

RESTORATION



Restoration has set the tone for the entire Beirut city center development. Both the Conservation Area and the traditional neighborhoods have been restored to their former beauty. Enhanced by modern interiors and facilities, the historic core is a vibrant “vieille ville” housing important institutions, while its pedestrian streets, squares and cafés make it a popular destination. The friendly residential environment created in Saifi is being emulated in Wadi Abou Jamil.

In Beirut city center, heart of the country and of its capital, street façades and arcades, squares, cafés and other meeting places, traditional markets and residential clusters, are part of the city memory.

The historic core has a rich architectural heritage of monuments, religious, public and private institutional buildings and commercial landmarks. Its recovery has led to a phenomenal market demand for space to accommodate a broad range of office, retail, recreational and cultural uses. Saifi, Wadi Abou Jamil and Zokak El Blatt are re-emerging as urban villages.



The Restoration Process

The Master Plan retained for preservation 265 buildings and 27 public and religious buildings.

The buildings have been the subject of careful restoration, according to a set of rules established by Solidere in cooperation with urban planning authorities. These involve detailed sector plans and restoration guidelines.

Restoration briefs were based on architectural and photogrammetric surveys, damage assessment and historical research on the buildings original designs and materials. They were established as guidelines for articulating the design and restoration strategy to be adopted by architects in each restoration case, and are relatively stricter for buildings classified as of heritage or architectural value.

The projects go through phases of preliminary design approval, restoration permit issuance,

mobilization of site works, façade sample approval, site inspection, and finally occupancy permit procedure.

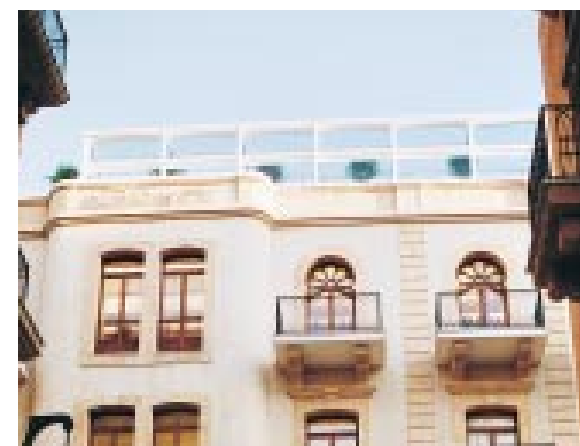
A dedicated Solidere team monitoring implementation ensures efficient work progress. Restored buildings have to be maintained on a regular basis, and to that effect, owners provide the Municipality of Beirut with a signed commitment to undertake general cleaning and façade maintenance every five years.

The areas of Foch-Allenby and NejmeH-Maarad are particularly notable for their faithful façade restoration, preserving surviving elements - old stone, wood and wrought iron - and completing them where needed with new elements likewise crafted; and for their high quality stonemasonry.

The city center restoration combines authenticity with a progressive outlook. The buildings are rejuvenated through the use of skylight atria, roof gardens, glass roofs and other features.

Behind elaborately restored external façades are completely modernized interiors. All restored buildings are fitted with modern equipment for functionality, comfort and efficiency. In residential buildings, modernity is allied with a high sensitivity to the Mediterranean typology. In office buildings, open plans allow optimal and flexible use of floor area.

The final product of restoration is quality space with a special character. Its success has confirmed that heritage buildings can survive and even create substantial value, provided they are adapted to the needs of contemporary life and business.



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Recuperated and Sold Buildings

At the inception of Solidere, the heavily damaged buildings of the city center had been deserted by their former occupants, with small pockets of residents remaining at the periphery. The Company efficiently managed the recuperation process, whereby former owners and tenants were given the opportunity to regain their rights in the buildings retained for preservation. In addition to the requirements applying to all restoration projects, recuperation contracts outlined the financial rights and responsibilities of involved parties, be they returnee owners or tenants. With the conclusion of the recuperation process, a total of 146 complete built lots have been recuperated. Of those, 124 buildings have been fully restored, 14 are currently under restoration, and eight are pending various legal issues.

Of the retained built lots whose ownership devolved to Solidere, 37 were regrouped into 31 lots and had been sold as is by the end of the year 2002, while one had been leased as is to be restored by its user. Their restoration is proceeding on the part of their buyers/user, with 20 built lots (21 before regrouping) ready and the rest under renovation.



Solidere Buildings

Solidere took the lead in restoration, undertaking showcase work on its own properties and closely monitoring other parties' projects. 51 built lots were the object of restoration by the Company. These include two co-owned buildings and two lots leased from the Islamic Wakfs.

Restoration was completed in 24 built lots: 17 destined for office use in the Maarad and Foch-Allenby area, with retail at street level; and seven destined for residential use in the Saifi, Wadi Abou Jamil and Zokak El Blatt neighborhoods. Work is underway in the other 27 built lots, with 12 at the construction stage and 15 under study.

Four restored buildings, plus sections in a co-owned building, serve as Company premises. Three built lots, designating five restored buildings initially occupied by Solidere, were later successfully put on the market.

Having in some cases sold complete commercial buildings after restoration, the Company also leases office and retail space in other buildings. By end 2002, 15 sale agreements, relating to 11 restored buildings or sections thereof, had been signed. Another 109 signed tenancy agreements, relating to units in restored properties, resulted in the occupation of around 16,300 sq m of residential space, 4,600 sq m of office space and 6,800 sq m of retail space.

Public and Religious Buildings

Nineteen religious buildings located in the BCD attest to the spiritual value of Beirut. Solidere has helped in their restoration, and 12 functioning places of worship are drawing increasing numbers of people.

