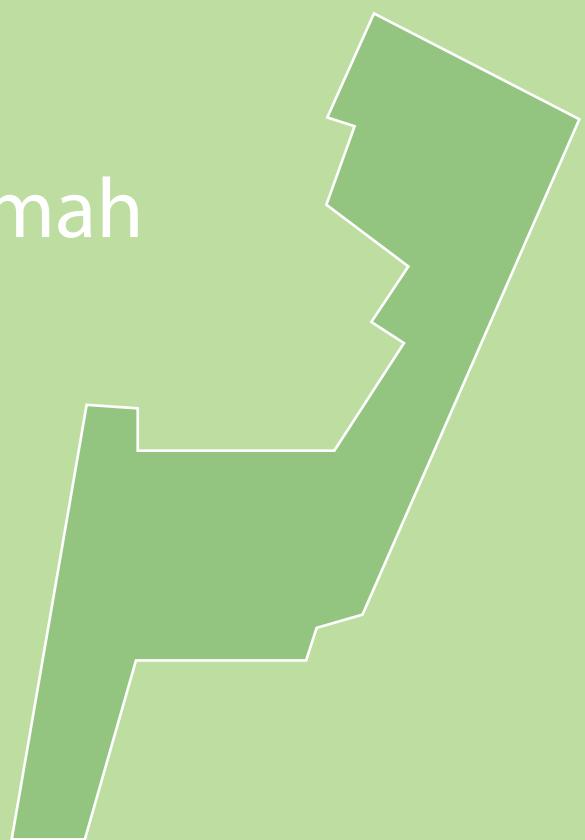


Hadiqat As-Samah



## Hadiqat As-Samah

Many people in Lebanon and around the world are contributing to the making of this garden of reflection and reconciliation in the heart of Beirut. The project has also had an enthusiastic following at international conferences and gatherings on the theme of peace and forgiveness. Amongst the many supporters of the garden, I especially want to thank His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales for his commitment from the outset and his continuing interest in the implementation of this most important public space. I personally have been greatly heartened by his support throughout the lengthy process of making such a project happen.

To all supporters of this powerful idea, I hope we have done it justice: in selecting the right site with its own layers of meaning; in finding a visionary designer; and now in building a garden that I hope will enchant its future visitors and give them cause for reflection, each in their own different way.

This garden will have both national and international significance, but most importantly it must succeed for our fellow citizens. To do so it has to meet several important objectives. It must help in the process of postwar reconciliation and healing by providing an inclusive, multi-confessional space open to all. It must also contribute to a whole family of public spaces in the city center that are re-creating the city's meeting point and common ground for all the Lebanese. It must respect Beirut's valuable archeological heritage. Finally, combining all of these, the garden must contribute to a new sense of common heritage, identity and spirit of the future for all Lebanese communities.

I would like to conclude with my personal view on the project's broader significance in our contemporary world of increasing intolerance, extremism and heightened tensions across cultures and beliefs. To me this garden seems like a "still, small voice" emanating from the Middle East with its important message to all, of tolerance, understanding, forgiveness and hope.

