



BEIRUT
URBAN
DECLARATION

FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE
NEIGHBOURHOODS

HIT BY THE 4TH OF AUGUST EXPLOSION

INTRODUCTION



The Beirut Port explosion on August 4, 2020, was a watershed event in the history of Lebanon, and the capital city Beirut. It is a catastrophe that affected the neighborhoods of Al-Mudawar, Karantina, Al-Badawi, Mar Mikhael, Rmeil, Gemayzeh, Mar Nicola, and extended to Burj Hammoud, Ashrafieh, Al Bashoura, and Zoqaq El Blat. It reached the other neighborhoods of the city, leaving behind about two hundred people deadened thousands wounded, in addition to the destruction of nearly three hundred buildings, complete or partial destruction, and the displacement of tens of thousands of residents of the area.

The Order of Engineers and Architects (OEA) in Beirut, in partnership with the Faculties of Architecture in Lebanon, took the initiative to produce the “Beirut Urban Declaration” with a general vision on ways to reform the affected areas.

This declaration reviews a set of ideas that would constitute a starting point for work, to formulate an integrated vision for the reconstruction of the affected areas, as a result of the port explosion. It proposes a national vision for reconstruction, heritage rehabilitation, protection of the social fabric, and the distinguished urban identity in the affected area as a result of the tragic event, and the reformulation of the port relationship and its urban context.

The declaration is an intellectual and cultural endeavor that contributes to the formulation of a comprehensive vision, in form of ideas and proposals of the reformation of the city. It presents them as a set of documented issues that seek to meet the challenges of emptying the city from its residents and demography change, as well as providing suggestions and quick feasible, and operational ideas to the officials and official institutions concerned.

The declaration outlines the course of intervention and the role that the OEA could play in cooperation with the Universities in envisioning the reformation of the affected region. It adopts a comprehensive view of social, economical, and urban aspects, and deals with the damaged area as an urban fabric fully integrated with the port. “Beirut Urban Declaration” emphasises on the following ideas

Emphasizing that preserving the heritage urban fabric does not contradict with the variables of people's lifestyle and behavioral patterns and new requirements. And that these requirements can be secured while preserving the composition of the heritage urban fabric

Considering the heritage character of the affected area, which consists of their general fabric and the constituent units of this tissue, and as a site in which people's life, social and economic behavior is practiced. This heritage character is an accumulation of people's social and spatial life and their memory, from the formation of the city to the moment of the explosion that destroyed these historical and heritage areas and neighborhoods, and it is a basic parameter that cannot be changed or modified except with the general approval of the main stakeholders (owners or residents)

Determine the paths between urgent (fast), medium, and long term (slow), and establish an observatory to follow up and document the actions and options that are presented and which will become a tangible reality, by setting indicators for monitoring the reconstruction process and recommending and lobbying for policies.

The need to establish appropriate policies (housing, infrastructure, heritage,...) to keep pace with the reconstruction process, and pressure to adopt these policies

The general idea of the reconstruction management has to go through devising mechanisms that guarantee wide participation of the society and specialists, aiming at setting the reconstruction process on a scientific and a national path that preserves Beirut's identity and its human, heritage, and cultural image.

The document is divided into five axes, namely:

1

City Identity ◀

2

Economic and Social Consequences and Challenges to be faced ◀

3

Towards a Comprehensive View of Rehabilitating the Destroyed Area ◀

4

Challenges of Protecting and Rehabilitating the Urban Heritage Fabric ◀

5

Management and Organization of Planning and Reconstruction ◀

City Identity

The stricken area is a major component of the capital's identity and its social and urban characteristics.

