

Code to ensure preservation of Tripoli's old city

ITM London



Dr Paul Bennett, head of the Society for Libyan Studies mission saw some drawings of the Medina Gadima (old city) being worked on by MEDURB, urban designers and architects from Paris and Beirut, who had been commissioned by the government to prepare a new code for Tripoli, setting out a vision for the rehabilitation of the city.

Neglect in the old city



Street in the old city

After a short conversation he found himself appointed to provide a brief history of the city and a blueprint for the recording of standing and buried archaeological remains in advance of development of the former Jewish quarter of Tripoli, the Hara Al-Kabira and the Hara Al-Saghira and of other vacant sites in the Old City of Tripoli and historic Ottoman and Italian suburbs.

In a recent lecture to the Society for Libyan Studies Bennett

remarked that the Medina Gadima is a wonderful, ancient city with a great depth of buried archaeological deposits and a wealth of standing historic buildings. "It is an extraordinary state of affairs, but here is one of the Mediterranean's great cities, that has never seen a modern archaeological excavation and its surviving walls and fortifications, gates, ancient street grid, mosques, madrasa, suqs, shops, town houses, smaller houses, hammams, prisons and





Clock tower in the old city

hospitals, have yet to be fully studied.”

The city faces many challenges. During the past 40 years the process of decay and collapse of historic property has increased year on year and it is now accelerating at an alarming rate.

As many of the properties rely on their neighbours for structural support, once a building collapses or has been demolished, then neighbouring properties are immediately at risk. A significant number of properties have been

lost, some of their own accord through neglect decay and collapse, and others pulled down by the authorities in the public interest.

Some regrettable decisions have been taken with regard to the Medina and the motor car; the opening of the old city to car traffic; the building of coastal road that cuts the city off from its port and the sea; the formation of raised pavements and the establishment of car parks. Modern high-rise buildings have been allowed to proliferate on the boundaries of

the old city and at its heart. Most sit uncomfortably alongside their historic neighbours and are unsympathetic and alien for reasons of design and materials. The City Code sets out a long-term vision for the Old City based on regeneration, to create an internationally recognised ancient city packed with historic monuments, traditional urban buildings and houses, fortifications and gates, all in good condition. A city with good pedestrian links to public transport and the sea, with a thriving economy based on trade, traditional crafts and

tourism, with a rich cultural life that Libyans are proud to live and work in. A medina that uses traditional architectural techniques and modern technologies for ventilation and energy generation; sustainable solutions for freshwater and wastewater management; efficient and effective rubbish collection and disposal systems; new and well managed services of all kinds, installed without damaging the integrity of standing buildings or archaeological remains and regulations that restrict the use of the car and promote out of city parking

Jewish synagogue in old city



Old city at night



Street scene



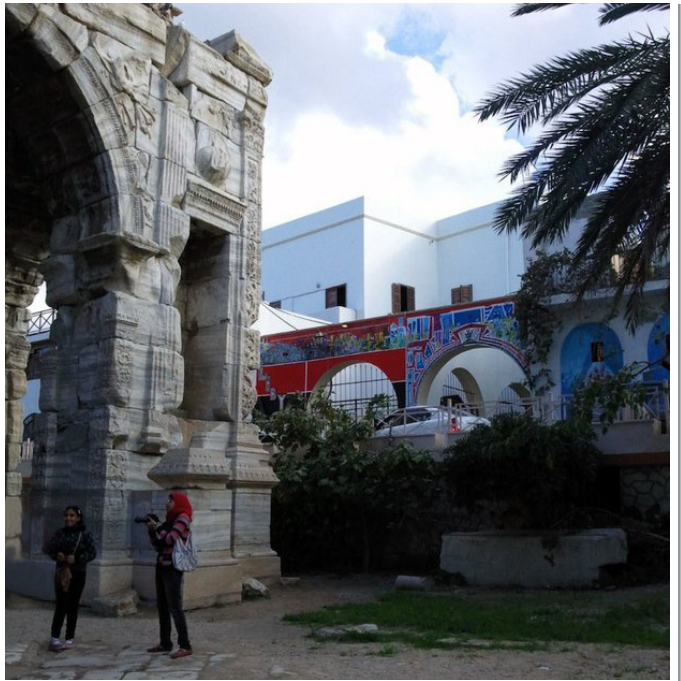
Market in the old city

Completed in May 2010, City Code is a reference document, a planning and regulatory tool that also deals with land use, construction, archaeology, architecture and landscaping. Archaeological protocols and procedures form a seamless part of the reference document, including the principles of desk assessment, geophysical and physical evaluation, watching brief and excavation in advance of new development, including post-excavation work, archive, assessment, reporting, finds

storage and display. Building assessment, analysis and recording also form an integral part of conservation-led schemes for the repair and refurbishment of historic urban property. Recommendations in City Code include support for the Department of Antiquities; for capacity building and training, through a mixture of university-based programmes, work placements and internments at home and abroad, and through skills transfer, by working alongside seasoned professionals employed by the Department to set up this

new system and monitor and respond to the first wave of development, beginning with the installation of a new sewer system and an evaluation of the Hara Kabira and the Hara Saghira using geophysical and physical (archaeological) evaluation.

Tourists visiting the old city



Mosque in the old city

