

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MLAE)

Damascus governorate (DG)

Rural Damascus governorate (RDG)

The Syrian Arab Republic

**The Study on Urban Planning for
Sustainable Development of
Damascus Metropolitan Area
in the Syrian Arab Republic**

Final Report

Volume 3

Report on Detailed Plans

March 2008

**RECS International Inc.
Yachiyo Engineering Co., Ltd.**

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The Study on Urban Planning for Sustainable Development of Damascus Metropolitan Area in the Syrian Arab Republic

Final Report

Volume 3: Report on Detailed Plans

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Chapter 1 Selection of Areas for Detailed Planning

Three different types of areas are conceived as potential areas for more detailed planning: (1) informal housing area, (2) urban/architectural heritage area, and (3) new urban expansion area. One area has been selected from each of these types of areas as described below.

1.1 Selection Procedure and Criteria

1.1.1 General criteria and procedure

For realistic selection of areas for more detailed planning, the following general criteria are set for different types of areas.

Informal housing areas

- 1) The area can be transformed into a formal residential area (not the area for relocation);
- 2) The area should have the land area of 10-20ha more or less and the maximum population of 3,000, manageable for planning by participatory approach; and
- 3) The area should be such that some important function can be conceived for the DMA urban development, or the planned development there would serve as a model for other similar areas.

Urban heritage areas

- 1) No ongoing initiative exists to preserve the heritage in the area;
- 2) The area should have the land area of 2-5ha more or less and the maximum population of 1,000, manageable for an exhaustive questionnaire survey; and
- 3) The possibility for implementation in the subsequent stage is high to create a symbol for the Syria-Japan cooperation.

New urban expansion areas

- 1) The area should be located outside the Damascus city and its conurbation areas;
- 2) The area should have the maximum land area of 200ha and the maximum planned population of 30,000; and
- 3) The area should be such that its development would be effective in guiding the urbanization of the DMA.

A task force was formed within the Syrian counterpart team for the selection of candidate areas for the detailed urban planning to work closely with the JICA Study Team. The task force had a series of meetings together with the JICA Study Team, and candidate areas have been selected in steps through long listing, first screening, second screening and final selection. The selection procedure and criteria are described for each type of candidate areas.

1.1.2 Informal housing areas

(1) Long listing and first screening

There exist some 30 informal housing areas, more or less, in the Damascus city and its vicinities, where the population corresponding to close to 30% of the city's total population live. These are areas outside the coverage of the existing Master Plan, where buildings have been constructed by either settlers or land owners without obtaining formal permits. Sometimes settlers enter into lease agreement with land owners.

Of all the informal housing areas, 16 areas were pre-selected as a long list of candidate areas by broad judgment on existing conditions of these areas. These areas are shown in Figure 1.1. The pre-selected areas are then compared by several criteria as follows (Table 1.1):

- 1) Physical characteristics such as geography, existence of serious environmental problems and urban environment,
- 2) Assessment of urgency for improvement, possible effects of improvement, and need for coordination, and
- 3) Related initiatives such as urban renewal and other projects and donor involvement.

(2) Second screening

Based on the first screening, a short list of candidate areas was prepared. These areas were evaluated by several criteria as described below.

- 1) Urgency: whether each area has human security-related risk such as urban disasters and urban sanitation problems.
- 2) Impact: whether the improvement of each area would have positive effects on surrounding areas.
- 3) Land availability: whether additional land is available in surrounding areas to allow consistent development/improvement of the informal housing area and its surrounding areas.
- 4) Viability: whether the improvement is likely to make the area commercially more competitive in a larger area.

(3) Final selection

The short-listed candidate areas were evaluated by the task force in close collaboration with the JICA Study Team by the set of criteria presented above. One area has been selected and endorsed at the weekly meeting of the Syria/JICA joint team on June 6, 2007.

