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Executive Summary

The American University of Beirut (AUB) was established in 1866, its campus built on Ras Beirut, a promontory overlooking the Mediterranean Sea to the west of the old city center. Over the subsequent 150 years AUB developed into one of the premier private institutions of higher education in Lebanon and the region, and the neighborhood densified and developed into Beirut’s most modern, cosmopolitan district. With its medical center, AUB is Beirut’s largest private employer, employing 4,000; its mainly Lebanese student population numbers nearly 9,000.

AUB’s rationale for neighborhood engagement is both corporate and academic. It is important for AUB to maintain the attractiveness of the university’s place in the city to faculty and students by addressing livability and affordability issues. Generating good will for the university in Beirut and Lebanon through actions that demonstrate social responsibility is also important. Neighborhood engagement also promises academic benefits as multidisciplinary teams of faculty and students apply their knowledge to local problems. Affordable housing and congestion are two of the most pressing problems. Neighborhood stakeholders mirror those concerns, charge AUB with contributing to congestion and rising prices, and wish the university would use its considerable resources to address them.

The main campus of AUB is surrounded by a wall; gates are manned by security guards who limit access to the university population, alumni, and visitors with specific destinations. Security was tightened following the end of the Civil War (1975-1990) and the destruction by a car bomb in 1991 of the university’s main administration building. The Campus Master Plan of 2002 recommended ways to strengthen AUB’s connection, both physically and programmatically, with its neighbors. With proper commitment, planning and resources the university could implement Master Plan recommendations within its private domain, encourage existing initiatives to improve the public domain, and develop more activities on and off campus that would interest neighbors.

Development in Beirut is shaped by laws governing land, building, rent and the protection of heritage buildings, although the latter is largely unenforced. In recent years, a growing number of ‘exceptions’ to laws have enabled politically connected developers to gain access to prime land, agglomerate land parcels, and build highly profitable luxury complexes. AUB is, legally speaking, a foreign entity and is restricted from buying and selling land. A recent change in the rent law means that many neighbors living in ‘rent control’ dwellings (an estimated one third of Ras Beirut residents) may soon be forced out of dwellings they have occupied prior to 1992. Real estate is a major investment vehicle in Lebanon, with prices rising dramatically until recently. With the turmoil in the region and the conflict in Syria, prices have now stagnated in Beirut.

AUB’s Neighborhood Initiative was launched in 2007 to mobilize the university for the public good just outside the campus walls. The Initiative mirrors the mission of the university to be of service locally. Stressing ‘mutual benefit,’ the Initiative has moved away from the normative ‘noblesse oblige’ approach to present a new model of engagement at AUB, and one that encourages interdisciplinary and academic innovation. A number of significant projects have been undertaken under three themes: the urban environment, community and well-being, and preserving the diversity of Ras Beirut. However, a transformative impact on the neighborhood would require a more comprehensive approach to the neighborhood by the university along the lines of an anchor strategy.
Introduction

Objectives
This report provides background information and analysis to inform the AUC-AUB symposium and its ‘conversations’.

The symposium aims to raise awareness in Egypt about urban universities and their roles in their neighborhoods and city, and to hold focused discussions during a two-day ‘ideas lab’ on the AUC and AUB cases, recommending specific steps for Tahrir Square, New Cairo, and Ras Beirut.

This introductory section provides an overview on the AUB campus and its neighborhood, and the methodology adopted for the background research. The following sections of the report are structured around four themes guiding the ‘ideas lab.’ The report concludes with several challenges to be addressed by participants in considering the AUB case. AUB’s problematique is: What would the university have to do to have a transformative impact on its neighborhood over the next ten years?

AUB and Neighborhood Overview
Location and Historical Contexts
Source: AUB Campus Master Plan 2002

Beirut, the capital and most populated city of Lebanon, is a name from antiquity; it derives from the Canaanite be’erot (‘wells’), referring to the groundwater that is still used by residents of the city. Known for its geographical and topographical significance, Beirut is embedded in its 11 km shoreline, and is characterized by
two hills: Achrafieh on the east and Ras Beirut (Beirut’s headland) on the west (Nahnoo, 2012).

Historically, Ras Beirut, a rocky headlands jutting out into the Mediterranean north-west of the city center, was sparsely settled. Its hilly topography reinforced its inaccessibility from the shore and from neighboring areas (Abunnasr 2013). By the mid-1800s, Ras Beirut was distinctly suburban, with flat-roofed houses surrounded by garden fields, and unpaved paths lined with prickly pears. The transformation of the neighborhood’s character, from its rural and agricultural landscape into a densely developed and unplanned urban center occurred over the course of the twentieth century.

With vistas toward the Mediterranean Sea and the Mount Lebanon range, Ras Beirut holds a prominent natural vantage point. Such an auspicious location attracted the founders of the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), established in 1866, and renamed the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 1920.

AUB’s founding encouraged the development of Ras Beirut, first with the building of urban villas, then low-rise apartment buildings with gardens, and, from the mid-twentieth century, mid-rise buildings with mixed residential, retail, commercial and leisure functions.

Over the years the AUB campus itself expanded and densified, first on the hills overlooking the sea and then down toward the sea. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the first phase of major construction had been completed with the now-iconic buildings of the Upper Campus. A major push occurred between 1940 and 1974 with the development of several building on the Lower Campus. In 2002, AUB completed a master plan study which guided major new construction mainly on the Lower Campus emphasizing AUB’s presence on its northern edge along the Corniche. Today, the university is implementing an ambitious expansion of its medical center under the ‘AUBMC Vision 2020’ with a total budget of 400 million dollars.

The AUB campus currently sits on 61 acres (about 250,000 sqm) and includes 64 buildings, athletic fields, a private beach, a bird sanctuary, and a repository of native and non-native trees and shrubs. The University comprises seven student residences, the AUB Medical Center (AUBMC), the Charles W. Hostler Student Center, five libraries, computer labs, two art galleries, the Archaeological and Natural History Museums, and one of Lebanon’s few geological collections.

