



www.carlinecars.com
0212 573 56 56

Hürriyet In the 49th Year as Turkey's English Daily

Search Daily News

go



DAILY NEWS & ECONOMIC REVIEW

Nikah'larda Böyle Şekerler Görürseniz
Şaşırmayın!

HOME TURKEY ECONOMIC REVIEW REGIONSCAPE INTERNATIONAL OPINION CULTURE SPORTS BLOGS VIDEOS PHOTOS

Sub Categories: » NATIONAL • POLITICS • DIPLOMACY

TURKEY

• NATIONAL

Monday, April 12 2010 10:23 GMT+2
Your time is 09:23:10

High-flying development may bring Istanbul crashing down

Font Size: Larger|Smaller

Friday, April 2, 2010

İŞİL EĞRİKAVUK

ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

The abundance of high-rise residential towers in central Istanbul offer potential inhabitants a wealth of luxurious amenities while creating a modern urban skyline. Many architects, however, say the promise is a mirage and the ongoing construction boom will only damage the city's historical character, leaving behind a horizon of empty buildings



Istanbul residents can't pick up a newspaper or turn on the TV these days without encountering ads promising potential real-estate buyers a magnificent modern life in the heart of the city.

"We promise you a new, modern world," developers vow, offering "a glorious future" to

people who invest in one of the new high-rise residential communities that seem to be continuously under construction.

Istanbul is already first in Europe and fifth in Asia with 2,146 high rises and another 190 being built, according to Emporis, an online database of public and commercial buildings. But while developers tout the benefits of high-rise life, many architects and city planners express their concerns about what the building boom is doing to the city's historical and cultural fabric.

"These buildings are all located in the middle of the city, and they will create many problems, from infrastructure to traffic to energy consumption," Tayfun Kahraman from the Istanbul Chamber of City Planners told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review. "It is obvious that these buildings are not made with the intent of modernizing the city."

Architect Çelik Erengezgin agrees, saying the trend toward high-rise development is a result of unplanned urbanization policies. "Many people think it is better to live in the center rather than the suburbs," he said. "But they don't think about the time and energy they will spend in traffic chaos."

While these types of problems are common to large cities around the globe, preservationists say Istanbul's historical character adds another dimension to the dilemma of how to plan for growth. "There needs to be a law that controls the planning of all these buildings. Otherwise, while building the high rises, they are also damaging the cultural heritage of the city," Metin Sözen, the president of the Foundation for the Promotion and Protection of Environmental and Cultural Heritage, or ÇEKÜL, told the Daily News. "On

Related News

- Retired Turkish ambassador claims nuclear bombs stored in Istanbul
- Starting point: Wining and dining in Istanbul
- Pick one from a rich range of yoga activities in Istanbul
- Easter celebrations at Istanbul's Çırağan Palace Kempinski
- New center for dry food producers
- Italian airline launches Istanbul-Milan flights
- Istanbul now available at an iPhone touch
- APOCP conference to be held in Istanbul
- This Year, Istanbul is Cultural Capital of Europe
- Israel's settlement plans protested in Istanbul, Ankara

Related Commentaries

- Endless love
- Istanbul 2010: Don't waste the opportunity!
- Scenes from a 'normal' country

TURKEY

- Bodrum Peninsula's only wetland at risk of perishing
- Alternatives to a dam-free Hasankeyf explored at conference
- Turkish-Armenian academic criticizes 'Turkey's policy of denial'
- Turkish gun shops go from back alley to mall
- Village teachers in Turkey set to receive modern housing
- Turkish military hopes for quick finding on deaths of 7 soldiers
- Weapon-free Aegean Sea remains a dream for now
- Turkish PM to urge world leaders to criticize Israeli nuclear arms
- Relief, worry in wake of Turkish university entrance exam
- Critical articles of Turkish reform package to be discussed Monday

MOST POPULAR

MOST COMMENTED

Turkish PM to urge world leaders to criticize Israeli nuclear arms

Istanbul's historical peninsula, for example, there's no space left for authentic sites to breathe."

Is there demand?

Such concerns seem to have little influence on buyers and renters, who newspaper reports say prefer high-rise homes. "It is a new lifestyle in Turkey and many people want to live in residential towers," said Burcu Ertan, a marketing strategist from 3T Residences.