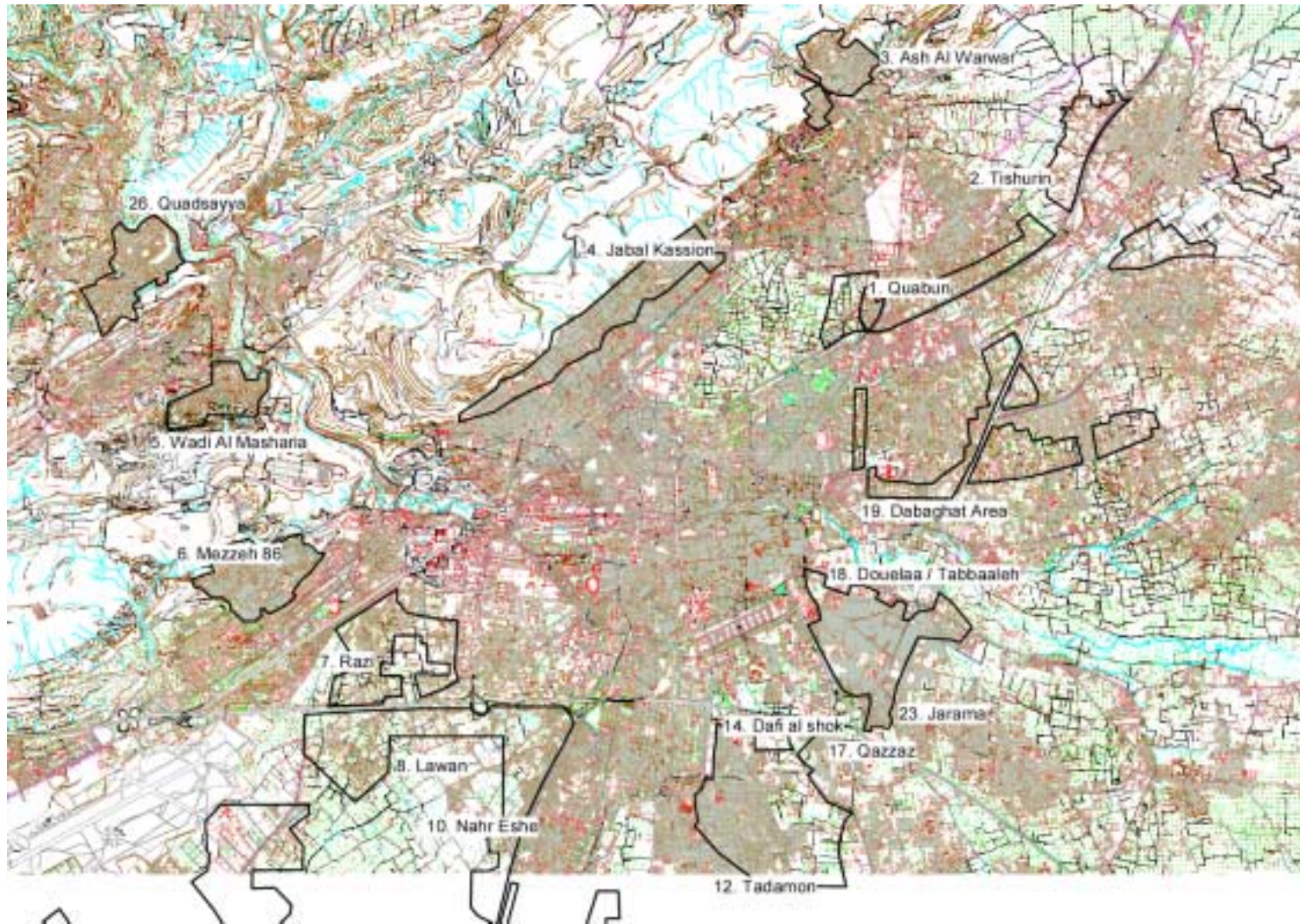


Figure 1.1 Location of Informal Settlements

Table 1.1 Comparison of Candidate Informal Housing Areas

No.	District	Physical characteristics			Assessment			Related initiatives		
		Geography	Serious environmental problems	Urban environment	Urgency	Impacts	Coordination needs	Urban renewal	Other	Donor involvement
High incline mountains										
3	Ash Al Warwar	Caves High incline mountains	Narrow roads Inadequate sewerage	Sloping land Lack of greenery	Not urgent	Reduction of urbanization pressure on city center		Removal suggested by regional committee	None	None
4	Jabal Qassioun	Caves High incline mountains Fault lines	Narrow roads Risk of low quality buildings	Narrow roads Insufficient public services	Not urgent	Possible tourism development		One of 18 development areas	Trunk road planned by Echoshar M/P	MAM
5	Wadi Al Masharia	Incline mountains	Poor infrastructure	Difficult access to other areas	Rather urgent	Landscape from presidential palace to be improved		None	None	None
6	Mezzeh 86	Incline mountains Fault lines	Risk of low quality buildings	High density with 6-storey buildings		Improvement of entire Mezzeh area		Master plan ready	None	None
26	Qudsaya	Incline mountains	Poor sanitation caused by solid wastes			Integration with Qudsaya area	Rural Damascus	None	None	None
Mixed use with agricultural land										
7	Razi	Flat agricultural land	Not remarkable			New type of development with provision of housing		None	None	None
8	Lawan	Flat agricultural land	Not remarkable	Nothing remarkable		New type of development with provision of housing		None	None	None
Mixed use with industrial land										
1	Quabun	Gently sloping land	Not remarkable	Nothing remarkable		Possibility to develop as northern entrance		None	Northern axis development	None
2	Tishrin	Flat land on hill	Not remarkable	Narrow streets		Possibility to develop as northern entrance		Master plan ready	Northern axis development	None
10	Nahr Eshe	Flat land	Not remarkable	Generally poor		Model development following master plan		Master plan ready but not authorized	Improvement of road to Lawan area	None