Nasser Chammaa  
Chairman - General Manager  
SOLIDERE

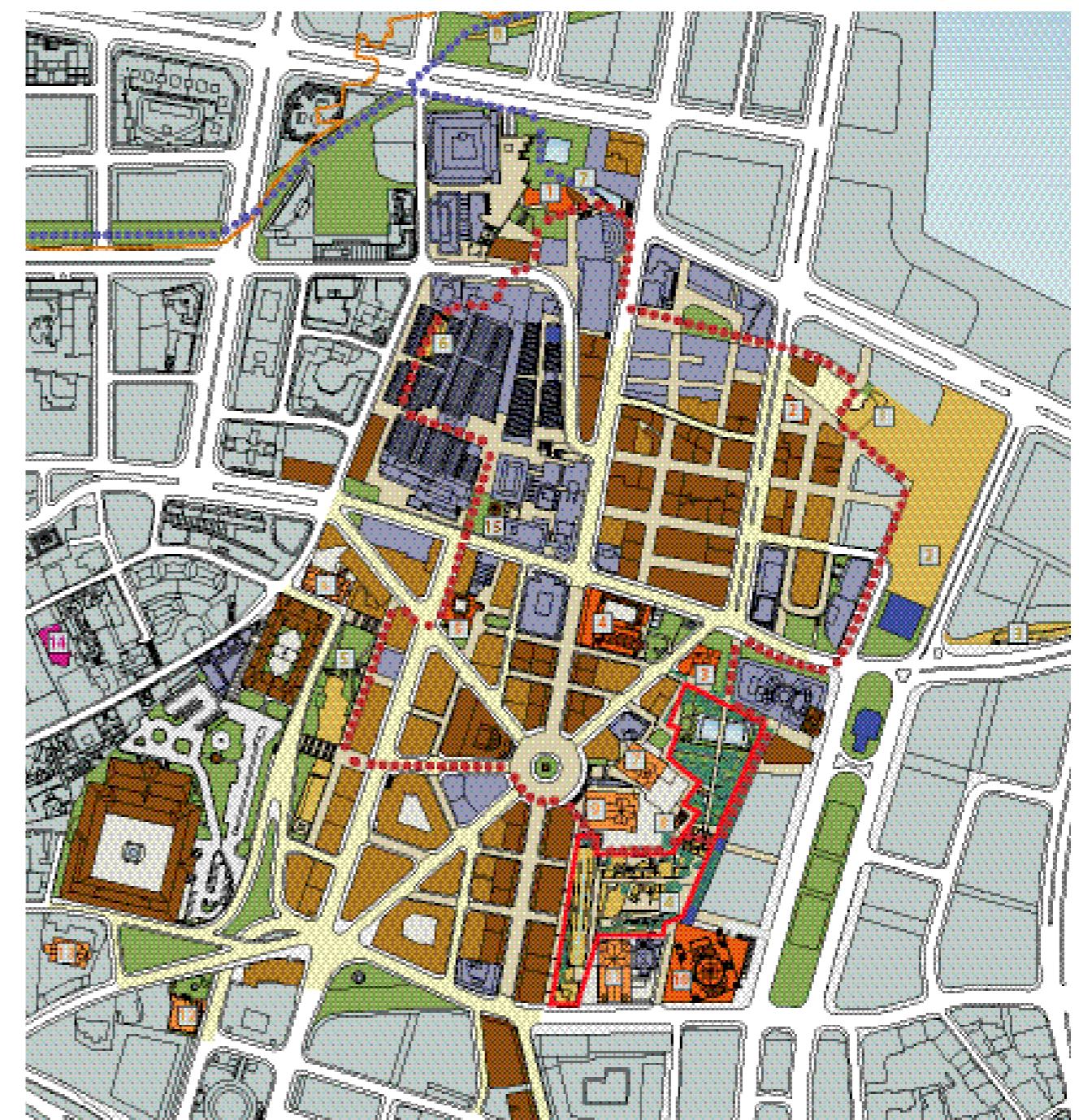
# Context

Hadiqat As-Samah will be one of the most significant public spaces in Beirut's city center, now revived and re-emerging from the devastation of the 1975-1990 Lebanese war. The theme of the garden has grown out of Lebanon's unique situation, as country and people begin to come to terms with their immediate past and to reconstruct an essentially pluralistic cultural identity. Beirut's central area, historically the common ground for all Lebanese communities, offers the project a location charged with symbolism. The garden lies adjacent to Sahat Al-Nijma (Nijma Square), focus of the historic core, and close to Martyrs' Square, the termination of the wartime Green Line that bore the brunt of destruction. The site is surrounded by mosques and churches and integrates the archeological heritage of a city that has been destroyed and rebuilt many times in its 5,000-year history.

The garden and its archeological treasures will also constitute an important destination on the Heritage Trail, a pedestrian route encircling the historic core. The trail gives access to archeological remains of many different periods, site museums and heritage buildings located throughout the Conservation Area and its immediate environs.



City context plan:  
Hadiqat As-Samah,  
city center, Beirut  
peninsula.



Location plan: Hadiqat As-Samah, historic core, Heritage Trail.

1 Hadiqat As-Samah	2 Crusader Castle	3 Majidiya Mosque	9 St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral
2 Heritage Trail	4 Ancient Tell	5 Al Dabbaghia Mosque	10 Mohamed Al Amine Mosque
3 Other trails	6 Phoenician City Wall	7 Amir Assaf Mosque	11 St. George Maronite Cathedral
4 Heritage buildings	8 Hadiqat As-Samah	8 Al Omeri Mosque	12 Evangelical Church
5 Other retained buildings	9 Roman Baths	9 Amir Murad Mosque	13 St. Nishan Armenian Church
6 Newbuildings in Historic Core	10 Medieval Moat & City Wall	10 Capuchin Church	14 Maghen Abraham Synagogue
7 Site Museums	11 Ottoman Quayside	11 St. Elie Greek Catholic Church	
	12 Ottoman Sea Wall	12 Nouriya Chapel	



Aerial view of the site adjacent to Sahat Al-Nijma.

