

**central business  
district 9**

## Nucleus of Urban Design in Kuwait.

**Al Mirgab - aka CB9 is one of the largest urban redevelopment areas of the central business district in Kuwait City. Designed by Saba George Shiber in the 1960s, it came as a direct critique to the previous development of Fahad Al Salem Street**

The first "piece" of urban design in Kuwait is now taking shape in the CBD as several blocks of the eleven-block redevelopment area are nearing completion. For the first time in Kuwait, and despite the staggering building volumes and building masses erected in Kuwait, the relationship of one building to another — basically urban design, city architecture or townscape — has been introduced. This is a good thing. The momentum of rapid building — which in no case whatsoever took conscious and massing buildings and grouping elements — has been steered in the direction of civic design and composition. Urban architectural and psychological "ambience" (especially behind the facades) as well as the architectural happenings around the many roundabouts that spot and dot the city from end to end, will find the new and evolving urban, spatial and architectural environment and atmosphere unfolding in new CBD areas relaxing and pleasing by contrast, and one derives a certain degree of physical and aesthetic satisfaction and uplift by virtue of the human-scale "ambience" resulting from "tailoring" the new central area to the human scale and not to the scales of either accident, the car or the speculation of nearly all central areas of cities that have become, if not totally at least largely, inhuman.

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convenience, safety and congestion was being caused by the density and planless growth suggested and unplanned pattern to guide and govern growth. Accumulation of buildings, schools, office buildings and the like were given no regard to areal and spatial juxtaposition, and what the resulting traffic

Hardly any realistic thought was made in the city when the capital was nearing the deep thought given to planning around paved and green spaces attempted in many parts. The concept of the bazaar, its many and proved benefits given to the resulting cross ventilation or the

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**Fahad Al Salem Street  
late 1960s**

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the staggering building started in Kuwait, the tower — basically urban in form — has been introduced. The momentum of rapid development never took conscious account of massing buildings and their proportions — has been largely a matter of scale and composition. The urban-architectural psychological "anchor" (behind the facades) is missing around the many blocks from end to end. The spatial and architectural unfolding in new blocks by contrast, and one that lacks aesthetic satisfaction and human-scale "ambience" in the central area to the

human scale and not to the scales of either accident, the population of nearly all central areas of cities have become, if not totally at least largely, inhuman.

## Nucleus of Urban Design in Kuwait.

**In July 1960, Shiber appealed to the Municipal Council as they debated the fate of the CBD of Kuwait City, Shiber re stressed his critique of the haphazard development of the city so far stating**

**"Among the new streets and boulevards all types of new buildings were going up frantically in uncoordinated fashion, geared to realize a quick profit irrespective of the damage to the town fabric and. The convenience, safety and welfare of the citizen"**

