

ZAHA HADID'S CITY LIFE – MILAN

Caroline Kiley

CityLife is a project in Milan that was started as an effort to revitalize a neighborhood in the city. The master plan (pictured below in figure 1) includes a shopping district, green space, and luxury residential complexes. A company by the name of Generali Group won the opportunity to redevelop the historic neighborhood of Fiera Milano. They were offered 523 million euro to complete the project and after the initial design phase they broke ground in 2007. A large part of the project is complete today; however, because of the project's scale, it is still under construction and is estimated to be completed in 2018.



Figure 1: Master Plan for CityLife

In order to transform this area and create the envisioned community, three famous architects were hired: Zaha Hadid, Arata Isozaki and Daniel Libeskind. The project involved the construction of three sky scrapers that would serve as areas for offices, stores and restaurants. The residential area would then cover 164, 000 square meters with the ability to house 4,500 people. The presence of nature is also made a priority as over 50% of the available land is dedicated to green space. The residential complexes are complete and currently being inhabited; however, the sky scrapers are still in progress. The last step is then to connect this area to the rest of Milan. To do this underground parking garages were created in order to store approximately 7,000 vehicles. And beyond cars, the city is extending the metro in order to service this area. By taking into account the need for transportation, this area become very desirable and becomes a city within the larger city of Milan. Also, this project has put an emphasis on sustainability and is equipped with the most advanced alternative energy system.

One of the architects hired for the project is Zaha Hadid, whom was the only woman architect on the team for the project. She designed one of the residential complexes within this CityLife project (Pictured below in Figure 2 featuring me).



Figure 2: Zaha Hadid's complex featuring me

Zaha Hadid began designing this project in 2004 and the project came to fruition in 2014. The Hadid residences, also known as the residences on Via Senofonte, are situated in the south-east part of the CityLife area. Below in figure 3 is the plan of the complex. Her project consists of seven buildings that can accommodate 230 luxury apartments. Each building ranges in heights from 5 stories to 7 stories. This variation in the building heights creates a very unique and defined skyline for the complex. Within these complexes, Zaha Hadid was also able to offer a wide range of living possibilities that range from one-bed apartments to double-height penthouses. The buildings are uniquely situated on an axis with green space in between.



Figure 3: Plan of Zaha Hadid's Residential Complex

Overall this space serves as a contemporary revitalization of a historic area. It is an effort to bring new life to an area. These luxury apartments and shopping areas bring people together and are facilitating the development of a new way of life in a larger city.

When we first arrived in this area, I immediately felt at peace. This small area was a nice escape from the bustling city of Milan. What allowed this space to give me that feeling was the amount of green space and the absence of cars which is made possible by the presence of an underground garage. My first interaction with the Hadid residence was characterized by awe and curiosity. From the outside, I was able to admire the scale and beauty of how the building's forms and colors waved at me and seemed to invite me in. As an outsider, however, I did not have the ability to pass the threshold of the outside in order to look within. Thankfully, we were given the ability to enter the building. What I loved about going inside and between all of the buildings was the ability to get so many different perspectives all at once. The fluid design of the building seemed to almost consume me. I enjoyed seeing the wood panels of the building close up as seen in figure 4 below.



Figure 4: Wood panels on the side of the buildings

Once inside the complex I felt slightly out of place by the exclusiveness of the area, but over time I became more comfortable. Seeing inside the penthouse apartment was extremely rewarding. After looking up at the building for so long, I was finally able to look down on the surrounding buildings; thus adding to my repertoire of perspectives of the complex.



Figure 5: looking down

Inside of the apartment I admired all of the furniture and the way that it enhanced the space. It taught me architecture is more than the space, but it is also about how the space is used and the objects that are put inside of the space. I also realized how important the views are to a residential space. This apartment had the ability to give so many views to the people inside based on which room they were in. Overall, all of these aspects added to the overall aesthetic of the building and made this visit extremely enjoyable.

More views from the apartment:

