

the character of the historic core of Paris as it was and as it exists in people's imaginations. It is what the 25 million tourists who come to Paris each year desire to see and enjoy. The result was the moving of some services to the periphery of the city and the building of a series of new towns around it.

By 1956, a number of office towers had already been located in the vicinity of La Défense. In 1958, EPAD (Etablissement Public pour l'Amenagement de la Region de la Défense) was formed and progress started on what we now know as La Défense. An EPA is a public body that works with private companies to acquire land and prepare it for development. It links the efforts of local and national governments with those of private sector developers. EPAD thus had the power to expropriate land, establish a development zone and expedite construction. EPAD bought the land, rehoused about 25,000 people, demolished 9000 dwellings and several hundred industrial and light-industrial factories, and set about developing an office estate. The development spans four decades of fits and starts with the major periods of inaction being prior to 1964, between 1974 and 1978, and again between 1992 and 1998.

An early proposal (1964) consisted of two rows of skyscrapers equal in height (100 metres) surrounded by housing and with an esplanade covering the roadways. Little came of it. A more serious proposal for the site was instigated in 1971 by President Georges Pompidou, and a third a few years later by President Giscard d'Estaing. The third proposal is essentially what we see today.

President d'Estaing and Prime Minister Raymond Barre had intervened in 1978 because, in spite of state funding, the

economic future of La Défense was uncertain. New development was being carried out at a slow pace. EPAD was in a poor financial state as its resources came from the sale of construction rights. It had a deficit of 680 million francs. Under d'Estaing's leadership the central government put in additional resources drawn directly from publicly owned savings banks. Additional restrictions were also placed on building within Paris by a national government authority DATAR (Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire et à l'Action Régionale) and a differential tax rate was put in place to encourage development at La Défense.

The construction of the infrastructure was the major enabling step because it allowed buildings to be plugged into a vehicular, rail and pedestrian transportation network. This network is organized into a multi-layered structure segregating the different transport modes with a vehicle-free 40-hectare (100-acre) pedestrian deck, or esplanade, being the top layer. Vehicular traffic is kept on the periphery of the superblock (see Figure 8.10). The original conceptual design builds on Le Corbusier's idea of what a modern city should be. As the scheme evolved it has become denser to stimulate some sense of urbanity and liveliness. The Centre National de Industries et Techniques, with its triangular roof, was one of the first landmark buildings in the area. It acted as a catalyst spurring further development (see Figures 8.11–8.13).

The partial termination of the axis from the *boulevard périphérique* today is the La Défense Arche designed by Danish architect Johan Otto von Spreckelsen who died before construction was completed. The Arche was the winning entry in a design competition held under the auspices of