



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Historic Cities Support Programme



CAIRO: URBAN REGENERATION IN THE DARB AL-AHMAR DISTRICT

A Framework for Investment

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AN INTEGRATED CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



(Above) Map of central Cairo with the position of the Darb al-Ahmar District and al-Azhar Park. The red line shows the location of the Fatimid City.
(Below) Panorama of Cairo by Pascal Sebah around 1880, with Darb al-Ahmar and the remains of the east Ayyubid Wall in the foreground (Courtesy of the American University in Cairo, Rare Books and Special Collections Library).

THE NEW AL-AZHAR PARK on the edge of historic Cairo, completed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in 2004, has created welcome opportunities for parallel rehabilitation efforts in Darb al-Ahmar, the impoverished and densely built-up district that borders the Park. Darb al-Ahmar lies south of the prestigious al-Azhar Mosque and the popular Khan al-Khalili, Cairo's principal tourist bazaar, and is bound by al-Azhar Street to the north, the Ayyubid Wall to the east, and Darb al-Ahmar Street to the west. In spite of its central location, pedestrian scale, historic buildings and active community of artisans, the development of the area has lagged behind other parts of Cairo and living conditions have actually worsened over the past few decades. This is due to the lack of maintenance of infrastructure, coupled with low family incomes and the severe deterioration of monuments and private housing. The latter has been aggravated by outdated planning constraints, widespread insecurity of tenure and unrealistic rent controls. In spite of these serious shortcomings, Darb al-Ahmar remains socially far more cohesive and architecturally more genuine than other parts of Cairo, such as Gamalyia, which have been irreversibly altered by tourism and pervasive commercial redevelopment.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture believes that the downward spiral of disinvestment and deterioration can be stopped, and that this area offers the pre-conditions needed to preserve its urban qualities, as well as the potential to regenerate its economy. The formula advocated by AKTC consists of improving the area's physical assets through greater public and private investment and raising family incomes through small-business loans and employment generation programmes. No all-encompassing projects and no far-fetched social engineering agendas are required; rather, what is needed is an incremental improvement of what is already in place, and a strengthening of the available social capital and positive economic trends. This formula is very different from conventional

Pyramids
of Giza

Fatma
al-Nabawiyya
Mosque
(c. 1850)

Amir Altunbugha
al-Maridani
Mosque
(1340)

Aslam al-Silahdar
Mosque
(1345)

Amir Qijmas
al-Ishaqi
Mosque
(1481)

Bab Zuwayla
(1092)

Sultan
al-Mu'ayyad Mosque
(1420)



urban renewal approaches based on grandiose programmes that call for demolition of the historic fabric, displacement of the residents and the introduction of disruptive new functions and automobile-oriented urban patterns. As demonstrated by too many unfortunate precedents, such massive redevelopment schemes not only destroy the physical character of an area, they also deprive it of the social base that sustains the life of the community.

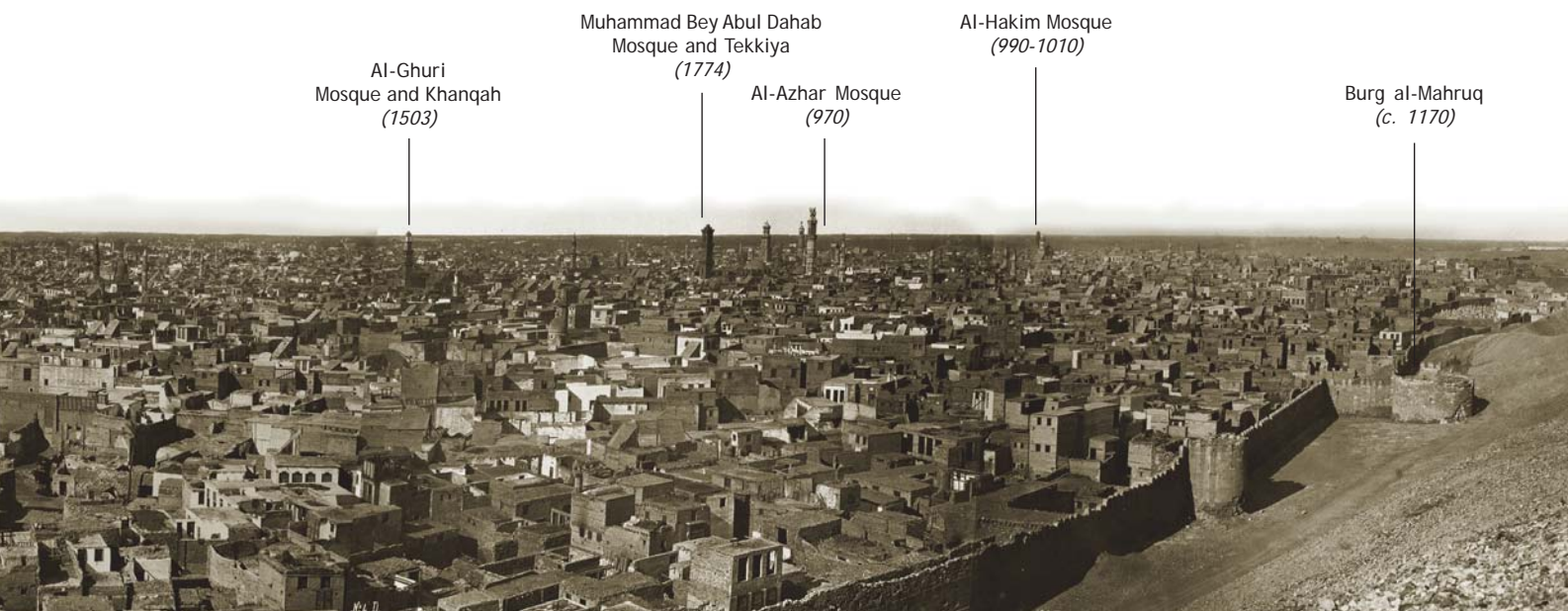
Since the year 2000, AKTC and its partner funding agencies, with support from the Governorate of Cairo and the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), and with the direct participation of the area's residents, have developed a series of projects on the eastern edge of Darb al-Ahmar that combine social and economic initiatives with physical improvements. These include micro-credit for business development and housing rehabilitation, employment-generation, as well as direct investment in the restoration of monuments, the re-use of historic buildings, and the improvement of small-scale infrastructure and open spaces.

The historic fabric and its preservation are central to this programme, but not as something frozen in time, like a museum, or commercialised as a tourist attraction. Rather, the old buildings and traditional social ties are seen as a resource for positive change, as they embody the very essence of the place with its complex stratification of spaces and uses. Although run-down and in need of intervention, the historic fabric cannot be separated from the living community that inhabits it, and remains a vital asset for the future of the district. Preserved and respected for their intrinsic qualities, the monuments, old buildings and traditional open spaces must be re-integrated into the everyday life of the residents and reconnected to the complex, multi-dimensional social and cultural character of the area. These rehabilitated physical assets will thus become the building blocks for a realistic and harmonious development of Darb al-Ahmar.

AKTC's proposed urban improvement programme requires not only simultaneous physical, social and economic actions, sustained over an extended period of time, but also institutional capacity-building. Here the task will be to support the formation of local NGOs in various domains until they are ready to



A contemporary view of Darb al-Ahmar with the Citadel in the background. In spite of transformations and the deteriorating building stock, the area preserves its traditional character to this day.





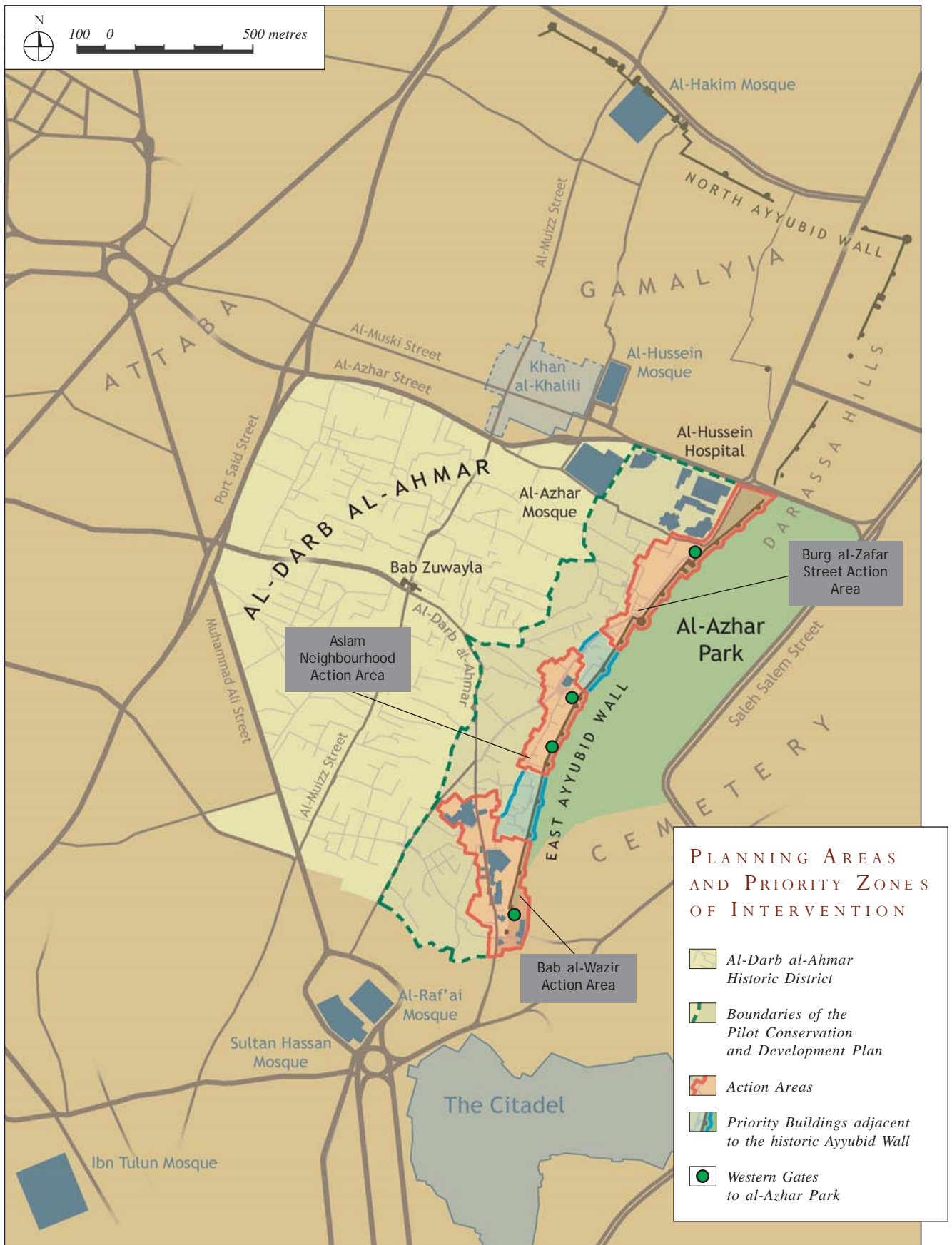
(Top) Urban blight in *Burg al-Zafar* and its immediate surroundings.
(Middle) A pedestrian street in the *Aslam* neighbourhood.
(Bottom) *Bab al-Wazir* contains some of historic Cairo's most important monuments.

carry on with reduced assistance from AKTC. Eventually, it is hoped that a public/private “Development Corporation” can be established as an umbrella organisation in Darb al-Ahmar under the auspices of the District Authorities to coordinate ongoing activities, generate income from restored facilities and services provided, and eventually be responsible for a self-sustained rehabilitation process. Meanwhile, AKTC has concentrated its efforts in three Action Areas, each with its own special character, needs and opportunities:

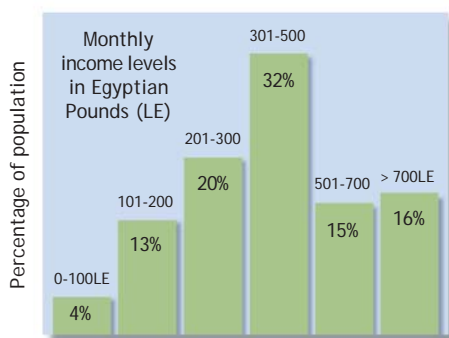
- The blighted *Burg al-Zafar Street* and its immediate surroundings, located in the northeast corner of the District, call for public funding and private investment aimed at comprehensive urban development to reverse the present decay, raise housing standards and introduce new commercial uses and economic activities.
- The intimate and densely built-up residential fabric in the *Aslam neighbourhood* requires a combination of private local financing and limited public and donor funding towards small, targeted interventions to improve housing, up-grade infrastructure and develop community-based initiatives.
- The *Bab al-Wazir* area and its extension along Darb al-Ahmar Street, in the southeastern sector, requires public and donor funding to improve the infrastructure and revitalise dormant assets, in particular its outstanding monuments, which can serve as catalysts in attracting an increased visitor presence and stimulating the economic development of the area.

The individual action area plans are linked to a comprehensive socio-economic development programme for the Darb al-Ahmar district—all presented in this brochure. Together, the action area plans and the socio-economic programme are part of an integrated urban planning concept for the eastern portion of the Darb al-Ahmar district, which is being prepared in coordination with the District authorities. The relevance of these different initiatives goes beyond this particular district as it offers an alternative model of urban management and development for neglected and economically depressed historic areas that has wider applicability in Cairo and indeed other Islamic cities.

AKTC's initial six-year effort in Darb al-Ahmar has substantially enhanced the image and perception of the area and it provides a sound framework for collateral investment and donor participation. Mobilising jointly public institutions, donor organisations, residents, local business people and private investors now is essential to achieve the critical mass needed to make the final turn-around happen. The following blueprint for continued action—complemented by specific project proposals included as separate attachments—is being presented to stakeholders, donors and prospective investors. The proposals are based on a careful assessment of available opportunities and build upon the investments and initial results obtained by AKTC and its partners. The presence of a dedicated project management structure, backed by the Cairo Governorate, will ensure the co-ordination of future donor efforts and partnership arrangements needed to maximise the long-term benefits in Darb al-Ahmar.



SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN DARB AL-AHMAR



(Top) View of a typical residential alley in Darb al-Ahmar characterised by poverty and building decay. (Above) Average levels of income are less than 100 USD per month, making Darb al-Ahmar families among the poorest in Egypt (6.2LE=1USD).

DURING THE LAST QUARTER OF 2003, an extensive socio-economic survey was carried out within the thirteen *shiakhats* that make up the District of Darb al-Ahmar. Social and economic data were gathered and general actions and specific sectors of intervention aimed at stimulating the social and economic development of the area were defined. The main objective of this survey was to establish a baseline to track ongoing development in the intervention area. In addition to providing AKTC with the relevant reference points for measuring future progress, the survey also brought to light important directives for detailed project design.

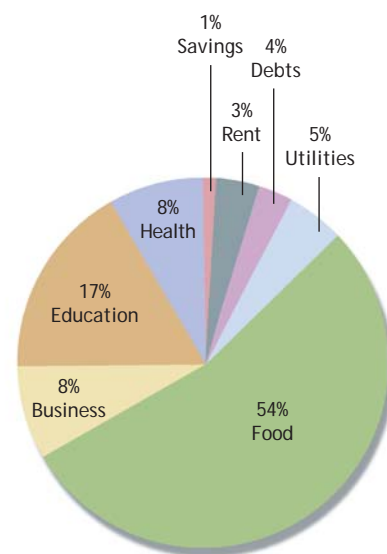
DATA COLLECTION

The baseline survey showed Darb al-Ahmar households, particularly those close to the Ayyubid Wall, to be among the poorest in Egypt. By late 2003, average yearly incomes were reported to be no more than EGP 1200 (USD 193) per capita. This means that people in this part of Cairo have to survive on less than the equivalent of one dollar per day. Not surprisingly, average household expenditure levels show that more than 50 percent of people's incomes are spent on food items. Also, very little money is spent on rent, not just as a

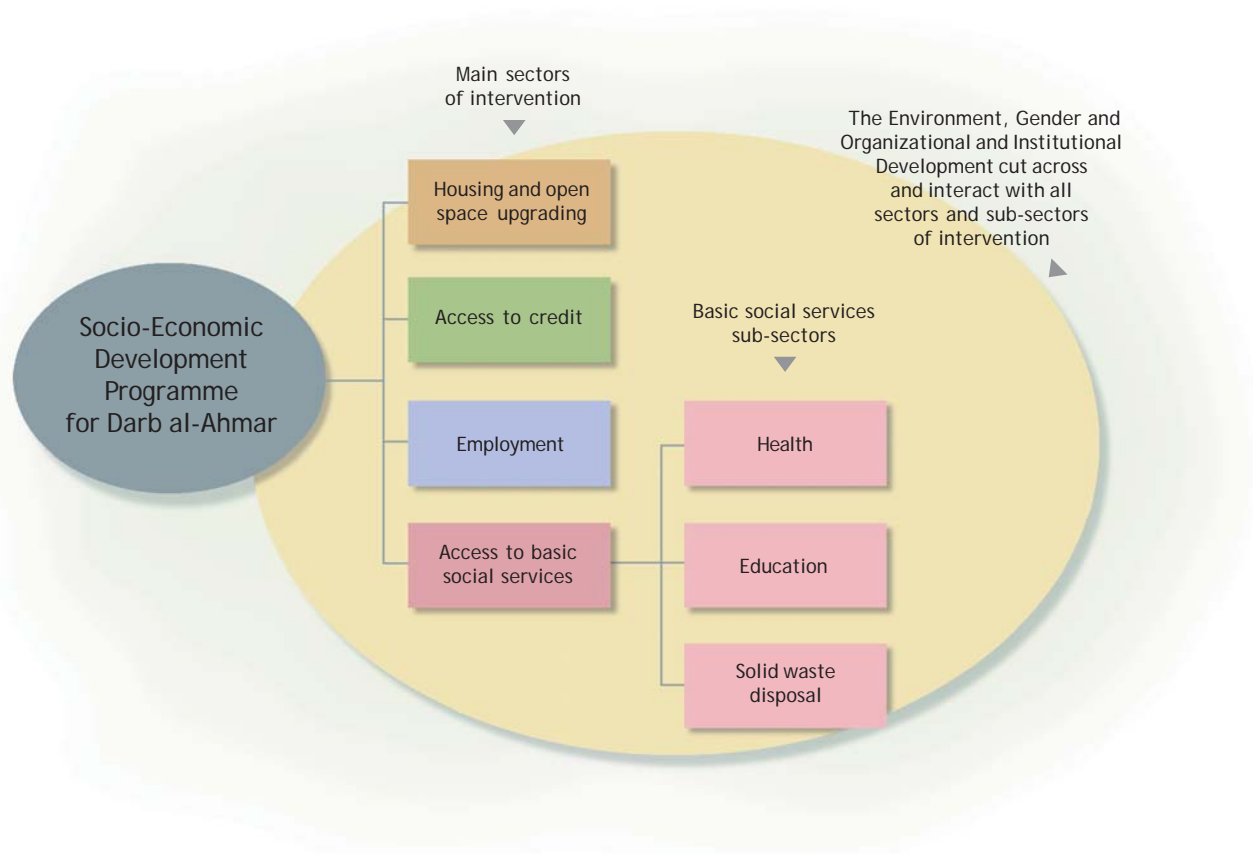
percentage of actual expenditures, but also in absolute terms. Such low rents are typical of very old rental agreements; they are also indicative of the near complete negligence of housing maintenance in the area.

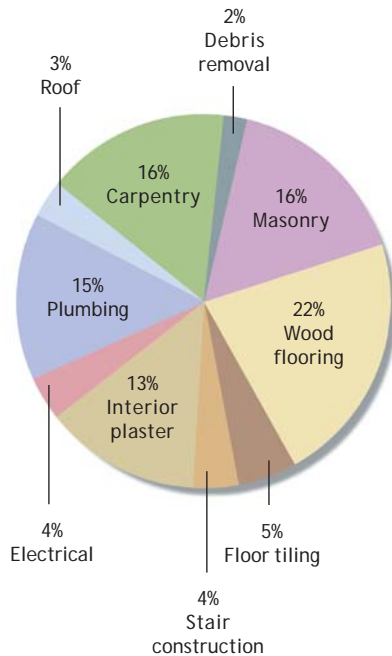
A Monitoring & Evaluation Unit was established in the framework of the project to measure socio-economic progress by looking at pre-determined quantitative and qualitative indicators. Improvements in the quality of life of Darb al-Ahmar's residents are assessed at three levels: *results* are measured through quantitative indicators; an impression of *effectiveness* is gained by taking into account quantitative and qualitative indicators; and finally, *impact* is considered by looking at the indicators in relation to the time factor, objectives and lasting changes in people's attitudes and outlook.

In response to the survey's findings, it was decided that the Darb al-Ahmar socio-economic programme would focus on the following development sectors: Housing and Open Space Upgrading, Access to Credit, Employment and Basic Social Services (the latter subdivided into Health, Education & Solid Waste Disposal). These sectors are combined and integrated in order to lay the foundation and create the pre-conditions needed for the physical and social rehabilitation of the area. In addition to these sectors, three priority issues were identified as "cross-cutting", in other words, they interact with all five development sectors. These cross-cutting issues are: the environment, gender and organisational and institutional development.



Break-down of average monthly expenditures for a five-person household in Darb al-Ahmar. Over 50 percent of the family budget is spent on food. (Source: AKCS-E/ADAA baseline survey, December 2003).





HOUSING AND OPEN SPACE UPGRADING

Grants, loans and a combination of the two are available for rehabilitating housing in the three Action Areas, thus serving both lower income households and households with extremely low levels of income. Although the rate at which the project's Housing Rehabilitation Programme has developed has been slower than expected, the programme is committed to its original target of 200 houses (13% of houses in the three Action Areas) by the end of 2009. Obtaining this financing, an estimated investment of USD 4 million, is not the only important limiting factor for the development of this sector of activities. Another constraint continues to be the legal documentation required before rehabilitation can start, not to mention the need to convince the various parties occupying each single house to collaborate in the rehabilitation effort. A social housing team has been engaged by the project to assist with these efforts. It is working full-time to make sure that all the non-physical conditions are met before physical rehabilitation can take place. Following a preliminary agreement reached with the residents of the buildings earmarked for rehabilitation, an independent credit team carries out an assessment to establish the credit-worthiness of the individual families concerned. One measure of the success of the housing rehabilitation and open space upgrading sector will be the multiplier effect it has in the somewhat less poor areas adjacent to the Project's three Action Areas, by stimulating similar but privately financed rehabilitation initiatives.



(Top) A break-down of construction costs for a typical housing rehabilitation project in Darb al-Ahmar. Budget are reviewed and monitored to contain costs while ensuring good quality results. (Above) Works also include improvements to interior services, such as this sub-standard, unsafe kitchen located under a staircase. (Right) A family kitchen following improvements carried out by AKTC. The first group of nineteen buildings has been rehabilitated and returned to the residents.





ACCESS TO CREDIT

Specific activities in support of income-generating activities have been combined into a single Micro-Credit Programme, which is run through a local entity. The services provided by the programme go beyond supporting handicrafts and retail operations, where the absorptive capacity is small due to the modest working capital and limited need for equipment. On the other hand, as the housing rehabilitation programme expands and new businesses are introduced in the sectors of construction, tourism and services, it is expected that the number of clients will grow in these sectors and that the size and nature of the programme will graduate to supporting more ambitious initiatives favoured by their close proximity to the Hussein Hospital, al-Azhar University and the new al-Azhar Park.

New loan-tracking software was recently installed and a comprehensive micro-credit operation manual developed. With more than 425 new outstanding loans disbursed and a 99-percent recovery rate within seven months after overhauling the credit programme, the importance of credit for the development of Darb al-Ahmar has clearly been demonstrated. Just over half of all loans (53%) went to the retail sector, 35 percent to cottage industries and 12 percent to service and transport businesses.

During 2004, women had taken out 25 percent of the loans disbursed. This percentage is expected to increase to 30 percent by the end of 2005. Although loans have been disbursed to borrowers in larger numbers than originally anticipated, their combined value is somewhat less than what had been forecast. To a large extent, this reflects the small scale of the local economy and the very low income levels prevailing in Darb al-Ahmar. It is foreseen that between 2004 and 2008 USD 1.5 million will have been invested in credit facilities. The number of loans is projected to reach 2,000 by the year 2006.



(Top left) One of the recipients of a micro-credit loan bought a stove to bake bread and produce hot meals for sale to workers and residents in the area. (Top right) This coffeeshop owner took out a loan to buy equipment and expand his business.

(Above) A loan enabled this woman to buy a press to stamp metal components for nearby workshops.



(Above) Preserving wood panels in the Khayer Bek complex. AKTC's restoration projects provide direct employment opportunities for Egyptian conservators. (Below) The project supports many small workshops and retail outlets in Darb al-Ahmar by providing credit to purchase equipment and materials, thus generating new employment opportunities.

EMPLOYMENT

In order to help reduce unemployment in Darb al-Ahmar, both the supply and the demand side of the employment equation are being addressed. On the supply side a series of activities are being set in motion aimed at empowering and motivating the target group. In addition, efforts are being made to upgrade individual qualifications and skills. A Training Needs Assessment of individuals looking for employment is the first step. After this initial counselling session, job seekers are further assessed and their employment plans refined. Individual job plans are produced within two months of the initial counselling session. Job search skills training will continue to be held at regular intervals throughout the project implementation period.

On the demand side employment opportunities are mapped and categorised. Project staff then act as brokers for job placement. During the first four and a half years of project implementation, close to 2,500 job referrals have been made, resulting in almost 1,300 people finding employment. Regular contact between staff involved in the credit programme and staff concerned with employment activities has also helped create apprenticeships in the area and facilitate actual placement of apprentices. Efforts are being made during the project's second phase to at least double the number of people to find employment.



BASIC SOCIAL SERVICES

Basic social services in the context of the Darb al-Ahmar Project include the sub-sectors of health, education and solid waste disposal. **Health activities** are aimed at raising the quality of healthcare in Darb al-Ahmar. In particular, the activities under the project's Family Health Development Centre (FHDC) concentrate on improving access to existing healthcare facilities, providing physical examinations (in particular for female patients and addressing especially pregnancy-related matters) and offering limited clinical care. A family health clinic, set up to provide care not found in other facilities, continues to be operated by the FHDC. Other than its clinic, the FHDC also runs two outreach programmes. One addresses reproductive and sexual health, and the other concentrates on the handicapped and the aged. Both programmes have been well received, with the number of participants from the target group increasing. The number of patients visiting the Centre is expected to rise to 800 per month by the end of the Project's duration.

Education is the second of the three basic social services taken on by the Project. In addition to its inherent importance, the education programme also has an impact on the other sectors in that its activities—e.g. vocational and administrative training—contribute to a better-educated and better-skilled labour force. These activities are helping improve the credit sector, which is supporting the development of small- and medium-size enterprises, as well as leading to higher levels of assertiveness among those participating in the life-skills training sessions. Literacy classes, particularly those organised for women, are expected to contribute to improving living conditions in the District, greater upward mobility and ultimately higher levels of income. The main components of the Education Programme are:

- Early Childhood Development (ECD). Working in close collaboration with the Aga Khan Foundation, which started an ECD training centre in Aswan, AKTC expects to have established three ECD centres (one in each Action Area) by 2008.



(Top) Outreach programme meetings are held periodically to address issues related to health and family planning. (Above) Early childhood development classes have provided educational opportunities for young children from the area. (Below) Administrative and institutional training for NGOs is a means of fostering local competencies and skills towards the establishment of independent and self-sustainable local organisations.





(Top) View of the nineteenth-century mansion on Abou Hureiba Street in its current poor condition.

(Above) Rendering showing the restored mansion after its conversion into a vocational training centre. The rehabilitation of the building foresees on-the-job training for builders and craftsmen.

- Vocational training (from 2005 this will include existing training for carpenters and stone masons) aimed at improving product quality and marketability. Most of the vocational training will be centred on the rehabilitation of an historic mansion in Abou Hureiba Street, which is expected to be completed in late 2006 or early 2007. Training in traditional crafts will later be added as a subject.
- Administrative training (computer literacy and book-keeping) classes will start in 2005. Office management and book-keeping skills are much needed for strengthening the business sector in Darb al-Ahmar and will thus complement the micro-credit and housing finance programmes. Women are expected to become major beneficiaries of this programme component.
- Adult literacy classes. An average of 60 to 70 adults graduate each year from these classes. AKTC works in close collaboration with a local NGO to maintain this programme, and efforts are being made to increase the number of adults graduating each year.
- Capacity-building of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Activities focus on institutional development and organisational strengthening, as well as the development of subject-matter knowledge, with a view to these organisations eventually taking over a number of AKTC-initiated activities in Darb al-Ahmar.



Solid waste disposal is a major issue in Darb al-Ahmar, one that is immediately apparent to anyone visiting the project area. Although much has been already accomplished, clearly more needs to be done as solid waste and litter are still dumped in empty plots and on street corners throughout the neighbourhood. A small team, headed by a Solid Waste Manager, is engaged exclusively in resolving the problems and logistics of collecting and disposing of the District's rubbish. A good working relationship has been developed with ENSER, the local cleaning organisation subcontracted by the municipality. As a result, many parts of Darb al-Ahmar, where previously there had been no cleaning whatsoever, are now covered by a daily service. AKTC frequently starts special cleaning campaigns with people from the neighbourhood, targeting rubbish on rooftops and empty plots. These actions are then followed by a distribution of bins and regular collection. AKTC staff and representatives from ENSER meet regularly to discuss problems and actions to be taken. To enhance cooperation in the neighbourhood, the team launches periodic awareness campaigns, with a particular focus on the young.

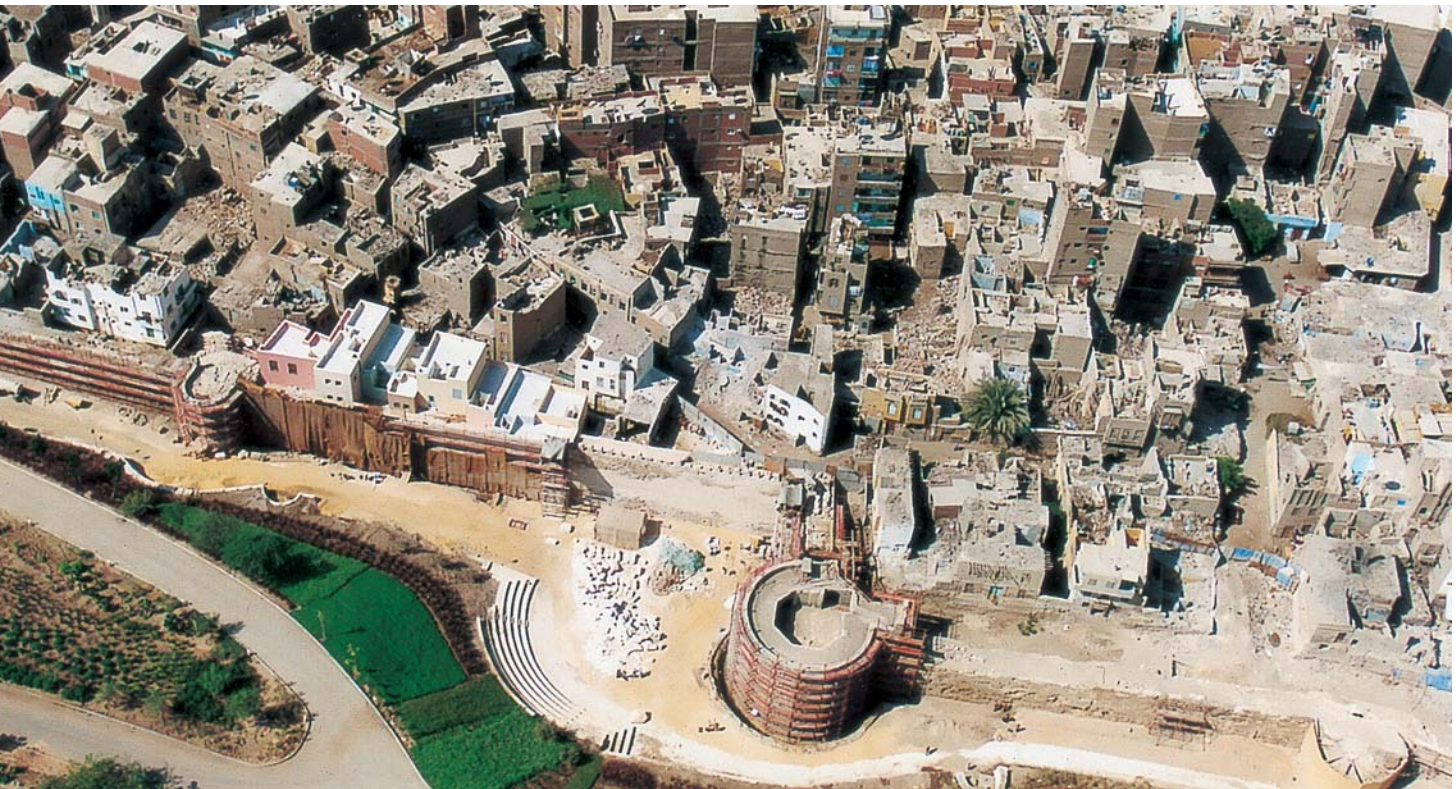
CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The environment, gender and organisational and institutional development are cross-cutting issues which affect all the development sectors. They are being addressed at an organisational level by a three-member advisory team of independent Egyptian specialists. They meet with senior project staff twice a month to review ongoing initiatives, results achieved, proposed actions and suggested policies from an environmental, gender and institutional points of view. The organisational and institutional development of local initiatives is especially important to the District, as it is through local organisations that the different development activities started by AKTC must continue. This is reinforced throughout the Project by helping community leaders to acquire specific skills and management abilities, and by enabling NGOs to participate directly in project activities as part of a special capacity-building process.



(Top left) The project's solid waste officer works in coordination with ENSER's cleaning staff to ensure timely collection of garbage in Darb al-Ahmar. (Top right) A master welder trains an apprentice. Apprenticeship programmes have been developed within the framework of the Project's employment component and will be reinforced with the creation of a vocational training centre. (Above) An environmental awareness meeting targeting women is one of several cross-cutting initiatives developed by AKTC.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN BURG AL-ZAFAR



(Top) An aerial view of Bateniyya, the neighbourhood bordered by Burg al-Zafar Street and the Ayyubid Wall. The Burg al-Mahruq bastion is visible in the centre of the image. (Above) Urban conditions in Bateniyya have worsened in the last fifteen years, with many buildings empty and on the verge of collapse.

STRATEGICALLY LOCATED near the main vehicular artery of al-Azhar Street and the popular pedestrian zone on either side of it, Burg al-Zafar is an area of paramount importance in the future revitalisation of the Darb al-Ahmar District. Moreover it lies within easy reach of Khan al-Khalili, historic Cairo's market and an important tourist attraction. In addition, the area faces the new al-Azhar Park, 30 hectares of green in the middle of the metropolis, and the newly excavated northern stretch of the Ayyubid Wall and its associated archaeological areas. Burg al-Zafar's proximity to these visitor attractions make it a prime site for investment and new development. This applies particularly to Burg al-Zafar Street itself, with its many ruined buildings and under-used plots along the excavated historic Wall.

The area in fact had witnessed a marked decline in recent decades. A thriving drug trade in the 1980s left it with a reputation for being crime-ridden and unsafe. Little or no investment was the outcome, a situation exacerbated by the 1992 earthquake and the continued use of the Darassa Hills as a dumping ground until 1997. The lack of maintenance of most of the area's traditional buildings has meant that an overwhelming number are today crumbling and many are beyond repair. But the neighbourhood's poor reputation and unattractive

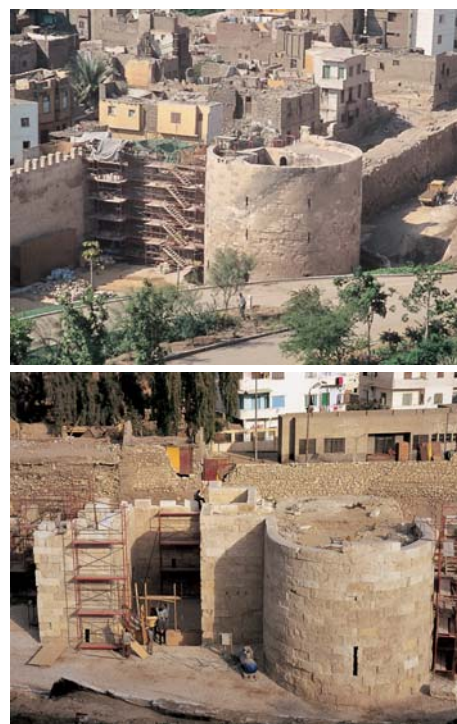
and unhealthy physical environment also discouraged the indiscriminate urban development that permanently altered other parts of historic Cairo over the last twenty years.

The creation of al-Azhar Park provides an ideal opportunity for renewed investment and, ultimately, a complete turn-around of the area. Today, Burg al-Zafar is free of drugs and safe. The former mounds of rubble and debris that deterred private investment have become the western slope of the new Park, providing Burg al-Zafar Street with views of green hills unparalleled in Cairo. Unlike other parts of Darb al-Ahmar, this neighbourhood has the additional advantage of good vehicular access from other parts of Cairo, al-Azhar Street immediately to its north and the Salah Salem highway to the east.

The monuments and archaeological attractions close to Burg al-Zafar constitute an additional asset. Al-Azhar Mosque is one of the city's most renowned monuments and a centre of learning known throughout the Islamic world. Two famous Ottoman residential buildings, the Harawi and Zeinab al-Khatun merchant houses, are also located in the vicinity. Their restoration was completed in the 1990s and both buildings are now used for cultural events and performances, attracting many visitors and greatly contributing to reversing the negative image of the area. These attractions are complemented by the recently unearthed eastern section of the Ayyubid Wall, between Burg al-Zafar Street and al-Azhar Park. This section of the Ayyubid fortifications includes two significant architectural features: a three-storey defensive tower, Burg al-Mahruq, destined to become an exhibit space, and the recently discovered Bab al-Barqiyya, a gateway into the city which has been restored as an entrance to the Park.

These cultural assets and the area's strategic location provide unique opportunities for private investment in housing, visitor facilities and commercial space. A high demand for housing exists in Darb al-Ahmar, as newly constructed apartments are very limited and older properties virtually unavailable. Young families from the area seeking reasonably priced housing are forced to move elsewhere, often to sub-urban areas where the range of facilities and services that are readily available in central locations are lacking. The many ruined and vacant lots in Burg al-Zafar can be used to meet the current housing shortage with new residential developments that are attractive to local residents and outsiders alike.

Facilities for visitors are also sorely lacking in historic Cairo. Hotels are especially limited, and the few that exist around Khan al-Khalili are shabby and often unhygienic. Burg al-Zafar is an ideal location for small-scale hotels that are comfortable yet simple, easily accessible from the rest of city, and which offer tourists the chance to stay within walking distance of most of historic Cairo's attractions. In addition, the Burg al-Zafar area with its promising location could help meet Darb al-Ahmar's lack of retail space, and the many small businesses and workshops in the area would finally be able to sell their products locally. Attractions such as Burg al-Mahruq and the other proposed amenities would help maintain the critical mass needed to sustain these business activities.



(Top) The three-storey defensive bastion of Burg al-Mahruq as seen from the top of al-Azhar Park. (Above) The gate of Barqiyya, also viewed from the Park, has been restored and will be the principal northwest point of access to the Park.

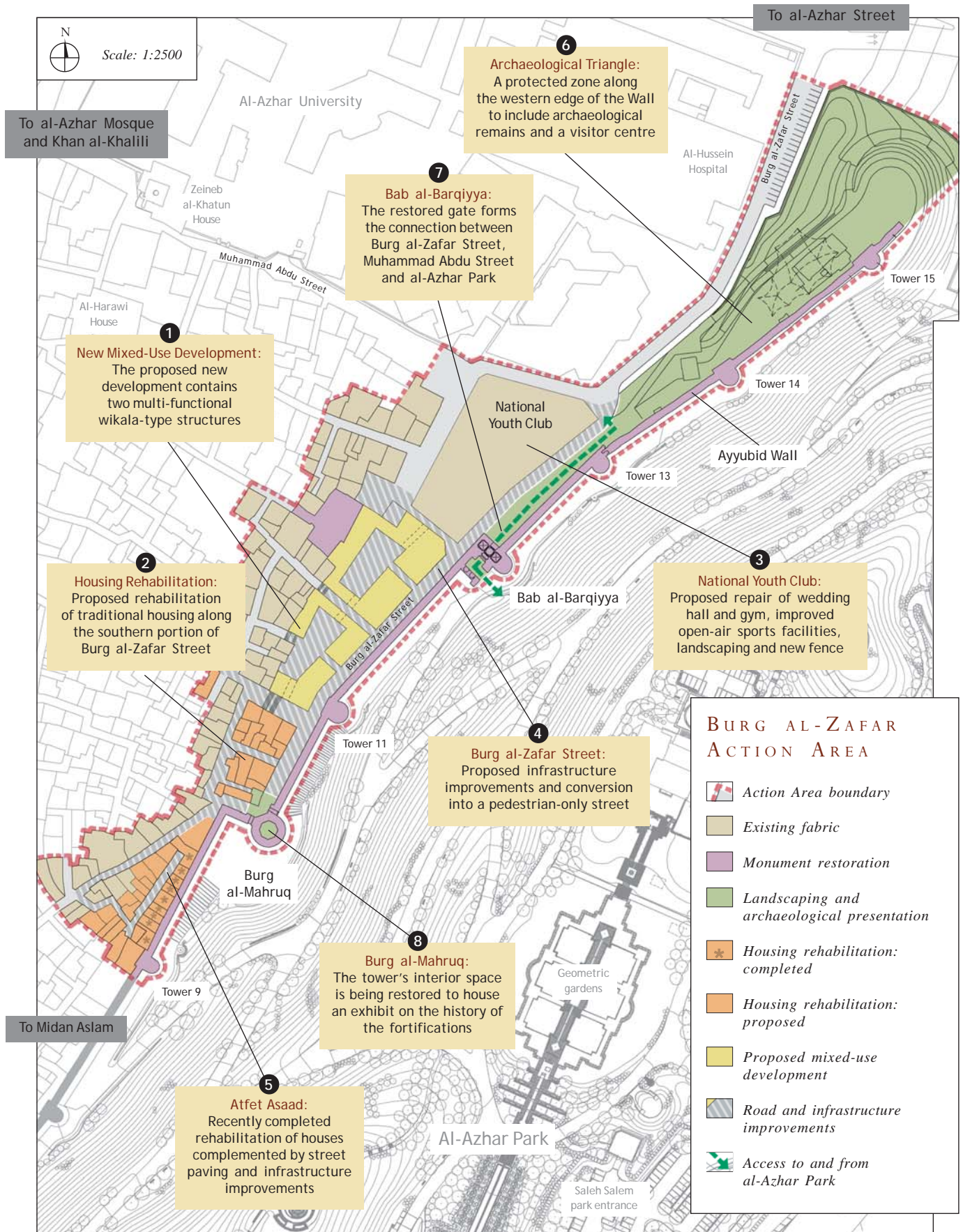
Model of the Burg al-Zafar Action Area showing the context of the principal interventions envisaged by AKTC:

- ① New Mixed-Use Development
- ② Housing Rehabilitation
- ③ National Youth Club
- ④ Burg al-Zafar Street
- ⑤ Atfet Asaad
- ⑥ Archaeological Triangle
- ⑦ Bab al-Barqiyya
- ⑧ Burg al-Mahruq

AKTC has already undertaken substantial development initiatives aimed at improving housing and the physical environment of the Burg al-Zafar area. These include the lowering of the Burg al-Zafar roadway built in the 1970s on top of the historic wall, a serious threat to the monument, as well as removal of centuries of debris to reveal the Ayyubid Wall itself. AKTC is also implementing a comprehensive conservation programme for the wall and its towers in the Burg al-Zafar area. The programme includes rehabilitation of several traditional houses in Aftet Asaad, a small residential cul-de-sac abutting the Ayyubid Wall. Infrastructure works to re-route pipes and cables from atop the wall ramparts have also been carried out.

The importance of AKTC's and its partners' ongoing interventions goes beyond these immediate results. The work carried out to date lays the foundation for future initiatives in Burg al-Zafar that take into consideration the existing social and physical context, and promote the full redevelopment of the area. These include proposals for new developments and urban rehabilitation along Burg al-Zafar Street, as well as plans for the creation of visitor facilities and exhibits along the historic wall and the adjacent archaeological areas.







(Above) Ground floor plan of the proposed mixed-use development showing the commercial portico along Burg al-Zafar Street. Shops surround the two interior courtyards.

PROPOSED NEW DEVELOPMENT AND URBAN REHABILITATION INITIATIVES

New Mixed-Use Development

AKTC proposes a mixed-use development scheme for the blighted area one block north of Burg al-Mahruq. The proposed scheme calls for two independent but closely connected multi-functional wikala-type structures modelled after traditional Islamic commercial buildings. The two buildings are organized around interior courtyards and present a single porticoed commercial front along the western side of Burg al-Zafar Street. The difference in level between Burg al-Zafar Street (lowered by AKTC during excavations of the adjacent Ayyubid Wall) and the western section of the site makes it possible to create a parking structure underneath the courtyards. The complex integrates retail, office, short-term rental units and residential space within a low-rise structure that conforms to the prevailing building heights in the area, and is easily accessible from al-Azhar Street. In addition to helping meet the demand for housing in the area, the new complex will offer the community commercial facilities to spur the growth of the local economy. These commercial spaces, located at street level, will provide neighbourhood artisans with local retail outlets instead of their having to sell their products to middle-men in other parts of Cairo.

Housing Rehabilitation

The blocks of traditional housing on the southern stretch of the Burg al-Zafar area will be included in the housing rehabilitation programme initiated by AKTC. Priority is being given to houses along Burg al-Zafar Street and close to Burg al-Mahruq in order to reconstitute the edge of the street. The housing programme will raise living standards and help create the attractive, well-maintained environment needed to encourage private investment in the area.



(Above) View of one of the interior courtyards in the proposed complex. (Right) The portico along the pedestrianised Burg al-Zafar Street will introduce a series of retail shops and create new economic opportunities in the area.





Upgrading the National Youth Club

The National Youth Club, located at the intersection of Burg al-Zafar and Muhammad Abdu streets, is one of Darb al-Ahmar's few open-air sports facilities. The club also includes a hall for wedding celebrations and an enclosed gym. However, structural problems have led to the gradual deterioration of the facility and eventual disuse of these two spaces. AKTC recognises the club's importance to the local community, and intends to rehabilitate the wedding hall and gym, as well as introduce additional amenities within the complex as part of the general urban improvement of Burg al-Zafar.

Infrastructure and street improvements

Burg al-Zafar Street will be turned into a pedestrian street, to keep the constant vibrations and exhaust fumes from damaging the Ayyubid Wall. Primary infrastructure and connections serving the district will be permanently re-routed underneath the street, the surfaces paved, and the city-side of the historic Wall and ramparts restored. The pedestrianised Burg al-Zafar Street will thus become a commercially active and attractive streetscape where visitors will be able to walk along the Wall and wander through the shops planned for the ground floor of the new mixed-use development.

Atfet Asaad

The recently completed rehabilitation of the houses in Atfet Asaad, the small residential cul-de-sac abutting the historic Wall, will be complemented by new paving, improvements to the infrastructure and by the introduction of income-generating activities.



(Top) Two elevations comparing the east side of Atfet Asaad Alley before and after intervention. (Above) A view of the alley after rehabilitation.



(Above) The Barqiyya Gate, dedicated in 1187, as it looks after restoration by AKTC. (Below) The proposed Barqiyya gateway to al-Azhar Park as it will appear to visitors entering the Park from Darb al-Ahmar.

INTERVENTIONS ALONG THE HISTORIC WALL AND ADJACENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREAS

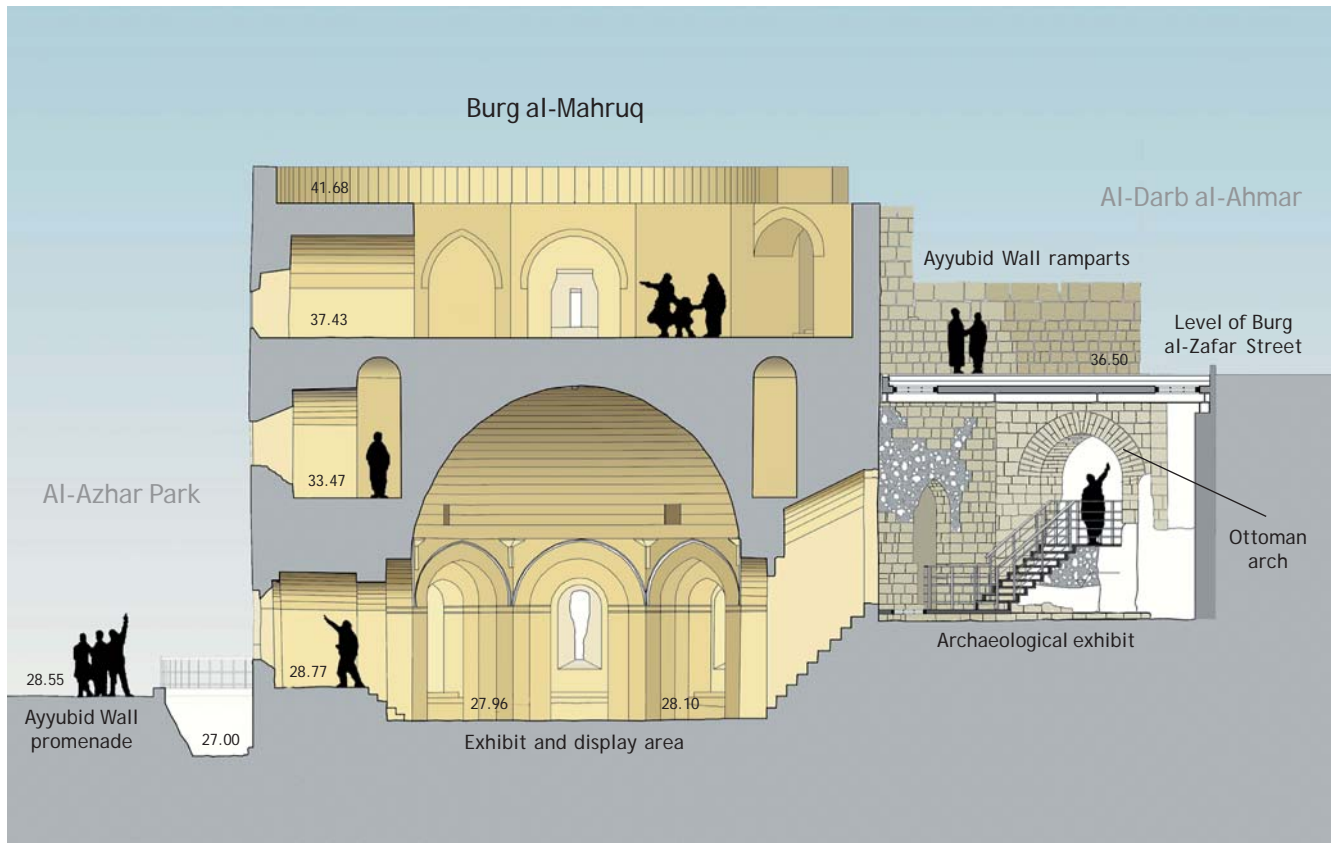
The Archaeological Triangle

The triangular-shaped archaeological site north of Burg al-Zafar came to light when a sizeable portion of the Ayyubid Wall facing the city was uncovered, together with other important remains from the Fatimid and Mamluk periods. The plans developed by the SCA and AKTC take these recent archaeological discoveries into account and call for enclosing and connecting the area with the adjacent Park via the newly discovered Barqiyya Gate (see below). The archaeological triangle will create a protective zone between the Wall and the city to avoid the risk of future development in this sensitive area. The SCA plans to create a visitor centre at the northern edge of the archaeological triangle to illustrate and explain the evolution of this part of the city and the Wall's relationship to the historic urban fabric.

Bab al-Barqiyya

The recently unearthed Ayyubid gateway has been restored and will form the connection between al-Azhar Park and the northern section of Darb al-Ahmar. Located halfway between the Burg al-Zafar Street planning area and Muhammad Abdu Street, which leads to the Harawi and Zeineb al-Khatun houses, the gate will draw visitors and residents of historic Cairo toward the Park. In turn, the gate will encourage visitors to the Park to explore the adjacent





historic quarter and its monuments. To this effect, Bab al-Barqiyya will be linked by a stepped ramp to the National Youth Club and the porticoed commercial front of Burg al-Zafar above, as well as al-Azhar University and Mosque and the Khan al-Khalili via Muhammad Abdu Street. The solid wall of the Club will be replaced with a metal fence, thus permitting a direct visual link to al-Azhar Park.

Burg al-Mahruq

This three-storey tower, the largest and most visible feature of the eastern Ayyubid Wall, is currently being restored by AKTC. Parallel archeological work at the base of the tower on the city side has shed light on the history of this part of Islamic Cairo. Given the structure's architectural significance and size, AKTC and the SCA intend to use it to house an exhibit interpreting the history of the city fortifications. The interior of the tower and the exhibit areas will be accessible from the Park through one of the original tower doors. This entrance will also provide access to the archeological site behind Burg al-Mahruq at the original, much lower street level. The archaeological remains of the old street, which include the original paving, an ancient archway and remains of a cemetery will be covered by a walkway, allowing for the continued use of Burg al-Zafar Street as a pedestrian thoroughfare. On the Park side, at the foot of the western slope, a new amphitheatre outside the tower will be used for open-air performances, where Burg al-Mahruq and the eastern Ayyubid Wall form a very suggestive backdrop.



(Top) Section through Burg al-Mahruq following its proposed conversion into an exhibit area accessible from the Park. (Above) View of the below-level archaeological exhibit on the city-side of the bastion. The remains of the medieval street and recently found arched passage are displayed.

URBAN HUSBANDRY IN THE ASLAM NEIGHBOURHOOD



(Top) The former school as it appears today after its restoration and conversion into the Darb al-Ahmar Community Centre. (Above) The former Darb Shoughlan School, located at the edge of the Aslam neighbourhood and close to the historic wall, as it appeared before its rehabilitation and adaptive re-use.

THE ASLAM NEIGHBOURHOOD, a densely built-up quarter east of Bab Zuwayla, the former southern gate to the old Fatimid City, occupies the eastern edge of the Darb al-Ahmar district. It is notable both for its turn-of-the-century architecture and its role as a hub of artisan activity. The neighbourhood's principal focus and only open space is Aslam Square, located just inside the Ayubbid Wall's al-Mahruq Gate. The square contains a rich array of social and economic activities and is distinguished by a fourteenth-century Mamluk monument, the Aslam al-Silahdar Mosque, still used by local residents. The neighbourhood's productive base remains fairly active, if struggling, with a large number of small artisans' workshops engaged in carpentry, shoemaking, inlay cabinetry and metalwork. In addition, there are many shops catering to the daily needs of residents, as well as numerous coffee shops and bakeries.

Like other parts of Darb al-Ahmar, the area has witnessed socio-economic decline and increasing deterioration, aggravated by the 1992 earthquake when many residents were forced to abandon their houses. The local workshops are losing ground to better-equipped competitors in other parts of Cairo. They suffer from a lack of capital to expand their businesses and tend to produce items of poor quality as they struggle to find a wider market for their products.

The Aslam neighbourhood stands to gain considerably from the recently completed al-Azhar Park. The Ayyubid city gate, Bab al-Mahruq, will provide a second link between the Park and Darb al-Ahmar, bringing visitors and stimulating the local economy. In addition, the view of the Park from this section of Darb al-Ahmar will no doubt encourage the development of many of the ruined plots in the area—currently used as informal rubbish tips. The transformation of these plots from unsightly health hazards into new residential and commercial space will improve the area in every sense, and, in turn, attract more investment in adjacent locations.

In order to bring about significant improvements in the conditions of the neighbourhood, AKTC has undertaken various initiatives since 2001, including a solid waste collection and management programme as well as apprenticeship and employment programmes. In particular, AKTC has established a lime production centre and a carpentry workshop in the neighbourhood, which provide on-the-job training and employment for local carpenters and construction workers engaged in AKTC's restoration projects and in the production of furniture for project buildings and facilities. As of 2005, both have become part of AKTC's vocational training programme.

Recently, the ruin of a prominent turn-of-the-century building, which later housed a school, has been restored and now contains the Darb al-Ahmar Community Centre. The many social initiatives of the centre include educational, cultural and women's activities, as well as a library and media room for children and teenagers. In addition, eleven residential structures, mostly along Darb Shoughlan Street, have been rehabilitated with local residents contributing to the rehabilitation costs. This initiative provides a sense of what the area would look like if fully rehabilitated and maintained, and has raised considerable interest among residents. Numerous applications for housing rehabilitation loans are currently pending and testify to the willingness of local inhabitants to invest in their homes. Finally, AKTC is completing the restoration of the twelfth-century eastern Ayyubid city wall that forms the eastern edge of the Aslam neighbourhood. The restored wall will include a visitors' circuit along the ramparts and restoration of the historic al-Mahruq gate. Together these interventions form a sound base for the development of further actions in the area.

Unlike Burg al-Zafar, where substantial public and private investment is required to achieve meaningful results, the strategy pursued in this neighbourhood concentrates on small-scale interventions. These target areas of opportunity, particularly where physical improvements can help foster economic growth and community initiatives. By promoting local pride and contributing to the stability of the area, these interventions are ideally suited to counteracting the current pattern of abandonment and disinvestment. This planning approach has been termed "urban husbandry" as it expresses a reliance on managing and carefully developing what already exists, rather than demolishing and building anew. Its strategy consists of promoting small, incremental improvements rather than a radical transformation of the social and physical context.



(Top) One of the many workshops found in the Aslam neighbourhood. Although fairly active, workshops in the area are in need of capital and struggle to find suitable outlets for their products. (Above) The children's library is one of several social services recently established in the Darb al-Ahmar Community Centre.

Model of the Aslam Neighbourhood Action Area showing the principal interventions envisaged by AKTC:

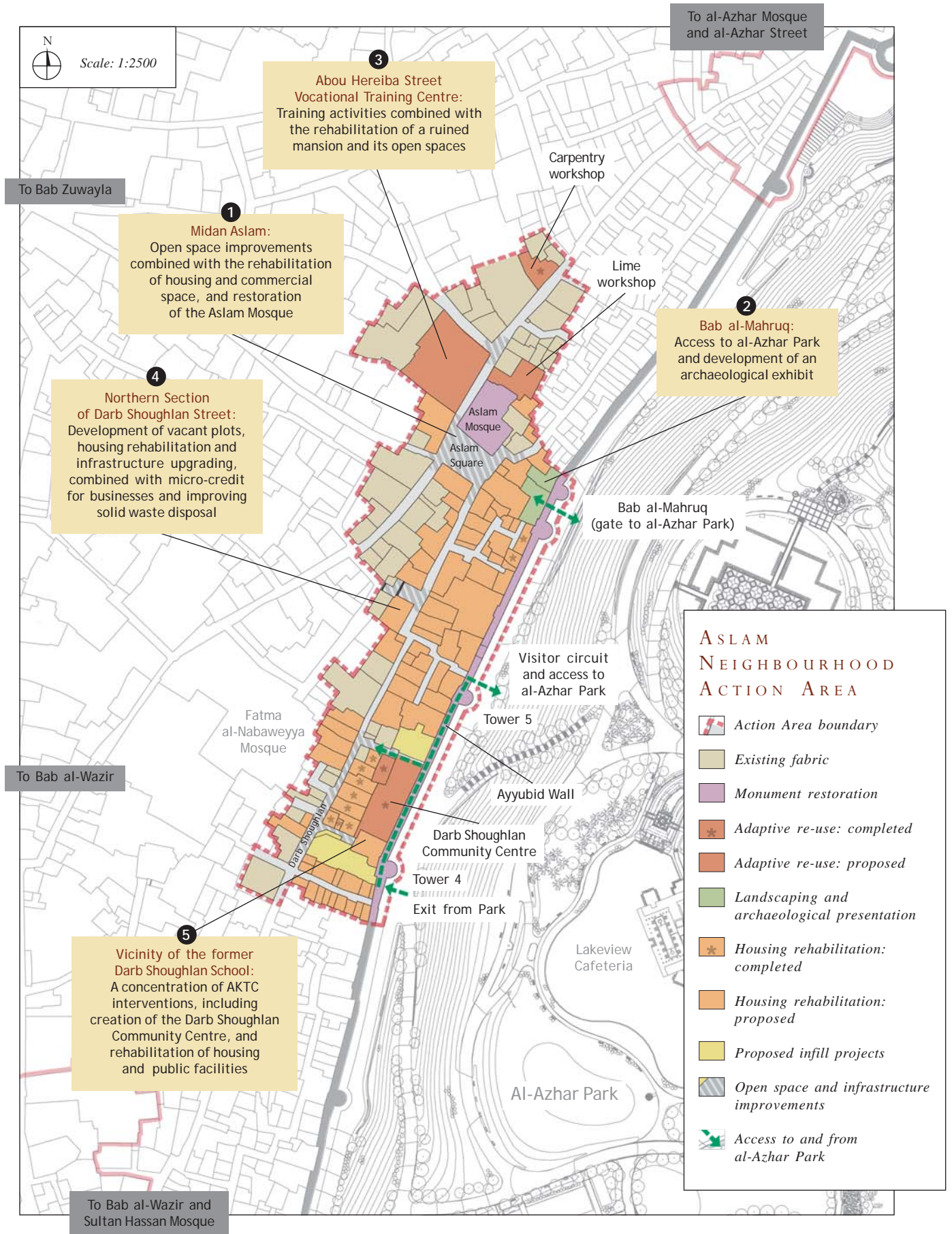
- ① Aslam Square
- ② Bab al-Mahruq
- ③ The Abou Hureiba Street Vocational Training Centre
- ④ Northern Section of Darb Shoughlan Street
- ⑤ Vicinity of the former Darb Shoughlan School

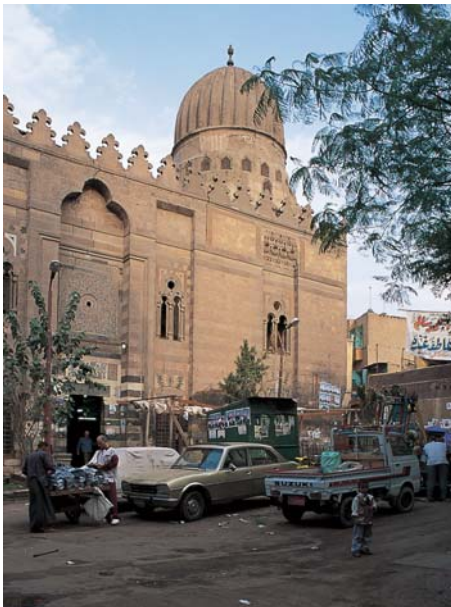
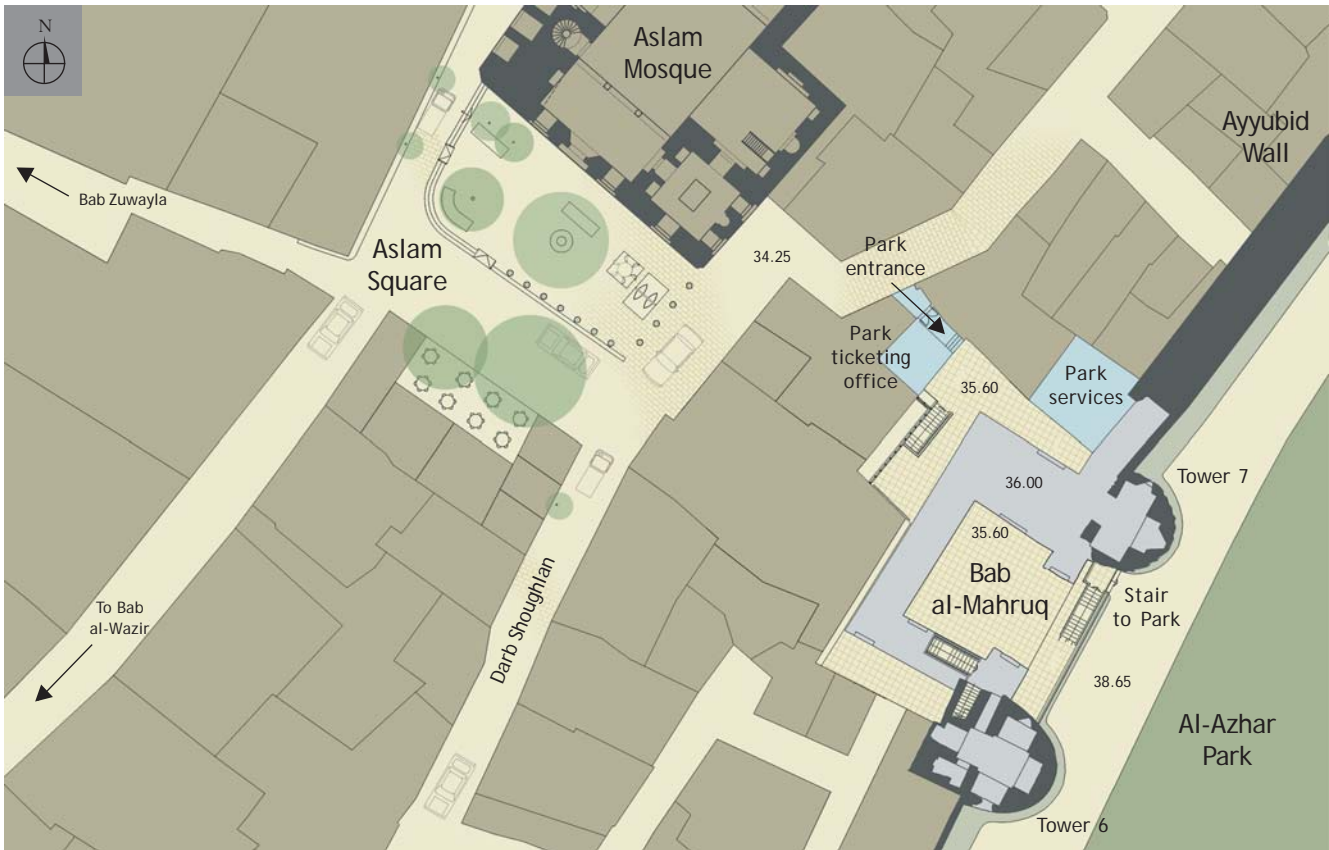
In the Aslam neighbourhood, AKTC foresees that institutional support, housing rehabilitation and the development of social services in combination with private investment sympathetic to the historic context will gradually turn the area into an attractive corner of the old city. Residents will benefit from improved physical and economic conditions and better services and facilities, and visitors will be attracted by the combination of significant historic monuments and the proximity of al-Azhar Park with its 70 acres of green, restaurants, play areas and magnificent panoramas of Cairo. In order to bring the revitalization of the Aslam neighbourhood to full fruition, AKTC has identified a series of initiatives in the following locations within the neighbourhood, which build upon and expand the projects already ongoing.

BAB AL-MAHRUQ AND ASLAM SQUARE

Aslam Square and the Ayyubid al-Mahruq gate together form an important node, providing a connection with al-Azhar Park on one side and the rest of Darb al-Ahmar and downtown Cairo on the other.







(Top) A plan showing the proposals for Aslam Square and the Mahruq Gate, which establish a connection between the Park and Darb al-Ahmar.

(Above) A recent view of Aslam Square.

Aslam Square

The improvement of the square aims at creating an attractive and well-maintained public space on the city side, thus reinforcing the connection between the Park and other parts of Darb al-Ahmar. AKTC proposes to:

- Restore the Aslam Mosque, a highly valued community facility and prominent local landmark. Restoration of the mosque will have an immediate impact on the quality of the surrounding urban environment.
- Rehabilitate the houses around Aslam Square, enhancing the view of the square from the Park and enticing visitors to venture down the Park's western slope to enter and explore the old city.
- Upgrade the public space within the square itself—infrastructure and paving—and create new seating areas and a pedestrian area in front of the mosque.
- Issue micro-credit loans to boost local retail businesses (coffee shops, groceries, retail shops) around the square, including establishment of a cafeteria or restaurant on one of the rooftops along the eastern side of the square.
- Promote the square, gate, and link to the Park in guidebook itineraries and walks through Historic Cairo, especially towards Bab Zuwayla to the east and the Blue Mosque and Citadel to the south.