The most important milestones of Beirut's historical formation are:

The development of the Old City of Beirut outside its walls began in the mid-nineteenth century **1.1**

The initiative of the notables of the city who became rich because of their relationship with the Ottoman authorities and the European consuls to build palaces and luxurious residences on the Sarasqa and Zoqaq el Blat plateaux **1.2**

The urban development along the roads that connected the old city to Tripoli (Gimmayzeh neighborhood), Sidon (Al Basta neighborhood), al-Sham (Bashoura and Nazareth neighborhoods) **1.3**

The development of Beirut Port and its impact on the urban development of the affected area **1.4**

The specific characteristics of the urban development in the neighborhoods of Gemmayzeh, Jeitaoui and Rmeil, with Al Achrafiyeh plateaux on one side, and port on the other side **1.5**

The historical peculiarities of the formation of the karantina and the Maslakh (the slaughterhouse) neighborhoods **1.6**

The arrival of the Armenians to Beirut escaping the massacres after the First World War and the development of the Mar Mikhail neighborhood (adjacent to Armenia Street), and Al-Badawi (on the Beirut River Bank opposite Bourj Hammoud) **1.7**

The relative stability in the region, which didn't witness significant urban and social transformations since the independence and until the end of the nineties of the last century (Modern Beirut of the 1950s and 1960s developed westward toward Hamra, Was Beirut and Raouche) **1.8**

The Construction boom which began to extend outside the commercial city center starting in the late nineties, which was manifested by the construction of towers in the Sarasqa neighborhood and the area adjacent to Charles Hello Avenue opposite the port **1.9**

The economic and social transformations the region witnessed during the past twenty years, with the decline of the traditional crafts activities, the opening of restaurants and bars, the development of new cultural and artistic activities, and the emergence of new young groups, along with the survival of a sizeable portion of the original residents, all that makes the region distinguished by its social mix

1.10

Economic and Social Consequences

and Challenges to be faced

As a result of the great damage caused by the explosion of the port, especially in the old parts of the city, and the economical and social tragedies it caused, the basic needs emerged as urgent, and it falls among the priorities in the hierarchy imposed by the current circumstances:

2.1

Housing:

The need to ensure the rapid return of residents to their homes before the onset of winter

2.1.1

The need for temporary shelter (or permanent) during the reconstruction period. And securing decent housing for the residents of the area until the complete reconstruction of their homes

2.1.2

Work to reach frameworks that allow the construction of housing for people with limited income in the affected area, especially in the areas of Karantina and Maslakh

2.1.3

2.2

The Economic and Living life cycle:

Taking into account the needs and priorities of people, that is, the approach to reconstruction to be on the human and social level

2.2.1

Reviving the economic activities in the region and helping to restore the activities that were struck by the explosion

2.2.2

2.3

Education:

Rehabilitation of the public and private educational institutions in the area as soon as possible to allow the start of the school year

2.3.1

1
2
Reconstructing and restoring the damaged institutions, **2.3.2** taking into consideration the standards of public safety, inclusive life and sustainable construction

▶ **2.4**

Health:

Rehabilitation of the health sector (hospitals and medical centers), to meet the needs of the area, after the destruction of four main hospitals and a number of medical centers

2.4.1

Towards a Comprehensive View

of Rehabilitating the Destroyed Area

3
4
5
This section represents the focal point of the urban study that should be developed to organize the area after its status is modified by the Supreme Council of Urban Planning to become "Status Under Review". From this standpoint, a comprehensive review of the area of destruction and its revitalization among the components and peculiarities with other regions in Beirut raises the following issues

3.1 The Port Area and its Relationship with the City:

Examining the new role of the Port of Beirut as an essential economic facility, taking into consideration the other ports on the Lebanese coast, as well as the other ports on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean.

3.1.1

Reconnecting the port with the city center, and restoring its relationship with the affected areas

3.1.2

3.2 Addressing the Problem of Mobility:

It is imperative to study the issue of public transport and the problem of smooth mobility paths, and set them as a priority in the reconstruction plan. The region is suffocating today due to traffic problems and dependence on private cars. In this regard, it is useless to secure additional car parks to serve the neighborhoods, as all recent studies indicate that a large number of parking spaces lead to the exacerbation of the traffic problem instead of solving it.

3.2.1

3.3 The Morphology and Typology of the City:

Study of the morphology of the area and its relationship with the typology of the buildings and streets, to delve into the social and economic relationship of each neighborhood in the affected area, the neighborhoods with each other, as well as their relationship with the port.