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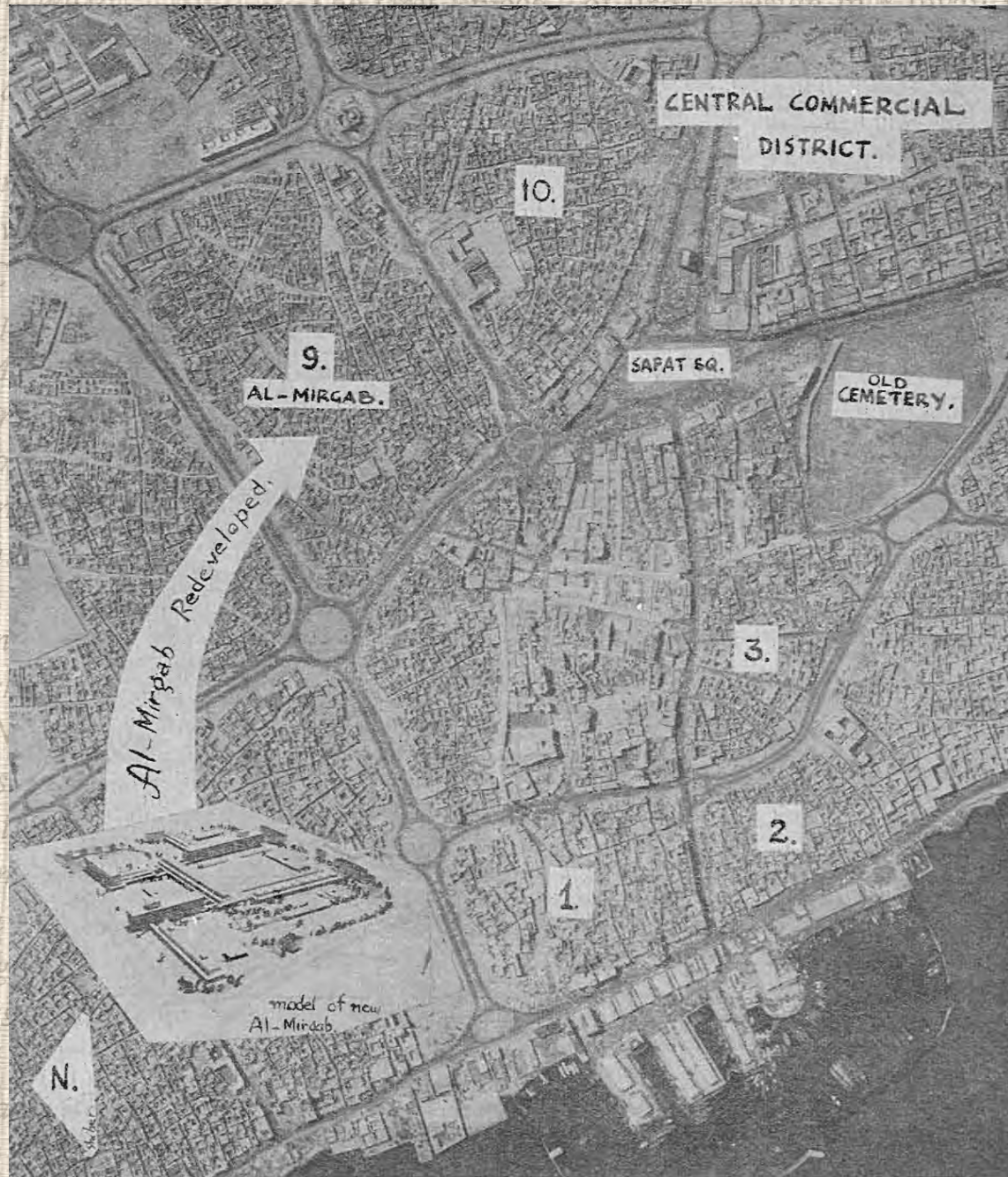
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Hardly any realistic provisions for parking were made in the city where, perhaps, car ownership per capita was nearing the highest in the world. No deep thought given to pedestrian shopping areas around paved and green courts similar to what was attempted in many parts of Europe and the Arab world. The concept of the bazaar was not capitalised on its many and proved attributes. Little thought given to the resulting orientation of buildings for cross-ventilation.

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**Areal view of Kuwait City with proposed locations of the CBDs - 1960**

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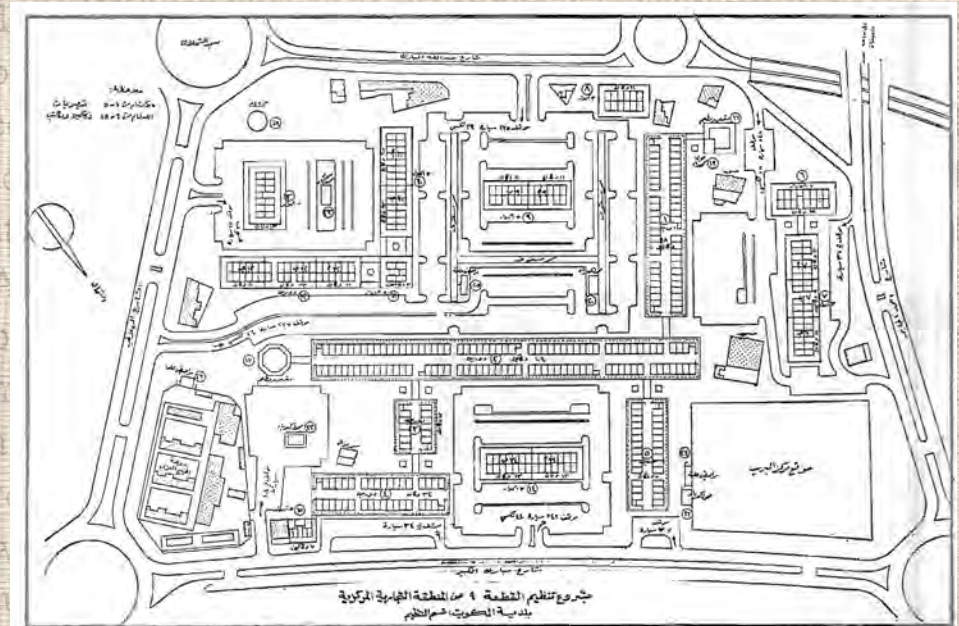
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**Describing CBD 9 in his book The Kuwait Urbanization**

**The main feature of the design is a long bazaar "trunk" with shops facing each other across a sky-lighted pedestrian street seven meters wide.**

Hardly any realistic provisions for parking were made in the early years. Car ownership per capita was rising. The parking areas placed around paved and green courts similar to what is being attempted in many parts of Europe and the Americas. The concept of the bazaar was not capitalised on despite its many and proved attributes. Little thought was given to the resulting orientation of buildings, their cross ventilation or their rational structural order. Neither was much thought given to density equalisation by the proper relational handling of land-usage. Scanty scientific thought was given to the choice of sites for the multifarious types of buildings.