## The site

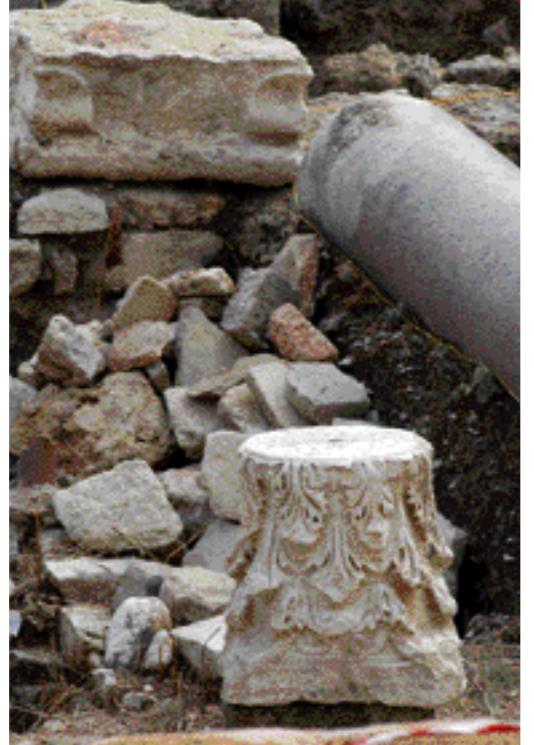
In 2001, a site of 2.3 Ha (5.7 acres) was formally committed for the garden by Solidere. In the amendment to the Beirut Central District master plan which it initiated, the company relinquished development rights in this site. The area, substantially destroyed during the war, had been identified as a zone of archeological opportunity capable of revealing many former city layers. With the archeological excavations well under way, the potential was recognized for the integration of these layers within a themed landscape setting. Solidere then organized an international landscape design competition for the project.

The design competition was won by the renowned landscape designers Gustafson Porter, and the construction of the garden is now under way. The incorporation within the scheme of important archeological remains discovered on the site is fully supported by Lebanon's General Directorate of Antiquities, which coordinates closely with Solidere and the design team.

Northward view along the Roman Cardo Maximus before construction of the west terrace wall.



View along the Cardo Maximus looking southward towards the standing columns at its intersection with the recently discovered Decumanus Maximus.



Above, left to right: view from the east, Fakhreddine walls in the foreground; unearthed artifacts near the intersection of the Cardo and Decumanus Maximus; remains of Roman dwellings and stone paving from the secondary Decumanus.

## The vision

*Hadiqat As-Samah will be a garden in which people can gather strength and inspiration, a place for calm and gentle reflection. A garden for individual introspection, a sanctuary accessible to all. An edifying place, archetypal of Lebanon's flora, with flowing water, suitably covered by sun and shade, which nurtures sentiments of peace, joy and healing.*

*Beirut's city center was always a meeting point for Lebanon's many communities. It can therefore offer an important neutral location with a multi-communal history that other parts of Beirut, or Lebanon as a whole, cannot. This area can also stand out as a paragon of social integration and reconstruction. As a global landmark, it will differentiate itself along spiritual lines rather than according to physical form or architectural grandeur.* **jj**

Alexandra Asseily

As Beirut progresses with its rehabilitation and reconstruction, a sense of renewal and integration brings with it the need to come to terms with the past. Hadiqat As-Samah is envisioned as a place of calm reflection, sheltered from the bustle of the city and expressing themes of understanding, forgiveness and unity. Open to all, Hadiqat As-Samah will be a pluralistic public space at the heart of the city.

Integrating archeological remains of surviving city layers, Hadiqat As-Samah will offer unique insights into earlier civilizations. The integration of archeological artifacts within the garden will provide a historical context,

demonstrating a shared ancestry that predates the recent conflict. By displaying these layers of civilizations, the garden will "use foundations of the past to build foundations for the future."

