

A Plan for Developing al-Hattaba Neighbourhood in Historic Cairo

The Built Environment Collective (BEC) presented the Ministry of Antiquities with a masterplan for the neighbourhood of al-Hattaba in the Citadel area, in accordance with the Egyptian government's interest to preserve cultural heritage and utilise it to revive traditional crafts and improve tourism, and within the framework of the Ministry of Antiquities' comprehensive management plan for Historic Cairo as a UNESCO world heritage site, and in parallel with the State's plans to develop unsafe areas.

The proposal was developed as a result of a workshop hosted by the Built Environment Collective and attended by representatives from the Ministry of Antiquities, Cairo Governorate and the Informal Settlement Development Fund in September 2018. The proposal gained initial approval from the Ministry of Antiquities' Permanent Committee in October 2018, encouraging BEC to resume working on the project to serve as a comprehensive and sustainable model in dealing with neighbourhoods at the dilapidated heart of Historic Cairo.

The overall plan aims to elevate al-Hattaba as a historical area that is easy to develop as a crafts and tourism neighbourhood. Since it was built in the Mamluk period, al-Hattaba was a residential extension of the Citadel of Salah al-Din. During the Ottoman rule it became a service and craft zone that supplied the Citadel and surrounding areas with wood. Moreover, it was the starting point of the annual Hajj caravan taking the Kaaba cover to Mecca where al-Hattaba's *sabils* and cisterns supplied pilgrims with water. It became more prominent during the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha, when he built al-Bab al-Jadid (the New Gate) and widened the road leading up to the Citadel through al-Hattaba to accommodate his horse-drawn carriage.

Al-Hattaba suffered when al-Bab al-Jadid was closed to tourism at the turn of the 21st century. Soon the dilapidated state of its buildings led to its classification as an unsafe area and the decision to re-plan it. Accordingly, the Built Environment Collective collaborated with its government partners to prepare a masterplan proposal, recommending the reopening of the al-Bab al-Jadid to encourage a tourist route starting there, passing through al-Hattaba and leading to important tourist attractions in Historic Cairo. The proposal also includes a plan to promote the existing handicrafts, especially mother of pearl inlay and khiyamiyya (tent making), as well as, studies on management, partnerships and economic development.

The proposal offers the possibility of continuing tourist visits to the Citadel of Salah al-Din through a tourist route that starts from al-Bab al-Jadid and passes through al-Hattaba and its historical buildings such as al-Shurafa Mausoleum, the Citadel's cistern and al-Khanqah al-Nizamiyya. The route encircles al-Hattaba allowing visits to Sabil Shaykhu, Yunus al-Dawadar Dome, Sabil and Trough of 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda and Manjak al-Yusufi Complex. With the restoration of the mentioned monuments as a museum sequence, they narrate the story of al-Hattaba, its crafts, relationship to the Citadel, the Hajj route and surrounding areas. The route guides the tourist journey westward, to the rest of al-Khalifa municipality, passing through the mosques of Sultan Hassan and al-Rifa'i, the Prince Taz Palace, and ending at Ahmad Ibn Tulun Mosque. It is also possible to travel north to visit Fatimid Cairo, through al-Darb al-Ahmar and al-Azhar Park.

The second focus of the proposal is on presenting al-Hattaba as an area of traditional crafts. The area includes many traditional craft workshops such as mother of pearl inlay, khiyamiyya and arabesque carpentry, most of which are over a 100 years old. In addition to the development of existing crafts, the proposed project includes the establishment of new craft centres for the

development and creation of new designs, and to attract other types of crafts, fully utilising the nature of the area, improving tourist experience and providing employment opportunities for residents of al-Hattaba to raise economic standards in the neighbourhood as a whole. This will be achieved through rehabilitating ruined buildings to become craft workshops according to architectural designs in harmony with the historical context, as well as upgrading residential buildings and public spaces inline with the proposed tourist and craft activities

The Built Environment Collective is an Egyptian non-governmental organisation that has worked in al-Khalifa since 2012 within the framework of Athar Lina Initiative and in partnership with the Ministry of Antiquities, Cairo Governorate and other local partners. Athar Lina Initiative has conserved a number of Islamic monuments in the area, established a heritage school for children, organised tourism and craft promotion activities, facilitated urban upgrading and converted empty land plots into sports and recreation areas. The proposal comes within the framework of the Citizen Participation in Historic Cairo research project, funded by Ford Foundation, implemented under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Solidarity in partnership with the Ministry of Antiquities.

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