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**Original CBD9 Plan - 1960**

CBD areas relaxing and pleasing by contrast, and one derives a certain degree of physical and aesthetic satisfaction and uplift by virtue of the human-scale "ambience" resulting from "tailoring" the new central area to the human scale and not to the scales of either accident, the car or the speculation of nearly all central areas of cities that have become, if not totally at least largely, inhuman.

## Nucleus of Urban Design in Kuwait.

### CBD 9

One of Saba George Shiber's critiques of the initial urbanization of Kuwait City is the lack of designated parking lots. In one of his articles, Shiber noted

"Hardly any realistic provisions for parking were made in the city where, perhaps, car ownership per capita was nearing the highest in the world."



Parking lot in Kuwait City

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**Informal parking areas in Fahad Al  
Salem Street late 1960s**

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first time in Kuwait and despite the staggering building heights selected in Kuwait, the other — basically urban form — has been introduced. The momentum of rapid discovery took conscious and massing buildings — has been design and composition. The urban-architectural and psychological "anxiety" behind the facades) rings around the many city from end to end. In spatial and architectural unfolding in new by contrast, and original and aesthetic satisfaction — man-scale "ambience" resulting from "tailoring" the new central area to the scales of either accident, the

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Hardly any realistic provisions for parking were made in the city where the population was nearing the highest in the world. Not was deep thought given to pedestrian shopping areas placed around paved and green courts similar to what is being attempted in many parts of Europe and the Americas. The concept of the bazaar was not capitalised on despite its many and proved attributes. Little thought was given to the resulting orientation of buildings, their cross ventilation or their rational structural order. Neither was much thought given to density equalisation by the proper relational handling of land-usage. Scanty scientific thought was given to the choice of sites for the multifarious types of buildings.

**In his design for the CBDs of Kuwait City, Shiber insured including parking areas within the development. By placing the buildings inwards or perpendicular to the main road, ample areas were left for parking spots and pedestrian activities**

