with a slow shuttle service.

Solidere’s guidelines, which were developed by its urban management added-value services that ensure quality standards of living and equip properties with high-tech amenities and modern services, with a vision to continuously enhance the experience.

Furthermore, two regulations were issued to improve the city center image as a whole and maintain the architectural value of its real estate. One is the Quinquennial Maintenance Program, which requires the refurbishment of the external envelope of all city center buildings on a five-year recurring basis. Another deal with health and safety regulations on active construction sites, streets, public domains, and during events held in the city center to ensure the wellbeing of tenants, visitors, and the neighborhood as a whole.

***

Design and Development Control Ensuring Property Value

(*.*)

Operation, Maintenance, and Property Management

Managing the City

After delivering completed infrastructure and public domain to the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), Solidere provides assistance and supervision when and where needed. It remains in charge of the maintenance of open spaces, including the irrigation network and landscaped areas. Damage that occurs to public property around the city center is documented and reported to municipal authorities, and when commissioned, repair works are carried out at cost.

In cooperation with city center residents and property owners, Solidere has implemented a multitude of services that enhance the city center experience, in addition to the ones offered by the Municipality of Beirut. These include security surveillance, door-to-door waste collection, street and sidewalk furniture cleaning, and pest control, as well as a CCTV surveillance system, which is being installed to cover all parts of the city center.

With regard to the built environment, the Company plans and controls the quality of real estate development and maintains, operates, and manages its properties, as well as third-party properties, on a contractual basis. It cultivates long-term relationships with clients, be they developers, owners, or tenants. The aim is to maintain an upward curve to property value while ensuring a functional commercial environment.

In that regard, Solidere estimates professional facility management added-value services that ensure quality standards of living and equip properties with high-tech amenities and modern services, with a vision to continuously enhance the experience.

Furthermore, two regulations were issued to improve the city center image as a whole and maintain the architectural value of its real estate. One is the Quinquennial Maintenance Program, which requires the refurbishment of the external envelope of all city center buildings on a five-year recurring basis. Another deal with health and safety regulations on active construction sites, streets, public domains, and during events held in the city center to ensure the wellbeing of tenants, visitors, and the neighborhood as a whole.

***

Parking

Vehicular Accessibility

Regulations prepared for the city center are designed to incorporate parking spaces within building plots by their developers and provide adequate parking to serve the uses of each project. The standards assume the gradual introduction of effective public transport within the city. In addition to these dedicated parking facilities, a significant number of public car parks are planned.

Among those provided by Solidere, the completed Beirut Souks car park has a capacity of some 2,300 spaces and an adjacent car park with a capacity of around 400 spaces is under construction below Khan Antoun Bay Square. Serving the Pol-Aleyeh area are the four-level Weggan Street car park with 198 spaces and another four-level parking lot below Harbor Square, which provides 120 spaces. Furthermore, in accordance to an agreement with the state for the operation of Beirut Marina, Solidere completed in the first half of 2012 the construction of a 400-space car park underneath the Corniche Road, adjacent to Zaitunay Bay and Beirut (Western) Marina.

The Master Plan also envisages three major underground public car parks under both Martyrs’ Square and Raed El Solh Square and near the Grand Serail, none of which has yet been implemented. In 2010, the Municipality of Beirut resolved to cancel the parking planned under Raed El Solh Square due to archaeological finds while the Council of Ministers resolved to prepare the tendering of the Martyrs’ Square parking as a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) project and assigned this task to the CDR. The BOT bid file is being prepared by the latter’s consultant, Khaldi and Alain, in coordination with the Municipality of Beirut, and a public bid is expected to be launched after the completion of the bid file in 2012. The design of the underground Martyrs’ Square car park, planned to accommodate around 2,000 spaces, is taken into account Solidere’s guidelines, which were developed by the urban consultant Renzo Piano Building Workshop (Italy) and transport planning consultant One Arup International (UK). The guidelines consider the integration of the remains of the Petit Serail on site, the proximity of the car park to the proposed Beirut City History Museum, north of Martyrs’ Square, and the landscape for the square.

Two other parking facilities are under study in the Waterfront District, one beneath the Corniche Road and another beneath the planned city park in the Waterfront District, to provide 1,200 and 800 spaces respectively.

Pending the completion of sufficient underground parking spaces, several vacant lots are used as temporary surface parking lots. These currently provide up to 1,000 spaces in the Traditional City Center and another 1,000 spaces in the eastern section of the Waterfront District with a slow shuttle service.

The Waterfront District, planned as a model project of sustainable urban development, a minimum entry has been mandated in Development Briefs issued for each parcel.
New infrastructure has enabled the restoration of heritage buildings and construction of new developments.

Urban dynamism pulses by the second
Foch-Allenby forms with Etoile-Maarad the historic core of the city center, which incorporates the largest pedestrian zone in the capital and stands as a prime showcase of postwar reconstruction.

Hardscaping, along with street and sidewalk furniture, paving, and lights are designed to match the character of each sector.
The 1950s Lazarieh Commercial Center comprises several blocks around a central permeable courtyard that links Emir Bachir Street to Mere Gellas Street.

The sloping Al Wehda Al Wataniya Square, designed by Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture with water features, includes a sculpture of the late prime minister Rafic Hariri by Meguerditch Mazmanian (Russia).
Stone repair was significant in the Conservation Area, notable for its faithful reconstruction of elaborate façades and high-quality masonry work.

The concept by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners (UK) for the 1920s Grand Theatre proposes to faithfully reconstruct the façade of the old structure to its original design.
The Waterfront District will comprise a city park, two marinas, seaside promenades, roads, biking and jogging trails, and 2.9 hectares of development land.

**Marinas, open views to the sea and mountains, and an 80,000 sq m city park** – the Waterfront District has transformed from an area of reclaimed land to the new development frontier, with gateway projects such as Renzo Piano’s Pinwheel Project set to bridge the Traditional City Center with the sector in the making.

With extensive green areas and distinctive architecture, the Waterfront District has elicited strong investor and developer interest, and land sales to date confirm its potential as a prime, multi-use extension to the Traditional City Center.

The part of the Master Plan that relates to the 710,000 sq m of reclaimed land was further elaborated for Solidere in a detailed sector plan completed in 2001 by a consortium of American firms led by Skidmore Owings & Merill (SOM) for urban design and including Sasaki for landscaping and Parsons Brinckerhoff for transport planning.

The plan recognized Beirut as a prime tourist destination as well as a regional business center. It therefore imagined the district as a city by the water with distinct leisure and residential areas, and as an extension of the Traditional City Center’s retail and office components, with the high-quality infrastructure, amenities, and facilities of a contemporary cosmopolitan hub.

The Waterfront District accommodates a total of 1.7 million sq m of built-up area (BUA), and is governed by sectors A and D in the city center’s Master Plan, with a development density higher than that of the Traditional City Center as nearly 60 percent of the land is set aside for public space and parks.

Most of these open spaces are in Sector A, which is reserved mainly for leisure, sports, and recreation activities, and comprises the Beirut (Western) Marina and quayside development, the 80,000 sq m city park, the Corniche terraces, and seaside park and promenade.

