
Think Housing Competition Jury Report

Documentation of the general evaluation process and broad assessment of the competition entries

75 teams registered for the competition, and 27 entries were submitted by the deadline. Submissions were distributed as follow: 10 Entries for the Ras Beirut case study; 3 entries for the Mousseitbeh case study, 3 entries for the Tariq El Jdide case study, 7 entries for the Bachoura case study and 4 entries for the Mar Mikhael/Roum case study.

The jury members convened for two days on December 16 and 17, 2018, at the Order of Engineers and Architects in Beirut for deliberation sessions in the presence of steering committee members and the competition coordinator at the end of which they selected the winning proposals, the prizes distribution as well as honorable mentions. Dr. Hiba Bou Akar was elected as Chair of Jury. A first round of selection took place to shortlist the most comprehensive entries and a second round narrowed the selection and determined the winners. Jury members based their evaluation on the following main criteria:

- Economic feasibility
- Affordability and diversity
- Replicability potential
- Adequacy of planning tools and legal mechanisms
- Sensitivity to urban context
- Clarity and completeness of the submission

The prizes were distributed among the winning entries as follow:

- First prize (one project)
- Second prize (one project)
- Third prize (tie between two projects)
- Honorable mentions (3 projects)

Broadly, the competition entries brought to the forefront the need for a national housing policy. More precisely, the winning schemes re-engaged the government in the discussion on housing, while presenting several scenarios on the relationship between preserving the local fabric and general policies. The proposals were also able to articulate the roles of multiple stakeholders in the management and provision of housing, including public institutions (such as the Municipality, public Corporation for Housing (PCH), etc..), the private sector, philanthropies, and the community.

The proposals presented the complexity of housing, and considered aspects related to the social, economic, cultural, legal, historical and architectural. Accordingly, the proposals were diverse in their level of intervention. They varied between design interventions, policy proposals and urban planning schemes, at the building, neighborhood and national levels. Several outstanding entries highlighted the potential for new housing typologies that can respond to the needs of diverse users of the city – the elderly, migrant workers, students, disabled – and highlighted the value of inclusivity and accessibility. As such, these schemes built on the potential of the existing local housing stock and proposed venues to rethink the existing legal structure.

The entries gave much needed attention to the rental market, highlighting its role in affordable housing provision. Whilst offering models for mixed income uses and inclusion, schemes applicable at the building scale and at the national policy were proposed to avoid the displacement of old tenants. Several proposals also presented innovative funding schemes for acquiring, managing and maintaining affordable housing stocks.

Jury Appreciation on the winning entries

1st Prize - 2000 USD

Title of Project: *Protective Housing Ecologies: Preliminaries for a Degrowth City (Mar Mikhael/Roum)*

Team Members: *Roula Khoury Fayad; Candice Naim; Lea Helou; Fadi Mansour; Patrick Aboukhalil; Ali As'ad*

At its core, the proposal calls for the de-commodification of housing and presents it as interlinked with citizenship. Its strength lies in the conceptual paradigm shift it proposes, and the ability to show how it works on all levels, from policy to a neighborhood upgrading scheme. As such it is a replicable proposal. Although situated in Mar Mikhael, it can be expanded to a national policy or broadened as a mechanism to manage the old housing stock.

Equally important is its emphasis on the critical role of the government in housing interventions through engaging a wide range of public sector actors such as the PCH, the CDR, and the Central Bank. Its proposed rental assistance program highlights the important role of the rental market in maintaining housing affordability, provides a viable alternative to the abolishment of the old rent law and proposes a way to deal with vacancy through taxation.

It also preserves the urban fabric and provides accessible public spaces.

2nd Prize - 1000 USD

Title of Project: *Social Infrastructure for all (Mousseitbeh)*
Team Members: *Kalliopi Sakellaropoulou; Simran Bansal*
(MAS Urban Design - ETHZ)

The proposal accommodates for a diverse group of users and stakeholders (multiple family sizes, students, elderly), and focuses on integrating the elderly within a larger community, while allowing for NGOs and charity institutions to be part of the funding scheme. It also caters for the housing demand generated in the area due to the proximity to a university.

With a multigenerational approach, the proposal integrates the building within its larger urban fabric. It transforms parts of the building floors to serve as social infrastructure for the neighborhood, and uses the ground floor as gardening and community spaces.

3rd Prize (tie) - 500 USD

Title of Project: *Affordable Housing Scheme: Al Mahaba Building (Tariq El Jdide) - في المسكن الجديدة ريقه - الجد بيت ط ريق*
Team Members: *Omar Abdul Samad; Sarah El Khatib; Christina Hachem Majdalani; Mohamad El Chamaa; Soha Mneimneh; Rania Nouaihed; Roland Nassour; Dunia Ezzedine; Julia Kassem*
(MUPD – AUB)

The proposal addresses the complexity of property ownership and the exclusion of old renters from decision making, by rethinking collective action and activating dormant taxation and housing cooperatives laws. As such, it is a community-led proposal, integrating public, private and philanthropic financing to upgrade and renovate the building. It is a self-sustaining and self-management model and can be replicated elsewhere.

3rd Prize (tie) - 500 USD

Title of Project: *Al Bachoura Alley: Catalyzing Affordability (Bachoura)*
Team Members: *Lynn Hamdar; Hayfaa Abou Ibrahim; Petra Filagrana; Itab Kabalan; Shareef Tarhini*

The proposal emphasizes the role of the private sector in giving back to the community, through presenting a model of leveraging private sector finance. Departing from the concept of limited profit development, the proposal's significance lies in highlighting the social responsibility of developers and their contribution in preserving the old urban fabric; while focusing on income generating activities for low-income communities. The proposal also presents a model of public-private partnership, by suggesting land pooling and subdivision and the role of the municipality in managing the 25% of public areas that arise from utilizing this planning tool.

Honorable Mentions:

Title of Project: *Ras Beirut Collective (Ras Beirut)*
Team Members: *Drhuv Gusain; Chrysoula Pierrakou*
(MAS Urban Design - ETHZ)

The proposal presents an innovative building typology and looks into a diversity of investors, with a focus on institutional partnerships. It envisions a role that AUB can play in the neighborhood and presents a scheme that considers the population it generates, alongside interventions that rearranges and downsizes large housing units.

Title of Project: *Home in Progress (Tariq El Jdide)*
Team Members: *Stefania Kontinou-Chimou; Ormpailin Leelasiriwong*
(MAS Urban Design - ETHZ)

The proposal presents a new typology of housing, emphasizing models of communal living for the elderly. To that end, it brings to the forefront the need to think of leftover spaces as possibilities for much needed innovative arrangements; such as relocating the evicted through an intergenerational community integrated approach.

Title of Project: *(Ras Beirut)*
Team Members: *Ines Lakrouf; Yara Iwaz; Rania Sassine*

The proposal presents a programmatic approach to housing. It brings to the discussion on housing adaptive reuse and sustainability ideas. It addresses the issue of maximizing the built-up area by strategically locating additions that are sensitive to the existing urban fabric while offering mixed use spaces for a diversity of users.

COMPETITION INFORMATION

Introduction

In an effort to advocate for affordable housing and more inclusive cities, this competition seeks innovative proposals for inclusive urban housing options that challenge the dominant models of urban development by reversing ongoing displacements of low and middle-income residents from the city. Teams of multidisciplinary practitioners and/or students (graduates and undergraduates) were invited to articulate feasible proposals that respond to the imperative of inclusive housing by reacting to one of 5 case studies profiled in Beirut (Lebanon) with an integrated feasible development scheme in line with the competition guidelines. The competition seeks to address the affordable housing shortage in Beirut, one of the most expensive cities in the world.