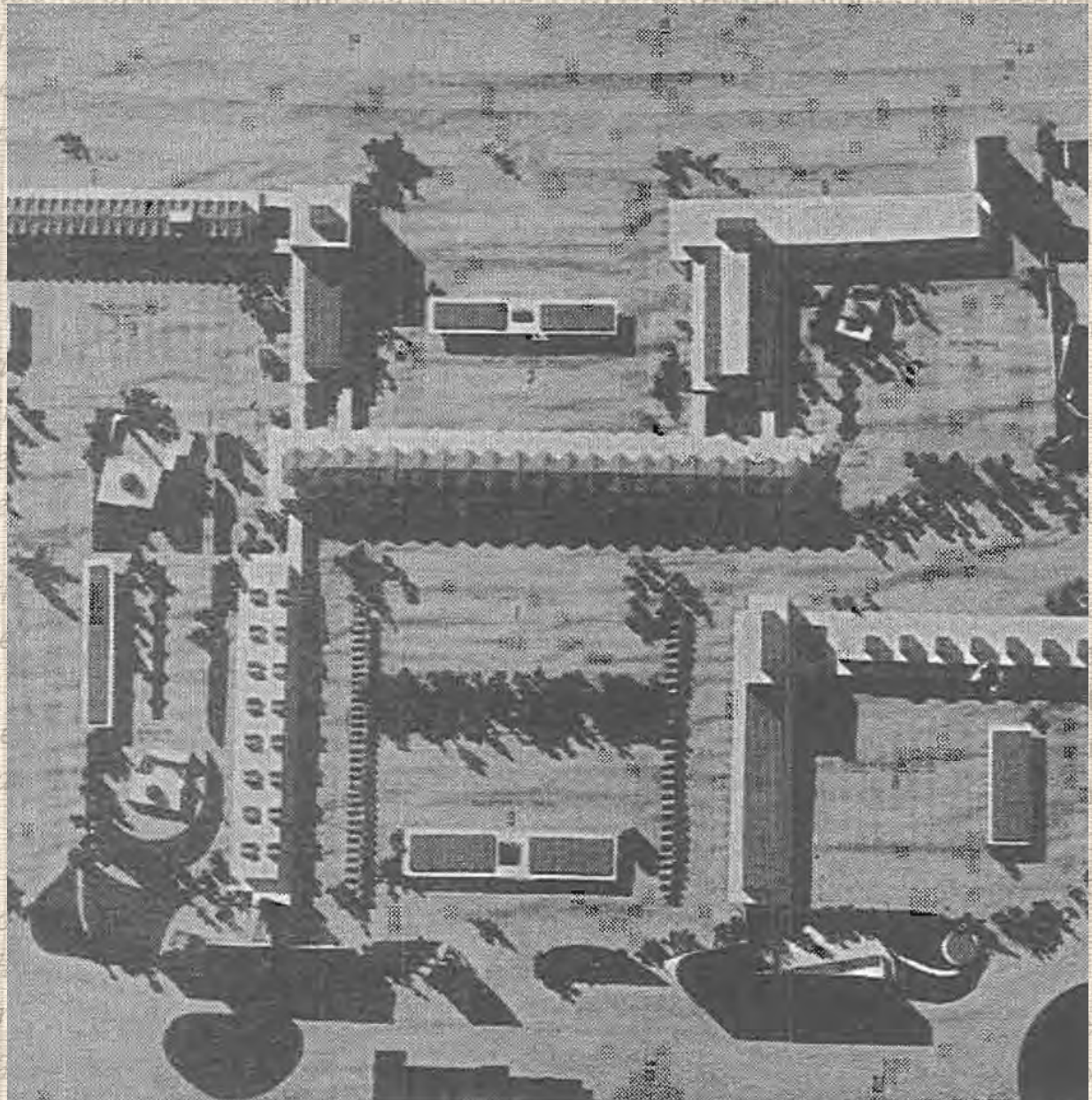
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Hardly any realistic provisions for pedestrian movement were made in the city where, perhaps, car ownership per capita was nearing the highest in the world. No deep thought given to pedestrian shopping areas around paved and green courts similar to what was attempted in many parts of Europe and the United States. The concept of the bazaar was not capitalised on its many and proved attributes. Little thought given to the proper handling of land-use, scanty cross-ventilation. Neither was much thought given by the proper relational handling of land-use, scanty scientific thought was given to the choice of sites for the multifarious types of buildings.

**Photograph of a model  
of the first design of  
CBD 9 - 1961**



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## Nucleus of Urban Design in Kuwait.

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convenience, safety and health. The congestion was becoming unbearable. The density and the scale suggested and implied a need to guide and govern the accumulation of schools, office buildings and the like within an areal and spatial framework. What the result

Hardly any thought was made in the early days. A deep thought given around paved areas was attempted in many places. The concept of cross-ventilation in its many and varied forms given to the streets to provide cross-ventilation.

Neither was much thought given to density equilibrium by the proper relational handling of land-usage. Scarcely scientific thought was given to the choice of sites for the multifarious types of buildings.

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**Covered market in CBD9**

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**In later years, the allocated parking spots by Shiber proved to not be enough do to the constant growth of car dependency and the lack of a proper public transport system in the city. Two additional structures were introduced to the area, Souq Al Safat and a stand alone multi story car park**



