

Introduction

Beirut: Its history dates back over 5,000 years. Under the city's downtown area lay remnants of Ottoman, Mamluk, Crusader, Abbassid, Omayyad, Byzantine, Roman, Persian, Phoenician and Canaanite Beirut. In the first century B.C, it became a Roman colony, only to be destroyed later by a triple catastrophe of earthquake, tidal wave and fire in 551 A.D. Arab control then dominated until the Crusaders took over in 1110. Following the Crusaders were the Mamlukes and the Turks, and after World War I there was a French mandate period ended in 1943. There after Beirut witnessed numerous local and regional wars of civil and uncivil hostilities coupled with a twenty years of Israeli occupation ended year 2000 and thirty years of Syrian control ended 2005. Furthermore, Beirut was devastated by the Israeli bombing in 2006. Beirut is the commercial center of the region and was sometimes called "the Paris of the Middle East" because of its cosmopolitan atmosphere prior to the Lebanese Civil War. Prior to the Israeli bombings Beirut had undergone major reconstruction in recent years and had been set to host the Jeux de la Francophonie (Francophone Games) in 2009. Beirut is the capital; the largest city; has a population of 1.5 million people in the city proper and 2.1 million people in the surrounding metropolitan areas.

program. Massive privatized public investment was coupled with macro-economic policies designed to stimulate private local and foreign investment.

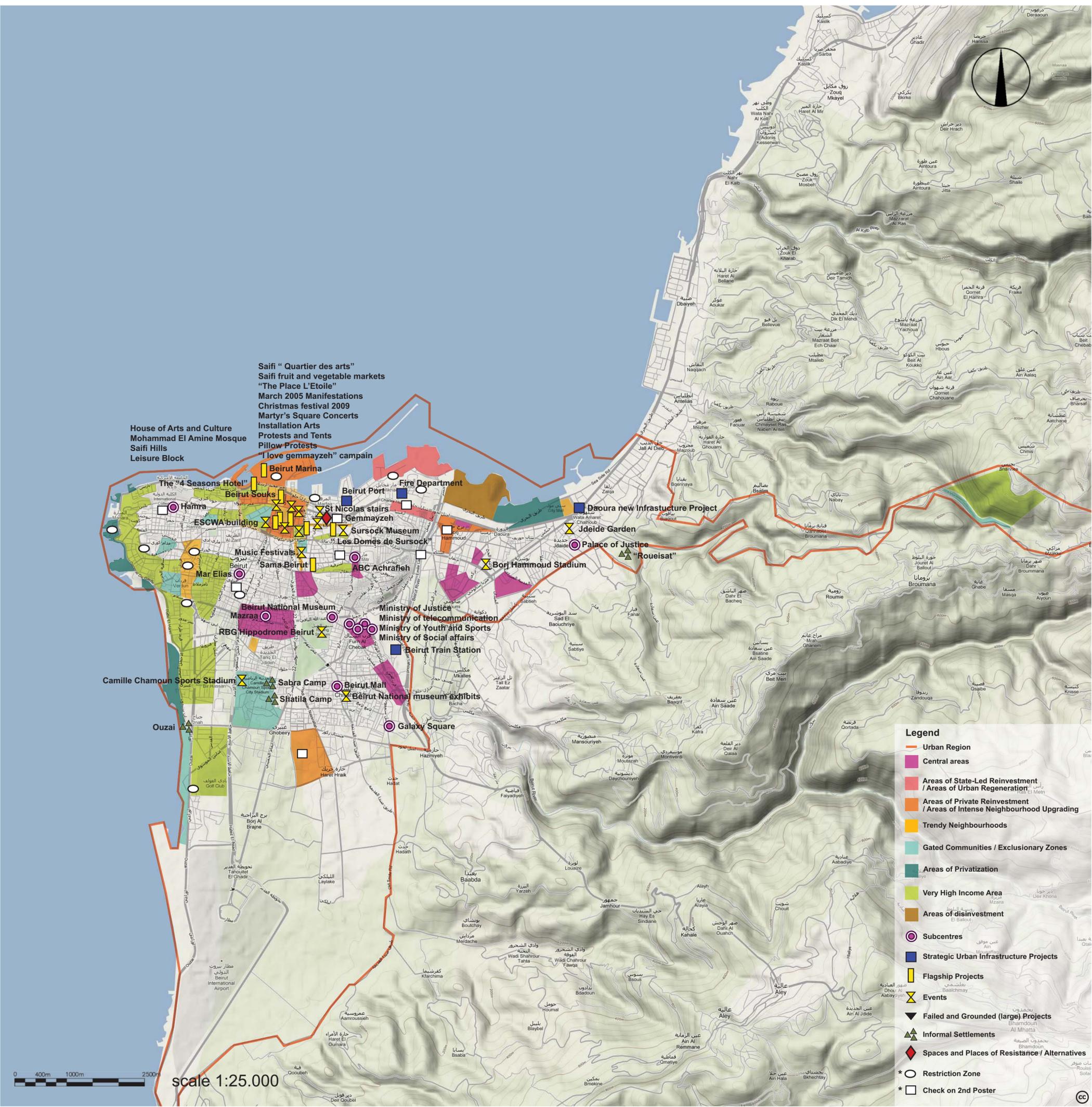
The development company, SOLIDER was established within the framework of Law 117 of 1991 which regulates Lebanese real estate companies aiming at the reconstruction of war-damaged areas, in accordance with an officially approved master plan, "SCHÉMA DIRECTEUR" catering to the private upper class which is 5% of the population and negating the rest of the Lebanese population. "More than half of Lebanon's 3 million people live below the poverty level. The minimum wage amounts to \$127 per month, with food prices as high as Paris's and energy prices as high as Tokyo's. A Lebanese architect fears that the renovated heart of the city will belong only to foreign firms, rich Lebanese returned from exile, then, we will have a Beirut without Beiruters!"