Framing the Competition

Jointly organized by Public Works Studio, the Order of Engineers and Architects in Beirut and UN-Habitat, and under the patronage of the Public Corporation for Housing, the “Think Housing” competition is conceived as a pilot intervention for the “Affordable Housing Initiative”. It seeks to place housing at the forefront of the local debate on the possibilities of inclusive cities and affordability, by inviting innovative proposals and alternative ideas that challenge the dominant model of urban development and address the displacement of low and middle income residents from the city. Through five localized cases in five neighborhoods of Beirut, the competition highlights the lack of alternative housing programs and planning practices that prioritize high profit generation, at the expense of all other parameters of urban inclusivity and sustainability.

In order to address affordable housing and inclusive city questions, the key challenges that need to be respected and addressed in the context of any intervention include the following:

FIRST, institutional and legal challenges that stem from the lack of land or housing policy. Ongoing building practices and development patterns prioritize large scale urban renewal projects at the expense of social, historic, and cultural factors.

SECOND, economic challenges that emanate from unaffordability, in a context of skyrocketing land prices and escalating rents compared to overall household earnings and expenditures.

THIRD, the vulnerability to displacement resulting from market forces, and since 2014 from the new rent law.

FOURTH, growing socio-economic inequalities, class and sectarian segregation, and spatial fragmentation inside Beirut's historically and socio-culturally rich neighborhoods.

These challenges signal the necessity of rethinking ongoing patterns of development, land use, functions, and institutional organization, in ways that can protect the urban fabric, secure affordable housing, and maintain a sufficient supply for the flow of new residents.

Competition Objectives

The proposals are expected to be starting points for visionary exercises that can build broader coalitions advocating for livable and inclusive cities, ruled by the principles of social justice.

The Jury's task consisted of selecting the entries that most comprehensively address -most of- the competition objectives mentioned below:

- To position the proposals as the starting point of a public debate about affordable housing and an inclusive city.
- To develop alternatives in which the existing fabric of the city continues to exist and play a role in the housing of all city dwellers.
- To situate the debate on the new rent law within a broader debate on the right to housing and the city.
- To engage professionals in the cause against displacement through their contribution.
- To inform city officials and governmental bodies of possibilities for the future of Beirut's residents and engage them in the debate about the right to housing.
- To provide exposure to professionals' work that engages urban issues, hence expanding their presence and role in contributing to the future of the built environment in Lebanon.
- To broaden our collective understanding of the meaning of place within a highly individualized profit-driven urban geography in Lebanon.

Listings

Steering Committee Members

Monica Basbous - Architect and Spatial Analyst [Public Works]

Nadine Bekdache - Designer and urban researcher [Public Works]

Habib Debs - Architect and Urban Planner [Urbi]

Desirée Feghali - Legal Consultant [DF Legal Practice]

Tala Kammourieh - Urban Planner and Policy Analyst [UN-Habitat]

Mona Khechen - Independent Urban Development and Planning Consultant, Senior Lecturer at AUB

Souheir Assi Mabsout - Architect and Urban Designer

Abir Saksouk - Architect and Urban Planner [Public Works]

Dounia Salamé - Urban Researcher [Social Justice and the City, AUB]

Ali Termos - Professor of Economy [American University of Beirut and American University in Bulgaria]

Competition Professional Advisor

Souheir Assi Mabsout

Competition Coordinator

Acile Sfeir

Jury Panel Members

Hiba Bou Akar – Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University.

Kawthar Dara – Independent Consultant and Public Financial Management Advisor

Desirée Feghali - Legal Consultant [DF Legal Practice]

Marwan Ghandour - Professor and Director, School of Architecture, Louisiana State University

Elie Harfouche – Assistant Professor of Architecture at the Lebanese American University

Adrian Lahoud - Dean of the School of Architecture at the Royal College of Art

Rony Lahoud – Chairman and General Director of the Public Corporation for Housing

Maysa Sabah – Urban Planner and Housing Specialist

Jad Tabet – Architect and Head of the Order of Engineers and Architects in Beirut

Competition Supporters

The competition is financially supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the AUB Neighborhood Initiative and the Arab Center for Social Sciences (ACSS).

For more information you can visit the competition website www.thinkhousing.org