**AUB Facts**

*Source: AUB Facts and Figures, 2015 and AUB website*

AUB is a private, independent, co-educational, and non-sectarian institution of higher learning in Beirut, Lebanon. It is registered with the New York State Education Department and the Lebanese Ministry of Higher Education. It is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Based on the American liberal arts model of higher education, AUB is a teaching centered research university with rigorous academic standards and a commitment to critical thinking, open debate, and mutual tolerance. It includes six faculties that offer more than 120 programs leading to Bachelor’s, Master’s, MD, and PhD degrees, and housing about 7,000 undergraduate and 1,700 graduate students. The total number of instructional faculty is about 850 and the number of staff is about 1,200 on AUB campus and 2,600 on AUBMC. The language of instruction is English. There are more than 60,000 living alumni in more than 100 countries around the world.
1876
AUB is established in Zokak El Balat in 1866, then moves to Ras Beirut in the early 1870s.

1920
Beirut city is declared capital of Lebanon.

1959
Hamra, Ras Beirut’s main commercial street becomes a node of attraction. The tramway continues to operate until the late 1960s.

2004
The building law is amended and the cadastral maps of 1966 are updated.
Significance

Source: AUB Campus Master Plan 2002 and other

AUB is an urban campus and can be understood only in the rich context of the cultural and historic diversity of Beirut, and Ras Beirut specifically. Ras Beirut, with a concentration of respected educational institutions, is one of Beirut’s most cosmopolitan addresses and socially diverse districts. To the south of AUB lies Hamra, Beirut’s glamorous and modern street from the mid-20th century, with famed sidewalk cafes, shops, and movie theatres. The Corniche on the north serves as a major vehicular connection and a pedestrian promenade that extends along the entire edge of the sea, linking many of the major attractions in the city, including Beirut Central District (BCD) to the east.

The aerial photograph on the right highlights the university buildings and landscape. AUB, with the distinctive red-tiled roofs of its historic Upper Campus buildings, is a green oasis within a dense urban fabric.

AUB has shaped and still is shaping its surroundings. Its interaction with its neighborhood has contributed to defining Ras Beirut’s identity and character.
Beirut is considered among the most populated cities in the world with one of the lowest public green space rations at 0.8 sqm per person... WHO defines that a healthy city should include 10 sqm per person of public green space and 40 sqm per person of private green space.” (Nahnoo, 2012)
Research Methodology

Background Research
The research is based on primary sources such as interviews with neighborhood stakeholders, surveys, and mental maps. Secondary sources include the AUB Neighborhood Initiative research archive of published and unpublished data, and other academic works, articles and reports, maps, surveys, and published statistics. Ongoing Neighborhood Initiative research on gentrification and urban change led by Mona Khechen will also be cited.

Interviews with Stakeholders
Since 2006 the Neighborhood Initiative has sought the opinions of its neighbors on Ras Beirut’s most pressing problems and their solutions through participant observation, in-depth interviews and informal conversations.

In September 2015, the Neighborhood Initiative engaged anthropologist Samar Kanafani to conduct a series of in-depth interviews to update knowledge on stakeholders’ perceptions. She conducted 20 in-depth interviews with stakeholders who live, work, and visit the neighborhood regularly, including business owners, NGO spokespeople, government agencies operating in Ras Beirut, and who varied according to age, gender, occupation, income levels, and relationship to AUB.

Neighborhood Limits
Perceptions on the physical boundaries of Ras Beirut vary and do not correspond to administrative designations. Of the 20 interviewed stakeholders, all considered Ras Beirut to include AUB, the seaside Corniche, the lighthouse area Manara, and the commercial area around Hamra Street, but there was no consensus over other areas. These perceptions did not match the district served by Ras Beirut Police Station either (Kanafani, 2015).
1 Rationale for Neighborhood Engagement

What does the university want from its neighborhood?

AUB Neighborhood Initiative Rationale
In the case of AUB’s ‘neighborhood’, the term neighborhood refers to the Ras Beirut headland at its broadest extent and is used more poetically than technically (Khechen, 2014).

The Neighborhood Initiative aims to make a positive difference locally, in Ras Beirut, generating ideas, and creating models of change through practical projects, for mutual benefit. Potential benefits to the university are both corporate and academic.

➔ maintaining the attractiveness of AUB’s place in the city to those who matter most (faculty and students) by addressing livability and affordability issues;
➔ generating good will for the university in Beirut and Lebanon;
➔ mobilizing multidisciplinary teams for research and action on local problems and real life examples; and
➔ offering faculty, staff and students the opportunity to act as citizens.

AUB Stakeholders
In addition to students, faculty, and staff, AUB stakeholders include visitors to the campus and the AUB Medical Center.

AUB Stakeholders’ Needs
Stakeholders have different needs from the neighborhood. A majority of faculty want a pleasant, affordable place to live, preferably near the university and the many excellent schools of Ras Beirut (U3Advisors, 2011). The vast majority of AUB students live with their parents and commute to campus. Many drive their own cars to campus since public transportation is poor in Beirut, and they want free or inexpensive places to park their cars (Student Commuting Survey, 2007; Student Spending Survey, 2007). Similarly, visitors to the AUB Medical Center want easily accessible and inexpensive parking. Congestion more generally is a significant problem for visitors to AUB and its Medical Center.

Because of their importance the following sections examine the questions of affordable housing and congestion in more detail.
Lack of affordable housing

Many descriptions of Ras Beirut prior to the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) observed that the ‘town and gown’ were highly connected in Ras Beirut. AUB faculty, staff and students, many of whom were international, resided close to campus, and neighborhood businesses had substantial economic relations with the university. Kongstad and Khalaf describe Ras Beirut as a cosmopolitan but essentially middle class neighborhood (AUB Bulletin, 1972, Kongstad and Khalaf, 1973).

The following give a picture of the current situation:

...[Ras Beirut]’s visible manifestations of change, power and wealth stand in stark contrast with an overall neglected urban context characterized by a decaying old building stock, pollution, traffic congestion, poor sidewalks, and inadequate public amenities (Khechen, 2014).

Two extremes exist side by side in Ras Beirut now, the one represented by the newly constructed towers–huge flats owned by wealthy family households often residing part-time in the neighborhood–and the one of the run-down lower rise buildings with a large proportion of older, old rent tenants living with fewer financial resources, less access to the world class health care nearby, and in dwellings more likely to have environmental problems. It is these unequal daily lives that affect the growing differences in the health and well-being of people in Ras Beirut (Kaddour et al, forthcoming).

Ras Beirut now has some of the highest property values in the city thanks in part to the presence of the AUB – as a respected institutional anchor and the city’s most beautiful green space. Developers capitalize on unimpeded sea views over the flowering gardens of AUB (at no cost to them), making large profits from the sale of huge expensive flats to those who can afford them (Myntti, 2010).