**Souq Al Safat - 1984**

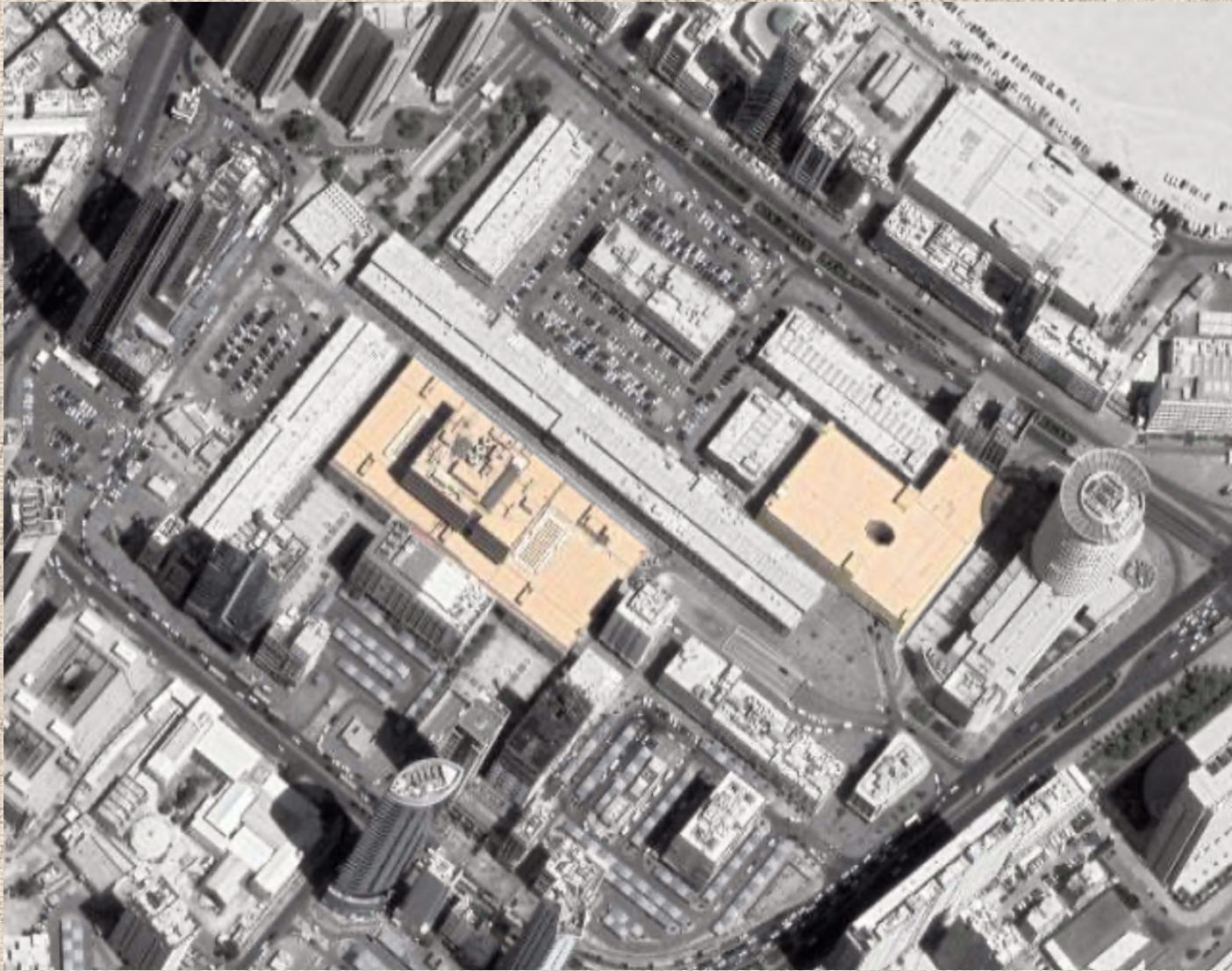
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**Aerial view of CBD 9 highlighting the two structures - 2021**

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## CBD 9

**A unique feature in the CBD and parts of Kuwait City is having a plot of land subdivided into parcels that were auctioned off to different owners. Shiber noted the design challenges that this presented in his book *The Kuwait Urbanization:***

**The problem of unifying the architecture of one building mass consisting of several ownerships on which several architects are at work, posed a very realistic problem to us in attaining architectural unity and harmony.**