11	Assari	Flat land	Narrow streets High density	Insufficient open space Poor public services		Provision of housing		Strategy to transform from industrial to residential	None	None
12	Tadamon	Flat land	High density Low quality high rise	Poor sanitation		Provision of housing	Rural Damascus	None	None	None
14	Dafi Al Shok	Flat land	Poor infrastructure Low quality building			Model case of DG/RDG coordination	Rural Damascus	Some studies done	None	None
17	Qazzaz	Flat land	Low quality buildings	Generally poor but not the worst		Southern entrance from airport	Rural Damascus	None	None	None
18	Douelaa/Tabaaleh	Flat land	Better than other areas	Better than other areas		Significant supply of housing for city center		Master plan authorized	None	None
19	Jobar	Gently sloping land	Better than other areas	Better than other areas		Improvement of east gate of city		Master plan authorized	None	None

1.1.3 Urban heritage areas

(1) Long listing and first screening

Through extensive survey of different areas in and around the Damascus city combined with documented information, a long list of candidates for urban/architectural heritage areas was prepared. They consist of 16 broad areas as shown in Figure 1.2.

These candidate areas are compared by several criteria as follows (Table 1.2):

- 1) Physical characteristics such as geography, existence of serious environmental problems and urban environment,
- 2) Assessment of heritage value, possible effects of improvement, and public land availability, and
- 3) Related initiatives such as urban renewal and other projects, and donor involvement.

(2) Second screening

Based on the first screening, a short list of candidate heritage areas was prepared. These areas were evaluated by several criteria as described below.

- 1) Dominant land use: dominantly residential areas may be easier to improve than dominantly commercial areas especially of small scale.
- 2) Land availability: whether land for redevelopment is available within each candidate area or its peripheries.
- 3) Cooperative arrangement: whether cooperative arrangement for improvement exists with any donor or entity, or new arrangement is necessary or likely.