Alternatively, Sector D consists of the development blocks and public domain situated east of the city park, north of the historic core and Souks Sector, and west of the Beirut Port’s First Basin. This sector incorporates a transition zone, known as the Pinwheel Project currently under design by Renzo Piano Building Workshop (Italy), which extends between the Ottoman Wall (part of the old shoreline) and Shahid El Wazan Street and establishes strong pedestrian and land use links between the historic core and the waterfront.

As a sustainable, low-energy consumption development area, the sector encompasses a multi-use district that offers a wide range of commercial and retail space in addition to a special business district, marina, leisure attractions, hotels, and extensive residential developments. Strict design criteria have been formulated regarding the main street and boulevard frontages. View corridors aim to preserve open sea and mountain views.

Most developments in the sector are of medium density, with structures on park and sea frontages limited to 40 m in height while frontages on the Mount Sannine view corridor will reach 52 m in height. Some twelve high-rise developments are planned at distinct locations that will endow them with 360-degree views of the city, sea, and mountains.

While Lacro Architects & Engineers (Lebanon) is expected to deliver a detailed infrastructure design by the end of 2012, with execution planned for completion within three to four years, and in response to increasing investor interest, an urban design study is underway to formulate a coherent phasing strategy and determine the best criteria to apply to land use, building massing, and public transport proposals. These criteria will take into account the main conclusions of the sustainability guidelines, wind modeling, and solar studies that Solidere has initiated to achieve its ambitions for the Waterfront District.
Environmental reclamations, harbor works, and sea defense installations to international standards were carried out in creating the new Waterfront District.

Transport Strategy
Comprehensive Study

With the increase in investor interest for developments in the Waterfront District, Solidere commissioned Ove Arup International (UK) to undertake a study and advise on multimodal transport requirements for the district and to deliver an area-wide transport strategy. The study takes into account environmental considerations and advises on suitable infrastructural provisions.

Ove Arup International built a Base Year Vissim micro-simulation model, a multimodal traffic flow simulation software for cities, which assesses the impact of generated trips from developments in the Waterfront District, and produced a car parking strategy that will benefit all users accessing the area.

A strategy was also developed to complement the proposed land uses and provide pedestrian connectivity between key areas in the Traditional City Center and the district by implementing green corridors running north to the Corniche, east to the Port First Basin and future Eastern Marina, and northeast toward the view of the mountains.

Additional work is currently being carried out to assess the potential of introducing pilot public transport projects to the district, as a stepping stone towards a more comprehensive citywide strategy that will be proposed to the relevant authorities.
The sea defense system is made of a unique caisson structure that is limited to 5.5 m above sea level to protect the view from deep within the city center.

The city center is opening its horizon toward the Waterfront District and the Mediterranean Sea.
Beirut Marina has enhanced the Mediterranean lifestyle of the waterfront area and, along with the planned Eastern Marina, maintains the city's long history as a maritime gateway.

Residential buildings, juxtaposed with office, retail, and hotel space, compose the skyline of the fast-developing medium to high-density hotel district overlooking Beirut Marina.
Part of the development of the waterfront area focused on creating a spine that links the Traditional City Center to the terraced seaside promenade.

The waterfront Corniche has become a meeting point for families and exercise enthusiasts with its bike lanes, walking paths, and jogging trails.
You often say that “places talk to you.” What did Beirut say to you? How did you connect with the city?

Yes, I also say that “places talk to you.” In Beirut, the most important elements that have a vocabulary are the light and the Mediterranean Sea.

I was born in Genoa on the Mediterranean, which is a center of life in quite a few countries: France, Spain, Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Italy, and many others. When you think about it, you realize that this body of water has been a hot bed of cultures for thousands and thousands of years. These cultures all feed on the same kind of essence: light, vibration, and joy. It is a sense of lightness.

In my opinion, what the Mediterranean says about the sense of lightness is not only physical; it is also mental. When I say the Mediterranean, I don’t only mean its smell or sound. I also mean an attitude. There is a dreamy aspect that comes from the presence of water.

Beirut first speaks to me about the sea, and then specifically about the Mediterranean. As a city at its most eastern edge, its sounds and feelings are somewhat Eastern. In my imagination, it is Eastern.

Martyrs’ Square holds a symbolic significance in the Lebanese national consciousness: it is a multilayered history, social, and political environment. How does your voice for the square reflect this multilayered symbolism?

Martyrs’ Square is a place of civilization. In Italian, città (city) and civiltà (civilization) carry the same meaning. In English, they do not. Martyrs’ Square is the symbol of civic life, civic pride, and civic identity. That is why you can feel that the place has a lot of passion.

It is a place of evidence. When you look at old postcards, you see how the square was once filled with small carriages and palm trees. The old postcard image is not merely romantic; it says that this place is the heart of the city.

You know, very often cities grow from piazzas, the empty space, which is more important than the built environment. The piazza is a natural place where urbanity is formed. Urbanity is a great sensation because it is about coming together and sharing experiences. The piazza is the archetype of this as it is static rather than dynamic. It is where people meet, spend time, and share experiences and where in some way differences disappear or tend to disappear.

The Lebanese understand the importance of bringing diversity together. As architects, we have to recognize the importance of a piazza as a meeting place where diversity becomes an opportunity rather than a problem. Part of our duty is to find ways to bring diverse cultures together. I think Martyrs’ Square is somewhat a merging of different roads. It will remain in the life and spirit of Beirut as a meeting place forever because it is the place where you feel a sense of belonging to the city. It is a political place, where the meaning of political is palms.

You know the word politika (politics) comes from the word polite – two words that have grown quite apart in meaning over time so that no one is able to make a connection between them. Essentially, politika and palms are the same. Their origin is Greek, dating back to when an elected person in Greece had to promise: “I shall give you back a more beautiful Athens than the one you gave me.” It is the ability to look at what is common to the people, meaning the city: the palms, the community.

Our scheme conceives Martyrs’ Square as a sequence of spaces that move from the city to the sea. It starts at the southern end of the square and moves north past the famous martyrs sculpture (Martyrs’ Statue) and northward through the archeological site – the Petit Serail and the Ancient Temple – to the water, the DNA of Beirut. All in all, it is around half a kilometer. I totally believe that this perspective must not be interrupted with anything built and that we should not take away the soul of the square, what it was and what it should remain.

Our aim is to keep the sun and the light on the square. In that regard, we have to maintain the developments around it at low rise. At ground level around the square, we have aimed to design functions that will feed the life of the piazza: restaurants and public spaces, including a major cultural building. Piazzas are great because they breed a lot of public functions around them. They feed public life: this is the sense of the entire project.

Martyrs’ Square marked a demarcation line between East and West Beirut during the civil war. Some urbanists draw parallels between Beirut’s Martyrs’ Square and Berlin’s Potsdamer Platz. What is your take on the comparison of these two sites of demarcation?

Potsdamer Platz became a demarcation line after the Second World War in 1945, and the Berlin Wall in the middle of the piazza was built in 1961 at the beginning of the Cold War. The wall is probably the most cruel, terrible invention that anyone could have done – separating a town in half. When the wall came down in 1989, it was liberation.

