



“A MODERN
INTERPRETATION OF
SEVERAL TRADITIONAL
FRENCH, MEDITERRANEAN
AND LEBANESE
ARCHITECTURAL ASPECTS”

CITY *limitless*

CURRENTLY TAKING SHAPE IN ANCIENT BEIRUT,
THE NEW DISTRICT//S DEVELOPMENT PROMISES
TO BE AN ENTICING ‘CITY WITHIN THE CITY’

The capital, largest city and cultural hub of Lebanon, Beirut has had a long and sometimes troubled history. Today, the city often referred to as the ‘Paris of the East’ is once again on the up. There is no better symbol of this regeneration than District//S, a major new development currently taking shape in the elegant Saifi district on the country’s Mediterranean edge.

ONGOING REGENERATION: Developed by Estates SAL, the design of District//S aspires to create a modern interpretation of several traditional French, Mediterranean and Lebanese architectural aspects. Made up of town houses, apartments, penthouses and retail spaces, as well as piazzas, swimming pools, roof gardens and a cultural centre, the project will be a major part of the city’s ongoing regeneration. District//S will ultimately have 22 contemporary buildings inspired by the history of the city. The result will be a welcoming luxury space in an already fascinating part of Beirut.

Since Beirut has existed for many centuries and has a cosmopolitan atmosphere as well as great culture, it is an attractive destination for travellers to the Mediterranean. ‘Behind the creation of District//S is a desire to re-establish Beirut’s heritage and highlight its ability to

constantly regenerate itself,’ explains Anthony El Khoury, CEO of Estates SAL.



As well as being a thoughtful architectural statement, the firm has other aspirations for the scheme. ‘It’s a city within the city,’ enthuses Anthony. ‘In other words, a stand-alone neighbourhood development as well as an important part of the wider Beirut Central District.’ So how does District//S fit in with the

rest of the city? ‘It was conceived and designed to be open, un-gated and interconnected with the surrounding areas,’ Anthony explains. ‘At the same time, it is clearly a separate neighbourhood with its own independent character and atmosphere.’

‘LIKE A FAMILY’: District//S’s design is incredibly detailed. Modern facades pay homage to the surrounding buildings with their wooden shutters and Mediterranean detailing, while the open spaces have been used to showcase the country’s wonderful climate and relaxed lifestyle. London architects Allies and Morrison were commissioned to create the project. ‘It is modern, simple but also highly advanced,’ explains architect Graham Morrison. ‘Each building is different with its own distinct character, but they have been designed to sit together like a family,’ thereby maintaining the area’s architectural cohesion.

Angus Gavin of Solidaire, a private company commissioned by the Lebanese government to oversee the regeneration of Beirut and other areas, introduced the architects to the project. Having written a book on the history of the city’s central district, Angus takes a close interest in Beirut’s future, and is keen to encourage international architects who share his vision to get involved with new builds.

ARCHITECTURAL HARMONY:

Allies and Morrison has a strong architectural ethos. 'The buildings are very straightforward shapes but have unusual details,' says Graham. Set around an intersecting network of squares and lanes, no two buildings are parallel. 'We had to design models of the outside space as well as the actual buildings in order to comprehensively map the entire site,' he adds. 'Wherever you look, there is something of interest.' The architects explain how they envisaged District//S fitting into the cityscape of Beirut: 'We employed many of the same architectural devices that are present around the city, albeit within a very contemporary scheme,' says Graham. 'We have used local stone and created elaborate timber shutters and metalwork balconies similar to those adorning many of the city's ancient buildings, thus creating a feeling of balance with the rest of the city.'

The architecture has been conceived to reflect the contemporary lifestyles of District//S's future residents, with each home offering a feeling of light, space and luxury. The two, three and four-bedroom apartments all have access to gyms and pools, whilst the stunning penthouses have their own private rooftop pools and gardens. The development will comprise different areas – residential, retail and cultural – giving it that true 'city within the city' feel that the developers want. 'The piazza at the centre of the project will be where all the cafés, restaurants

and diners are,' says Anthony. 'It will be dynamic and vibrant, with relaxed communal spaces.'



ECO AMBITIONS: Like many contemporary developments in Lebanon, District//S has been designed with consideration for the environment, and will achieve LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. But the plan is to make District//S's eco credentials even stronger than the norm. 'District//S will be the

first sustainable neighbourhood in Lebanon and the Arab world,' says Anthony. Graham expands: 'The buildings' layouts create shaded spaces, and the interiors are kept cool by large wooden shutters. The outdoor spaces have been designed to funnel breezes, so less air conditioning is needed. We avoided installing large areas of glass, instead applying a "punched hole" effect, and the use of heavy stone masonry in the construction will mean that the buildings stay cool throughout the day and night.'

GREAT EXPECTATIONS: Although the project is still four years away from completion, interest in District//S is already strong. Thirty per cent of the properties had been sold before the project was even launched. 'Yes, it is true that pre-launch interest has been tremendous,' confirms Anthony. 'This shows a lot of confidence in the partners of the project, including Estates SAL, Allies and Morrison, and the sales company REAL.'

For investors, the opportunities are varied. At the moment, prices range from around \$7000 per sq m to \$15,000 per sq m for residential space, and from \$13,000 per sq m to \$17,000 per sq m for retail areas. Some 10,000 sq m of dedicated retail space will be available at the centre of the project for the creation of new cafés, restaurants, boutiques and galleries. With such promising retail and residential potential in this landmark development, the opportunities seem boundless. www.districts.com.lb

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