The Mahruq Gate

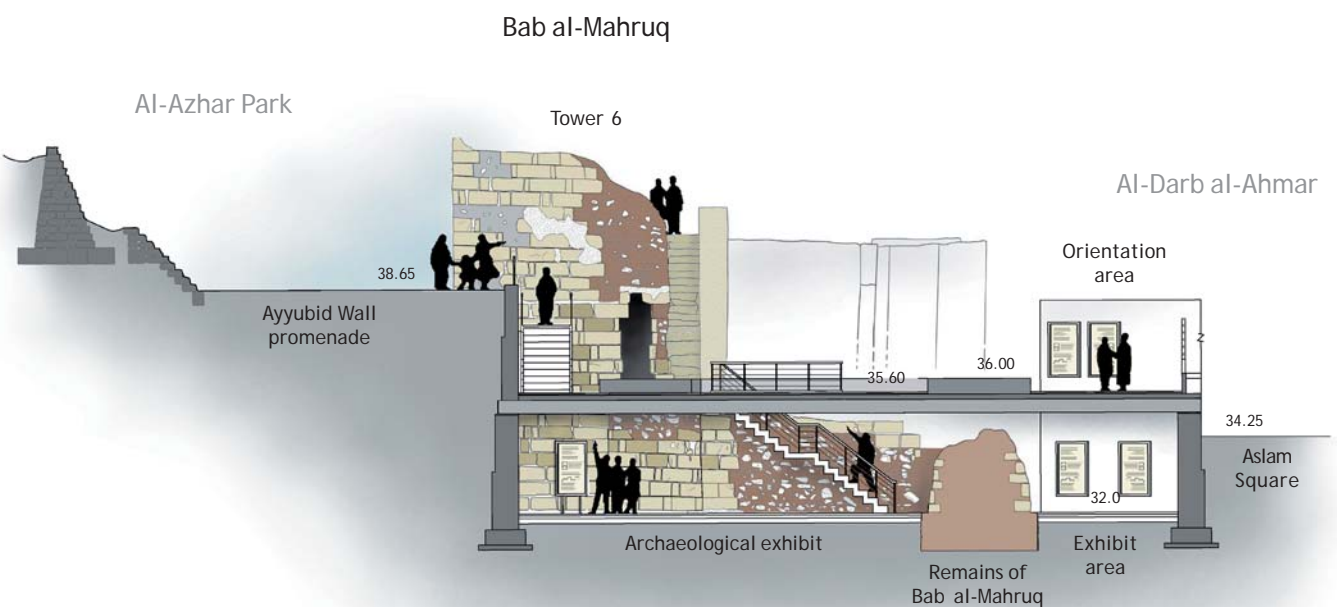
The restoration of the gate will complement the work carried out in the adjacent public square by establishing an entry point into al-Azhar Park. Recent archeological work has revealed the original layout of the gateway. Given its state of ruin—only fragmentary evidence has come to the surface—and the importance of creating a link here between the Park and Darb al-Ahmar, AKTC proposes to:

- Stabilise the gateway as an archeological ruin and create a protective platform over the remains found at the base of the gate. The space below the platform, accessible via two stairs, will house an exhibit about the history and significance of the gate and display the archaeological findings, including the many ceramics and the pipe-making kiln unearthed in one of the towers.
- Use the platform built over the gate as an open “piazza” connecting Aslam Square to the Park and provide seating that reflects the geometry of the gate.
- Re-use the existing one-story structure at the northern end of the plaza to house toilets and a kiosk under the management of al-Azhar Park, to sell refreshments and small items of interest to visitors.

The gate will thus become a visitor attraction, allowing park visitors to enter the neighbourhood through Bab al-Mahruq and return to the park from one of the other Darb al-Ahmar gates. It will be publicised as a visitor destination, with signs posted in the Park and in Aslam Square to encourage visitors to enter the neighbourhood from the gate and *vice versa*. Transport inside the Park will connect Bab al-Mahruq to other points in the Park, especially the



(Above) A view of the proposed Bab al-Mahruq open “piazza” above the gate’s archaeological remains as seen from the Azhar Park. This space connects Aslam Square to the park and provides seated areas and follow the geometry of the vanished gate. (Below) Section through the “piazza” showing the interior of the towers and the level below grade, which are accessible to visitors.





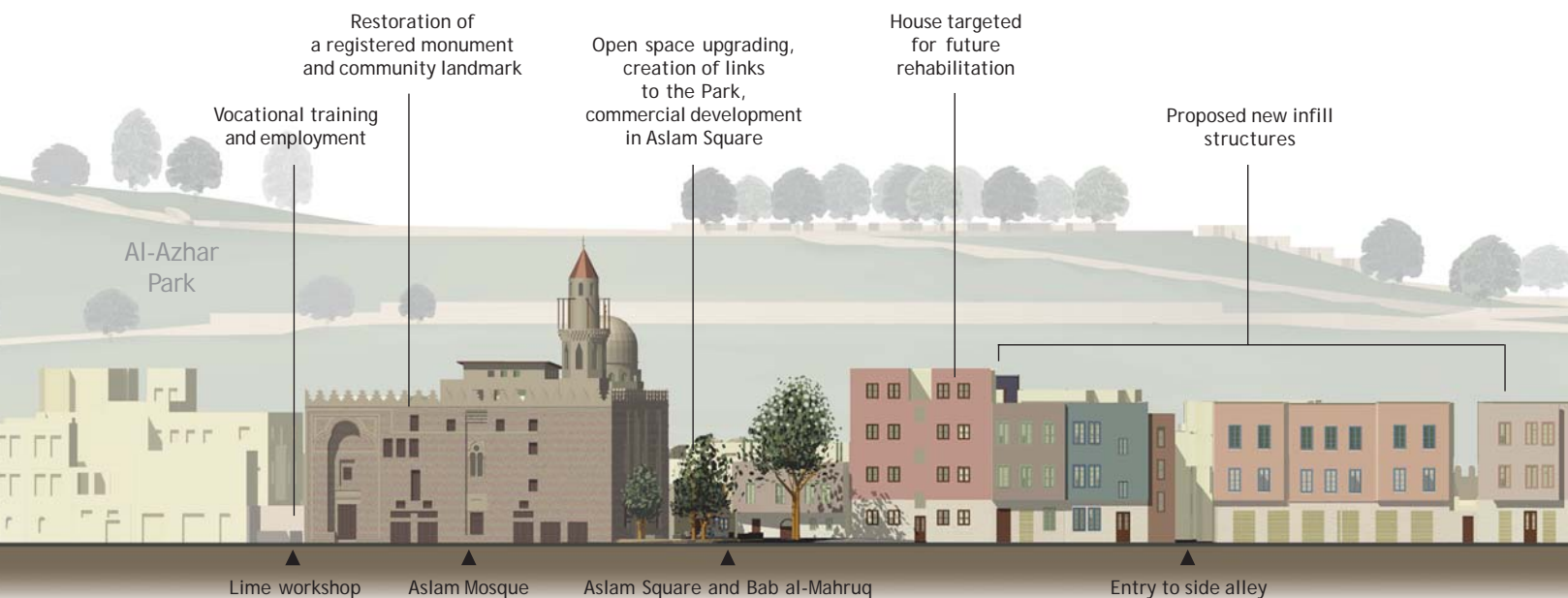
(Top) The carpentry workshop was established in 2001 to serve as a training and production facility for AKTC's projects in Darb al-Ahmar and al-Azhar Park. (Above) The lime production workshop provides a steady supply of lime for AKTC's restoration activities.

higher-ground areas—restaurants, children's playground and sports field—and avoid the steep western slope being perceived as an obstacle, especially by elderly visitors and families with young children.

THE ABOU HUREIBA STREET VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

The scheme focuses on the eastern end of Abu Hureiba Street, a long street linking the Aslam neighbourhood to Bab Zuwayla and, eventually, downtown Cairo. In this vicinity, AKTC has already established two workshops: a carpentry shop and a lime workshop. The first provides on-the-job training for young apprentice carpenters making traditional fittings for the buildings under restoration, as well as furniture for the new Park and Community Centre. The lime workshop produces the lime required for AKTC's restoration activities.

These training activities are contributing to employment generation in the area and to the establishment of a group of skilled artisans who will be able to work on rehabilitation and construction projects throughout historic Cairo. Opportunities for future work are not lacking as so many of the houses are in poor condition, not to mention the large number of vacant plots that could in future be redeveloped as housing. Future initiatives aimed at expanding vocational training and employment in this area include the proposed establishment of a training centre specialising in construction. A suitable site for the centre has been identified in a ruined nineteenth-century mansion with a courtyard large enough to accommodate teaching sessions and demonstrations. The structure itself can be rehabilitated as part of the training process. A nearby vacant lot could be used as a car-park for delivery vehicles to the centre and to prevent informal parking in Aslam Square.



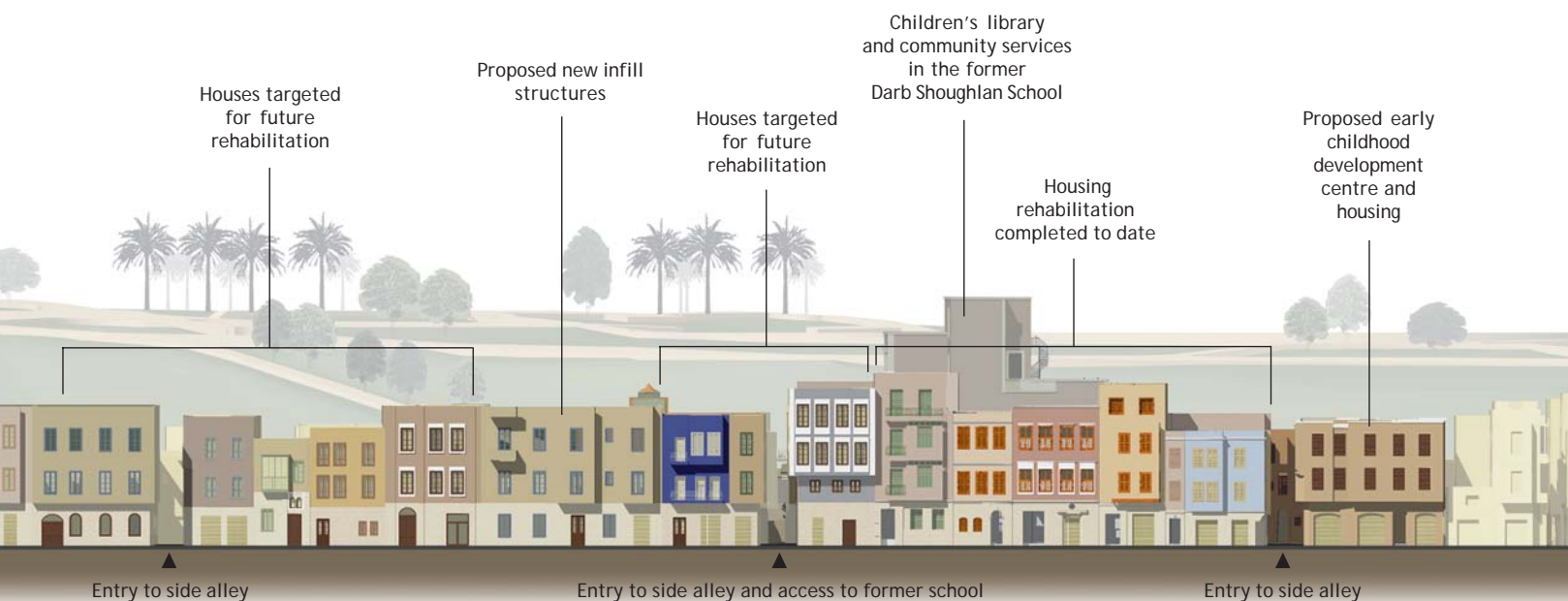
THE NORTHERN SECTION OF DARB SHOUGHLAN STREET

The northern section of Darb Shoughlan Street connects Bab al-Mahruq, Aslam Square and the Darb Shoughlan Community Centre, AKTC's major intervention in the area. This stretch contains several vacant plots and derelict houses. The ground floors are often used as workshops, even if the upper floors have collapsed. These buildings can be seen as an opportunity for small-scale private investment rather than the object of continued donor funding. In particular, AKTC proposes to:

- Encourage the development of the vacant plots and rehabilitation of the derelict houses by providing credit and technical assistance to property owners and local investors.
- Carry out the structural repairs and partial rehabilitation of the houses abutting or immediately adjacent to the Ayyubid Wall.
- Upgrade the infrastructure and paving along this section of Darb Shoughlan Street, including drainage, sewage, electricity and water connections to individual houses.
- Improve collection and disposal of solid waste along Darb Shoughlan with the cooperation of the residents and in coordination with ENSER, the company responsible for solid waste removal in this area.
- Provide micro-credit business loans to existing workshops and develop vacant commercial properties along the street as retail outlets for local products.



(Above) An infill prototype for a residential building in Darb Shoughlan Street using proportions and forms which are compatible with the character of the traditional buildings found in the area. (Below) Elevation of Darb Shoughlan Street showing the work completed and the other interventions planned by AKTC.