Recent trends mean that many middle class professionals, including most AUB faculty members, are not able to find decent family housing that is affordable near the campus, either to rent or to buy.

As a response to the perceived crisis of affordability, the AUB administration created in 2011 a Housing Task Force to analyze faculty needs, and the full cost of housing, including the many compulsory utilities expenses, in relation to average salaries. The Task Force also analyzed existing policies to subsidize rents and support housing purchase.

The Housing Task Force study found that

➔ Ras Beirut had become unaffordable, due to a steep increase in the real-estate, pushing faculty members farther away from campus or into sub-standard housing in Ras Beirut.

➔ Although 56 per cent of AUB faculty lived within 1km of campus, a much smaller number could afford what would be considered a decent family dwelling with now essential amenities such as a generator.

➔ The existing housing subsidy programs were inadequate, and affected adversely faculty recruitment and retention.

➔ There was a need for a comprehensive strategy to increase AUB’s rental housing stock and to enable faculty to buy through an invigorated purchase plan.

Recommendations included:

➔ restructuring the housing subsidy,

➔ expanding AUB owned housing supply by exploring building on-campus faculty housing, and/or exploring real estate investments and partnerships in Ras Beirut, and

➔ establishing a new real estate office at AUB responsible for the implementation of real estate initiatives.

As a result of the Housing Task Force study, the AUB Board of Trustees increased rental subsidies and modest support for housing purchase. Further feasibility studies were conducted for the development of new faculty housing buildings on campus under the Design, Build, Operate, and Transfer (DBOT) system and off campus in partnership with real estate developers. No actions were taken on these proposals. No comprehensive strategy was defined, nor staff with real estate expertise hired.

AUB is currently facing a large budget deficit, and the new university president, Dr. Fadlo Khuri who began his term, on September 1, 2015, has stated that current housing subsidies are unsustainable. The time is opportune to repeat the call for the development of a comprehensive housing strategy that employs creative approaches to increasing the supply of affordable housing in Ras Beirut. In 2008, Omar Blaik as a consultant to AUB, recommended seeking donors to a fund for the acquisition of apartments, buildings and land parcels in the neighborhood; approaching friends of AUB for donations of land or property in Ras Beirut; and creating life annuities for alumni willing to deed their properties in the neighborhood to AUB after their deaths. These ideas could be re-evaluated, as could other innovative mechanisms available in the Lebanese legal code for the development and preservation of affordable housing. These include servitudes, joint stock companies and housing cooperatives (Abdelsater-Abusamra, 2008).
Congestion and lack of parking for students, employees and visitors

The Neighborhood Congestion Studies conducted by faculty and students from Civil Engineering and Urban Design have analyzed parking demand, traffic congestion, and pedestrian–vehicular conflicts in Ras Beirut.

The causes of congestion are numerous. Beirut does not have an organized transportation network, effective law enforcement, or established parking management practices. Narrow streets, poorly maintained sidewalks, limited parking, and almost no passenger drop-off areas have resulted in a nightmare for pedestrians and drivers alike. The parking deficit is particularly acute near AUB during the midday period, and taxis are often unwilling to enter the neighborhood to drop off passengers at the university or its hospital (Salameh, Abou-Zeid, Kaysi, 2013).

The researchers presented recommendations to the AUB administration and to public sector decision-makers on:

→ reducing the pedestrian-vehicular conflicts through better urban design
→ options for improving public transportation
→ travel demand management (TDM) strategies to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport like public transport, ridesharing, walking, or biking (Aoun et al, 2013).
→ the development of a dynamic taxi sharing service to encourage AUB students and employees to use communal commuting strategies (Al-Naghi, 2014).

In addition, feasibility and design analyses were conducted on expanded parking facilities in the neighborhood, but were not recommended because they were deemed as exacerbating not relieving congestion.

AUB is a major traffic generator in the neighborhood. It contributes to

18% of morning peak hour trips in the neighborhood.
21% of the neighborhood’s carbon footprint.
28% or 1,752 spaces not satisfied inside AUB campus of the parking demand.

When construction is completed, the new AUB hospital complex will likely exacerbate an already bad situation.
What does the neighborhood want, in general, and from AUB?

Neighborhood Stakeholders
The resident populations of Ras Beirut are diverse and often unconnected. The neighborhood has no ‘community development corporations’ that represent residents as is the case in North American cities. Neighborhood Initiative staff employ continuous multiple strategies to keep connected, from participant observation, in-depth interviews and surveys. Many neighbors are involved in Neighborhood Initiative projects. Stakeholder interviews in September 2015 consolidated feedback from neighbors.

Stakeholders’ Opinions on Problems
In order of prevalence, the interviewees noted these problems:

- Traffic congestion and parking shortages
- With gentrification, the increasing gap between rich and poor
- Uncomfortable urban environment: broken or nonexistent sidewalks, pollution, noisy nightlife
- Lack of green spaces
- Decreasing sense of trust and security
- Stagnation, lack of civic engagement
- The presence of political parties, both visible and invisible

What Neighbors want from AUB
Most interviewees felt that, being the single largest institution in human and spatial capacity, AUB and AUBMC are the main contributors to congestion and rising real estate prices. At the same time, many acknowledged AUB’s positive role as educator, healthcare provider, and cultural hub. Stakeholders were somewhat divided about AUB/MC’s ability to produce concrete improvements for the public good. Attitudes on opening the campus up to the public also varied, but most were against the idea, justifying AUB’s closure due to the country’s security situation and the difficulty of managing the campus as a public garden.

Yet a number also expressed the wish for the university to be more open.