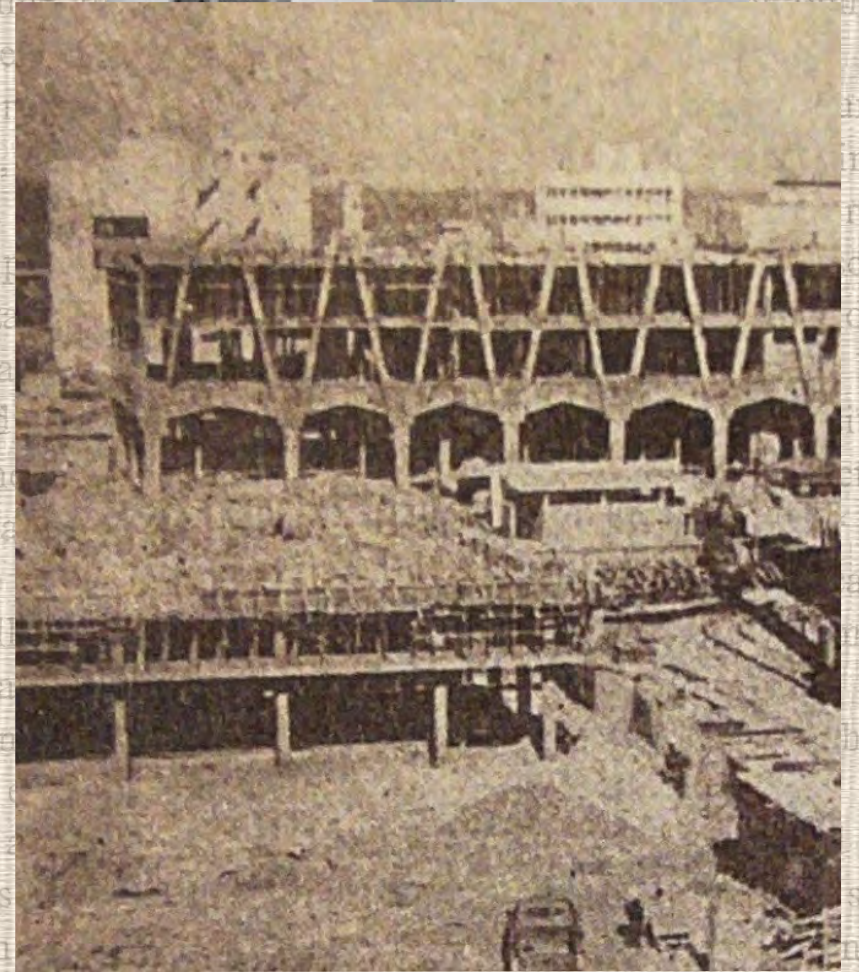
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Hardly any realistic provisions for parking were made in the city where, capita was nearing the highest. No deep thought given to pedestrian shopping areas, playgrounds around paved and green courts similar to what is being attempted in many parts. The concept of the bazaar, its many and proved attributes, little thought was given to the resulting orientation of buildings, their cross ventilation or their rational structural order. Neither was much thought given to density equalisation by the proper relational handling of land-usage. Scanty scientific thought was given to the choice of sites for the multifarious types of buildings.

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**An architectural committee in the Municipality was established to control the architecture of the new buildings, especially the adjoining plots. The control came in the form of co-operative meetings and collaborations between the hired architects and the architects in the municipality that sought to raise the aesthetic standards of architecture in the city.**



**CBD 3 under construction  
1963**

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Street view of CBD 1  
1967

staggering buildings erected in Kuwait, the urban form — basically urban in shape — has been introduced with the momentum of rapid growth. It has never taken conscious thought in design and composition. The urban-architectural form is a psychological "anonymity" behind the facades. Buildings around the many streets of the city from end to end, in spatial and architectural terms, are unfolding in new forms by contrast, and one can feel a lack of human-scale and aesthetic satisfaction. The "man-scale" "ambience" resulting from "tailoring" the new central area to the human scale and not to the scales of either accident, the car or the speculation of nearly all central areas of cities that have become, if not totally at least largely, inhuman.



## CBD 9

Recalling a meeting held regarding one of the 3-parcel units in CBD 3, Shiber stated:

**"A quick sketch during one of the meetings was made for the three architects that was simple, original, modern and possessed the basic characteristics of Arabic architecture rendered in a simplified, contemporary idiom. The three architects agreed that the proposed sketch formed a sound basis for further development."**



**Multi parcel building in  
CBD 3**

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**In CBD 9 the multi parcel plot occurs in multiple instances, originally the built structures were designed to visually appear as one as they went through review and assessment by the architectural committee in the Municipality. Muhammed Kumaikh and Abdullah Jassim Shehab Buildings are an example of this multi owner plot.**