I will make a reference to Berlin, but not necessarily to Potsdamer Platz being divided or not divided, because that division was artificial. It was a pure political perversion. I look at it in the sense that Beirut is a “martyr city.” Having worked in many, I know “martyr cities.” My definition of a martyr city is a city that has been suffering. Berlin is one, Sarajevo is another. They are very different.
A martyr city such as Berlin, Sarajevo, and Beirut is based on diversity. The latter two especially are a mix of different cultures, different religions.

I was very touched two or three years ago when I was on Martyrs’ Square around Christmas time. Church bells were ringing, which is the typical sound of Christmas, and then when the bells stopped ringing, we heard the sound of the Muslim prayer. This mix reminded me of Sarajevo, another place where the sounds and rituals of the city belong to different worlds that come together. Potsdamer Platz is a completely different story, which began merely as a mandatory, a circulation point that turned famous as it became the martyr of the city, the place that was divided.

What about the Pinwheel Project? It stands in the water as a gateway to the new Waterfront District and a link between the historic and contemporary parts of the city. What is your philosophy of the site and context?

The project we are developing is in the water. It is not just by the water, the land was water, and so water is an essential part of the project.

Beirut is not far from the sea, but by adding a new extension to the city on the north side, the reclaimed Waterfront District, we have to carefully plan how water enters the city and stays there. Water has to be essentially visible; you should see and feel the water.

The Pinwheel, a name that relates to the original form of the site, is actually the joint or connection between the “old world” and the “new continent.” Our plan envisions a canal that runs through the project so one can feel the water that borders the “new continent.” That is the reason we are bringing water in canals along the Ottoman Wall, part of the old shoreline. We want to give the Pinwheel a strong public identity (see page 119).

While the ground floor of the project is a vista where water, perspective, and light interplay, the building never takes possession of the ground. The buildings float above the ground, so the ground floor has to be very transparent. Of course you have the interior design, the lift, and the stairs, but no opaque function, no storage, and no parking, so that you see through to the gardens that are essential to the project. It is the vision of nature and water invading the built environment.

In essence, the Pinwheel has a sense of lightness, levitas – of levitating above ground, and you have to be able to see through everything with water all around. It is nature at ground level and on the rooftops.

You say water is the DNA of Beirut. You plan to link Martyrs’ Square to the water, and the Pinwheel Project rises from the water. Why is water so important to these projects?

It is a deep-seeded memory. For me, water is not romantic; it is part of our skin. It is essential because it makes things beautiful.

Water is like time. I once met Joseph Brodsky, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1987. He used to say that “water is the image of time.” It is true. Time makes things belong to you, water makes things more intense. We are talking about cities of course, but it is true for many other things.

I will reiterate that water is a main factor in our scheme. The true sense of lightness that you will feel and breathe in our project arises from the fact that we are in a Mediterranean city at the crossroads between Europe and the East. It is something that has been in my imagination and dreams since I was a child, the eastern part of the world.

“...It is Mediterranean, but it is breathing something different, something that has been in my imagination and dreams since I was a child, the eastern part of the world.”
Congregate

Civilizations come and go, but it is the ancient legacy of maritime mercantilism that has held the communities of the Beirut peninsula together for generations. The traditions of conviviality enliven sidewalk cafes, rooftop scenes, bayside boulevards, gardens, plazas, public monuments, sites of worship, art centers, and museums.

People gather around culture.
Outdoor escapes are integral to the full experience of the city center and are intertwined with the greater urban vision.

From families biking along the waterfront promenade to friends toasting to the sunset over dinner at the Zaitunay Bay esplanade, people are drawn together by the landscaped plazas, gardens, and pedestrian areas that interweave to form threads of the Beirut city center fabric.

Beirut city center is home to thousands of rooms with a view: the mountains in the distance, the expanse of the Mediterranean Sea, open spaces, urban corridors, and cultural wonders. With plans for around 60 landscaped gardens, plazas, pedestrian areas, seaward promenades, and a city park, the outdoors are always beckoning and always within reach.

The list of gardens, squares, and pedestrian promenades that have been completed and opened to the public grows year after year. For example, the Roman Baths have become a popular site for open-air concerts; Etoile Square and its regenerated cobblestone arteries have attracted crowds for over a decade; Saifi Square forms the center of an urban village; and Ajami Square in Beirut Souks bustles alongside a weekly farmers’ market and children’s science museum.

Three new outdoor public spaces were added to the list in 2011. On Uruguay Street, a U-shaped pedestrian area surrounds three sides of a restored building adjacent to the Samir Kassir Garden. The design by Imad Gemayel Architects (Lebanon) is inspired by the keys of a piano, hence his idea for naming it Piano Plaza. Of relatively small width, the plaza is dedicated to open-air seating and pedestrian activity that are extensions to the ground level commercial spaces, which have been leased to pubs and restaurants. Uruguay Street and the plaza have quickly become a hub of after-work and nightlife activity.

The two other spaces inaugurated during the year are Zeitounah Square and Gebran Tueni Memorial. The former was designed by Gustafson Porter Landscape (UK) as part of a sequence of interconnected public spaces to create a promenade along the city’s original sea boulevard, the Old Shoreline Walk. The memorial on Weygand Street was designed by Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture (Lebanon) to offer a space for tranquility and reflection.

As a city by the sea, Beirut also has many venues that cater to outdoor activity enthusiasts. The waterfront Car-niche has become a meeting point for families and exercise enthusiasts with its bike lanes, walking path, and jogging trails. While waiting for construction to begin, the empty plots have served as ideal locations for outdoor concerts, hosting artists from the world over.

Beirut Marina, now in its tenth season, can accommodate 204 boats, ranging in size from 5 to 65 meters and currently moors 176 boats. The marina has brought an element of the jet set lifestyle to the waterfront area. As for the Eastern Marina, a preliminary detailed design by Cowi (Denmark), the international marine structures consultancy firm, is currently under review.

Overlooking Beirut Marina, Zaitunay Bay is the most prominent outdoor venue to open in 2011. With its panoramas of Lebanon’s Mount Sannine to the north, the bay’s seaside restaurants and retail outlets have fast become a center of activity (see page 115).

These outdoor escapes are integral to the full experience of the city center and are intertwined within a greater urban vision. As an essential aspect in urban regeneration, each plays a role in enhancing the beauty and the environmental quality of the area, and each forges a special relationship with the growing community of residents, workers, and visitors.
Excavations under the St George Greek Orthodox Cathedral uncovered eight layers of archaeological remains from the Hellenistic period to the present. They are now incorporated in the Crypt Museum opened to the public in 2010.

Our projects in Beirut seek to redress the balance of the city, creating permeable spaces and links for pedestrian activity that are flexible in use between day and night and from season to season. We are inspired by the architectural and historical heritage of the country, which has generated an innovative approach and influenced the design of facilities required by a contemporary city.

The latest of our projects to be completed in Beirut city center is Zeytouneh Square in Mina El Hosn, which is conceived as a relaxation and gathering place for nearby office building tenants, neighborhood residents, and visitors, as well as a platform for community events.

The innovative open-space concept, unveiled in August 2011, features bold black and white pavement patterns that create a fractal landscape and accentuate the site’s terraced levels. It includes pools, a water channel, spray fountains, stone benches, and a bridge that links the terraces planted with flowering trees.

Zeytouneh Square is part of the Shoreline Walk, a series of interconnected public spaces along the city’s old shoreline. We are designing and for which we were the category winners in Future Projects – Landscape, at the World Architecture Festival in Barcelona in November 2011. The Shoreline Walk was conceived to create a pedestrian route that straddled the old and new city boundaries – between the medieval street layout of the old city and the engineered grid of the new reclaimed area. It is located between memories and aspirations, between activities that made a connection to an organic coastline and a new contemporary landscape.

Our most recent project, the Gebran Tueni Memorial, was inaugurated in December 2011. It was designed to tell a story for generations to come. Located across from Tueni’s office in the An-Nahar newspaper building, it alternates between the symbolic – an olive tree to represent Tueni’s roots – and the tangible – 10,000 river stones inscribed with his name and date of birth and death, meant to be taken as keepsakes by visitors.

His legacy is highlighted throughout the project with 31 quotes extracted from his articles and speeches spanning 25 years. Aromatic wild thyme is planted beneath five oak trees that lead up to a 9-meter high fiber optic backlighted monolith representing Tueni’s 49 years of life. His famous national oath is engraved on the monolith.
The 1930s Etoile Square area is marked by its clock tower, a gift from Lebanese émigré Miguel Abbed and designed by Lebanese architect Mardiros Altounian.

The Etoile Square area with its regenerated arteries and charming walkways has become a haven for families seeking the enjoyment of outdoor spaces within the city.
Trablous Street is the stage for concerts, festive events, and children activities and links the southern part of Beirut Souks to the northern part’s soon-to-open Entertainment Complex.

Beirut Souks’ Ajami Square hosts a number of restaurants, which have gradually become a daily and festive experience for city center residents and visitors.
Inspired by the ancient street that led to the Roman Hippodrome, Xavier Corberó designed, created, and installed basalt sculptures depicting figures on their way to the arena.

Old trees were preserved and new ones planted to help restore, rehabilitate, and conserve the indigenous and migrating birds of Beirut city center.
Banks Street runs parallel to Riad El Solh Street as they both embrace the early modern buildings that have served as headquarters to financial institutions since the mid-twentieth century.

Traditional paving, reminiscent of the 1930s, was installed using basalt cobblestones in pedestrian streets and new basalt tiles in vehicular streets.
The design of the Gebran Tueni Memorial, alternating between the symbolic and the tangible, was conceived to tell a story for generations to come.

Zeytouneh Square’s innovative open-space concept features bold black and white permanent patterns that create a fractal landscape and accentuate the site’s terraced levels.
Serviced by valet parking and a 400-space car park, Zaitunay Bay has welcomed over 3,000 visitors per day in the first six months since its launch.

Festivals and open air activities are planned for 2012, followed by the inauguration of the yacht club building in 2013, which includes 54 state-of-the-art serviced apartments.
The rich culinary, leisure, and retail scene adjacent to the water offered a new entertainment destination and created a number of employment opportunities.

A year-round haven of work, leisure, social, and cultural activities has emerged alongside the city center’s Beirut Marina and Hotel District.
Millennia of Mediterranean history converge in archeological heritage, and today the work of artists, designers, and musicians dazzle audiences throughout the year. Rebuilding a city and showcasing its 5,000 years of history is a challenge. The eleven civilizations that have inhabited Beirut have left their mark in various locations around the city center. Archeological remains, ranging from the Canaanite to the Ottoman periods, have been uncovered, preserved, and well integrated within reconstruction efforts.

The Beirut Heritage Trail that will be launched in 2012 links archeological findings, historic sites, and heritage buildings over a 2.5-km pedestrian circuit. Fifty panels placed along the trail will provide information and the chance to discover and engage with the layered history of the city. Among the sites are a number of restored mosques and churches, including the St George Greek Orthodox Cathedral on Etoile Square. A few years ago, excavations in the cathedral uncovered eight layers of archeological remains from the Hellenistic period to the present, including those of two churches, all of which have been incorporated in the Crypt Museum opened to the public in 2010. The trail also passes by the 1925 Beirut Municipality building, Martyrs' Square Axis with its Petit Serail and Ancient Tell, Castle and Harbor squares in the Foch-Allenby area, and archeological remains in Beirut Souks.

On the Martyrs' Square Axis, two historical and archeological sites will become key components of the planned Beirut City History Museum: the Petit Serail, built in 1881 as the seat of the Ottoman governorate, and the Ancient Tell, which constituted the fortified center of the city for centuries. The Beirut City History Museum is funded by the State of Kuwait through the Lebanese Ministry of Culture.

In Beirut Souks, several archeological sites have been integrated into the landscape: including the Mudhif Zawiyat Sin Araj, the Modern Wall and Must, and the Phoenician-Persian Quarter. The latter, a 1,345 sq m site, encompasses the foundations of a residential quarter from the late sixth century BC, where merchants resided and engaged in maritime trade.

Solidere has recently solicited proposals from museologists and exhibition designers for the Phoenician-Persian quarter site museum. Under the direction and supervision of the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA), who completed the preservation of the site in 2011, the aim of the design is to highlight the archeology and create a multi-sensory experience that is educational and interactive.

Also under the supervision of the DGA, other vestiges previously uncovered such as parts of the ancient Roman Hippodrome in Wadi Abou Jamil, elements of the ancient harbor in Khan Antonin Bay, mosaics from a first-century villa, and many more around the city center have been documented, digitized, and either preserved on site and made accessible to the public for viewing or transferred to the Beirut National Museum.

Bridging between the past and the present, eighteen historical and one newly-developed spaces of worship around the city center attest to the ongoing spiritual diversity and richness of the place. Solidere assists financially in the restoration of the historical buildings, with 17 in use today, drawing increasing numbers of people from different communities throughout the year and on special occasions.

In the Quartier des Arts in Saifi, art galleries, antique stores, and artisans have opened their doors against a backdrop of reconstructed and restored traditional buildings, winding cobblestone streets, and landscaped courtyards. Other galleries have taken up residence in

---

Historic Landmarks, Sites for Future Creativity

Heritage, Art, and Culture

The City Center Building, also known as the egg, dome, or bubble, originally designed in the mid 1960s by Joseph Philippe Karam as a movie theater, has been used since the late 1990s, as its current rain, as an alternative cultural venue.

In Quartier des Arts in Saifi, art galleries, antique stores, and artisans have opened their doors against a backdrop of reconstructed and restored traditional buildings, winding cobblestone streets, and landscaped courtyards. Other galleries have taken up residence in

---

Culture remains a dynamic and integral element of everyday life, just as it is central to the formation of the urban fabric, character, and economy of a city. The planned House of Arts and Culture will offer space for contemporary performing and visual arts to further the development of creativity in the country.

In the Quartier des Arts in Saifi, art galleries, antique stores, and artisans have opened their doors against a backdrop of reconstructed and restored traditional buildings, winding cobblestone streets, and landscaped courtyards. Other galleries have taken up residence in
the upscale Hotel District and the Waterfront District. Music is also taking its rightful place in the city center with the annual Jazz Festival, Fête de la Musique, Beirut Chants, and more recently, large scale productions in the Waterfront District, all of which attract audiences from around the country.

Solidere continues to play an active lead and supporting role in the creation of artistic programs, museums, and event platforms that foster Beirut’s role as a cultural destination. It has initiated and provided full support to the establishment of Portal/9, an Arab-English journal of stories and critical writing about urbanism and the city, which will be launched in the second half 2012. The biannual publication addresses the need for a consensual debate about architecture, planning, culture, and society in urban contexts across the Middle East and the rest of the world.

***

Illuminating Façades
Lighting Beirut Architecture

When evening twilight breaks, part of the city center’s historic core is transformed into an almost magical place. The buildings’ urban characters and architectural styles take on a new life.

Architectural lighting is a premier experiment in permanent projection inspired by theatre spotlights to illuminate the façade of a mix of heritage and contemporary large urban scene. Through the use of gradients and accents of light, projectors have been developed especially to transmit the image of each building onto itself, with great attention to architectural detail. Unlike conventional lighting, fixtures are placed on rooftops facing lit buildings, safeguarding masonry work on façades. Thus, architectural legacy remains unspoiled.

The result is an illuminated nightscape that makes all of the different structures part of a unified fresco enriched by the strong personality of each façade. The concept of projection also offers versatility as it is possible to change the image of the urban area, transforming the city center into a lively platform for creative expression.

The technology of the system is energy efficient. It uses significantly less electricity than conventional lighting systems that produce similar results. It also allows perfect control of light emitted by the projectors, such that the city’s starlit sky is preserved, as the lights are confined to the façades, without any waste.

In May 2012, Solidere’s Lighting Beirut Architecture project was one of fifteen winners of the International Lighting Design Awards and one of seven who earned Awards in Excellence during the 29th Annual International Association of Lighting Designers held in Las Vegas, USA.

The award-winning project represents the first step in an evolving public area lighting master plan for the city center. One of the plan’s objectives is to create an annual festival of light, emphasizing public space, outdoor lifestyle, modern architectural landmarks, and heritage assets (archaeological sites and historic buildings).

Lighting Concept and Design: Light Cibles (France)
Building Survey Process: DIAP (France)
Fixture Provider and Installer: Mamari Frères (Lebanon)
Fixture Developer and Manufacturer: Lampo (Italy)

Al Omari Mosque is one of the first buildings to be restored, with attention to architectural details, stone masonry work, and wood craftsmanship.
St George Maronite Cathedral was restored and its looted works of art recovered, including the famous painting by Delacroix representing the cathedral’s patron saint.

The Emir Munzer Mosque, also known as the Nabouss (Mounting) Mosque, features eight Roman columns in its courtyard.
The reconstruction of the St George Maronite Cathedral by restorers, stone conservators, and craftsmen was faithful to its Neoclassical design, originally inspired by the Basilica di Maria Maggiore in Rome.

Lebanese from around the country have been increasingly drawn to the city center’s places of worship and historic landmarks.
Samir Kassir Garden, designed by Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture, provides a serene and contemplative landscape with a statue of the late journalist by French sculptor Louis Debré.

The bronze sculpture, the work of Italian artist Renato Marino Mazzucotti, was restored yet kept riddled with bullet holes.

Samir Kassir Garden, designed by Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture, provides a serene and contemplative landscape with a statue of the late journalist by French sculptor Louis Debré.
In its effort to enhance the city center as a cultural destination, Solidere inaugurated the Beirut Exhibition Center in 2010, a 1,200 sq m space dedicated to promoting and developing greater recognition and appreciation of contemporary art throughout Beirut and the region. The non-profit space provides a collaborative environment for art museums, galleries, artist collectives, and cultural institutions. Exhibitions are drawn from artists’ projects created on-site, collaborations among galleries, traveling museum shows, and a full calendar of public art programs.

The structure’s design by L.E.FT (US) conveys its use as the mirror façade reflects the continuously changing landscape in the Waterfront District, turning the city into a work of art, an abstract impressionist painting in motion.

Six exhibits were organized in 2011 and attracted over 16,000 art lovers, critics, and media representatives. The program included Parcours, a review of paintings from the different periods of Samir Khalil’s career; Zen-degi, showcasing the works of twelve Iranian artists who investigated and interpreted diverse themes and current issues; Rebirth, a collective exhibition of 49 Lebanese artists themed around the rebirth of Lebanon and Beirut; Burning, featuring Jean Boghossian’s recent works on paper and canvas; Retrospective, displaying Salwa Raouda Choucair’s major pieces over seven decades; and Art in Iraq Today, presenting works in varying methodologies of artists who are united by their experience of exile.

To further its cultural agenda and heighten artistic awareness, BEC launched in early 2012 a series of workshop cycles, where children between 7 to 12 years of age learn about art forms and styles and explore their own creativity.
Pause

From dawn to dusk and into the wee hours of the night, the city is on the move: business at brisk speed, people circulating, traffic rolling, nightlife booming. But urban dynamism lulls in moments of calm. Stillness suspends the tempo of the city.
Elegant hotels and exquisite cuisine distinguish the joie de vivre in Beirut, where the world’s most inventive restaurateurs, chefs, and hoteliers carry on the Lebanese tradition of refined living.

The development of hospitality venues, from hotels to restaurants, is part of the social and economic process through which urban areas are transformed into residential, business, and leisure destinations, creating a renewed city center for quality living.

The plan for Beirut city center has been driven by the need to create a space for people to interact. Given the prevailing moderate climate, the city’s hospitality venues are able to take advantage of outdoor terraces, vertical gardens, and seaside destinations.

Hotels, cafes, and restaurants blossom alongside the burgeoning office and residential neighborhoods. Several hotels, including the Monroe, Ramada, and Four Seasons, have opened their doors in the modern Hotel District facing Beirut Marina. Others, such as Le Gray, have established themselves at other poles of the city center.

The Etoile-Maarad and Foch-Allenby areas were the first to become destinations for daytime and nighttime entertainment and recreation. They were joined in 2010 by Beirut Souks, an architectural marvel that redefined and revitalized the traditional bazaar and provided space for a number of new hospitality venues to flourish.

In 2011, Zaitunay Bay quayside restaurants were inaugurated, and to expand on the strategy of creating further nodes for social gathering, the Company began to lease spaces to bars and diners on Uruguay Street, adjacent to the Samir Kassir Garden. With its outdoor seating and pedestrian friendly design, the area has become a prime spot in the city center’s night scene.

Leisure by Night, Al Fresco by Day

Hospitality in the City Center

Beirut Hospitality Company (BHC), a hospitality management entity, was created by Solidere in 2010 to complement and support real estate development and enhance property value in Beirut city center. BHC engages in a revenue-generating activity in collaboration with renowned chefs and restaurateurs.

BHC promotes the city center as a welcoming and friendly place that builds strong relationships within the community. It creates venues that are part of a creative ecology. In 2011, the company opened a number of dynamic cafes and restaurants.