values which were the founding principles of such a diverse community damaging the entire strata of urban socio-economic values. The city has become a bourgeois ghetto catering to only 5% of the Lebanese population. (LE SCHÉMA DIRECTEUR DE LA RÉGION MÉTROPOLITAINE DE BYEROUTH (SDRMB, 1986), The SDRMB plan is considered the reference for the reconstruction of the Beirut metropolitan region today.

Based on a Master Plan which optimizes the site's natural assets and draws on its rich heritage, the project aims at creating a modern district spreading over 108 million sq m of land, one-third reclaimed from the sea, and offering a mix of facilities totaling 4.69 million sq m of floor space. The reconstruction and development company of the central district promotes that the plan respected the main natural feature and topography of the site by maximizing views of the sea and surrounding landscape, on the contrary the people of the city consider it a harsh devastation of the urban morphology of the city.

With the return to peace and stability, Lebanon's economy re-emerged in 1990, sustained by an ambitious national development

Lebanon	10'452Km2	* Inhabitants	3'971'000
Urban Region	253Km2	* Inhabitants	1'500'000



CEDAR ISLAND

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FAILED PROJECT

CEDAR ISLAND

Purpose: villas, apartments, shopping complexes, schools and hospitals.

Dimensions: 320 km².

Projects costs: \$8.2 billion.

Investors: Lebanon and abroad, with Arabs and other investment parties.

Architects: 20 architects.



DESCRIPTION / REASON FOR THIS CHOICE / BACKGROUND CONTEXT

The Company «Noor International Holding» revealed that the project is an artificial island in the sea and it is similar to Lebanon's national symbol and according to them, it is worth mentioning that this island will be the biggest artificial tree in the history. It is proposed that the island will hold residential, commercial, recreational, and tourist facilities, as well as being equipped for permanent inhabitants (villas, apartments, shopping complexes, schools and hospitals). It is planned to be built 18 kilometers south of Beirut airport off the coast of Damour.

DEALS

A delegation from «Noor International Holding» headed by Chairman Dr. Mohammad Saleh insists the project will attract funding in spite of the global economic downturn: "I am not worried about the global crisis, because my main target is Lebanese expatriates who have nostalgia for their country and would like to invest in it". According to the developer, it is expected that the accomplishment of this project will take 3 to 4 years after getting the specific authorizations and decrees from the competent Lebanese parties and will accommodate over 40,000 residents. The Cedar Island will be constituted of over 300 villas, a golf course and a self-contained infrastructure, including a water treatment centre and power plant. Dr. Saleh added that the project will provide 50,000 job opportunities, clarifying that the company's strategy is to form alliances with the most important companies in this field in order to provide the best services in the project. In addition, he mentioned that more details will be announced about "Lebanon's Cedar Island" after getting the necessary approvals.