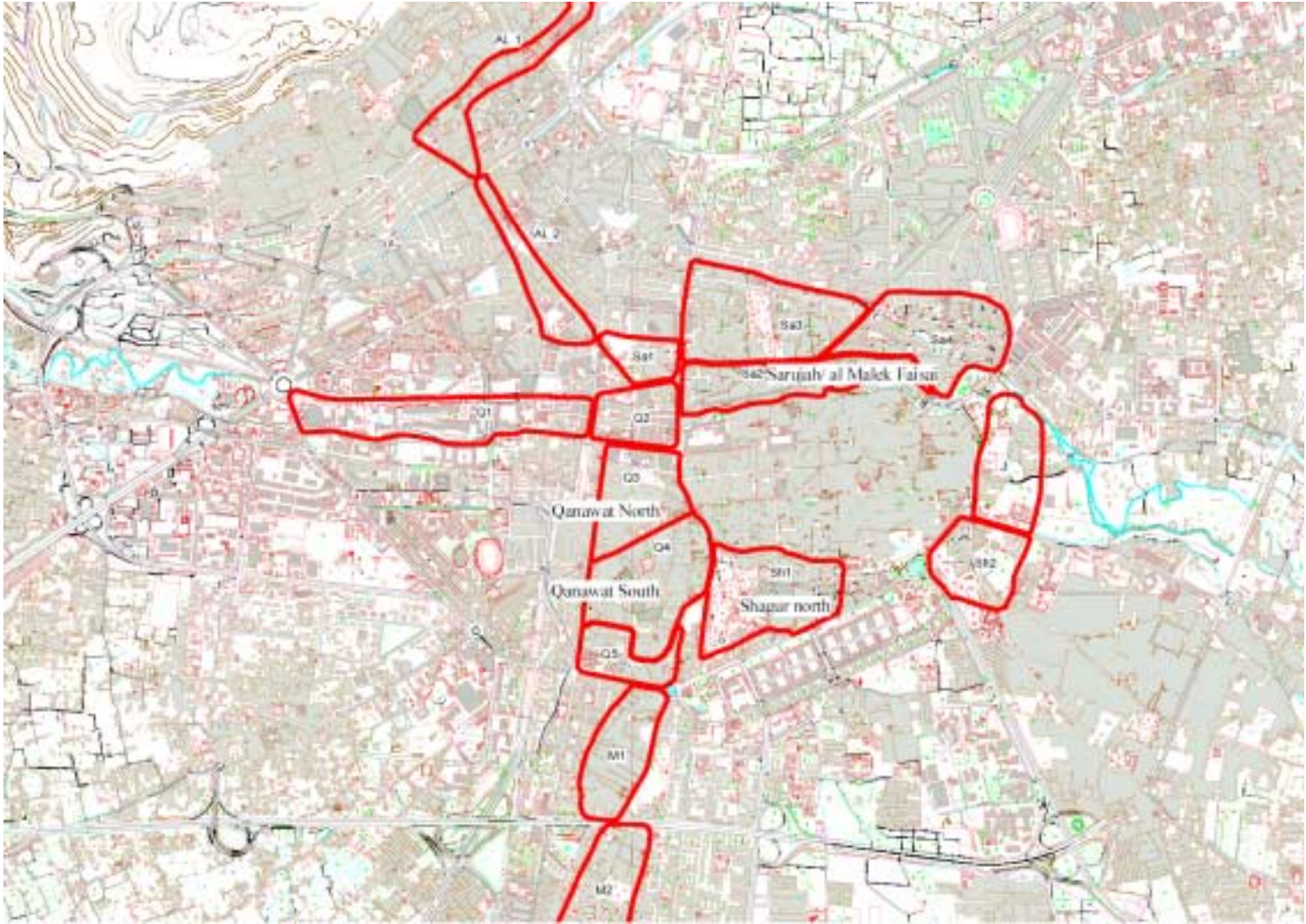


Figure 1.2 Location of Urban Heritage Areas

Table 1.2 Comparison of Candidate Urban Heritage Areas

No.	Physical characteristics			Assessment			Related initiative		
	Geography	Serious environmental problems	Urban environment	Heritage value	Impact	Public land availability	Urban renewal	Other	Donor involvement
Qanawat									
Q1	Gently sloping toward Barada river	N/A	N/A	Some registered historical monuments	New tourism axis to develop along Barada	Former exhibition center located	N/A	Pedestrian walkway under construction	N/A
Q2	Gently sloping	N/A	N/A	Several registered monuments & Al Shoubada sq.	Low impact as it is already developed	Difficult	N/A	Large park area provided	N/A
Q3	Almost flat	Difficult access to Old City due to heavy traffic	Narrow streets Insufficient open space and public facilities	Several registered monuments	Improved access to Old City Provision of parking space	Difficuly	Most area protected	Parking lot	N/A
Q4	Almost flat	Difficult access to Old City due to heavy traffic	Narrow streets Insufficient open space & poor building conditions	10 registered monuments & district	Improved access to Old City Tourism area	Possible with other development	Some area protected	Road of 30m width	Damascus univ. to cooperate
Q5	Almost flat	N/A	N/A	N/A	Low impact as already developed	Already used for public purposes	N/A	N/A	N/A
Midan									
M1	Almost flat	Difficult traffic control	Narrow streets inside historical block Land misuse for tourism puposes	Four registered monuments & old district	Improved tourism value	Possible in peripheries	N/A	N/A	IFPO only for survey
M2	Almost flat	N/A	N/A	N/A	New tourism zone	Possible in peripheries	No protected area	N/A	IFPO only for survey
Shagour									
Sh1	Almost flat	Difficult traffic control	Narrow streets Difficult access to commercial district	N/A	Tourism activities inside & outside Old City	Possible in peripheries	N/A	N/A	IFPO agreed to cooperate
Sh2	Almost flat	N/A	N/A	N/A	New tourism development zone	Possible in	New tourism zone dev.	N/A	N/A
Bab Sharki									
J	Almost flat	N/A	N/A	N/A	New tourism development zone	Possible	New tourism zone development	N/A	N/A
Sarujah									
Sa1	Almost flat	Noise	Mixture of old and new buildings Low quality buildings	Several registered monuments	Provision of hotel, terminal facilities etc.	Existing parking lot in the west	Development project?	N/A	MAM study going on
Sa2	Gently sloping toward Barada river	Noise Traffic congestion Air pollution	Poor public services Functional misuse of land and mixture of old & new buildinds	Several registered monuments near Old City	Possible reduction of needs for other historical gates	Only small lots	One of 18 projects Improvement of Al Maelek Faisal st.	Expansion of Al Maelek Faisal street	Damascus univ. and others