The company is cooperating with French chefs Eric Sinnig and Paul Gardin on three restaurants: Café M, located on Ajami Square, a cosmopolitan cafe with outdoor seating, and Relais Foch, at the intersection of Saad Zaghloul and Abdel Malak streets, a bistro serving innovative and hearty French cuisine. Both are designed by Dada and Associates (Lebanon). The third venue is Grid, on Saifi Square, a coffee shop concept marked to become a national franchise, designed by Riad Kamel Architectes Anonymes (Lebanon).

The Central Kitchen, located near Beirut International Exhibition and Leisure Center (BIEL), provides the three restaurants ready to cook ingredients, desserts, and bakery products and caters for private parties of up to 1,500 people.

In collaboration with Yannick Alléno, the famous 3-star Michelin chef of the Meurice Hotel in Paris, BHC has opened two destinations. S.T.A.Y on Fakhry Bey Street features a café-trottoir on the ground level and a contemporary elegant restaurant on the upper level with a floating lounge. Sweet Tea in the Jewelry Souk, a salon de thé serving and selling Alléno’s exclusive pastries, also boasts a rooftop garden lush with vertical green walls.
In partnership with London and Paris-based Mourad Ma- 
zou, BHC opened Momo at the Souks on top of the Jew- 
ey Souk. Designed by Annabel Kassar & Associates (Lebanon), it comprises a lounge, serving a light menu, and a restaurant offering Moroccan and French gourmet dishes. A garden terrace spans the perimeter and con- 
nects the two areas.

Finally, in Souk Arwad, Yabani entrepreneurs launched Y, a Japanese restaurant, designed by Rizl Kamel Archi- tects Anonymes (Lebanon).

Momo at the Souks Nestled within a Hanging Garden

From Paris, London, and Dubai, Algerian restaurateur 
Mourad Mazouz has blazed a successful culinary trail 
that led him to Beirut in 2011 with the opening of Momo 
at the Souks.

Located on the upper level of the Jewelry Souk in Beirut 
Souks on Imam Ouzai Square, Momo includes a dining 
area offering Moroccan and French dishes and a cafe 
located in a hanging, terraced garden, which allows pa- 
trons freedom of movement from one section to the other.

While food is the central element to any Mourad Ma- 
zouz restaurant, interior design and comfort are of 
prime importance. With interior architects Annabel Kassar 
and Véluane Jastor, the restaurateur scoured flea 
markets in Lebanon, England, and France to marry de- 
signer pieces with vintage furniture and custom-made 
fixtures in Momo at the Souks. As for the walls, they 
were fabricated with a Cordoba leather technique, using 
burnished and hand-painted cardboard with leather in 
certain places. On the terrace, forged furniture and 
sfapis added a homely touch.

The result is an elegant yet laid-back atmosphere – 
the type of design that is timeless, reminiscent of the ele- 

gance and charm of Beirut throughout the years.

The restaurant is beginning to find its place in the mar- 
ket. While the brand and our approach remain the same 
in every country, the ingredients, the interior decoration, 
the people, their tastes, and cultures differ. We have taken 
our time to learn our client’s habits in Lebanon and 
adapted our formula to their needs.

As in all markets we operate in, food and service quality 
are the top priority, and we combine efforts with our col- 
laborators, local employees, and our own managerial team 
to offer an exquisite and memorable dining experience.

Eric Syri
eq on Relais Fuch, Café M, Grid, 
and Central Kitchen

When I first moved to Beirut about a year and a half ago, my family and I decided to live in Wadi Abou Jamil. We loved the neighborhood, and it was walking distance from work, which was perfect. I moved here to be the Executive Chef of Soldier’s Central Kitchen, Relais Fuch, Grid, and Café M. So far, it’s been exciting, with obvious challenges presenting themselves, most notably, 
language. I’ve started taking Arabic language courses, 
which should help me build a better relationship with 
the clients and the people I work with.

I’m still getting accustomed to the local culture, figur- 
ing out eating habits and adopting new food, trends, 
and ideas. I try to integrate these into the menu. In Re- 

ais Fuch, for example, we’ve adapted some of our recipes to suit Lebanese tastes. It might be as simple as 
adding a specific spice, adding a twist with a different 
flavor. In that way, we remain true to our recipes yet sat- 
isfy the taste buds of our clients.

Our team is dedicated to understanding the clients by 
getting to know them, their habits, and their expecta- 
tions. This builds loyalty, and I firmly believe that, when 
we are loyal to our customers, they become loyal to us. Loy- 

alty is a major element of success. This is how we end 
up with regular customers who have integrated one of 
our venues into their daily lives.

Ofer the past year, I have been able to differentiate be- 
tween the lunchtime clientele and the evening clientele. 
At lunch, we usually have quite a few business lunches: 
quick, healthy, and consistent. They want a tasty sand- 
wich, a light salad, or a healthy main dish, sometimes 
catering to one of our reinvented desserts. They usu- 
ally stay about an hour or an hour and a half. In the 
evening, it’s a completely different story. Clients want 
to enjoy their time, often staying for hours. They are 
here for a good meal, savory dishes, and good wine.

Regardless of what the clients are looking for, we operate from a Central Kitchen that is able to cater to all their needs. This highly equipped and sanitized facility is a 
pleasure to work in. A staff of 50 people allows us to pro- 
vide ready-to-cook ingredients, desserts, and basics to 
several of Beirut Hospitality Company’s venues.

That means bio-fresh cleaned and chopped vegetables 
and meats skewered and sized according to specific needs. 
This way, we are able to guarantee hygiene and cleanli- 

teness, quality standards, and consistently controlled pur- 
chase prices.

The Central Kitchen is also the place where we prepare 
private high-end banquet catering for private dinners and 
cocktails, serving anywhere between 3 and 500 guests.

Café M has been an interesting experience as we have 
reimagined our approach to target family needs. We’ve 
launched Scoop Gelato Bar and kids’ fast food meals 
that are light, healthy, and still tasty.

As the year comes to a close, I can say that I am very 
happy with the results of 2011. Throughout the year, we 
opened four outlets. Grid was the last to be launched, 
so we expect it to grow over the coming year. This sets 
the stage for a promising 2012.

All in all, we’ve managed to offer a wide range of restau- 

rants, with quality food, superior service, and varied 
menus options with original recipes and lovely settings. 
Of course, a lively setting is easy in Beirut, with the 
weather, kindness, and generosity of the people. After 
all, Beyrouth, c’est le bonheur!
We remain true to our recipes yet integrate a local flavor to satisfy the taste buds of our clients.

---

The city lulls in moments of calm
The Central Kitchen, a modern, equipped, and highly sanitized facility, provides three restaurants ready-to-cook ingredients, desserts, and bakery products.

“I was attracted to the positive energy in Beirut Souks and felt it was suitable to our concepts.”

The Central Kitchen, a modern, equipped, and highly sanitized facility, provides three restaurants ready-to-cook ingredients, desserts, and bakery products.
Conceived as a place for socializing, diners form islands circumscribed by rows of differently-sized mirrors that reflect the elegant design.