IMPACTS

Dr. Saleh believes that this project will have no negative impact on the environment, yet, create even more job opportunities for all Lebanese alike and take advantage of willingness to invest and buy in Lebanon as the country's economy remains strong in comparison with troubled markets in the rest of the world. Also Dr. Saleh confirmed that the project, in its plans, takes into consideration the protection of the maritime environment without causing any damages to it due to the fact that some of the island's parts will be the cedar's branches floating above the sea surface. But on the other hand, people like Habib Maalouf, a journalist specialized in environmental issues; the simple existence of the island itself may be problematic. The "water brakes" (a technology that will protect the island from the waves of the Mediterranean) will also cause disruption to seawater currents, and not only around the island, but up to tens of kilometers away. This is expected to be harmful to marine life, and damage wrought in this area is also hard to recover from. Therefore, many people do not approve to the construction of The Cedar Island. Moreover, Thomas Schellen, publishing editor of Lebanon's Zaywa Industry Research, pointed out that the Lebanese environment could present problems. "The Mediterranean coast," he said, "is battered by storms most winters and projects like the sea wall for the new Corniche show that building construction on the coastline is not a simple proposition". Plus, the money that will be spent on this project can be used to much more useful and needed projects in Lebanon, like the need of 24 hours electricity, better roads, we need more job opportunities...

SAMA BEIRUT

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IN PROGRESS

SAMA BEIRUT

Purpose: residential, commercial and retail space.

Dimensions: 200 meters tall, 50 floors.

Projects costs: not known.

Investors: Fadi Antonios, head of Antonios Projects and the Developer of 'Sama Beirut' project.

Architects: ERGA Group - Elie and Randa Gebrayel.



DESCRIPTION / REASON FOR THIS CHOICE / BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Sama Beirut's prime location in the Sodeco area, in the heart of Ashrafiyeh, is currently attracting large masses. 'Sama Beirut's proximity to Downtown Beirut, makes it the perfect address for potential investors. It will include shops, offices and apartments. The view from the tower promises to be wonderful, as the surrounding area is filled with green trees and esthetically designed gardens. The tower itself will bring real estate development in Lebanon to a new level, especially as this project is the first of its kind in the country and is a big leap forward in the field of urban development. The residential section of the tower, which can be accessed through Elias Sarkis Avenue, offers its residents a private entrance. The apartments vary in size, ranging between 300 and 1,500m². In addition to the residential units, the tower contains six commercial shops that will be held by luxury brands. As for the office spaces, they will welcome blossoming businesses, and are conveniently located in the vicinity of all facilities and services that may be eventually required. Apartment prices range from \$5,000 per square-meter to \$15,000. Offices are priced around \$4,000 per square meter, while shops go for up to \$11,000. Offices and shops are not only offered for sale, but also for rent.

DEALS

Architects Elie and Randa Gebrayel designed both the exterior and interior spaces of the project in a unique way, with the tower facade made entirely of advanced composed curtain wall, and a revolutionary non-coordinated form rising in levels to reach the top of the tower at an altitude of 200 meters.

The main consultant to the project, a company that provides real estate consultancy, was behind the creation of the concept and the purchase of land, after undertaking financial and market studies for 'Sama Beirut'. The company, headed by Massaad Fares, is handling marketing and sales, in addition to financial and administrative management of the project. Moreover, the tower is expected to be fully operational in 2014.

IMPACTS

For Fady Antonios, head of Antonios Projects and the Developer of 'Sama Beirut' project, the possibility to build six identical small buildings which would be cheaper, but instead chose to use only 20 percent of the land and leave 80 percent for gardens and greenery. For some people like Mona Hallak, an architect and a member of the Association for Protecting Natural Sites and Old Buildings in Lebanon (APSAD), is against in building a very tall tower in Beirut, "It is on the edge of one very important cluster" adding that due to a lack of proper urban planning to prohibit building towers in historic areas, Beirut will lose its historic neighborhoods in a few years. Wael Hmaidan, executive director of IndyAct, a league of independent environmental, social and cultural activists, agrees with Hallak saying, "we are definitely against it...We need to understand the value of old architecture", explaining that Lebanon's comparative advantage to places like Dubai is its old architecture, moderate climate and social life -- not high-rise towers. Hallak says that high rise towers need to have more open space to breath. "This... is not a place for a tower. Nobody will notice how bad it will be until it is done and there will be no sun in that area".