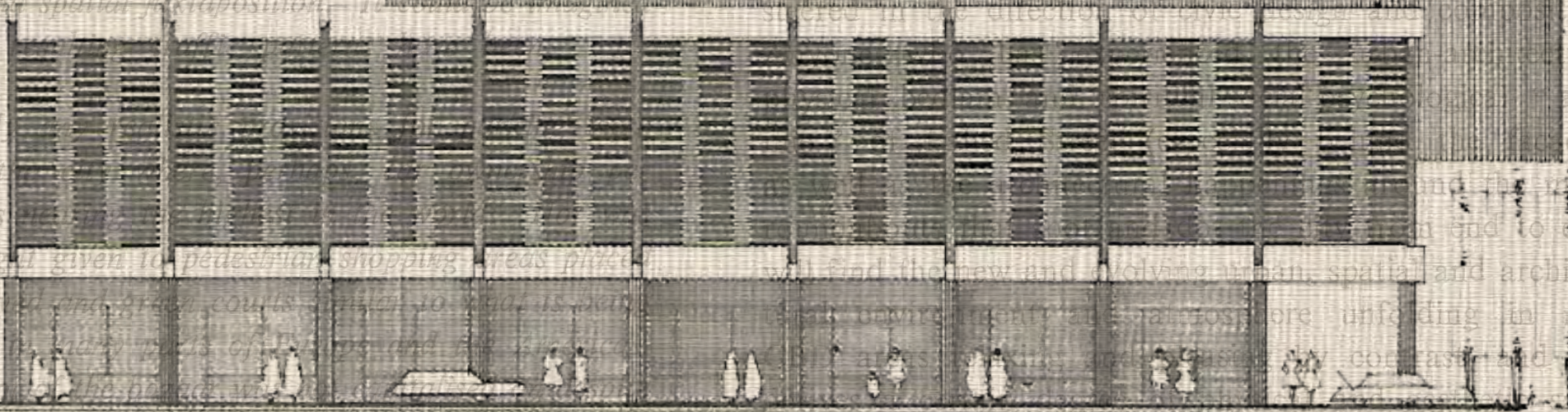
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Hardly any thought was made in the design of the cornice was the only feature of deep thought given to pedestrian shopping areas placed around paved and green courts — which is what was attempted in the early parts of Baghdad and Damascus. The concept of the arcade with its many and proved attributes, was given to the resulting orientation of buildings, their cross ventilation or their rational structural order. Neither was much thought given to density equalisation by the proper relational handling of land-usage. Scanty scientific thought was given to the choice of sites for the multifarious types of buildings.

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## Elevation

will find the new and evolving urban, spatial and architectural environment, and atmosphere unfolding in new areas, and the many contrasts and contrasts in reaction and spirit by virtue of the human-scale “ambience” resulting from “tailoring” the new central area to the human scale and not to the scales of either accident, the car or the speculation of nearly all central areas of cities that have become, if not totally at least largely, inhuman.

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Interior 1969

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erected in Kuwait, the other — basically urban in shape — has been introduced. The momentum of rapid growth has so far, however, taken no conscious account of the scale and massing of buildings and their components — has been largely a matter of design and composition. The urban-architectural "anxiety" (behind the facades) of things around the many blocks of the city from end to end, in terms of scale, spatial and architectural order, is more unfolding in new blocks, by contrast, and one that is not only a social and aesthetic satisfaction but a human-scale "ambience" resulting from "tailoring" the new central area to the scale and not to the scales of either accident, the car or the speculation of nearly all central areas of cities that have become, if not totally at least largely, inhuman.

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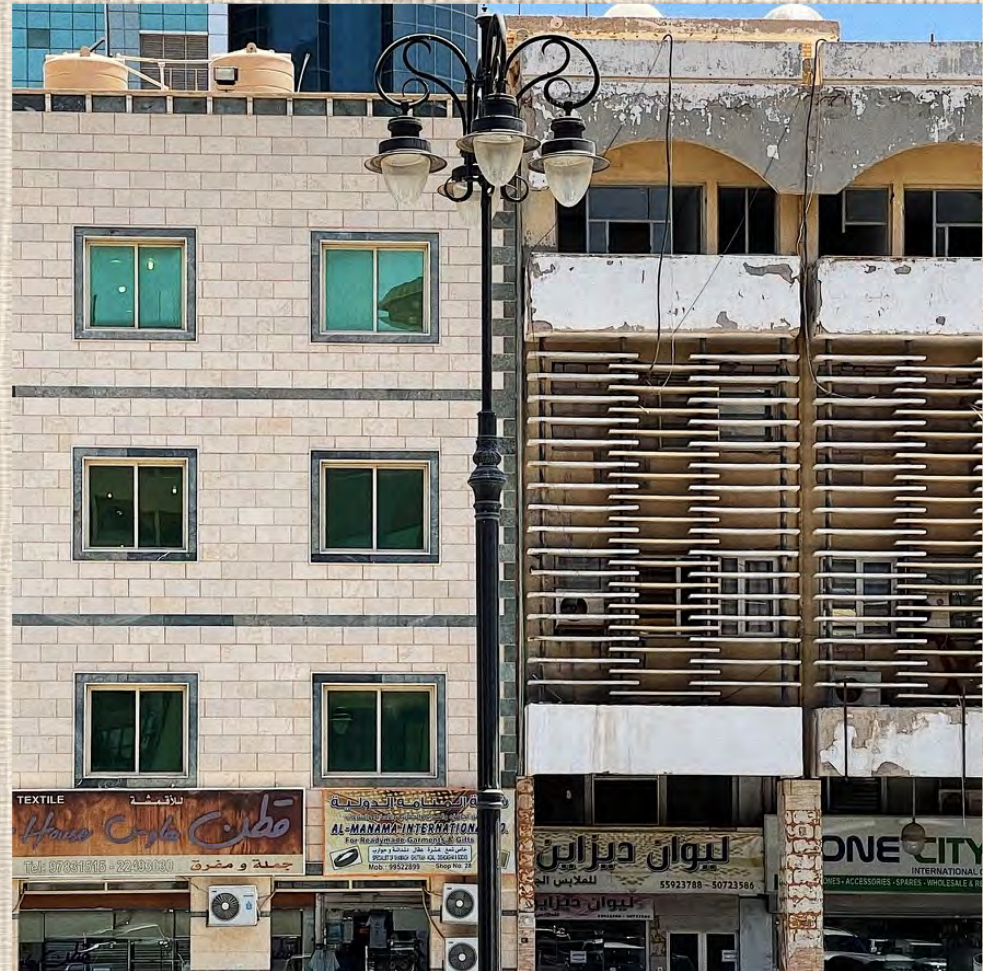
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In 2013 one of the buildings was demolished to make way for a new structure, however due to the lack of any form of architectural control in the current municipality, the newly erect building bore no resemblance to the adjoining original structure, albeit the height and the extension of the ground level arcade.

