

# Residential Development

Beirut, Lebanon, 2011–

This residential development is spread over two building plots in the Wadi Abou Jmiel quarter in the centre of Beirut. The site is hemmed in by the Maghan Abraham Synagogue to the west, the St. Louis Roman Catholic Church to the east and two seraglios (enclosed palaces) to the south. The larger of the seraglios dates back to the early nineteenth century and is currently used as the Palace of the Government, while the smaller is for the Council for Development and Reconstruction. The plots are raised on a hill that gently slopes towards the Mediterranean. The proposal comprises a series of residential buildings, including the reconstruction of four historic structures. Freestanding buildings were previously located along the edges of the two plots, generating open spaces in the middle. Three new buildings are being introduced into the western plot in addition to the four reconstructions, continuing the traditional perimeter typology with independent buildings. In contrast, the three new buildings on the eastern plot occupy larger footprints, interlocking a different type of open space, while also creating a new typology based on loggias, balconies and terraces, making the living spaces more attractive to potential inhabitants.

The reconstructions in the western plot are placed in an approximation of their original location, with the three new buildings responding proportionally. They remain independent and appear as small palazzi with attached balconies. This plot will retain the character of a historic downtown urban quarter. Two of the reconstructed buildings are seen as the gateway to the site from Rue Wadi Abou Jmiel. The building has been moved slightly closer to the western gateway building, while the fourth remains in its original south-eastern corner position. Two of the new buildings complete the opposite corner, while the third serves as a transition between the historic buildings and the plot on the other side of Rue Melki.

The design for the buildings on the plot to the east of Rue Melki takes advantage of a rule that allows for a twenty per cent increase of the building through the addition of non-enclosed space. A continuous balcony wraps around the perimeter of each building, including enlarged corner spaces, creating open terraces. The relatively deep balustrade allows for planting and acts as a flower bed. The composition of these buildings consists of orthogonal volumes perforated with windows of differing dimensions. The wider windows overlook the corner terraces. The curvilinear balconies counterbalance the strict geometry of the interlocking blocks. Cladding covers both the balconies and the blocks, consisting of wide rectangular limestone slabs of a different colour (varying from beige to yellow) for each individual building. The use of limestone is intended to imbue these buildings with a monolithic character as a response to the detailed crafted façades of the neighbouring historic buildings, lending further dignitas to a new development in this significant location within the city.

Date	2011–
Gross floor area	9,928 m <sup>2</sup>
Client	Royal Hotels & Resorts
Design architect	David Chipperfield Architects, Milan
Design and managing director	Giuseppe Zampieri
Associate	Cristiano Billia
Project architect	Andrea Cocco
Contact architect	Ziad Akl & Partners, Beirut
Project manager	ASAM, Beirut
Real estate consultant	Al-Mawarid Real Estate, Beirut