AUB could become a better neighbor by

- Tackling congestion by reducing the number of cars in neighborhood streets
- Contributing expertise toward a long-term traffic solution (as AUB did with the indoor smoking ban)
- Increasing access to campus for library use, sports facilities and cultural events
- Establishing scholarship and patients’ funds for neighbors
- Identifying solutions to gentrification, especially protecting long term residents and curbing real estate prices
- Guiding neighborhood enterprises, associations and residents toward conscientious business, initiatives and dwelling
- Instituting a neighborhood Town Hall at AUB

Conclusions
- Given the new leadership at AUB and the recognition that current housing supports are unsustainable, the time is right to push for a comprehensive housing strategy to address the affordability crisis.
- Creative solutions to the housing affordability problem could and should be beneficial to the neighborhood, not just the university.
- To address congestion, AUB should pioneer innovative approaches to communal transport for commuting students and employees.
- Open up more to neighbors and their concerns.
2 The Edge
Physical, Social and Economic Relationships between Campus and Neighborhood

AUB Campus Site

Context

Neighborhood level

Ras Beirut can be divided into five general land use zones:

- **Institutional zone** AUB and other universities and schools
- **Mixed residential/commercial/touristic zone** Hamra area
- **High-end residential/commercial zone** Verdun area
- **Dense mixed residential/touristic zone** Ain el Mreisseh
- **Dispersed high-end residential/touristic zone** Seaside sectors
Immediate surroundings
The academic campus is surrounded

→ to the west: by International College (IC) and the American Community School (ACS), premier schools (primary through secondary).
→ to the north: by the Corniche and the Mediterranean Sea.
→ to the east: by residential and mixed-use neighborhoods including tall, private residential towers blocking views from AUB.
→ to the south: by the university commercial district beginning with Bliss Street.

The Medical Center, on the south-east side of campus, is very much within the urban fabric of this area, with high-traffic streets running through it.

Physical Profile
Source: American University of Beirut Campus Master Plan, 2002

The AUB campus is divided into four sectors:

→ The Upper Campus, with a historic collegiate character.
→ The Lower Campus, with mainly modern buildings.
→ The Middle Campus green escarpment as a natural zone.
→ The Medical Center in the city and outside the main campus proper, currently undergoing a major expansion.

Due to its history of development and topographical situation, buildings and facilities are dispersed, often to the periphery of the campus, while the heart of the university is occupied by an extensive natural green zone, villas for administrators, and the university tennis courts.

The campus is pedestrian with vehicular access limited to peripheral parking, and circulation restricted to emergency vehicles, small service vehicles, and shuttle buses. East-west promenades and north-south stairways create strong links within campus between the academic, administrative, student life, and support facilities.
The AUB Campus Edge

Access to Campus
The main campus is gated with controlled access. The peripheral wall that surrounds the campus has existed since the early 1900s, but access was not restricted by guards until the 1950s. Even then security was light and access flexible. The chaos of the Civil War affected AUB profoundly; among the many traumas, a university president was assassinated in his office in 1984, and College Hall, AUB’s main administration building, was destroyed by a car bomb in 1991. Following the destruction of College Hall, the university hired the first professional head of ‘protection’ in its history, and campus access became limited to the university population, alumni, and visitors with specific destinations. Given the current turmoil in Lebanon and the region, relaxing security control measures at the gates is unlikely.

A major stairway on the west separates AUB and IC. It previously connected the Hamra area to the Corniche, but has been closed to the public since the first period of the Civil War in the late 1970s.
Activities and Connections: The Status Quo

Lower campus edge
This edge serves as the membrane to the Corniche and the sea. Two of the city’s major bus routes travel along the Corniche; students and staff who ride these buses arrive and depart through the Lower Campus gates. Students and staff may also park their cars on the Corniche, or be dropped off at Lower Campus gates. Members of the AUB community enjoy the seaside Corniche as Beirut’s premier linear public space, entering and departing through Lower Campus gates. New campus building projects, particularly the new business school and student sports center, offer visual transparency from outside in; glass facades, transparent fences and small cut-out spaces add variation to the wall.

Upper campus edge
Visitors, staff and students enter campus through three Upper Campus gates on Bliss Street. Students use parking garages, off-street lots and on-street spaces for their private cars, and valet parking services have emerged for affluent students in a rush. Students and staff use the area mainly for snacks and other food, stationery and books, and copying services, many of which are concentrated along Bliss Street. The Upper Campus edge on Bliss Street is traversed by members of the AUB community who live in the neighborhood and are able to walk to and from home.

Encouraging Connections: The Campus Master Plan Design Guidelines
AUB conducted a major campus master planning exercise in 2001 and 2002. The Campus Master Plan (CMP, 2002) recommended, as one of its guiding principles, ‘to strengthen AUB’s connection, both physically and programmatically, with its neighbors.’ This was further elaborated in detailed design guidelines addressing the following aspects (see appendix for more information):

- Edges and gateways
- Offsite improvements
- View corridors

Edges and gateways
→ When appropriate, opportunities to use building facades as the campus edge should be explored.
→ Develop a set of campus wall/edge treatments that unify the appearance of the campus edge, addressing each existing and proposed condition. Apply the new treatment as a component of each new site or building project that is implemented at the campus edge.
→ All new or reconstructed walls along the campus edge should be of stone construction or stone clad.
→ All fencing should be ornamental. Replace all existing chain-link fences with ornamental iron fencing.
→ Work cooperatively with the City of Beirut to develop a set of improvements for the public edges of the campus, including street sections, curbing, street trees, etc.
→ Establish a design theme for gateways to unify the look of campus entry points.
→ Provide poles for hanging banners to help advertise special events on campus.
→ Make the campus more ‘visually accessible’ without compromising security.

Offsite improvements
→ Tree planting and building design along the Corniche.
  o Vehicle circulation along the Corniche.
  o New pedestrian plaza and entrances along the Corniche.
  o Parking deck in the Salient area.
  o Medical Center Gate.
  o Public street circulation within the Medical Campus.
→ Conduct a traffic study of the Medical Campus area as a basis for the design of new facilities in the area.
→ Participate in or establish a neighborhood improvement committee with local business people, residents and representatives from other institutions.

View corridors
→ Protect and enhance views from the natural amphitheater (the proposed University Overlook).
→ Protect and enhance the existing major internal and external view corridors.
→ Consider the impact of new development on these view corridors as part of the design process.
→ Use vegetation to frame and enhance views. Vegetation that obstructs important views should be avoided.
→ Significant views from the Corniche to the campus should be maintained.

For more information see Appendix 3
Encouraging Connections: Other Initiatives and Proposals

AUB has proposed several interventions in both the private and public domains.

University Edge (AUB’s private domain):

→ Proposals have been made to minimize the presence of the solid masonry wall by increasing transparency through a wrought-iron fence; modifying the wall to create drop off zones for taxis and private cars; introducing indents for ‘pop-up’ artistic or commercial purposes; offering direct access to the AUB archeological museum and the AUB art gallery; or creating a playground for children at the wall.

→ Reopening the stairway separating IC from AUB, thereby linking Hamra and Bliss Street to the sea.

