

## Green is the new black

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY BUILDINGS ARE FINALLY COMING TO LEBANON

Although ecological building standards have become de rigueur in New York, London and Paris, countries across the Middle East have been slower to pick up on the trend. Lebanon, however, is catching up. Greenstone real estate developers, a firm based in Beirut, is designing the country's first UK-certified green-friendly residential development.

Construction is expected to start toward the end of the year on La Brocéliande, a four-story villa-style building in the leafy suburb of Yarzeh, designed by Dagher, Hanna & Partners Architects. Billed as ecological and green-efficient, the development – which should be completed by the end of 2010 – will seem like an extension of the tree-covered hillside from which it will emerge. "La Brocéliande will incorporate a variety of sustainable and environmentally friendly features into its design and is being rigorously evaluated under the United Kingdom's BRE Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), a sustainability assessment methodology for buildings," says Sami Andraos, project manager at Greenstone, which is affiliated with Johnny R. Saade Holdings, a company involved in tourism, wine-making and finance.

BREEAM is a widely used eco-assessment process for buildings. Not only does it set the bar for best practice in sustainable design, it provides developers with an internationally recognized standard for buildings that make little impact on the environment.

The need to comply with such standards, which reward the ability to efficiently use energy resources such as water and electricity, forces architects to come up with clever ways to



maintain aesthetics while minimizing the impact of their designs on the environment. "Green or energy-efficient buildings are becoming more and more important internationally as the construction industry has been recognized as one of the largest contributors to climate change," says Andraos. "In addition, living in healthier, well-thought [out] buildings increases comfort and the quality of life."

While it may take time to convince developers of the merits of green design, it's impossible to ignore the advantages it offers. La Brocéliande's green features, which were devised in association with UK-firm EcoConsulting, include thermal insulation to reduce the need and cost of heating in winter

as well as solar-powered water heating to take advantage of Lebanon's sunshine, says Andraos. Not only does this make financial sense (and limit the need for generators), it reduces reliance on fossil fuels. "All lighting throughout the project will be energy-efficient with timers and sensors for communal and external lighting," he says. "In addition, water consumption will be reduced thanks to a range of low-water appliances and re-use of the air conditioning condensate."

Andraos hopes that Greenstone's pioneering commitment to the environment will encourage other local developers to go green. "It's feasible," he says. "We hope others will follow us."

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