3.3.1

3.4 Take advantage of the opportunities :

Take advantage of the opportunities available in the affected neighborhoods to launch projects that allow development of public spaces that have the potential to transform into meeting and gathering centers

3.4.1

3.5 Study the "Sensitive" areas :

Study the "Sensitive" areas existing between the neighborhoods, and activate them to link the services with each other, while preserving their economical and social functions

3.5.1

3.6 Reconsidering the building regulations

Reconsidering the building regulations in the destroyed area and enhancing the interaction of the areas with each other, to preserve the diversity of the city's architecture

3.6.1

3.7 Reconsidering some of the Plans

Reconsidering some of the Plans that were previously studied by official institutions (The Supreme Council for urban planning, Beirut Municipality, Council for Development and Redevelopment, etc.)

3.7.1

Challenges of Protecting and Rehabilitating

the Urban Heritage Fabric

Considering the heritage character of the affected areas, which consists of its general fabric and the constituent units of this fabric, as a one single project entity to fully preserve its diversity that expresses the stages and developments that have passed through the city, and to deal with the site as an integrated civil and social fabric.

4.1

Using this Urban Heritage Fabric in serving the needs and requirements of the social fabric and the developments of its needs and contemporary role

4.2

Considering the areas of the Urban Heritage Fabric as special areas that are subject to plans and laws for the whole tissue and area, and not to classify them as selected single buildings

4.3

This part of the Beirut Urban Declaration is important, because it focuses on how the groups will work together with the universities and the OEA to contribute to the formulation of a vision about the reconstruction of the affected areas. And in this context, the OEA will endeavor with the faculties of architecture to define achievable goals through the committees they establish together. These groups draw their strength from adherence to the Beirut Urban Declaration, as it can form a pressure force that affects official decisions if it can produce a clear vision for the future of these neighborhoods.

5.1 Tasks and Priorities:

This process is related to setting priorities, especially follow-up operations in the coming months after finishing with the emergency operations of support, sheltering and urgent needs, and the start of reconstruction and planning operations to ensure that everything is on the right track. In addition to serving the aspirations of the people in the city and the Lebanese community for continuity and follow up.

5.1.1

5.2 The Role of Universities:

The role of universities in defining and distributing tasks, initiating detailed discussions at the level of small groups

5.2.1

Universities work through their academic programs on emerging problematics (urban, urban fabric, city fabric, and social formation), and identify problems as an entry point for sound solutions

5.2.2

Establishing a shared data bank and documentation that specifies a file for each university (a folder), coordinating cooperation through a data bank, and exchanging data with civil institutions and organizations (Organizing the shared data is the OEA's responsibility)

5.2.3

5.3 Organizing Workshops:

The first is at the end of November and the others should follow accordingly to exchange ideas and discuss all proposals and projects proposed by universities in partnership with civil society and official institutions

5.3.1

5.4 Data Bank and Documentation:

The data bank contributes to formulating a comprehensive vision through an intellectual and cultural effort that contributes to reshaping the city, based on documenting information, initiatives and issues.

5.4.1

The Urban Observatory

The OEA works through the architectural associations, in partnership with the faculties of architecture in Lebanon, to establish a permanent observatory to follow up and document works and options that contribute to the production of a general vision of urban transformations and their problems presented in the process of the renewed history of our society.

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This takes place through the following:

Establishing a bank of information, data, and research

Monitoring and documenting all work taking place on site in the affected areas

Establishing the operational mechanisms for the future development of the urban observatory

Participants in the preparation and discussion of the document:

Order of Engineers and Architects - Beirut

Architects Association - Beirut

Urban Planners Association – Beirut

Chadirji Foundation for Architecture and Society

The Faculties of Architecture Committee in OEA - Beirut:

Lebanese University - Faculty of Fine Arts and Architecture

Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts "ALBA" - University of Balamand

Beirut Arab University "BAU"

Lebanese American University "LAU"

Notre Dame University "NDU"

American University of Beirut "AUB"

Holy Spirit University - Kaslik "USEK"