City Edge (public domain):

→ The Neighborhood Initiative has supported research and design activities to improve Bliss and Jeanne d’Arc Streets, working with the City of Beirut officials to expedite implementation and creating models that could be replicated elsewhere.

Despite the wall and restricted access, AUB could also do more to strengthen connectivity by welcoming neighbors to campus for cultural, educational, social and athletic activities, or by going out to the neighborhood with collaboratively planned and executed activities.

For example:

→ Introduce special neighbor ID cards to ease entry without jeopardizing security.

→ Build on and strengthen successful existing initiatives (University for Seniors, Book Exchange, Friends of the Museum), and organize new events and activities that will attract neighbors (AUBotanic, University for Kids, Open Library day).

→ Publicize seminars, conferences, concerts, and other AUB cultural activities more effectively.

→ Encourage AUB’s activities off campus, through the AUB-owned Mayfair residence and art gallery, health fairs or mini-concerts in public spaces, or other collaborations at like-minded venues (theaters, cultural cafes, youth spaces).

→ Help create neighborhood associations to enhance communication and collaboration with AUB and local government.

Conclusions

→ With proper commitment, planning and resources, AUB could do more for the public good within its private domain.

→ Projects in the public domain are more challenging to implement because collaboration with the government is not straightforward, but worth doing for their potential impact.

→ AUB should facilitate access to campus, and introduce innovative programs that encourage connection with neighbors for mutual benefit.

→ AUB should strengthen its relationships with existing neighborhood institutions and groups, and help create intermediary organizations to forge connections.
3 The External Context
Legal Context, Urban Management Frameworks, and Real Estate Market Conditions

Legislative Framework
The legal frameworks and processes shaping the current physical and economic development in Beirut have led to the presence, side by side, of two extreme types of buildings (and lives) in Ras Beirut: new luxury residential towers in gated gardens and older, poorly maintained low and middle-rise buildings often combining residential and other functions.

The real estate sector is considered by many to be the main source of national economic growth (Mona Fawaz 2013, in Saksouk 2015). Following the Lebanese Civil War, the presence of the economic elite in the political arena intensified, leading to a legislative environment catering to the interests of real estate developers and contractors (Saksouk, 2015). Indeed, many urbanists, noting the far-reaching spatial and socio-economic transformations in Greater Beirut over the past 20 years, have argued that Beirut has become more destroyed and disfigured during the years of peace than during the Civil War itself (Ashkar, 2015; Marot, 2015).

The Building Law
Urban planning activities in the city of Beirut are governed by decree 6285/1954 following a master plan built on the vision of the French planner Michel Ecochard (Arbid, 2014). The Lebanese Building Law stipulates zoning regulations, which do not restrict building height but make height a factor of the site’s surface coverage, allowable floor to area ratio (FAR), and required setbacks from adjacent buildings and streets. In general, the bigger the site the higher the building constructed on it can go, increasing the allowable built up area (BUA). Several amendments have been made to the building law, the latest in 2004. The 2004 amendment allows an increase in BUA in buildings exceeding 50 meters in height. The result is the agglomeration of small adjacent sites and taller and taller buildings constructed by developers (Khechen, 2014).
The building law and amendments only tell part of the story. A second category of facilities was introduced to allow more actors to participate in real estate (Fawaz and Krijnen, 2012, cited in Saksouk, 2015). One such is the Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL), established in 1994 to promote investment and offer incentives and tax-cuts (up to 100 per cent) to investors whose projects fulfill its requirements. IDAL also facilitates the establishment of non-national companies.

Another widespread practice is granting ‘exceptionalities’ for large projects. First introduced in 1971 the practice gives additional building heights and exploitation factors to lots greater than 10,000 m2. This raised land value in prime locations, dramatically shifting property patterns along the Ras Beirut coast (Saksouk, 2015).

The Rent Law
Rental tenure in Lebanon may be classified into three types (Kaddour et al, forthcoming and Khechen, 2014):

- ‘Old rent’ contracts, applicable to rental agreements signed before July 1992, is a form of rent control, with tenure protected and requirements specified should the owner want the apartment back.
- ‘New rent’ contracts, applicable to rental agreements signed after July 1992 where contracts can be modified (usually increased) every three years according to market rates.
- Furnished flats, typically short-term contracts for small serviced apartments.

In April 2014 the Lebanese parliament passed a new rent law, which phases out protections to tenants on old rent contracts. When implemented, this will have serious consequences on neighborhoods with high concentrations of old rent tenants, Ras Beirut being one of them.

The Ras Beirut well-being survey, a household survey which interviewed a random sample of neighborhood residents in 2010, found a higher concentration of renters than in other parts of Municipal Beirut and in Lebanon as a whole. Of the renters, tenants on old rent contracts represent a higher proportion than new rent tenants or occupants of furnished flats (Kaddour, et al, forthcoming).

One consequence of the predominance of old rental tenants in buildings is disinvestment by owners in the building stock. When possible, owners opt to sell the property, now usually to developers or investors, who assume the responsibility of buying out existing tenants (30% to 40% of the unit sales price). In the absence of effective laws protecting older buildings, the new buyers opt to demolish the building and build a tall profitable one in its place, having also purchased and agglomerated adjacent small sites to maximize built up area (Khechen, 2014).

The new rent law of 2014 will make it easier to remove existing tenants and demolish older buildings, setting the stage for the displacement of vulnerable long-time neighborhood residents to less expensive Beirut suburbs. These processes contribute to the gentrification of Ras Beirut and threaten the socio-economic diversity of the neighborhood.
Heritage Building Law
Section 13 of law 646/2004 empowers the Ministry of Public Works to refuse a building permit if the building(s) in question are likely to be harmful to public health and safety, the environment, or the natural or architectural landscape. An additional draft law from 2007 gives discretion to the Ministry of Culture to designate protection of specific plots, however the law has not yet been voted on in Parliament. Activists point out that the construction of mega-projects and high-rise buildings is destroying Beirut’s cultural identity due to the weak legal framework for protecting architectural heritage.

Urban Management Framework
Local and national government entities are responsible for planning, legislation, urban governance and services. Responsibilities are often not clear cut and jurisdictions overlap, making for conflict and inaction.