Sa3	Almost flat	N/A	Already developed except area around Sarouja street	Several regiatered monuments	Enhancement of tourism value of Sarouja street	Almost nothing	N/A	Some district roads in north being improved	N/A
Sa4	Almost flat	N/A	N/A	Almost nothing as newly developed	Limited effects	Almost none	N/A	N/A	N/A
Al Muhajirin/Al Salhieh									
Al1	Almost flat except east-west street in the west	Difficult traffic circulation	Congestion on Bain Al Madaress street	20 registered monuments Area not registered	Improvement of tourism value with amenity	Very difficult	One of 18 projects	N/A	N/A
Al2	Almost flat	N/A	N/A	N/A	New buildings to attract commercial activities	Available if some existing buildings redeveloped	One of 18 projects	N/A	N/A

(3) Final selection

The short-listed candidate heritage areas were evaluated by the Syrian task force in close collaboration with the JICA Study Team, using the criteria described above. One area has been selected consequently, and the selection was endorsed at the weekly meeting of the Syria/JICA joint team on June 6, 2007.

1.1.4 New urban expansion areas

In the outer suburbs of the DMA, several growth centers are planned to be established to reduce the urbanization pressure on the central part of Damascus and guide the urbanization. They include the Qatana IT city, Al Kissweh industrial city, convention city near the airport, and a few residential centers as well as the Adra industrial city. Some of them are at more advanced stage of planning and implementation by respective authorities. They are along the development axes to the northeast (Adra), south (Al Kissweh), and north (residential development). For spatially more balanced development of the DMA, the urbanization to the west is important, specifically to the western part of Qatana.

A new city is proposed in the Qatana west, and the area has been delineated in cooperation with the municipality. The area is located on gently sloping land and endowed with rich water resources. Also, the access is reasonably good from the existing highway and road. In view of favorable natural conditions with view of mountains and its location in the upper basin, less water intensive and more service-oriented development should be pursued. Thus, the development of a science or IT city is envisaged.

1.2 Evaluation of Informal Housing and Heritage Areas

The candidate informal housing and heritage areas short-listed respectively through the procedure outlined above are evaluated by the criteria established for each type of areas as described above. The evaluation is made by assigning score of 1, 2 or 3, according to the following.

