

real estate development

Offering quality institutional residential and commercial space, a number of developments including UN House, the embassy compound, the Rue de France multiuse complex and Saifi Village, are characterized by modern architecture that is harmonious with its surroundings. Saifi Village is being extended and Wadi Abou Jamil developed along similar lines. The important Souks of Beirut magnet is still going through the final stages of the building permit and tendering processes.

Solidere's real estate strategy reflects an accurate assessment of demand, meeting the requirements and standards specific to each niche market. The Company has also shown its ability to respond to market and institutional circumstances, changing the nature of some projects or postponing them to better times. This applies particularly to projects stated within a 1997 property agreement with the State, involving the development of 70,000 sq m of floor space pre-leased as administrative buildings for seven years with an option to buy at an agreed price.



Embassy compound near the Grand Serail.

rue de france complex

The Rue de France development at the foot of the Serail hill was redesigned as a multiuse complex, comprising an office building, three residential buildings and a health club. The Council of Development and Reconstruction is occupying the office building on lot 1 Zokak El Blatt, totaling 2,900 sq m of floor space. Also entirely occupied are 3,200 sq m of floor space in the nine-flat residential complex on lot 1131 Zokak El Blatt. The 3,400-sq m Nautilus health club started operating in April 2003.

The Company had engaged in substantial works, adapting building designs to the end-users' needs.

Following a 1999 Council of Ministers' resolution to cancel the agreement, Solidere filed an action to reverse this unilateral decision. In addition to contractors' claims, the Company's damages include US\$25 million paid to the State in exchange for various lots as part of a property swap falling within the agreement. The litigation and its arbitration are still pending.

Solidere stopped implementation of the buildings dedicated to the ministries of Finance and Internal Affairs, completing in the latter case the skeleton for the substructure in order to stabilize the surrounds. Two developments destined for agencies affiliated to the Prime Minister's office were pursued on the basis of new land use, design and end-users. One is the embassy compound and the other the Rue de France multiuse complex.

embassy compound

Lot 89 Zokak El Blatt, under parceling and regrouping in Rue de l'Armée, was redesigned into a 9,300-sq m embassy compound. The Japanese moved their embassy there in 2001, the British in 2002. In 2004, 2,600 sq m of floor space were leased to the Australian embassy. The Australians are expected to move into their new premises in June 2004, after completion of requested internal fitting-out works. The remaining space is the object of interest on the part of a fourth embassy.

Rue de France complex.



the souks of beirut

The Souks of Beirut are a predominantly shopping district offering some 100,000 sq m of floor area. While being innovative in meeting contemporary shopping and entertainment needs, the project draws on the site's heritage. Several unearthed archeological finds are integrated within the project design. They include the late Phoenician-Persian harborside settlement and remnants of the medieval city wall, together with other artifacts and mosaics found on the site. The Souks will also incorporate the Mamluk Zawiyat Ibn Iraq shrine and Ottoman Majidiya mosque.

Design is by: Rafael Moneo (Spain) and Samir Khairallah & Partners for the Souks core, comprising around 200 retail units and an office building with a supermarket on the lower floors; Kevin Dash (UK - Australia) and Rafik El Khoury & Partners for the gold souk; Valode & Pistre (France) and Annabel Karim Kassar for the entertainment complex; Nabil Tabbarah for the department store and multiuse building; Olivier Vidal (France) for space planning and landscaping; Dimitri Alatzas Asociados (Spain) for parking structure design and management systems consultancy.

Solidere finalized the project detailed design and constructed the 2550-space underground car park. Complications raised by the authorities prior to releasing the building permit have delayed the development of the superstructure.

The development of the south Souks, covering the gold souks and the souks core, will start upon release of the related building permit, expected to occur by mid-2004, following the issuing on October 25, 2003 of Council of Ministers' decree 11259. Implementation should start upon the awarding of work contracts, based on the finalization of the earlier tendering process. Construction is expected to be finalized by early 2006, allowing the realization of pre-sales in the gold souk or jewelers' market and of leasing agreements for the souks core units. Fit-out works are expected to be finalized by mid 2006, with units reserved by end-users to be possibly delivered earlier. The medium-term funding needed for the project is facilitated by the inherent revenue elements involved: receivables against promissory notes from the gold souk, plus expected rental revenues.

Phase Two of the Souks development will cover the north Souks, consisting of the entertainment complex, the department store and the multi-use building comprising offices, restaurants and a commercial gallery. Expected to start upon completion of the related building permit approval process, this phase may proceed in parallel with the first. The facilities should be completed within 18 to 24 months from the permit approval date, allowing the finalization of leasing and management agreements with anchor tenants and international operators.



Souks of Beirut: south Souks site along Weygand street.

block 93

A car park in the northern part of Foch-Allenby is jointly developed by Solidere and owners of six properties in blocks 93 and 87. It will provide 700 car spaces over four underground levels totaling 31,200 sq m of built-up area, with two main access ramps on Foch and Allenby streets. Construction, awarded to Geneco, is to be completed in August 2004 for all but two properties, for which building permits are awaiting parcel subdivision and regrouping.

A landscaped Old Harbor Square will be created on top of the 280-car park section owned by Solidere. A destination on the Heritage Trail, it will contain a water feature and sections of the ancient harbor wall excavated on the site.

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saifi village



A success story, Saifi Village offers residential facilities totaling 34,000 sq m of floor space, including 4,102 sq m of retail at street level, in 16 low-rise new buildings forming four clusters over 7,400 sq m of land and along six streets.