The public administrative offices with responsibility for Municipal Beirut Planning/Legislation (CCPDR 2013)

- Directorate General of Urban Planning (DGUP): responsible of developing urban regulations and coordinating urban planning activities; also involved in the protection of archaeological and cultural heritage.
- Council of Development and Reconstruction (CDR): a public institution reporting to the Council of Ministers, and mandated is to establish the general framework for urban planning.
- Ministry of Environment (MOE): responsible for the establishment, protection and management of protected areas.
- Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MOPWT): mandated to control the implementation of the legislation and rules related to transport and marine public properties, of the maintenance of primary roads and the railway right-of-way, as well as the public maritime domain including its ports and marine terminals.
- Governance: Governorate of Beirut
- The Beirut Municipality is responsible for maintenance, services and utilities. Residents also rely on private initiatives to supplement the inadequate services provided by the public sector, often paying twice for services such as electricity and water.
- Civil society: There are no formally constituted planning councils for public participation as in the case in European and US cities. However civil society organizations have, along with the media, assumed increasingly important roles in raising public awareness and supporting grassroots activities to criticize corrupt politicians, demand better services and counter big real estate development.
Real Estate Market Influences

Description of Current Situation in Ras Beirut

‘The geographies of uneven development, so obvious at city and national scales, can actually be discerned in Ras Beirut. While the whole area is deemed attractive for capital reinvestment, some sites and locales are clearly more valued than others.’ More specifically, Khechen (2014) classifies the development trends as follows:

→ Deluxe residential fenced towers with open views to the sea and AUB, targeting the elite, the Lebanese diaspora and foreign nationals.
→ Commercial quality structures with less prominent views for residential, hotels/furnished apartments, offices, and shopping mall, depending on their location.
→ Existing buildings close to AUB and to the Lebanese American University (LAU) being refurbished and turned into furnished apartments serving students and young professionals. Other existing buildings are refurbished by residents for their own use.
→ Many older neglected or abandoned buildings, constructed prior to the 1990s, in poor physical condition, with poor amenities, and lacking parking spaces.
→ Low-rise historic buildings abandoned by their users.
As everywhere, location is the main determinant of real estate prices in Beirut, with sea- and AUB-view buildings among the most expensive in Beirut (RAMCO, 2014).

A recent report by Bank Audi, a leading bank in Lebanon, suggests that local and regional instabilities are affecting new construction, particularly of luxury buildings and refocusing new developments toward the local market and smaller apartments (the Daily Star, September 24, 2015).

The drop in real estate transactions however has not been accompanied by a fall in the prices of housing units because developers tend to rely on self-financing and are not heavily indebted to banks; speculators are playing a less important role now than previously; and the small size of Lebanon keeps real estate demand higher than supply. The Central Bank of Lebanon has also played a role by offering stimulus packages to boost economic growth amidst the difficult current conditions.

**Laws regulating AUB as a Foreign Entity**

AUB, as an institution registered in New York, is regulated by Law 360, passed in 1969 and amended in 2001. Among its stipulations, non-Lebanese entities require approval by the Council of Ministers or the President of the Republic to acquire properties above certain sizes (Raghida Jaber, 2011).

**How might the legal, planning and regulatory contexts be employed constructively for positive change?**

Within the legal context of Lebanese real estate development, which is highly oriented to large, politically-connected developers, it is still possible to imagine initiatives that offer more equitable visions of city- and neighborhood-making. The garbage crisis of this past summer and the brazen coastal land grab by developers, such as that on Dalieh of Raouche, has emboldened activists, and the national mood is angry and looking for change.
Equipped with a social justice vision combined with legal and real estate expertise, AUB could respond to the national mood and make a positive difference in Ras Beirut. Due to legal restrictions currently governing AUB as a foreign entity, the university would have to establish a Lebanese company (51 percent Lebanese owned) with independent capital to function as the development arm of the university, a mechanism used by other leading universities around the world.

As mentioned under Theme One, AUB could move specifically into the area of faculty and student housing production, employing innovative legal formulations to protect the affordability of housing in perpetuity, both for rental and ownership dwellings (Abdelsater AbuSamra, 2008).

Other possibilities outlined in a report to AUB in 2008 (Blaik) remain valid:

- Acquire key real estate holdings (apartments, buildings or land parcels) based on a strategic view of preserving older neighborhood buildings. As an owner, AUB would become a member of buildings’ ‘Committee of Owners’ and have a say about maintenance and improvements to the building.
- Acquire historic structures within the neighborhood and fund a full restoration work plan.
- Joint venture with existing owners or developers to influence their decisions on development and use.
- Devise a comprehensive retail strategy for Bliss Street and work on acquisitions to facilitate that strategy. Possible retail options should include a state-of-the-art bookstore. The bookstore could become a city-wide destination.
- Include arts and cultural venues as part of the retail strategy. For example, partner with defunct theater owners along Bliss Street to revive theater operations and schedule programs now housed on campus. Ras Beirut needs a venue a major theater.

**Conclusions**

- AUB, as a respected institution and Beirut’s most beautiful green space, contributes to high real estate prices near campus, but AUB has no mechanism to capture such value.

- Even though the legislative frameworks and existing building laws cater to high-end developments, it would be possible for AUB to intervene strategically in the market for more equitable purposes. The university would first have to establish a Lebanese company for real estate transactions.

- Actions could capitalize on real estate opportunities in old buildings, specifically, and seek donations of land and property from AUB alumni and friends.

- AUB’s interventions should be informed by Neighborhood Initiative research on gentrification.
4 Ingredients for a University Anchor Strategy

The Components of a Successful Anchor Strategy
A successful anchor strategy aligns a university’s core values, mission, strategic plan and organizational structure with neighborhood engagement. The university’s collective goal is to have a transformative impact on its neighborhood. A successful anchor strategy emphasizes place-making, and is based on long-term engagement and partnerships with multiple people and organizations.

Anchor strategies are comprehensive and engage the university as a whole (Dever et al, 2014):

→ Engagement on the university’s business side to hire local, buy local, and invest locally (housing, public spaces, targeted commercial and retail development, improved schools and other community resources).

→ Engagement for policy and planning, especially through collaboration with neighborhood organizations and local government.

→ Engagement on the university’s academic side through engaged scholarship (participatory research, experiential teaching, service learning, health care outreach, among others).

Commitments by AUB

University Values, Mission, Strategic Plan, and Organizational Structure
AUB values emphasize creative and critical thinking, life-long learning, personal integrity, civic responsibility, tolerance, and respect for diversity and dialogue.