S.T.A.Y’s interior design by Moatti et Rivière (France) comprises custom furnishings in silver-grey tones that are neutral and tasteful at the same time.
Restaurants, cafes, and night clubs have sprung up around the city center, taking advantage of the central location and making use of courtyards, rooftops, and pedestrian street terraces.

Flea markets in Lebanon, France, and England were scouted to marry designer pieces with vintage furniture and custom-made fixtures.
Adopt

With the influx of populations over the centuries, the walled port-town of Beirut grew to expand beyond its ramparts. Communities from near and far intermingled as the built environment broadened, thickened, altered. A Mediterranean capital came to flourish. People adopt the city.
A diverse group of people is now calling Beirut city center home, benefitting from cultural and entertainment facilities, landscaped open spaces, and a well-managed and secure environment.

The quiet hills of Wadi Abou Jamil slope down to the sea where high-rise residences afford panoramas of the mountains north of Beirut. The architectural diversity of the city – restored clusters around courtyards and sleek towers – hosts a myriad of metropolitan lifestyles.

Saifi Village and Wadi Abou Jamil, including Zokak El Blatt are residential neighborhoods of medium-density, defined by their low-rise urban village feel. They contrast with the Serail Corridor, Hotel District, and Martyr’s Square Axis, where mixed-use mid and high-rise developments are carefully planned.

Saifi, conceived with Lebanese vernacular tradition in mind, features two plazas, including a central village square, the ideal meeting points for residents, surrounded by trendy retail shops, courtyards, a cafe, and a restaurant. Most of the retail is focused on art and design and includes several art galleries, which have turned the area into the Quartier des Arts. Saifi will extend northwards, with the same pedestrian character and village characteristics but in a contemporary architectural expression, once the third-party residential project of District/S is completed.

In Zokak El Blatt, residents enjoy a quiet neighborhood designed around a large communal garden with club facilities. The rest of Wadi Abou Jamil, with developers’ projects such as the completed Phoenix and the soon to follow Noor Gardens and Wadi Hills complexes, is a new urban hillside neighborhood in the making, with a gentle topography sloping down towards the sea.

These are pedestrian-friendly environments in the urban village tradition, with narrow single-lane streets and tight sightlines that encourage slow driving and no through traffic. They entail a number of restored buildings and heritage mansions, with Mediterranean pitched roofs, loggias, and harmonious pastel colors.

New clustered developments in these neighborhoods complement the restored heritage buildings and define their urban and architectural character, inspired by tradition and enhanced with articulate forms and modern features suited to a contemporary lifestyle.

In the Serail Corridor and Hotel District, areas where the sea and mountain views are a key asset, new medium and high-rise residential buildings are juxtaposed with office, retail, and hotel space, making for a lively neighborhood feel. These include third-party residential developments such as 45 Park Avenue, Beirut Tower, and Platinum Tower.

Further along, on the Martyr’s Square Axis, developers’ medium-rise residential developments, planned to form the southern gateway to the city, will be at the forefront of a major meeting place.

In due time, the Waterfront District, ideally situated with open sea and mountain views, will also offer extensive residential developments in accordance with strict design criteria regarding main street and Boulevard frontages.

Tranquility at Home

Residential Neighborhoods

Adopted...
Our first project in Lebanon was in 1995; an introverted Mediterranean house with a large courtyard, oriented to the south with careful thought for cross ventilation and the rising winds from the valley. We also focused on framing every interesting view there was. We introduced an inclining double-wall system that housed all the technical networks and the structure. These walls with narrow openings gave privacy while they served to make plumbing and electrical wire easily accessible. The house’s orientation, thermal insulation, and passive energy enabled it to be free of heating and air-conditioning all year long.

Over the years, we have evolved to become a more people-focused architectural and planning practice. What matters most is the living experience that our projects create. Great attention is given to the broader social, urban, and environmental impact of any project. The qualities of each site, balanced with contemporary techniques, aesthetics, and the social milieu are explored, in order to achieve distinctive and timeless environments. Ecological initiatives are systematically introduced, but we always seek to find a balance between ideals and pragmatism, as projects most often have to remain economically feasible. For example, Platinum Tower in the Hotel District uses low-emission and fritted glass and special refracting inner façade sunscreens. A further plan to supply the building’s glass frame light with solar energy is undergoing a feasibility study.

In Beirut city center, each project has its unique character and specificities. Signature recognition is never high on our priority list. Our architecture tries to work with the passing of time, light, seasons, intangibles that a still camera cannot capture. We tend to build places that are simple and serene, places that are flexible in the long term.

Not every building can or needs to be iconic. A landmark is something that literally marks the land, a site that is particular to a place, such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris or the Opera House in Sydney. In Beirut, I would see it in the negative space, the layers of civilization our city has uncovered.
Convenient location, flexibility in design guidelines, and efficiency in technology make the city center a prime location for business and retail.

With an ancient legacy of trade and a history as a regional banking capital, Beirut is a hub for commercial, financial, diplomatic, and retail institutions that leverage the prime location, intelligent office space, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.

At the heart of Lebanon’s capital, the city center is at the convergence point of the country’s major road networks and within easy reach of the airport and port. With carefully designed infrastructure, it has become a prime location for business and retail.

Governmental and financial institutions were among the first organizations to relocate to the Traditional City Center after post-war reconstruction had begun. Then, international organizations, embassies, business delegations, and media corporations, followed shortly thereafter. Some of the landowners restored their properties, many tenants leased office space from developers, and others invested in new real estate projects. They found convenience in the location of the city center, flexibility in design guidelines, efficiency in the technology available, and modernity in services.

As the seat of the Lebanese government and a stately heritage building, the restored Grand Serail overlooks the city center from its hilltop site. To the east and at a lower elevation, the Lebanese Parliament building also stands restored, with its new annex offices adjacent. Between both governmental institutions lies Riad El Solh Street, where early modern buildings have served as headquarters for financial institutions since the mid-twentieth century. Further to the north, the Beirut Municipality building has also been restored, preserving its Egyptian influenced neo-Mamluk style.

These heritage buildings sit next to many new headquarters, including the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and other UN agencies, the Embassy Complex – home to several embassies and consulates, Bank Audi, An-Nahar, and Merit Corporation, among others.

Where Enterprise Prospers

Business and Commerce ***

All these businesses are able to operate efficiently in part thanks to the 24-hour IT zone that has been created in the city center, whereby every building has access to state-of-the-art multimedia and broadband communication services.

While several business centers have already emerged, a dedicated business district is planned to take shape by the sea in the Waterfront District. The aim is to create a premium regional office market to accommodate the rising demand of international multinationals for intelligent office space.

Beirut is also a shopping destination that boasts an ancient legacy of trade and commerce. Today, more than 350 outlets are spread throughout the commercial and residential areas of the city, encouraged by pedestrian-friendly environments, a growing resident and working population, and an increase in local and international tourists.

In the Etlib-Maard area, restored buildings and their arcade frontages charm tourists looking for a token of the city. Saifi, with its more urban residential feel, features local artisanal fashion, furniture, art galleries, and antique boutiques. For instance, Starch, a gem of the Saifi retail scene since 2008, is a non-profit collaborative effort that has helped launch emerging Lebanese designers. Five young designers were selected in 2011 to showcase their debut collections.

