



Rawabi's new development is a joint venture of Qatari Diar and Ramallah-based Massar International

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Palestine Mall offers a new shopping experience in the West Bank city of Jenin

A NEW CITY, NEW RESORTS, NEW MALLS

Private and foreign investors have launched huge new projects in Palestine's real estate sector which are set to transform the economies – and living standards – of the West Bank and Gaza. One of the most exciting is the huge new planned city of Rawabi, situated just north of Ramallah, being developed at a cost of \$850 million by the Bayti Real Estate Investment Company, a joint venture of Qatari Diar and the Ramallah-based Massar International. Drawn from an Arabic word which means “to mend, to repair, to make peace”, Rawabi will feature gleaming high-rise buildings to make the most of the available land, as well as green parks, a hotel and convention centre, a business district and shopping areas. It will provide more than 5,000 affordable housing units, spread across 23 neighbourhoods. Initially, it is expected to be home to 25,000 residents, but additional residential and commercial construction on the drawing boards could bring that figure up to 40,000. Sustainability, the employment of local companies, and liaisons with local universities and technical institutes are being emphasised, as is the prospect of it being a laboratory for future urban planning in Palestine and for the development of ICT-based small businesses. News that the Israeli government has given

tentative approval to the construction of a paved access road to the hilltop community has helped to spur both local and international interest, as well as helping Bayti proceed more rapidly with the building works. “Although the current road is only four metres wide, paving it will allow enhanced access for utility vehicles and construction equipment, and thus quicken the pace of construction in the new city,” the company said last month. In Gaza, preparations are in full swing to repair and upgrade the existing beach resorts, hotels and restaurants, following the opening of the Rafah border crossing to Egypt and the Hamas-Fatah reconciliation agreement. Kayed Ashour, who owns a mini-resort on the beach, told the local media that the resorts are “part of Palestine's national projects” to support the Palestinian economy and to employ a significant number of workers to enable them to support their families. Elsewhere in Gaza, Palestine's largest shopping mall is imminent. Built by the local Al Hayat Tureed Company, the 3,000 square metre, three-storey complex will feature a mega-supermarket, clothes and gift shops, restaurants and a cinema, as well as children's play areas. It follows the opening last July a two-storey mall that includes a supermarket, international clothing stores, a food court, beauty salons and restaurants.