The commitment to service and engagement is implicit in its mission statement where ‘The American University of Beirut (AUB) is an institution of higher learning founded to provide excellence in education, to participate in the advancement of knowledge through research, and to serve the peoples of the Middle East and beyond.’

AUB’s strategic plan of 2014 mentions the Neighborhood Initiative as part of the university’s social responsibility to a range of communities.

Despite AUB’s intentions to be engaged and socially responsible, the university’s organizational structure does not indicate any emphasis on civic and neighborhood engagement. No high level administrator has a civic engagement brief, and there are no offices for local and national government relations, or for real estate investment. The Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (located under the Provost’s Office) organizes mainly extracurricular volunteering activities and offers limited support to departments and faculty members engaged in community-based learning. Individual faculty members who do engage in community-based research or offer service-learning opportunities to students have few academic incentives to do so.

Neighborhood Initiative’s Values, Vision, and Mission
The Neighborhood Initiative values can be summed as:

→ Responsive: The Neighborhood Initiative responds to what concerns neighbors. Academic priorities are not imposed on the neighborhood.

→ Participatory: A participatory approach guides the work inside and outside the university.

→ Critical citizenship: Neighborhood Initiative projects encourage critical citizenship by giving faculty and students the opportunity to apply critical thinking through practical problem-solving.

In its vision, ‘The Neighborhood Initiative serves as a model of place-based engagement for universities in Lebanon and the
region, benefiting the university itself and the districts of Beirut surrounding.’

The mission states that ‘The Neighborhood Initiative mobilizes the full power of AUB for the public good in Ras Beirut, promoting the neighborhood’s livability, vitality, and diversity through innovative outreach activities and multidisciplinary research.’

**AUB Neighborhood Initiative—2006 to present**

**Overview**

The Neighborhood Initiative was officially launched in October 2007 by the university president in his opening address ‘Going Outside AUB’s Walls.’ This followed an analysis of the status quo in university-neighborhood relations in 2006 and a presentation on the Neighborhood Initiative to the Board of Trustees in June 2007.

The Neighborhood Initiative is institutionally located in the President’s Office. This location facilitates work across the university, with academic units (under the Provost’s Office) and non-academic units (under the Chief Operating Officer). The location is also optimal for external relations. The Neighborhood Initiative’s External Review conducted in December 2014 found the President’s Office the right counterpart for partners such as local government officials and businesspeople. President Fadlo Khuri arrived in September 2015 and his intentions for institutional reorganization are not yet clear. He may prefer a different institutional arrangement for the Neighborhood Initiative and other outreach and engagement units.

The Neighborhood Initiative currently has two staff: its founding director (since 2006) and a full-time coordinator who serves as a projects and office manager (since 2011). Salaries of both director and coordinator are covered by the university, while programmatic activities are supported by donations and foundation grants. The Neighborhood Initiative’s total annual budget is approximately $240,000.

**Projects: A different way of engaging**

Neighborhood Initiative projects do what universities do best: they generate new ideas and create new models. Projects are conceived within a mutual benefit framework, not a traditional charitable outreach framework.

Neighborhood Initiative staff play a variety of roles ranging from connector, catalyst, facilitator, and advocate.

Neighborhood Initiative projects fit under three themes:

- Urban environment: Congestion; Urban greening; Walkability; Noise; and Bliss Street improvement.
- Community and well-being: University for Seniors (UfS); Health and well-being survey; Oral history project; Medical outreach to vulnerable neighbors.
- Preserving neighborhood diversity: Understanding gentrification; Internal advocacy for affordable housing.

**Conclusions**

The following conclusions may be drawn from the Neighborhood Initiative’s eight year experience:

- Outreach at AUB is mainly conceived of within a charitable framework to disadvantaged communities. The Neighborhood Initiative and Ras Beirut itself do not fit that mold.
- The Neighborhood Initiative supports engaged scholarship and practical physical and policy interventions. It has a firmer academic foundation than many anchor strategies in other universities.
- AUB has not articulated an anchor strategy for Ras Beirut.
- AUB faces crisis in affordable housing for faculty; could a comprehensive plan for affordable housing in the neighborhood encourage AUB toward an anchor strategy?
- The Neighborhood Initiative has supported a number of worthy projects in its first eight years, but a transformative impact requires a more comprehensive approach to the neighborhood by the university.
5  Looking to the Next Ten Years

Understanding of a Successful Anchor Strategy
This background exercise began with the problematique: what would AUB have to do to have a transformative impact on Ras Beirut over the next ten years?

Since it was launched eight years ago, the Neighborhood Initiative has supported a number of worthy projects in Ras Beirut. An external review conducted in December 2014 observed that the Neighborhood Initiative presents a new model of engagement based on mutual benefit, not a focus on the disadvantaged; encourages interdisciplinary and academic innovation, thereby enhancing teaching and scholarship, the university’s central mission; and it demonstrates the importance of both a participatory process and meaningful results.

As this background research has shown, AUB exists in a context of political instability and urban development favoring the wealthy and well-connected. How can AUB, as a socially responsible institution embedded in this Beirut reality, promote a more just, equitable and livable neighborhood? How can AUB have an impact that is greater than the sum of the individual Neighborhood Initiative projects? These are the questions to be tackled in the ‘ideas lab.’

There is much to build on. Respectful working relations have been established with a range of neighbors and with local government, in particular the Beirut Municipality and the Beirut Governorate. Engagement with Ras Beirut is no longer a strange idea among university Board members, administration, faculty, staff and students, and many support it enthusiastically. A wealth of data on socio-demographic trends, the urban built environment, and oral history has been accumulated, published and organized for general access into a database.

To have a transformative impact, AUB may need a comprehensive approach to Ras Beirut that is bigger than the Neighborhood Initiative, and more akin to an anchor strategy. Given the recognition by the new university administration of the unsustainability of faculty housing costs, the entry point to a broader neighborhood strategy could be affordable housing. But to follow the spirit of the Neighborhood Initiative, interventions would have to be evaluated through the lens of mutual benefit, benefit for the university AND for the neighborhood.
Appendix

AUB and Neighborhood Map
AUB Housing Study—Recommendations by U3 Advisors
Neighborhood Initiative Summary of Work
AUB and Neighborhood Map
AUB Housing Study—Recommendations by U3 Advisors

Housing in Ras Beirut has become *unaffordable*, pushing younger faculty farther away from campus or in sub-standard housing in Ras Beirut, creating *pent up demand for on-campus housing* as the preferred choice for AUB faculty.
DEMAND

Data driven approach

Dissected by location, age, rank, and salary

56% of all faculty are living within 1km of campus...
Younger faculty are living farther from campus...