Designed in the Lebanese vernacular tradition, the infill development blends with existing buildings restored to their original glory. The apartments offer comfort and security, elegant interiors and quality finishes. They are equipped with underground parking facilities and are serviced by a nursery school and local shops.

The public realm design and landscaping enhance the neighborhood's character and convey an appealing and communal ambience of gardens, courts and walkways.

A Quartier des Arts is evolving, with a cluster of designers' and art galleries, antiques and artisans' shops, delicatessen stores, decorative art and beauty specialist boutiques attracted by Solidere's favorable rental policy and proactive promotional campaign.

The very favorable market response to Saifi Village gave Solidere the impetus to invest in new projects expanding the Village and to apply similar 'urban village' principles to other residential neighborhoods.



Saifi Village houses and walkway.

View from Saifi Village terrace.



saifi village extension

The architect Nabil Gholam was commissioned to design two residential developments providing an extension to the Saifi neighborhood.

178 saifi village

178 Saifi Village offers around 10,100 sq m of residential and 670 sq m of commercial floor space on 2,937 sq m of land. The new development comprises five separate new buildings, three with façades along Charles Debbas street, the rest along the other streets bordering the site. In the middle is a garden, constituting 30% of the site area and surrounding a restored building.

The five- or six-floor buildings, inspired by the Beirut architecture of the fifties, use materials and pastel colors similar to those of the neighborhood. They are organized in a traditional way around the garden courtyard, providing private terrace gardens. Taking into account the Mediterranean climate, they draw on the best features of the central hall plan to create a well-balanced, well-oriented, well-lit space, ensuring optimum efficiency and minimum energy costs. The 45 units, ranging from one to three bedrooms, benefit from modern amenities, ample storage and parking space.

The building permit file is in progress with the Beirut Municipality. The permit for excavation works was obtained on April 22, 2004.

146 saifi village

146 Saifi Village, addressing the corner of Martyrs' Square, offers around 22,100 sq m of residential and 2,150 sq m of commercial floor space on 3,153 sq m of land.

While overlooking the tiled roofs of Saifi Village, the new buildings differ from it in vocabulary and scale, their modern architecture and 40-meter height relating more to the planned scale and character of the Martyrs' Square axis. The scale of the development is broken down horizontally through the use of upper-level setbacks, and vertically by its subdivision into four separate buildings of different materials and colors.



178 Saifi Village: interior façade rendering; restored existing building.

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wadi abou jamil



Giancarlo de Carlo & Associates

Residential complex in Wadi Abou Jamil.

Solidere has initiated the design and implementation of clustered developments in Wadi Abou Jamil, involving infill construction together with restoration. The development briefs, while adapted to the project site, aim at creating a unified urban and architecture approach, with a predominantly residential use.

The Company commissioned the concept designs to international and local architects, selected for their experience in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries, and the responsiveness of their design approaches to local context, culture and climate.

Once a scheme is reviewed and adjusted to meet the specifications of assessed demand, Solidere ensures its implementation. This will be achieved through direct investment in the development, or through the sale of the land to interested investors / developers, along with the concept design, and possibly a construction package.

Significant progress was registered in three residential schemes being developed by Solidere facing the planned Wadi Abou Jamil public garden.

Designed by Giancarlo De Carlo & Associates (Italy), an important new development extends on two neighboring lots 1379 and 1370 Mina El Hosn, where it respectively offers 12,400 sq m of floor space, distributed over four buildings of six floors each; and 12,000 sq m of floor space, distributed over three buildings of six floors each. Lot 1371 Mina El Hosn, designed by Maha Nasrallah, offers 5,000 sq m of floor space distributed over three apartment buildings, consisting of seven floors, including penthouse duplexes. Building permit files for these two projects have been submitted to the Municipality.

Solidere is currently reviewing the design by Dar al Omran (Rassem Badran, Jordan), of another important development on lot 1392 Mina El Hosn, offering 20,300 sq m of floor space in six apartment buildings of seven floors, built around an internal garden, with a one-floor flat in the middle.

The concepts developed for these residential clusters define the future urban and architectural character of Wadi Abou Jamil. The architects are sensitive to the continuity and mix of successive architectural styles in Beirut. In each case, construction is planned around an internal garden courtyard, an area accessible to pedestrians' viewing through the entrance or other voids in the building façades, allowing transparency. Layering creates a gradual passage between the public and private domains.

The architects draw inspiration from the traditional central hall model and enhance it by using more articulate forms and modern features. The façades are designed as a mirror effect of multiplicity in architectural style. Windows, balustrades, crowning, balconies, loggias and pergolas are important features in the façades' esthetic texture to express the richness and grace of a diverse tradition and language. Local materials are used: yellow stone and wood, determined by the existing street and building alignments; white or colored plaster finish and metal, inspired by the modern building under restoration in the area.

The apartments, with their private gardens and their interiors of grand standing, offer exclusive residential accommodation combining luxury, modernity and privacy.

Among other new Solidere residential projects now under design are .block 52-51, by Abdel Wahed El-Wakil (UK - Egypt), offering 21,800 sq m of residential floor area; block 50-06, a 18,000-sq m mixed-use development, and block 51-04, a 7,770-sq m residential development, both to be designed by Demetri Porphyrios (Greece).



Giancarlo de Carlo & Associates

Internal façades of two Wadi Abou Jamil residential complexes, designed by Giancarlo De Carlo & Associates and Dar Al Omran.



Dar al Omran