In the Foch-Allenby area, the Serail Corridor, and the Hotel District, designer boutiques such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and Givenchy as well as other high-end brands have established their presence, building on the profile of the region.

As the ultimate shopping destination and at the heart of it all is Beirut Souks. After the opening of the core part of the south Souks in the last quarter of 2009, the Jewelry Souk with its glittering outlets was launched in March 2011.
A growing resident and working population and a regular stream of national and international visitors serve the city center’s growing number of retail outlets.

With the ever-growing economic activity in the city center, the need for more parking, better public transport, traffic modeling, and traffic management has become a priority. A pilot project to encourage the introduction of citywide public transport is being studied as is the integration of more pedestrian-friendly areas and the implementation of bicycle lanes.

Quality Telecommunications

Beirut city center is a 24-hour IT zone capable of attracting residents, multinational companies, and other tenants who will benefit from the provision of multimedia and broadband communication services.

Solidere obtained in 1998 a build-and-operate license for broadband distribution of a converged IP network including high speed internet, internet protocol TV (IPTV), video conferencing, data center facilities and virtual private networking (VPN) for corporate clients.

The Company signed in 2006 an agreement with Orange, a member of the France Télécom group, for the building and operation of a full IP network, using advanced telecom technology based on a fiber-optic backbone with dual connection to each building in Beirut city center. Since 2007, Solidere Broadband Network has been delivering data (internet) and video (TV), operated and monitored from the network operation center (NOC) that is hosting its data center, call center (IPCC), and other equipment and servers for the different services.

City center tenants can surf the internet at speeds not available elsewhere in Lebanon and experience an enhanced television watching experience, including a wide selection of HD channels and time shifting features. A complete fiber optic internet connection offers businesses the highest possible quality of communication.
Saifi residential neighborhood features a backdrop of reconstructed and restored traditional buildings with ground-level retail use.

The Quartier des Arts, with its artisans and designers, has turned into an exemplary place for communal living.
Commercial and residential buildings host a variety of food and beverage outlets alongside retail stores, which complement the living, working, and tourist experience.

The retail and culinary milieu has grown to embrace a local and international variety of tastes and to satisfy visitors from around the world.
Premium brands and chain outlets have established their presence in the city center. The city center's fashion districts are interspersed with landscaped areas.
A successful retail mix and promotion strategy that pairs strong brands with a schedule of leisure and cultural activities has drawn high demand for retail space. This strategy has turned Beirut Souks into an attractive shopping, leisure and business destination.

Exclusive concept stores and boutiques stand alongside flagship and signature stores complemented by cafes and restaurants with open terraces and vertical gardens, all serviced by ample parking space.

In the south Souks, the architects faced the challenge of emulating the familiar character of a souk while accommodating modern shopping and retail needs. The solution is a modern bazaar, based on the old souks’ ancient street grid. A chain of interconnected structures, vaulted alleys, and open spaces result in a rich labyrinthine experience, fully integrated within the city fabric.

Souks, each with its own identity and character, bear the namesakes of their predecessors from the early and mid twentieth century. The historical names – Tawila, Ayass, and Jamil, for example – referred to specialty goods, an anchor retailer, or well-known family names in business. The Jewelry Souk, with its glass shop fronts and network of charming passages and squares, is also reminiscent of the old gold souk.

Several archeological sites, such as the city’s Medieval Wall and Moat and the Phoenico-Persian Quarter, have been incorporated into the structure and architecture. Furthermore, the Zawiyat Ibn Arraq shrine, the only surviving Mamluk period building in Beirut, has been preserved on the right of the main entrance on Weggand Street. It is mirrored in form and scale by a new prayer hall with a dome on the left, creating a virtual portal to the bazaar. The juxtaposition of the old and the modern bespeaks the living history of the site. At the same time, art installations and diverse cultural activities render Beirut Souks a place for encounters and imagination.

Since the official inauguration in 2010, the Souks have become a stage for a variety of events, concerts, fashion shows, children’s activities, and art exhibits. Programing highlights of 2011 included the weekly outdoors farmers’ market off Ajami Square, the fourth edition of the Beirut Jazz Festival, Fête de la Musique, and holiday festivities. In addition, the Venue, a multipurpose space, presented the third Beirut Art Bookfair, World Press Exhibition, and other exhibits and launch events.

Beirut Souks is still a work in progress, with the launch of the Entertainment Complex, designed by Valode & Partners (France), slated for 2013. Conceived as a mega entertainment destination, the main building comprises 14 movie theaters including two VIP halls with their private lounge area in addition to concession areas and a food court. At street level, high-end boutiques will form a continuation to the existing retail on Allenby Street. An L-shaped adjacent building is planned to host restaurants while the annex facing Ajami Square will host the entertainment facilities of the complex.

It is the imminent opening of the cinemas and their complementary components, along with the future development of the Department Store designed by Zaha Hadid, that will round off the singular leisure experience of Beirut Souks.

---

**Twenty-First Century Modern Bazaar**

*Beirut Souks***

Commissioned public art, such as “The Visitor” by Belgian artist Arne Quinze and “Gloriette” by French-Argentinean Pablo Reinoso, enliven the Souks with creativity.

Rich with history, the Beirut Souks have long played a central role in the social and economic life of the city as a gathering place for people, goods, and ideas.
In 1933, Antoine Naufal opened his first bookstore, a 30 sq m shop opposite the Lazarieh Commercial Center on Emir Bachir Street, a commercial artery in the heart of Beirut. He was soon joined by his two brothers and opened branches in 1946 in Bab Idriss and in 1960 in Starco Center in the city center. These branches were followed by one on Hamm Street in Rawr Beirut in 1971. At the height of the Lebanese civil war, after the three city center bookstores burned to the ground, the brothers moved their headquarters to the Sin El Fil area east of Beirut.

Eighty years later, Librairie Antoine is back in the city center with a visionary concept, Antoine ID, a store for the next generation, where books and other cultural products create an interactive community platform.

The three-level bookstore stands distinguished on Ajami Square in Beirut Souks. It features a children's books and educational toys floor, comfortable reading areas on each floor, the famed YellowKorner photo gallery, a Fabriano Boutique high-end stationery area, a ticketing service, interactive screens, a stage for book signings and auditions, and a cozy Grid cafe. Antoine ID stands to become a place for sharing ideas, knowledge, experiments, opinions, and values.

The new Souks revive the mood and atmosphere of the old souks and build on their heritage as they provide a contemporary reinterpretation of that tradition.
Beirut Souks, a premier commercial project, has become an attractive global shopping, business, and leisure attraction.

A chain of interconnected structures, vaulted alleys, and open spaces results in a rich labyrinthine experience, fully integrated within the city fabric.
With its long history, rich legacy, and elegant architecture, the city center is gradually accumulating new stories.

The city center is home to several cultural organizations that nurture creative initiatives, encourage self-expression, and drive aspirations.
The renewed city center has created a number of job opportunities to cater to the city's growing population.