Strong demand to live within walking distance to AUB

Limited faculty housing supply on campus (16% of faculty)
62% of on campus housing stock is more than 45 years old

On campus housing is the most affordable option in Ras Beirut

Off campus rental prices are higher than on campus

Off campus for sale properties are out of reach for most faculty
Two Ras Beiruts exist

Off campus housing costs are up to 54% higher than on campus
INEQUITY

Assistant Professor (FAS)
- Married
- 2 Children
- Salary: $48,461/annually
- 3 bedroom apartment

- 28% Old Building
- 37% Renovated Building
- 47% New Building
- 56% Rent as percentage of gross income
- 74%-130% Purchase (All Options)

CONCLUSIONS

1. Housing in Ras Beirut is unaffordable
2. There is a strong desire to live on campus or within walking distance to AUB
3. The current housing subsidy programs are inadequate and insufficient

Framing Interventions

Supply

Intervention

Possibilities

Weak Market

Strong Market

Demand
Universities and their Neighborhoods: An AUC-AUB Conversation

**Background Information**

### Intervention Framework

**Supply Intervention**
- New on-campus housing
- Co-Ownership Program
- Princeton

**Demand Intervention**
- Self Development Off Campus
- UPenn
- Amenities and Services
- UPenn
- Housing Incentives
- UPenn
- Neighborhood Infrastructure
- UPenn

### Recommendations

1. **Re-structure** rental subsidy programs
2. **Expand** AUB rental supply on and off campus
3. **Introduce** new housing purchase program
4. **Obtain** In-House Expertise in Real Estate
Recommendations

1. Restructure Rental Subsidy Programs
   - Simplify subsidy by developing a flat-base monthly support
   - Provide additional incentives based on family size
   - Extend the participation to a maximum of 17 years while encouraging migration towards ownership

2. Expand AUB Rental Supply On and Off Campus
   - Develop new on-campus faculty apartment building
   - Weigh tradeoffs with:
     - Acquiring an off campus building
     - Exploring partnerships with developers

3. Introduce New Housing Purchase Program
   - Develop a mortgage guarantee program to assist faculty in accessing mortgages
   - Provide down-payment assistance
   - Develop a co-ownership program funded by the endowment to allow faculty to afford purchasing in Ras Beirut

4. Obtain In-House Expertise in Real Estate
   - Establish a Real Estate office to manage implementation
     - Enhance housing options through innovative real estate strategies
     - Proactively engage in real estate transactions
     - Assist in evaluating real estate investments
Priorities

1. Restructure housing subsidy
2. Establish an in-house real estate office
3. Explore building on-campus faculty housing
4. Develop new support for faculty housing purchase
5. Build on-campus faculty housing
6. Begin co-ownership, down-payment assistance, and mortgage guarantee programs
7. Explore off-campus real estate partnerships for student housing
8. Explore additional real estate investment in Ras Beirut
9. Potentially start work on housing with a real estate partnership
10. Continue ownership incentive programs
Encouraging Connections
The Campus Master Plan Design Guidelines
View Corridors
Perhaps the single most remarkable feature of AUB is its broad views of the Mediterranean Sea and the Lebanon Mountains. Although some external views have been obstructed by tall towers along the Corniche, there will still exist some extraordinary views to the sea. The most significant external view corridors exist at the top edge of the natural amphitheater.

Additionally, there are important internal view corridors that have been created by buildings within the university, and by views of framing by buildings, trees, and other landscape elements.

Above all, it is important to protect and enhance the external view to the Mediterranean from the natural amphitheater (the area of the proposed University Center), as well as the University Center area in General Plans for Specific Areas of the AUB landscape. The other major external views elaborated in Figure 2 should be protected and enhanced as well.

Internal view corridors are important as well and should be protected and enhanced. As new development occurs at AUB, potential impacts on these internal views must be considered as part of the design process.

View Corridor 1
Point out obvious views from the natural amphitheater (the proposed University Center).

View Corridor 2
Point out obvious views from the existing major internal and external view corridors on campus in Figure 5. Consider the impact of new development on these view corridors in the design process.

View Corridor 3
Use setbacks to frame and enhance views. Negatives that obstruct important views should be avoided.

View Corridor 4
Significant views from the Corniche to the campus should be maintained.

Figure 1.9: Important Campus View Corridors
Neighborhood Initiative Summary of Work
Universities and their Neighborhoods: An AUC-AUB Conversation

Cairo 5-7 November 2015

Themes and project

Community and Well-Being
- Well-Being Survey
- University staff
- Community
- Medical intervention

Urban Environment
- Community
- Greening
- Walkability
- Noise
- Blue Street Improvement

Protecting Ras Beirut Diversity
- Understanding
- Certification
- Affordable Housing

Achievements

20+
- Reports, Articles + Policy Briefs
- Many peer-reviewed academic articles such as:
  - Assaf A et al. (2013) Reducing parking demand and traffic congestion at the American University in Beirut (AUB), Transport Policy
  - Assefi A et al. (2013) Noisy roads
  - Al-Sayyid M et al. (2013) Reducing the pollution levels in the city

1000+
- Neighbors
- Engage with over 1000 neighbors through the Neighborhood Initiative
  - Active participation in neighborhood initiatives

70+
- Students
- Engage with over 330 students
  - Undergraduate students
  - Students participate in neighborhood initiatives

7000+
- Facility
- Engage with over 1000 undergraduate students and faculty
  - Students and faculty participate in neighborhood initiatives

What

Books
- The Neighborhood Initiative
  - A book
  - Contributions from various authors

Reports, Articles + Policy Briefs
- Many peer-reviewed academic articles such as:
  - Assaf A et al. (2013) Reducing parking demand and traffic congestion at the American University in Beirut (AUB), Transport Policy
  - Assefi A et al. (2013) Noisy roads
  - Al-Sayyid M et al. (2013) Reducing the pollution levels in the city

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
- City Debate 2015
- Other events and initiatives

Tangible Projects
- A model street
- Improving walkability
- Collaborations with the Beirut Municipality's Innovative Services
- Addressing pedestrian-friendly urban design challenges

Local NGO
- Urban planning and social challenges
- Engagement with local NGOs
- Collaboration with local NGOs

What

Achievements
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