For informal housing areas

Criterion	Score
Urgency for improvement	3: high; 2: medium; 1: low
Impact of improvement	3: high; 2: medium; 1: low
Land availability for improvement	3: high; 2: medium; 1: low
Viability of improvement	3: high; 2: medium; 1: low

For urban heritage areas

Criterion	Score
Dominant land use	3: residential; 2: mixed; 1: commercial
Land availability	3: high; 2: medium; 1: low
Cooperative arrangement	3: agreed; 2: likely; 1: to be newly made

The results of evaluation are summarized in Table 1.3. As seen from the table, the Qaboun area has the highest total score of the four selected informal housing areas, and the Qanawat south area has the highest total score of the four selected heritage areas.

Table 1.3 Evaluation of Selected Informal Housing and Urban Heritage Areas

(1) Informal housing areas

District	Evaluation criterion				Total score
	Urgency	Impact	Land availability	Viability	
Qaboun	2	3	2	3	10
Daf Al Shok Qazzaz	3	3	1	1	8
Razi Lawan	1	2	3	3	9
Dummar	2	3	2	1	8

(2) Urban heritage areas

District	Evaluation criterion			Total score
	Dominant land use	Land availability	Cooperative arrangement	
Qanawat south	3	2	3	8
Al Shagour north	1	3	3	7
Sarouja Al Malek Faisal	2	1	1	4

Chapter 2 District Planning for Qaboun Informal Settlement Area

2.1 Existing Conditions

2.1.1 Location, land use and population

(1) Location and land use

The project area is located in the northeastern part of the Damascus city. It is defined by the Sixth Tishreen street to the south, an old district of the Qaboun town to the north. The land area is 59.38ha, which is divide for the planning purpose into Zone A with 28.41ha and Zone B with 30.97ha (Figure 2.1).

The land use in the area consists of building lots occupying 54.85ha or 92.4% owned by private owners, and roads occupying 4.53ha or 7.63% (Table 2.1). The road area is small as is typically the case in most informal housing areas. Of the area of building lots, the agricultural and vacant land accounts for 16.46ha or about 30%, characteristic of this informal housing area (Figure 2.2).