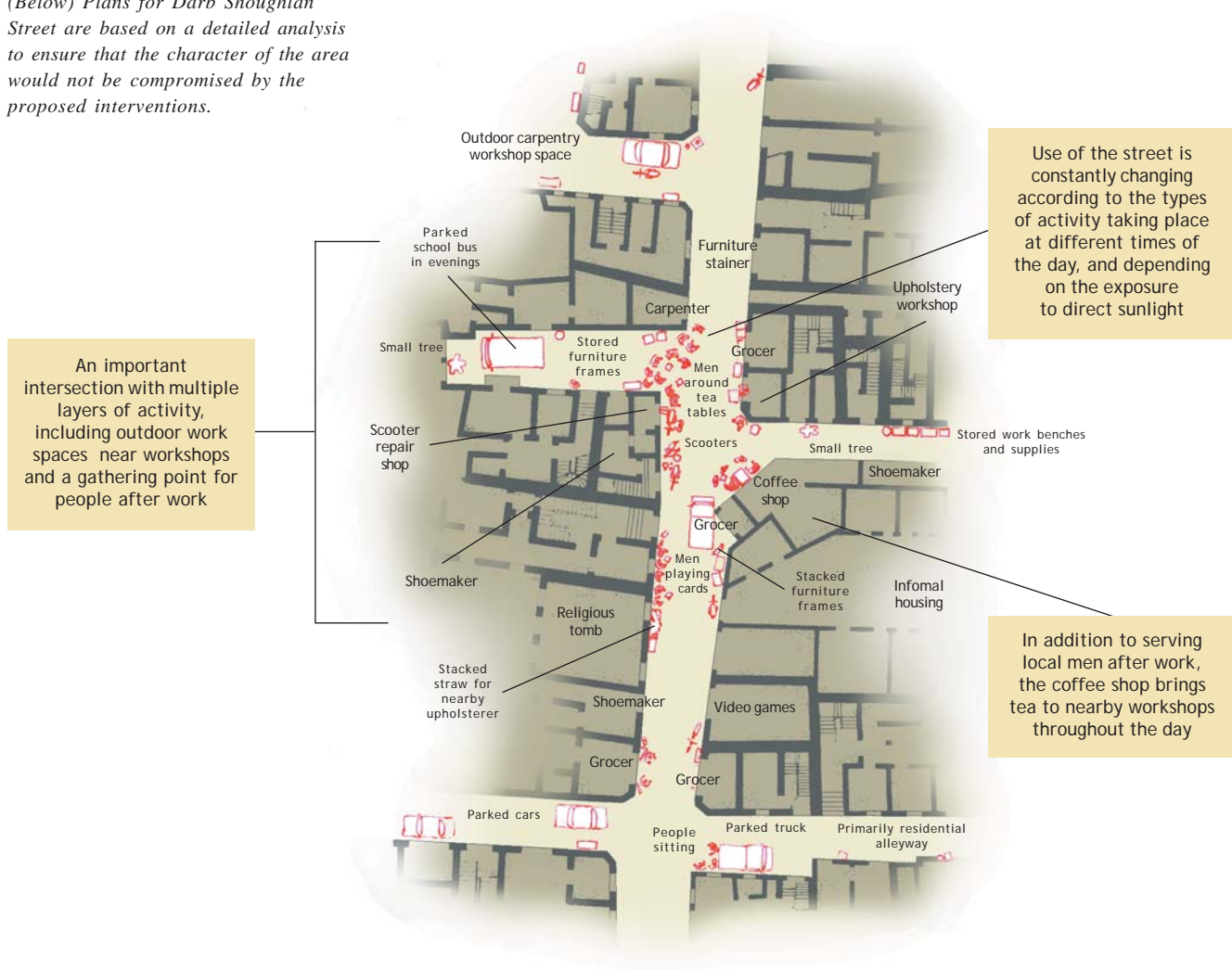


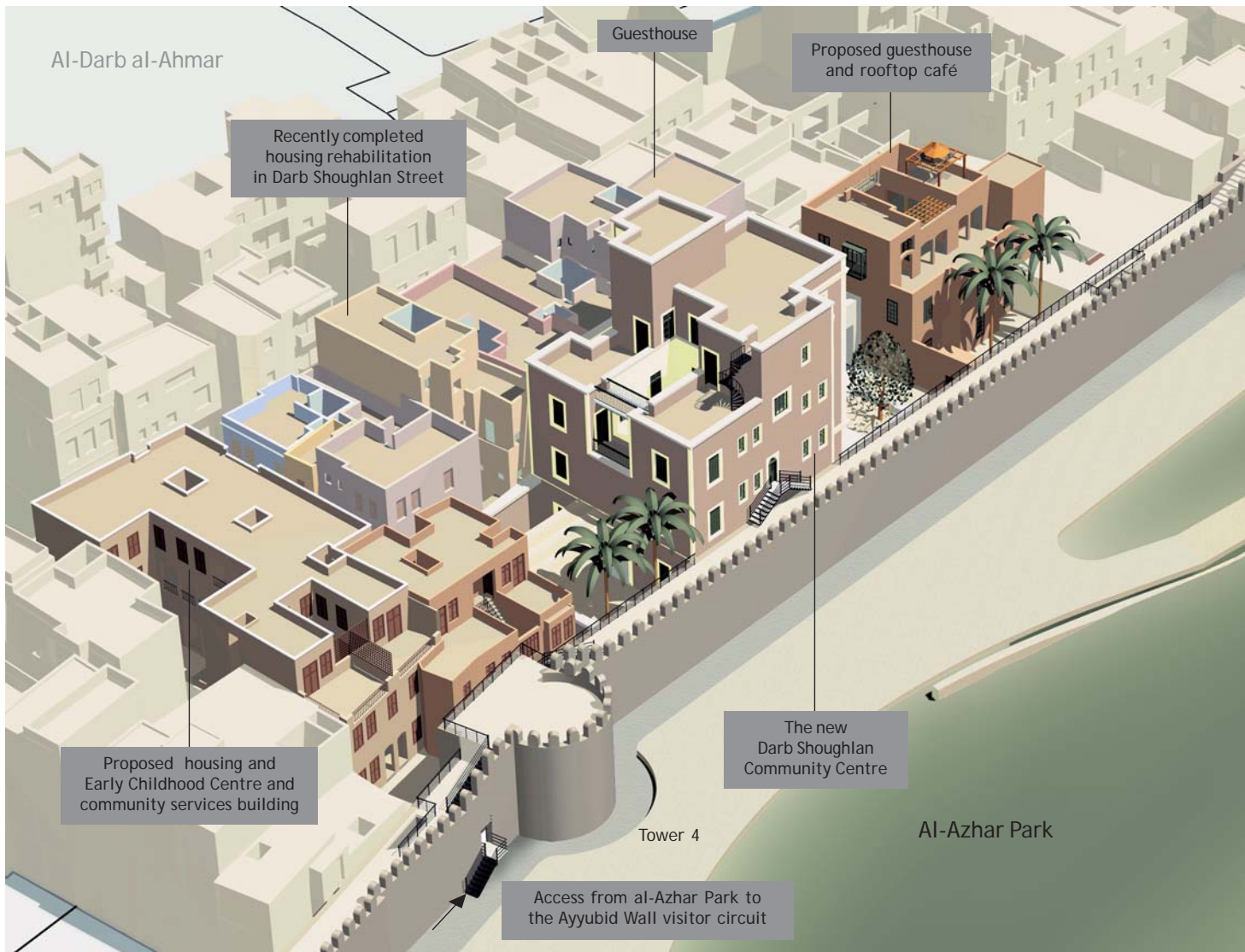
(Above) View of the houses in Darb Shoughlan recently rehabilitated by AKTC with a combination of grants and housing loans to the residents.
(Below) Plans for Darb Shoughlan Street are based on a detailed analysis to ensure that the character of the area would not be compromised by the proposed interventions.

VICINITY OF THE FORMER DARB SHOUGHLAN SCHOOL

AKTC and its partners have invested considerable resources here with the establishment of the Darb Shoughlan Community Centre, the rehabilitation of ten private houses through a combination of grants and loans, and the restoration of approximately two hundred metres of Cairo's historic city wall. The latter includes the creation of a visitor circuit with access to the ramparts and the interior towers and passages. Finally, a plot adjacent to the new Darb Shoughlan Community Centre is being converted into a guesthouse based on the positive findings of a pre-investment feasibility study. Future initiatives propose to:

- Rehabilitate a one-storey structure immediately north of the Darb Shoughlan Community Centre to house small commercial outlets and a rooftop café. The rooftop is currently rented by AKTC and used for storage. These facilities would be in close proximity to the Darb Shoughlan Centre with views of the Park and direct access to the visitor circuit, and could thus offer facilities, such as refreshments and restrooms, that are not available in this section of Darb al-Ahmar or the southwestern section of the Park.





- Develop a semi-ruined plot, owned by the Ministry of Religious Endowment and informally occupied by poor residents, immediately south of the new Community Centre and adjacent to the historic Ayyubid Wall, as a mixed-use residential and community services building. The proposed development would accommodate the existing families on the upper two stories, following traditional precedents for housing in Cairo (the *rab'*—usually a duplex unit). A kindergarten is proposed for the ground floor with a connection to the newly established Community Centre, formerly a primary school. There is a general lack of children's facilities in the district and their creation has been identified as a priority by the residents.

- Preserve an open, unbuilt strip parallel to the Ayyubid Wall to maintain the integrity of the wall and provide an open-air play area for the kindergarten. The children's library and computer facilities, currently located in the adjacent Darb Shoughlan Community Centre, will complement the kindergarten's facilities.

A model projecting the final aspect of the area near the former Darb Shoughlan School upon completion of the proposed interventions. Over half of the programme has been completed, including restoration of the Ayyubid Wall, conversion of the former school into a community centre, and the rehabilitation of eight residential buildings.

MONUMENTS AS CATALYSTS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN BAB AL-WAZIR



(Top) The mosque and minaret of Khayer Bek is part of a larger monumental complex under restoration by AKTC. (Above) Cleaning and restoration of the decorated shaft of the Khayer Bek minaret was a painstaking endeavour.

THE BAB AL-WAZIR area makes up the southern section of the Darb al-Ahmar District. Its main spine, Darb al-Ahmar Street, connecting the Fatimid City with the Ayyubid Citadel, is lined with splendid medieval mosques and historic houses constructed between the thirteenth and the nineteenth centuries. In the last century, however, the neighbourhood witnessed a steady social and economic decline, with a negative impact on the monuments and the urban fabric as a whole.

Since inception of al-Azhar Park in 1997, AKTC has worked to strengthen the links between the Park and the Bab al-Wazir area, envisioning the Park as a means to helping reverse the area's decline. To this end, AKTC started with a number of key monuments in the neighbourhood, notably the restoration of the Khayrbek complex and the rehabilitation of the madrasa of Um al-Sultan Shaaban.

These projects demonstrated that the restoration of significant historic buildings can bring about the social improvement of an impoverished neighbourhood. Not only does restoration preserve and improve important community assets, it also provides an opportunity for social and economic development by creating

jobs for local residents, training in traditional crafts, and by re-establishing the intangible link between a community and its monuments. The physical links are equally important in Darb al-Ahmar's development, and AKTC is currently constructing a gateway to connect al-Azhar Park and the Bab al-Wazir area.

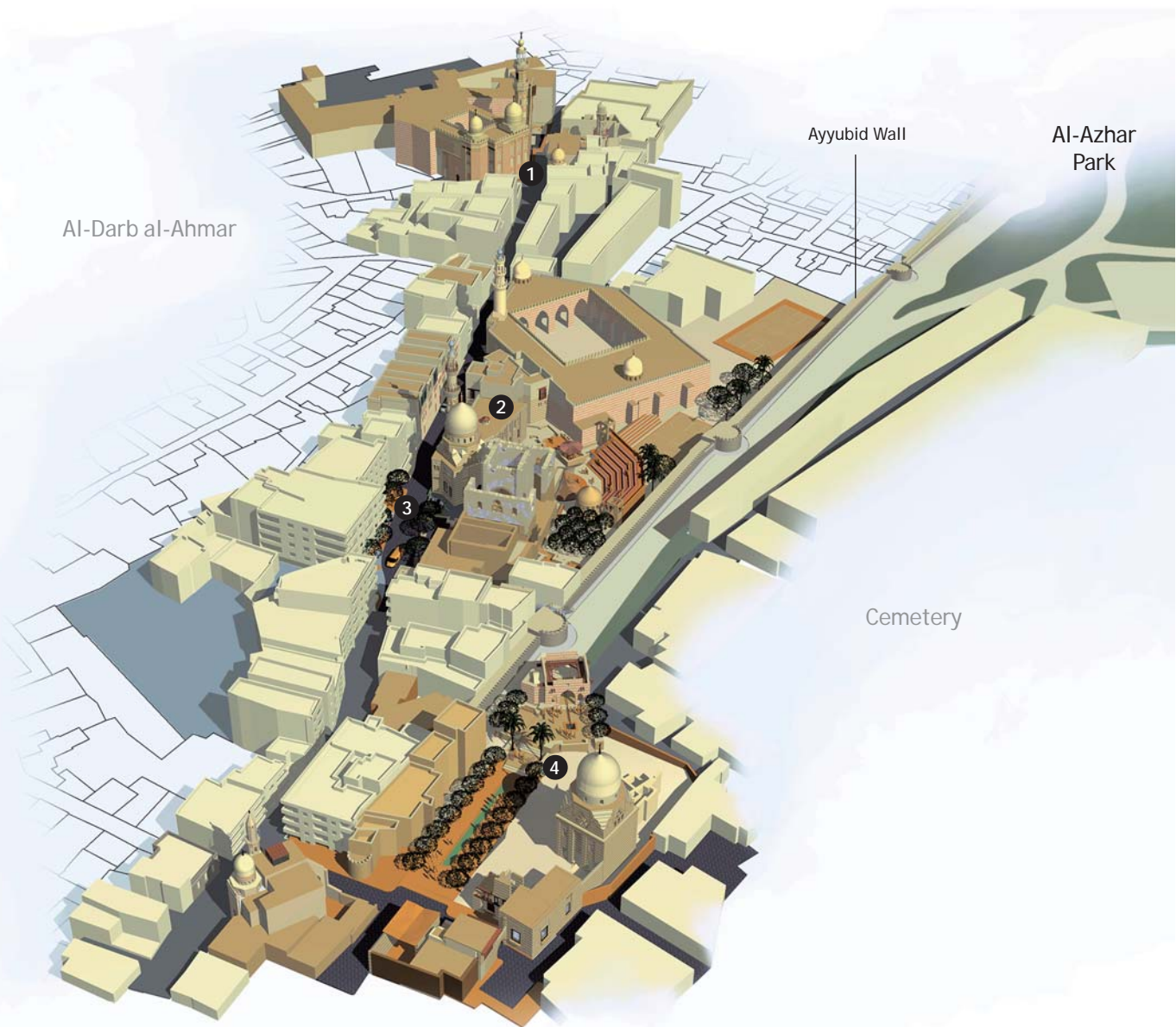
During the second phase, AKTC foresees a larger-scale development plan for the neighbourhood, aimed at improving and developing the area's public infrastructure and open spaces, and creating better conditions for private investment. To drive urban development in the Bab al-Wazir area a combination of interventions is proposed involving monuments, public open spaces and housing of historic interest. In parallel, selected commercial activities in the adjacent urban fabric, such as coffee shops and workshops, are to be promoted as economic development activities.

Today, many of the open spaces surrounding the historic buildings are neglected and have been turned into informal rubbish dumps. Planning the use of these public spaces and encouraging the development of ruined buildings and vacant plots is essential in order to sustain any upgrading or restoration work in the area. Moreover, such spaces can help create nodes linking the different AKTC projects.