Hardly any realistic provisions for parking were made in the new urban design. The parking per capita was very low. Nor was deep thought given to pedestrian shopping areas placed around paved and green courts similar to what is being attempted in the new urban design.

The concept of its many and proved attributes. Little thought was given to the resulting orientation of buildings, their cross ventilation or their rational structural order. Neither was much thought given to density equalisation by the proper relational handling of land-usage. Scanty scientific thought was given to the choice of sites for the multifarious types of buildings.

The first "piece" of urban design in Kuwait is now taking shape in the CBD as several blocks of the eleven-block redevelopment area are nearing completion. For the first time in Kuwait, and despite the streaming building



original structure (right)  
vs. new structure (left)

resulting from the concentration of the central area to the human scale. The result is either accident, the car or the speculation of nearly all central areas of cities that have become, if not totally at least largely, inhuman.

## Nucleus of Urban Design in Kuwait.

### Resources:

**Shiber, George, Saba, The Kuwait Urbanization, Kuwait Govt. Printing Press, Kuwait, 1964**

**Fabbri, R., Saragoça, S., & Camacho, R. (2016). Modern architecture Kuwait: 1949-1989. Niggli, imprint of bnb media GmbH.**

**Agha Khan Visual Archive - MIT Libraries**

Among the new streets and boulevards all types of buildings were going up frantically in uncoordinated fashion, geared to realise a quick profit irrespective of the damage to the town fabric and the convenience, safety and welfare of the citizen. Congestion was being compounded, thereby augmenting the density and planlessness of the already over-congested and unplanned pattern of the city. Concepts to guide and govern growth — more truly the haphazard accumulation of building — were lacking. Mosques, schools, office buildings, shops, fish and meat markets and the like were given equal and uniform importance in areal and spatial juxtaposition. It is difficult to say what the resulting traffic patterns have been.

Hardly any realistic provisions were made in the city where, perhaps, car ownership per capita was nearing the highest in the world. Not a deep thought given to pedestrian shopping streets around paved and green courts similar to what is being attempted in many parts of Europe. The concept of the bazaar was not carried over despite its many and proved attributes. Little thought was given to the resulting orientation of buildings, their cross ventilation or their rational structural order. Neither was much thought given to density equalisation by the proper relational handling of land-usage. Scanty scientific thought was given to the choice of sites for the multifarious types of buildings.

The first “piece” of urban design in Kuwait is now taking shape in the CBD as several blocks of the eleven-block redevelopment area are nearing completion. For the first time in Kuwait, and despite the staggering building volumes and building masses erected in Kuwait, the relationship of one building to another — basically urban design, city architecture or townscape — has been introduced. This is a good thing. The momentum of rapid building which in no case whatsoever took conscious guidance or care in the balance of composing, relating and massing buildings to create pleasing and interesting groupments — has been steered in the direction of civic design and composition. Anyone who has experienced the urban-architectural and spiritual-social-psychological “anomalies” of the old Kuwaiti street (especially behind the facades) will find the new and evolving urban, spatial and architectural environment and atmosphere unfolding in new ways that are exciting and pleasing by contrast, and one derives a certain degree of physical and aesthetic satisfaction and uplift by virtue of the human-scale “ambiance” resulting from “tailoring” the new central area to the human scale and not to the scales of either accident, the car or the speculation of nearly all central areas of cities that have become, if not totally at least largely, inhuman.