CITY MALL

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ACTIVE

CITY MALL

Purpose: commercial.

Dimensions: 220,000 m².

Projects costs: \$24,000,000 million.

Investors: not known.

Architects: D & ADESIGN & ARCHITECT PARIS.



DESCRIPTION / REASON FOR THIS CHOICE / BACKGROUND CONTEXT

The commercial center is located in the North-East residential and urban area of Beirut, on a rectangular land of 70,000 m², bordering the region's three major axes. At City Mall, there is a 11,000 m² of shopping sales area.

The mall includes a cinema complex with 9 movie theatres, specialty shops and the BHV department store on 2 levels totaling 18,000 m². The mall area is divided in a way to facilitate the access to the Hypermarket, to the stores and the restaurants.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics in 1997, Greater Beirut and its Northern suburb (Mount Lebanon) represent the market's greatest consumption potential: 45% of households correspond to 60% of the income per capita of Lebanese households. The overall spending of the average household of Greater Beirut is of 19,059 USD, of which 33% go on groceries.

The project marketing plan consists of a construction site of 200,000 m² with a parking lot for more than 2,000 cars and more than 75,000 m² GLA surface with a perfect temperature control system GEANT CASINO hypermarket with 11,000 m² of shopping sales are:

- BHV department store on 2 levels totaling 18,000 m².
- Commercial gallery containing about 100 stores.
- Medium sized sports outlet and a medium size leisure outlet.
- Cinema complex with 9 movie theaters.
- 15 cafes and restaurants.
- Specialty shops (sporting goods stores, bookshops, music shops ...).
- Kids playground.

DEALS

The center is situated at the outskirts of the North of Beirut, with a strategic location right at an intersection point of different urban zones: Metn region, East of Beirut to Beirut city, and the roads connecting the north with Beirut. The location is at the heart of high purchasing power zone.

Accessibility is unique in this project benefits from triple access, along the following axes:

- Dora highway – Dora to Dbaye, ad Sin El Fil to Dbaye.
- The coastal road from Quarantina to Dbaye (the road is being widened to more lanes).
- The new road under construction that connects Nahr-El-Mott with Broumana

Visibility: the plate-like characteristics of the site as well as the direction of the principal road axes should ensure excellent visibility of the project.

IMPACTS

Lebanon is known by its traffic which people experience every day, especially every morning in Beirut. And since The City Mall is located in Dora, at the beginning of Beirut, the traffic is insupportable, therefore, a bridge in front of The City Mall is currently under construction which facilitates the transportation and decrease the traffic in this area. But some citizens are against this idea because they consider that if there is going to be a war between Lebanon and Israel, the enemy will certainly bomb this huge bridge, and the time that workers and engineers will be a waste of time, "hmm... did u take into consideration that maybe Israel will bomb this bridge and take revenge if there is going to be a war between Lebanon and Israel?", one of the citizens said.

LINORD PROJECT

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PENDING

LINORD PROJECT

Purpose: residential, commercial.

Dimensions: cross area of 2,400,000 m² with a net area of 1,300,000m².

Projects costs: \$800 millions.

Investors: CDR (The Council for Development & Reconstruction).

Architects: not known.



DESCRIPTION / REASON FOR THIS CHOICE / BACKGROUND CONTEXT

The Council for Development & Reconstruction (CDR) is understood to be considering sub-dividing the Beirut coastline development Linord project into separate packages after the government announced the cancellation of the long-delayed project. The build-operate-transfer (BOT) development between Beirut and Antelias involved the reclamation of 1.4 million square kilometers of land and the installation of sewage and water networks, a marina and a harbor.

The Government of the Lebanon initiated a scheme to clean up the coastal area on the north side of Beirut between the rivers Nahr Beirut and Nahr Antelias. It includes the reclamation of a coastal strip for commercial, residential and touristic purposes and the building of new harbors and a marina. Royal Haskoning, undertook a series of studies and prepared reports covering the LINORD Development Project in Beirut.

The LINORD project characteristics:

- One of the largest environmental and development in Lebanon.
- It is located between Beirut River and Antelias River.
- It has an execution of a sewage primary treatment plant & rehabilitation and protection of existing sea outfalls.
- 260,000 m² of land for future secondary sewage treatment plant.
- Rehabilitation of Burj Hammoud waste dumps; converted to 260,000 m² of District Park.
- Construction of a military coastguard harbor and fishing harbor.
- 300,000m² as a tank farm to be sold to oil and gas companies.