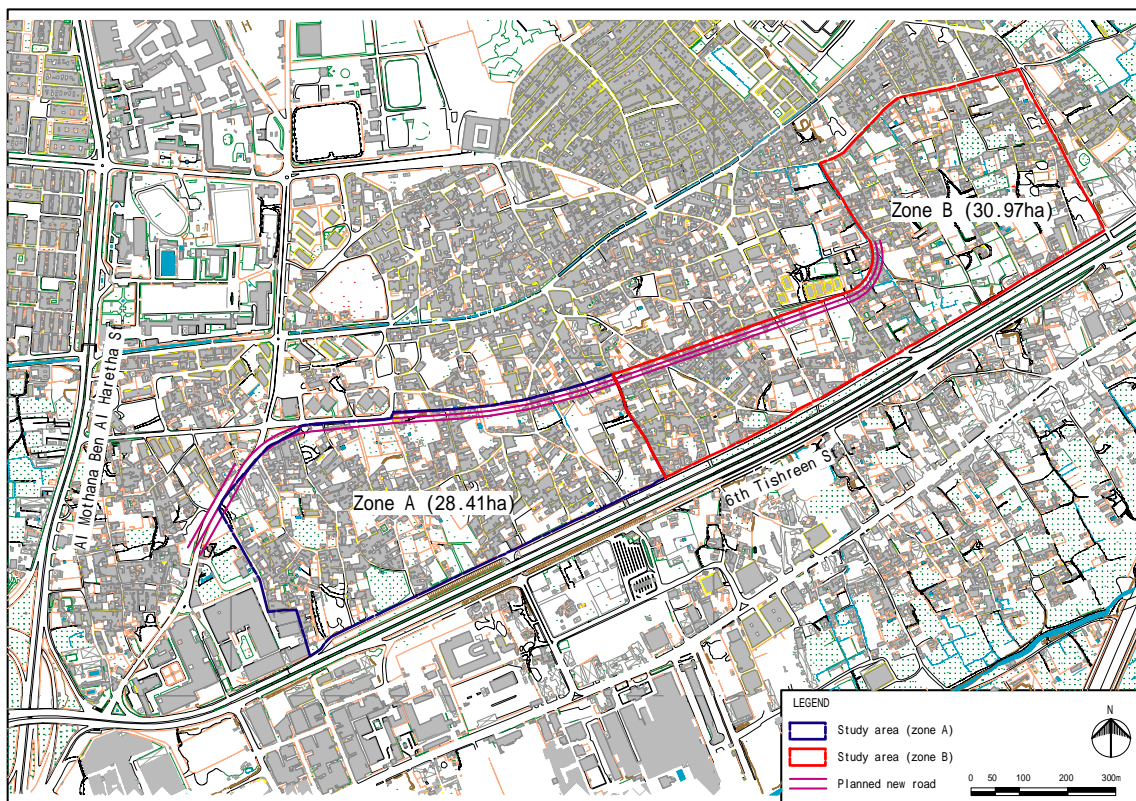


Figure 2.1 Location of the Project Area

Table 2.1 Broad Land Use Distribution of Present

		Zone A	Zone B	Total
Building lot	ha	26.15	28.70	54.85
	(%)	92.05%	92.67%	92.37%
(vacant land, agricultural field)	ha	7.12	9.34	16.46
Road	ha	2.26	2.27	4.53
	(%)	7.95%	7.33%	7.63%
Total area surface	ha	28.41	30.97	59.38
	(%)	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

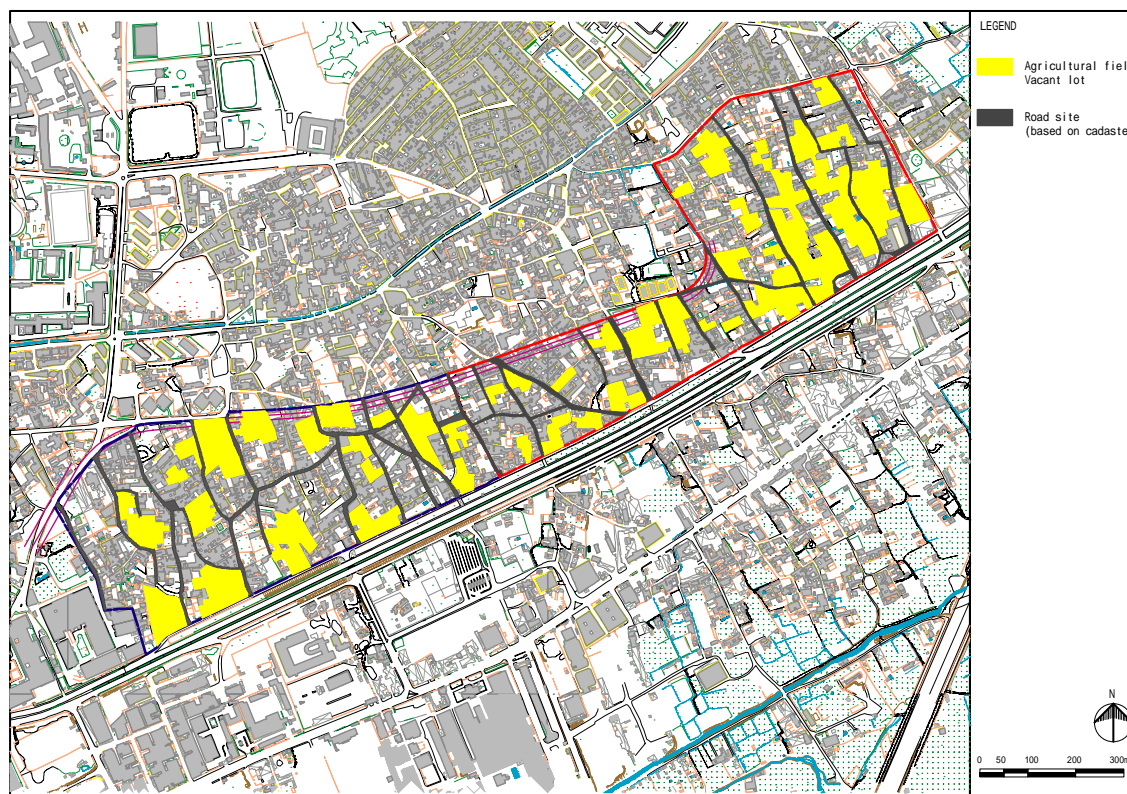


Figure 2.2 Vacant and Agricultural Land

(2) Population

According to the initial environmental examination conducted for the project area, there are 2,500 families in the area with the average family size of 5.22 to make the total population 13,050. The population density is calculated to be 219.8 per ha, relatively low for informal housing areas reflecting the large vacant land.

