

# Towards a Walkable Heritage Landscape

Developing tourist-oriented pedestrian connectivity that contributes to the wellbeing of the local community within the heritage district of Irbid City Centre in Jordan.

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## Introduction

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan proposes regenerating Irbid City Center and revitalizing selected heritage buildings within the urban core of the city. The study aims to produce a portion of the larger proposed project by incorporating a tourist-oriented pedestrian network in Irbid City Centre.

## Heritage Tourism Potentials in Irbid

Irbid City Centre is a heritage rich site. Heritage components include physical and cultural assets. Tal Irbid (the Hill of Irbid) is the dominant land feature. It is the town's historic core that transformed to house institutional uses and vacant open spaces. The southern part of the site is a heavily urbanized mix of residential and commercial uses. Reviving the fragmented heritage spirit within the site is necessary for successful outcomes.

The client requires considering three heritage building and two public spaces for rehabilitation and reuse to contribute to the tourists' experience and demonstrate pilot projects for heritage conservation and community development.

## Project Objectives

Three objectives to successfully transform Irbid City Centre into a touristic heritage landscape are suggested:

- Introducing a tourist-oriented pedestrian network within the site.
- Conserving heritage assets and reusing selected heritage buildings as tourist attractions and community development venues.
- Initiating community development and avoiding gentrification.

## Approaches and Principles

Framing approaches help define a set of principles to establish a good tourism pedestrian system in a heritage area. The following lists the explored topics:

- Urban heritage tourism
- Pedestrian Tourism Issues
- Heritage Tourism and Socio-Economic Development
- The 'Urban Heritage Management' Approach

## Identifying the Principles

A set of principles are developed to direct the outcomes of the development plan. The principles require allocating routes and pathways for tourist-oriented pedestrian use that satisfy a set of criteria, including access to destinations, significant sites, and pleasant sights, satisfy safety and security measures, connect to sites of respite, and address some cultural concerns. The principles also require providing proper way-finding and orientation tools, introducing public open spaces, conserving heritage features through rehabilitating and reusing heritage properties, and recommending conservation policies and regulations. Principles of community development require reinforcing the cultural heritage of Irbid's society, providing job opportunities, and avoiding gentrification or displacement of residents and local businesses.

## Understanding Irbid

Site analysis of the natural and build environments identify the site's physical assets. The Tal is determined suitable for landscaping. Components of the heritage landscape are identified, including heritage buildings and spaces, and traditional commercial activities. Functional and infrastructural challenges are identified. The socio-economic analysis contributes to understanding local economic, social, and cultural concerns.

## Analysis

The analysis connects the study of approaches to the site analysis and case studies to frame specific solutions within the site. Some of the key findings of the analysis are:

- Identifying three districts: cultural, residential, and commercial.
- Locating places of interest including heritage clusters, buildings, views, and activities.
- Exploring possible uses of renovated heritage buildings.
- Resolving cultural limitation issues.
- Identifying potential pedestrian routes and open spaces.

## The Development Proposal

The development proposal presents a plan that satisfies the project objectives. Proposed solutions address the set of principles to establish a tourism pedestrian system within a conserved heritage site, and facilitate the local

community's socio-economic development. The plan proposes introducing pedestrian routes and upgrading pedestrian infrastructure. It suggests a tourist trail that elevates the tourists' experience. The plan introduces green landscapes and public open spaces to serve the local community and enhance tourism pedestrian connectivity.

The development plan also proposes renovations and new uses for selected heritage buildings in the site to serve tourism and initiate community development. Suggested policies and regulations address a variety of issues, such as conserving the heritage assets and character of the site, and facilitating accessibility and connectivity to support economic prosperity and avoid commercial and residential gentrification.

A set of recommendations addresses policy reviews, community development initiatives, and topics that require further research.