In its proximity to the wartime Green Line that divided the city and became the focus of conflict, Hadiqat As-Samah will challenge the segregation of communities. The garden, nestling between mosques and churches, will provide a meeting point for diverse communities and beliefs. Hadiqat As-Samah will be a place for individuals to reflect on their collective memory and perhaps to nurture a renewed sense of common identity.



Concert on the Cardo during early excavation phase, 1996.



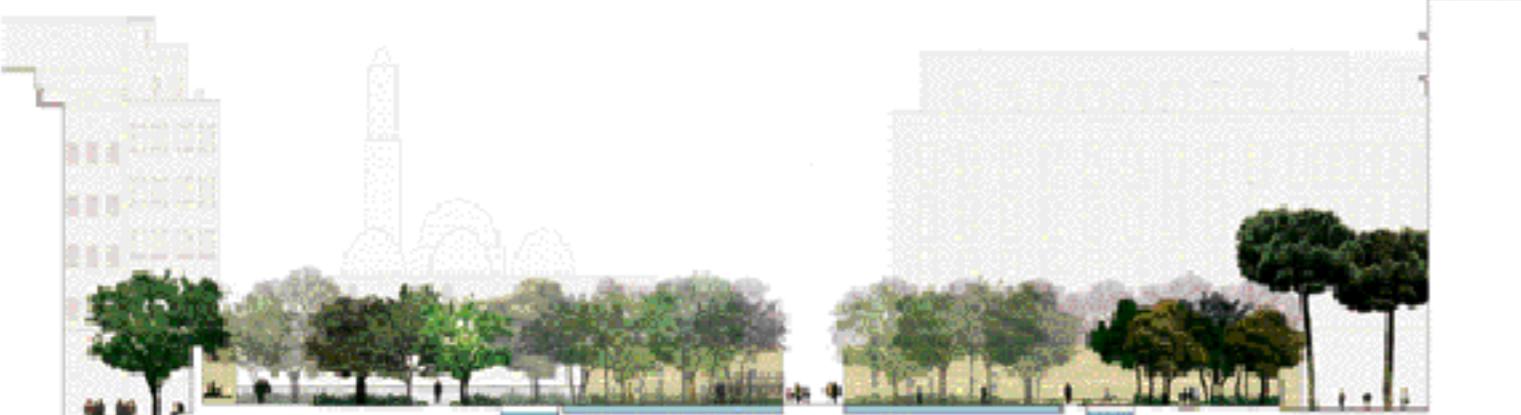
Amphitheater terraces with St George Maronite Cathedral beyond.

## Design

The design responds with subtlety to the vision by combining many elements of the Lebanese landscape with the city's historical layers. Hadiqat As-Samah will symbolize, not lessons in reconciliation but a spirit of regained unity, bringing together the natural features and rich flora of Lebanon's unique landscapes from the mountains to the Mediterranean shore. Artifacts from many different periods have been incorporated within the garden, overlaying historical and contemporary meanings.

Visitors may overlook the garden from its upper pedestrian streets, crossing the footbridge above it, on the Heritage Trail, or entering by the main gate to the north. Passing through a walled water garden, they will descend as if into the past, through irrigated terraces of fruit and olive trees, to a square imprinted with the complex pattern of archeology beneath. This square gives access to the information center and the archeological site beyond.