DEALS

The Linord Project is divided into 3 parts:

- The mixed used part which is made of a residential, leisure and a commercial area. This part is from El Mott river to Antelias River (1,101,137m²).

- A tank farm and business area from el Jamloul River to el Jott channel (564,000m²), consisted of:
 - A tank farm area.
 - A Commercial and offices area.
 - A business park.
 - A light industrial park.

- The third part is based on infrastructure which is from Beirut River to el Jamloul channel (729,430m²), consisted of:
 - A primary sewage treatment plant.
 - A secondary sewage treatment plant.
 - A district park-Light industrial area.

IMPACTS

The LINORD Project has a positive point in converting a big area of waste dumps from the rehabilitation of Bourj Hammoud into a District Park; a public healthy area. Moreover, the architects thought about the future in creating a 260,000 m² area of a second sewage treatment plant.

CONFUSING SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL URBAN CHANGES

The administrative structure of Beirut needs revolutionary improvements and expansion to become adequate for controlling the growth of the city. This sort of revolutionary improvement would meet enormous resistance from vested economic and political interests and from a prevailing traditional mentality. The problems that face such improvement make them very close to impossible. This would mean that the growth of Beirut would continue untamed on the pace started within the last fourteen years and would ultimately lead to changing Beirut from a city that thirty years ago had a liveability index as tops to a city with a liveability index of a slum by scientific definition on its peripheral and immediate urban fringes.

As the private sector in Lebanon is very strong, and as it is ambitious and displays a great entrepreneurial spirit, the task of the government would be just to channel the dynamic activities of the private sector, define the broad lines of its policy for the future of national growth and provide an attractive alternative for the dislocated people in the region that tend now to move to or out of Beirut by implementing the general state outline policy with a provisional infrastructure for a successful take-off. The problems that emerge from the continuation of the present trend can be divided into two groups: Those that result from the rapid expansion of Beirut and; Those that result from the draining of distant regions.(Chamoun,R.2005).

The Council for Development and Reconstruction in Collaboration with the Directorate General of Urban Planning have proposed a National Physical Master Plan of Lebanon (2002-2004) based on the

three adopted main principles: the unity of Lebanon, the equality of development among the regions and the rational use of the resources. The master plan is 'Giving the Capital Region the Position it Deserves'. Beirut and its suburbs from one single "Central Urban Area" and could, with its forecasted 2 million inhabitants, be among the largest capital regions of the Middle East and the Mediterranean. This ambition could be strengthened by:

- Review of the construction regulations in the suburbs north of Nahr el Kalb and south of Khaldé to limit the urban expansion to Nahr Ibrahim northward and Nahr Damour southward, which requires an increase in the construction ration in certain areas and the provision of adequate public transport facilities.

- The creation of a series of large urban projects: completing the reconstruction of the Beirut Central District and linking it with the rest of the city / implementing the southern urban planning project (Elyssar) / implementing the large urban project on the southern hills between Khaldé and Damour including the foothills (Cedars of Lebanon) / implementing a large urban project on the banks of Nahr Beirut / implementing a large urban project on the sea front between Beirut river mouth and Antélias (LINORD Project).

- Upgrading the transportation sector in the "Central Urban Area": creating a single transport organization authority for Beirut and Mount Lebanon / constructing dedicated modern public transport sites in Beirut, on the coast and along the main axes of residential

areas located on the western slopes / recovering of the railway right-of-way that would serve, on the long term, as a secured relay among all coastal cities / doubling the northern highway capacity by constructing an urban Cornish between Beirut and Antélias and a new highway between Antélias and Maamtein.

- Mastering the urban development and rejecting all derogation and regularization practices.

- Introducing nature within the cities, opening the cities on the sea-front, improving the public areas, particularly sidewalks, pedestrian areas, public gardens, and all places within the cities related to pedestrians, kids, and handicapped.



Though Ra'ik Hariri is often celebrated today as the architect of Lebanon's rebirth (including by American diplomats who saw him as an ally against Syria) his project to rebuild downtown Beirut, known by the French acronym SOLIDERE has been heavily criticized within Lebanon.