2.1.2 Related plans and regulations

(1) GCEC study

The ongoing GCEC study has defined the land use in the project area as shown in Figure 2.3. Proposed land use classes consist of organized area (H2), informal settlement area to be

formalized (O1), and areas for transport facilities (S). The area for transport facilities was defined for a railway project, which has been canceled later. The designation for the area to be formalized is in accordance with the present planning.

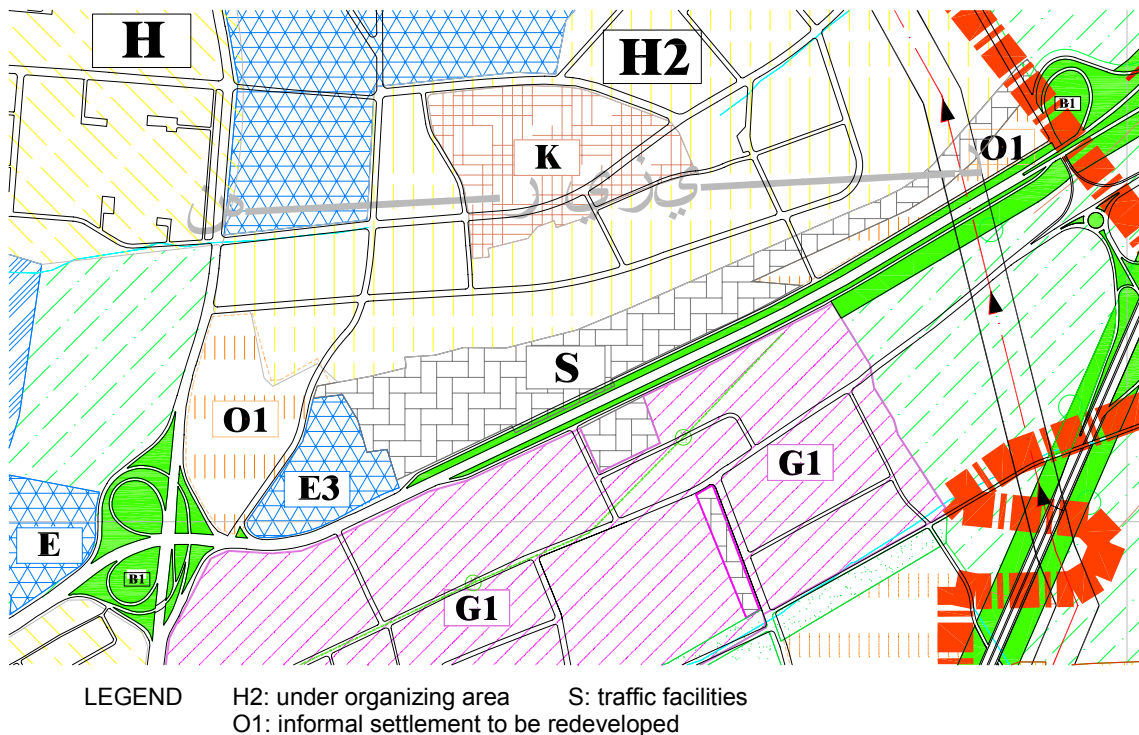


Figure 2.3 Land Use Plan by GCEC

(2) Feasibility study for the metro

A feasibility study for the metro construction is proceeding by a French firm (SYSTRA) under the department of transport of the Damascus governorate. The study plans to locate stations of the metro green line on the southern side of the Sixth Tishreen street near a bus terminal (Figure 2.4). The metro, once constructed, would increase the number of commuters passing through the Sixth Tishreen street significantly.