Developers say high rises are popular in part for the many services they offer, including in-building dry cleaners, hair dressers, restaurants, housekeeping services, 24-hour security, valet parking, meeting rooms and even emergency health care. Others say they are making an aesthetic contribution to the city.

"Our residence is a first on Istanbul's European side. It brings together lots of different things, not just in terms of its form, but also in its content," Uğur Dumankaya, a board member of Dumankaya Construction, said at a press meeting about the firm's new Dumankaya Modern residence. "When we designed our project, we wanted to bring art and life together by including sculptures in the development."

Many people are opting for high-rise developments in central Istanbul rather than the gated communities in the suburbs that were previously a focal point of the city's urbanization, said Nurhan Nalinci from Metrocity Millennium Residences. "There are some people who have to live in the city center, but they need homes where every possible problem caused by city life is reduced to a minimum," she said. "That way they can use their time effectively and meet all their demands without spending extra effort."

Others, however, say the demand for such homes is not as great as developers would like consumers to believe.

"Why do you think there are so many ads? Because no one wants to buy these houses," said architect Erengezgin said, who also criticized the poor quality of materials used in much new construction, leaving the buildings with little insulation against noise or heat and structurally vulnerable to earthquakes.

Nizamettin Aşa, vice chairman of the Istanbul Chamber of Real Estate Commission Agents, agreed with Erengezgin about the relationship between the frequency of advertisements and the lack of demand. "It is the same with shopping malls. Construction companies build them without considering the results," he told the Daily News. "But now there are so many empty spaces in those malls and so many empty houses in the city."

According to former real-estate developer Gary Lachman, though, there is still demand for many of the more intelligently planned new residences and offices on both sides of the Bosphorus.

"In a city of 14 million, the vast majority under 35, people are highly motivated to find places to live that are close to their work," Lachman, who now works as a special counsel on foreign law at the Istanbul firm of Lachman & Yeniaras, told the Daily News. "With banks and mortgage companies now making it easier for more people to buy flats, I think the demand is even exceeding the supply for centrally located, safe and attractive housing at the entry level of the market."

Yet Lachman agrees that some projects may see slower-than-expected sales – due, he says, to the fact that many construction companies in Turkey embark on building projects without first conducting extensive market research.

"Before starting a project in the U.S., the construction lenders require you to have a professional market-research company perform a detailed study to determine the depth and range of the target market and closely examine job and family formation, so that you can foresee the economic sustainability of the project," Lachman said. "Yet here, it seems like people just get some land and blindly start building."

Changing architectural plans

Istanbul's Polonezköy mourns following death of Polish president

Weapon-free Aegean Sea remains a dream for now

Turkish-Armenian academic criticizes 'Turkey's policy of denial'

Military chief says Turkey wants no trouble with Greece over Aegean

Iraq-Turkey trade up 50 percent in past year

Plane tragedy could impact East-West ties in Europe

Poland plunged into grief by death of president

Turkish Press Scan April 11

World leaders express sorrow over Polish president's death

Many of the new residential towers are being built on land that used to belong to the government and has been sold to private individuals or companies, Eyüp Muhçu, the head of the Büyükkent branch of the Chamber of Architects, told the Daily News.

"After the sale, [the developers] manage to change the architectural plans of these sites in order to build more stories. By doing that, they multiply the value of the land and maximize their profits," Muhçu said, adding that a taller building is also seen as more prestigious by many members of the city's nouveau riche.

The Chamber of Architects prepares reports and sometimes opens court cases against such abuses. The organization recently prepared a report on Astay Real Estate Inc., charging the firm with changing its architectural plans, a claim the company's head manager Atilla Öztürk denies.

"We are trying our best to prevent such cases, but the companies don't follow the court decisions," Muhçu said. "They finish the building even before the court case is over."

Alternative solutions

Already a large metropolis, Istanbul's population continues to expand, meaning some kind of additional development is likely needed to accommodate the growth. What form that should take, however, is still a matter of dispute.

"I am not 100 percent against high-rise buildings," Erengözgin said. "If they can sustain their own needs, such as producing their own food and energy, they can exist without being a burden on the city." But the architect generally expressed more support for cities spreading out to areas where there is room to build low-rise developments, following the model commonly seen in the United States some 50 years ago.