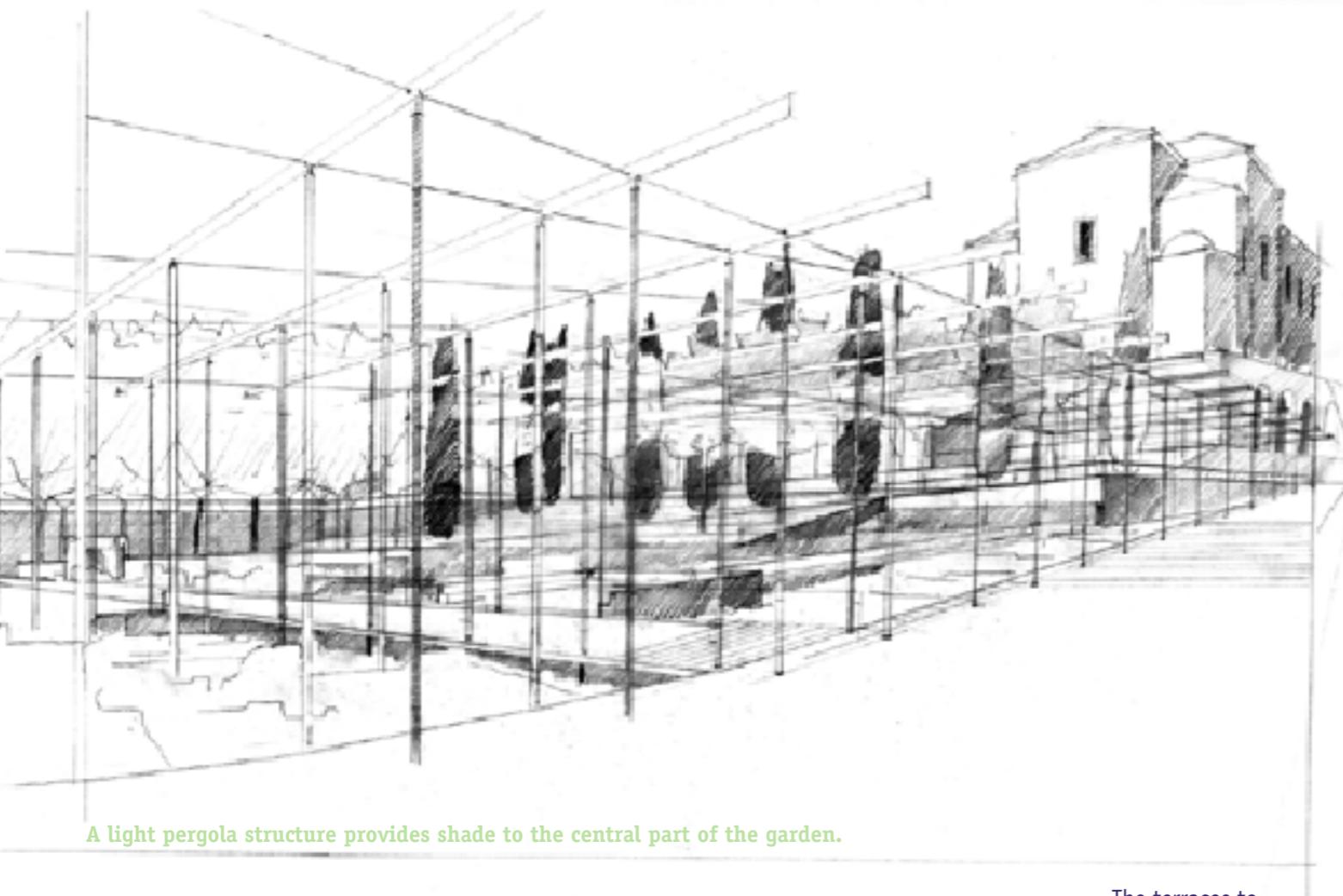
**Hadiqat As-Samah layout plan**  
The plan illustrates the separate garden areas. Visitors will descend along a ramp from the water garden, passing through terraces to reach the central gathering area. From there they may follow routes through the archeological remains located in the southwest.



North entrance elevation showing the water garden with Amir Assaf Mosque in the background.



