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## CASE STUDY

### Euralille, Lille, France: a new city heart (1987 to the present)

In 1994, Rem Koolhaas and his Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) prepared a master plan for the centre of Lille. Its aim was to create a new city in the heart of the old. The necessity of doing so had been the subject of considerable political negotiation. The growth of the European Union, the development of the Channel tunnel, and the desire to extend the North European line of France's TGV (*Train à Grande Vitesse*) had placed Lille, a city with a declining industrial base, at the centre of the London–Brussels–Paris business triangle. The city is strategically placed having a population of over 100 million people living within a radius of 300 kilometres (200 miles). It is, however, perhaps too close to Brussels to become a major centre.

The SNCF – the French national railway – in looking to develop its network north had proposed a stop in Seclin, a Lille suburb. It had calculated that the cost of running the line through central Lille would be 1.9 billion francs above the cost of running it through the outskirts of the city. In 1985 Lille's Deputy Mayor, Pierre Mauroy (Prime

Minister of France from 1981 to 1984) started to pressure the French government to have the train station in the centre of the city. In 1987 he had success. Mauroy went on to form a development management organization, Lille Metropole, to implement the project. Jean Peytelevade, a close associate, was placed in charge of raising funds. Lille Metropole with the regional office of the SNCF and the Regional Chamber of Commerce formed a public–private partnership to steer the project. The core shareholders were five major French banks.

Lille Metropole invited four French and four foreign architects to submit master plan proposals for the site. The French architects were Claude Vasconi, Jean-Paul Viguier, Yves Lyon and Michel Macary while the international ones were Norman Foster, Vittorio Gregotti, O. M. Ungers and Rem Koolhaas. The last mentioned's plan was accepted and the OMA became the master planner for Euralille. An all-of-a-piece urban design approach was followed with a number of illustrious architects working on the individual buildings in accordance with the master plan.