According to Lachman, though, this trend is being reversed in much of the U.S., Canada and Western Europe as people move back to city centers that had been turned into "urban wastelands" by suburbanization.

Cities such as London, Brussels, Vancouver, Atlanta, Denver and Washington, D.C., have been re-focusing their residential efforts inward as they try to create and maintain downtown districts that are vibrant 24 hours day, he said. "Citizens and urban planners alike have recognized that suburban sprawl and long commutes are a waste of time and resources," Lachman said. "But [urban development efforts] can only be successful with careful and creative planning and design. Providing comfortable and affordable mass-transit and adequate underground parking are fundamental requirements for success."

Though there is some master planning in Istanbul, Lachman said, it is "not as rigorous and coordinated as it could be." He suggested that developers be required to contribute to the infrastructure of the neighborhoods in which they are planning to build before imposing additional burdens on the area's schools, roads and public-safety facilities.

When Paris expanded development in the city, "they first planned the infrastructure so that there would be no problem with transportation," ÇEKÜL President Sözen said. "Here, we first build these buildings and then try to solve the problems."

5 Comments  SHARE   PRINTER FRIENDLY

READER COMMENTS

Guest - Adnan Sakli
2010-04-06 11:14:08

The over welling problem that know one seems to remember is that Istanbul is sitting on a fault line. The last quake killed 650,000 thousand people, I know they said 65,000, the real number was 650,000 . I arranged for the reconstruction funding of Istanbul then . I will not work backwards. The next earthquake where these building will be leveled and thousands die ,because of stupidity and greed, they will have to dig themselves out of the garbage they build. I just sorry for all the lives that will be lost.

Guest - Ihsan

2010-04-05 00:04:53

Low-rise can easily create an enviroment where children can play freely and safely within parents or neighours sight and minimize burglaries or other socially unacceptable behaviour. Low-rise is preferable, but high-rise is unavoidable in some cases. High-rise creates many problems that can only be solved by inclusive design. Turkish architects, urban-planners, contractors and developers could learn from Dutch and Danish counterparts. They have a good practice of inclusive design. A high-rise building that houses many families need at least some (semi-)private green area, retail and parking space, and possibly a school, office space and a gym or some other type of indoor sports facility. There are also good examples of mixing low and high rise and the key in this is really the quality of the semi-private open space and the quality of the building and it's inner spaces.

Guest - Brian

2010-04-03 12:17:59

"He suggested that developers be required to contribute to the infrastructure of the neighborhoods in which they are planning to build before imposing additional burdens on the area's schools, roads and public-safety facilities." This is a very good idea. When IKEA wanted to build a new store outside Dublin, they also had to pay for new roads to support the traffic to the site and also the other infrastructure needed such as sewerage, lighting, waste disposal facilities etc.

Guest - Viggo

2010-04-03 08:31:21

Are there really over 2000 highrises in Istanbul? Sounds a bit much to me. They are right with what they say about infrastructure. To build high buildings for loads of people, and still keep parking and roads at the same level for the last 40 years does not work. Maybe the municipality should step in, and not stop the building, but actually do some town planning? My second issue is that they are very negative about the development and talk about how it is going to ruin the character of the city, but how then can we live with the fact that 80% of the town is built illegally and large parts of it really looks like a slum in a third world country? To some extent these guys just seem nostalgic and old fashioned and resistant to change, rather than aiming at making Istanbul a nicer city to live in. (I am sure almost all of them are over 50 and men).

Guest - Haluk**Suleyman**

2010-04-03 03:01:45

Have the strongest building regulations on the planet and the best design and energy efficiency other wise the new turkey is not a new civilization just an other third world crap hole. You are in the bull ring now link the new suburbs to under ground rail and earn the respect of the world and don't forget your past architecture with in development zones

WRITE A COMMENT

Verification code



Write the code above. (Can't read code? Refresh)

Display Name:

(required)

Your Email:

(required)

E-mail is required in case we need to communicate with you. It will not appear on the website and will never be used for any other purposes.

Comment:

Max. Character

1000

Submit

Comments policy: The Daily News seeks and supports freedom of expression and this commitment extends to our readers. Constraints include comments judged to be in violation of Turkish press law. We also moderate hate speech, libel and gratuitous insults.