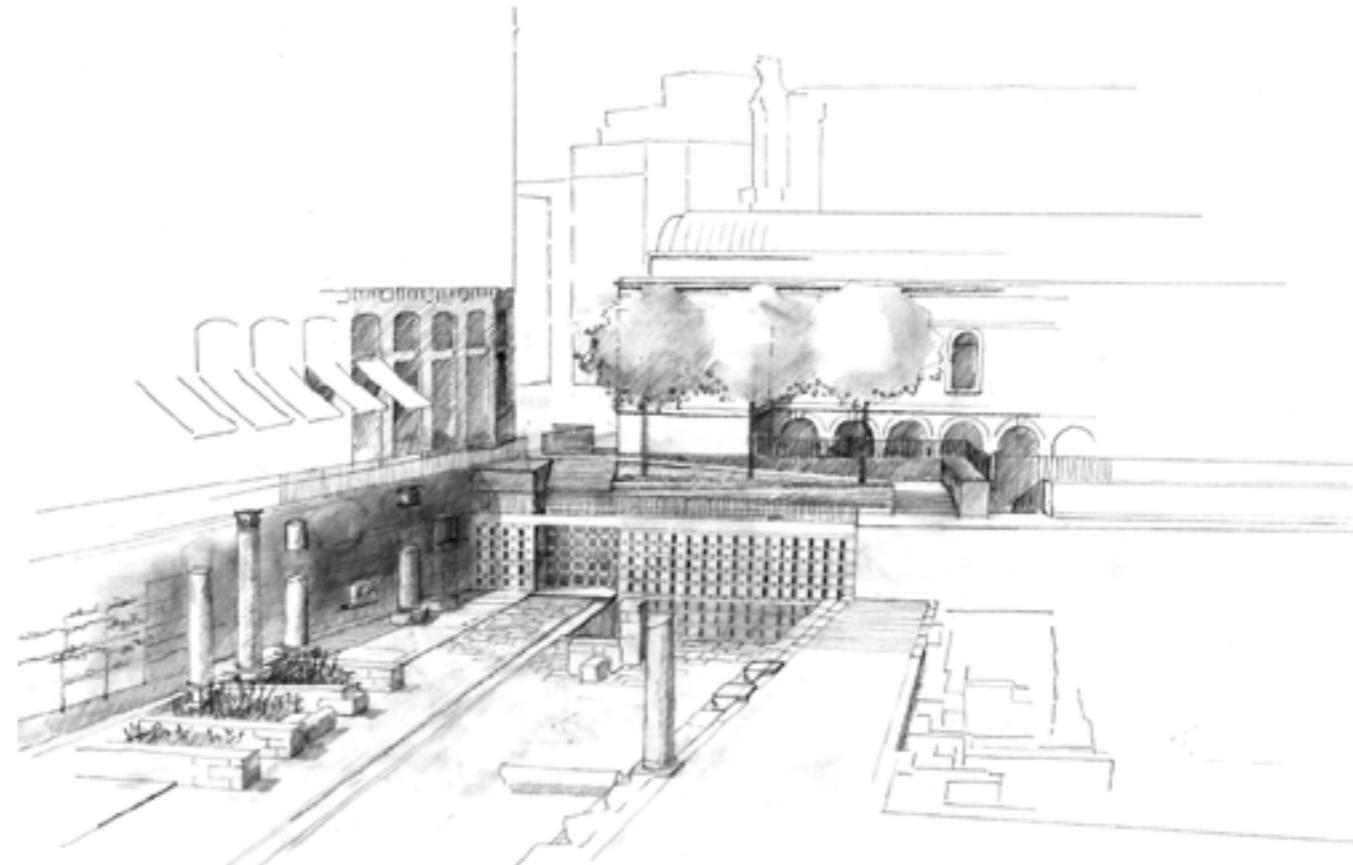
Southern seating terraces of the amphitheater in front of St George Maronite Church.



A light pergola structure provides shade to the central part of the garden.

**Pergola above Hellenistic settlement**  
Climbing plants and roses will create a canopy within the pergola structure planned above the remains of the settlement. Visitors can view the Hellenistic ruins from wooden walkways.

The terraces to the south conceal a pedestrian ramp leading down from street level and providing seating for the garden's amphitheater where cultural events may take place. Passing beneath a pergola structure offering welcome shade, visitors will arrive at the Roman Cardo Maximus, framed by planted terraces. To the south, a staircase descends from the street to a point where the Cardo intersects with the Decumanus Maximus. To the north, the Cardo disappears from view beneath St George Orthodox Cathedral.



At its northern end the Cardo enters a grotto, accessible to the visitor, below a ramped belvedere. To the left salvaged columns and capitals are fixed to a display wall.

The elements of the Hadiqat As-Samah design relate to the past. In the southern, area, an amphitheater is being created, planted with cypresses and paper bark trees. The shallow pool at the north entrance recalls traditional middle eastern gardens.



Work in progress:  
west terrace wall  
and temporary  
sand platform.

## Implementation

Construction of the west terrace wall began in the summer of 2003. Work on this pedestrian street, forming the western boundary to Hadiqat As-Samah, is expected to be complete by the summer of 2004.

During the initial construction phase, pilot projects for the conservation of archeology will be carried out, providing prototypes for the treatment of the archeological remains throughout the garden.

Construction of the peripheral retaining walls will continue, together with backfilling of the northern part of the garden and construction of the pool, irrigation channels and terraces. This will be followed by the east terrace pedestrian street with the information center and service functions underneath, other structures and, finally, the landscaping of the garden itself.

All construction is due to be complete by July 2005 and the garden to be opened to the public in the Spring of 2006.



**SOLIDERE**

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