Housing rehabilitation activities are seen as a complement to the restoration of monuments and the schemes to improve open spaces. Individual housing rehabilitation projects are selected according to location with respect to the open spaces earmarked for upgrading and the historic and architectural value of the houses in question.



(Top) The minaret of the fourteenth-century Um al-Sultan Shaaban Mosque has recently been restored by AKTC, including reconstruction of its top pavilion. (Above) Restoration work in the Khayer Bek complex: a wood conservation workshop was set up on site to restore the numerous mashrabiyya screens found throughout the complex. (Below left) The ongoing cleaning and restoration of a decorated wooden ceiling.



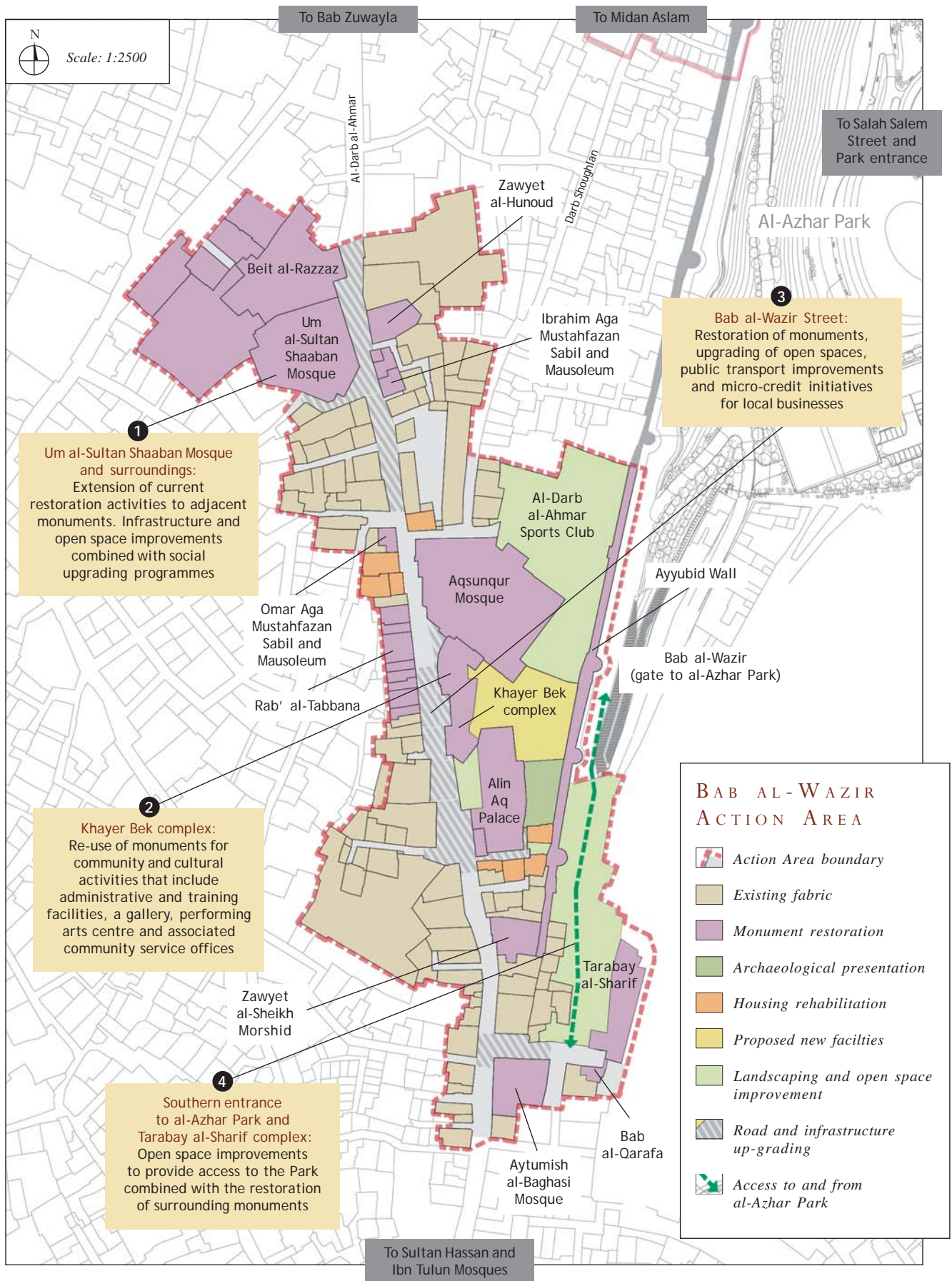
Model of the Bab al-Wazir Action Area showing the principal interventions envisaged by AKTC:

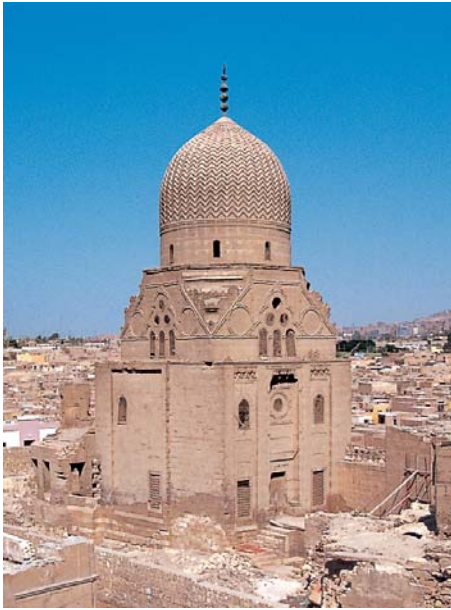
- ① *Um al-Sultan Shaaban Mosque and surroundings*
- ② *Khayer Bek complex*
- ③ *Bab al-Wazir Street*
- ④ *Southern entrance to al-Azhar Park and the Tarabay al-Sharif complex*

In order to achieve the above-mentioned development objectives and implement the complementary programmes needed to up-grade the Bab al-Wazir area, AKTC has identified a series of initiatives to be carried out with other institutional partners and private investors. These have been divided into the following clusters of activities on the basis of their location within the area:

THE SOUTHERN ENTRANCE TO AL-AZHAR PARK AND THE TARABAY AL-SHARIF COMPLEX

This area is a connecting point between Bab al-Wazir, al-Azhar Park and the Ayyubid Wall, and has excellent views of the adjacent Tarabay Mausoleum and the Alin Aq Palace. It will become the main southern gateway to the Park, providing direct access for local residents and offering park visitors an opportunity to explore al-Darb al-Ahmar. Given the area's location and its historical significance, AKTC proposes to:



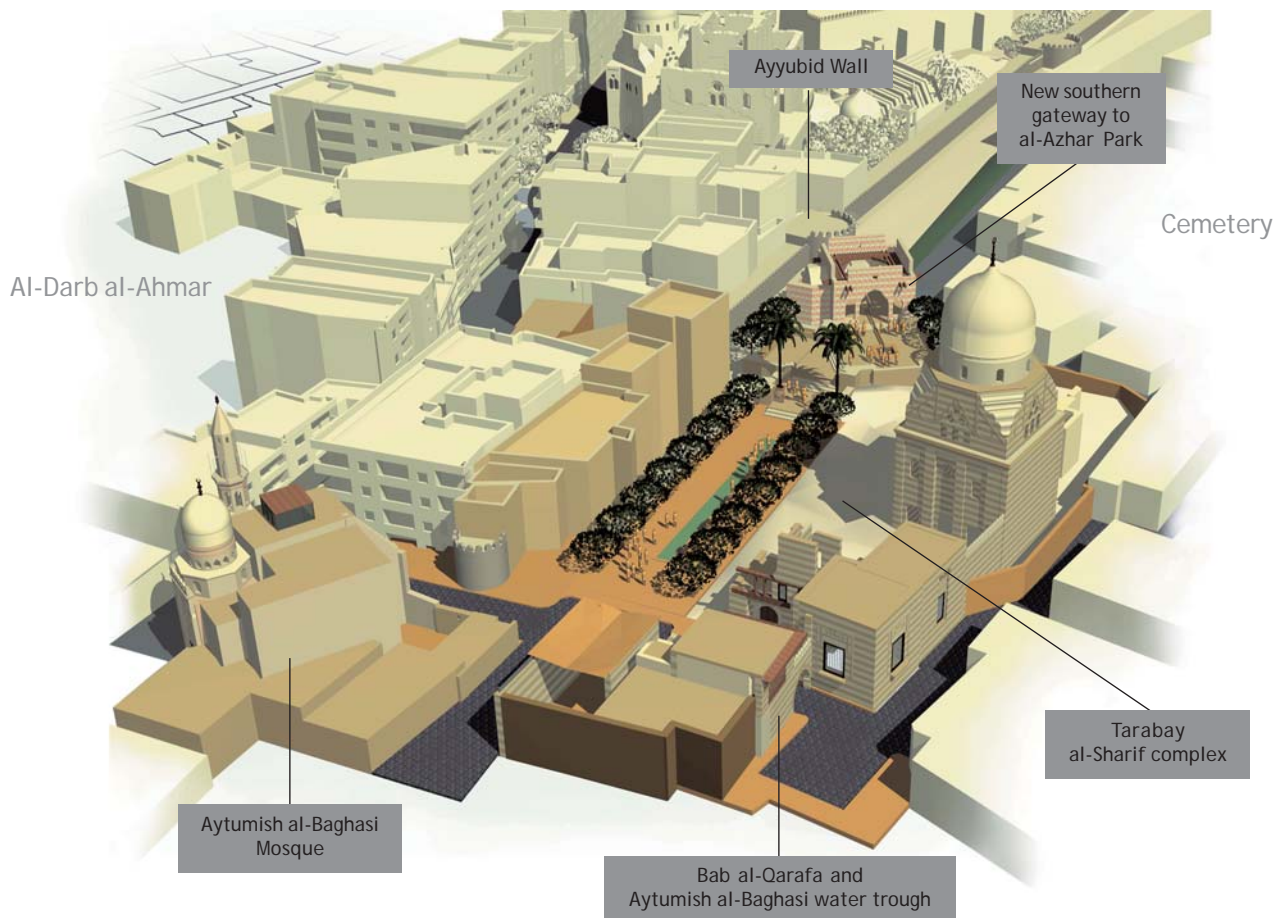


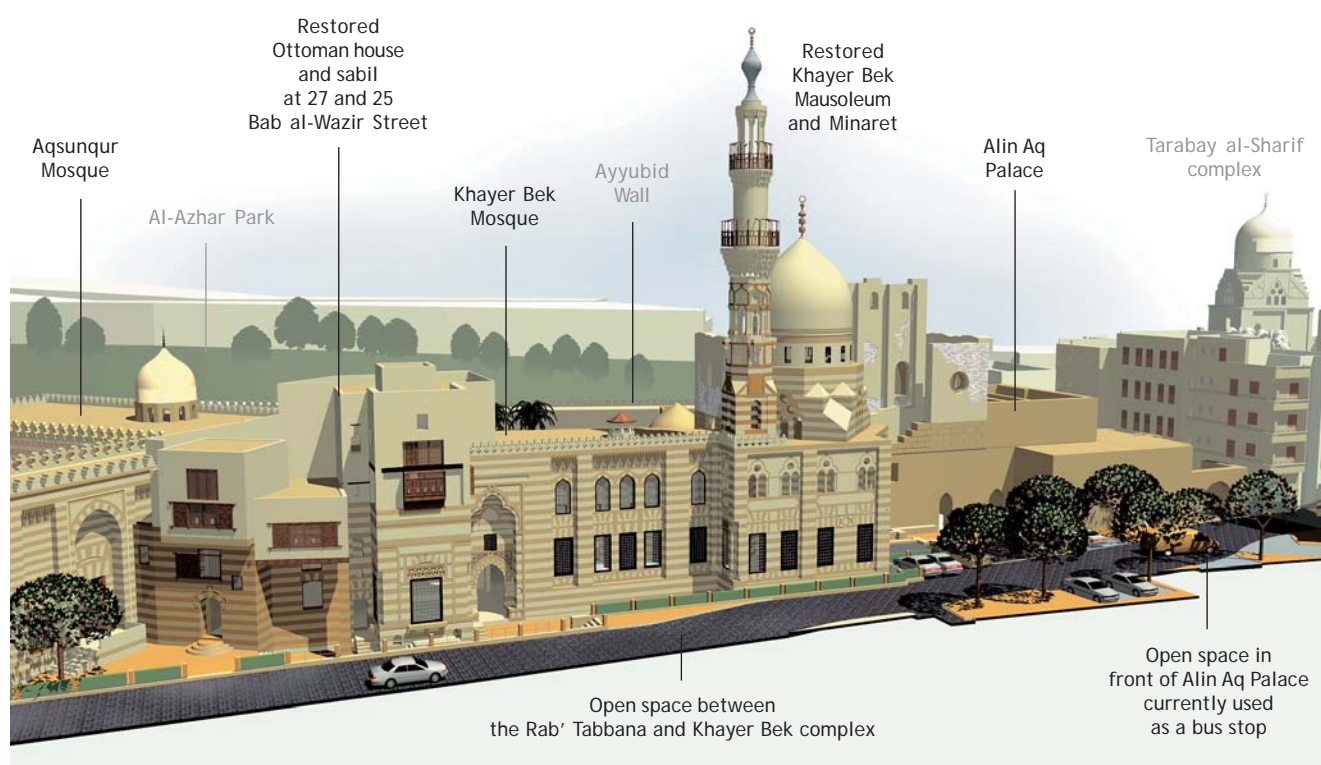
(Above) The Tarabay al-Sharif complex as it appears today. (Below) Model showing the proposed new southern gateway overlooking the Tarabay complex.

- Restore the Tarabay al-Sharif complex (built in 1503) and the historic Bab al-Wazir Gate and clean up the surrounding area, which has been used for years as a rubbish dump. The water trough adjacent to Bab al-Wazir will be re-used as an information point.

- In parallel, restore the Aytumish al-Baghasi Mosque, founded in 1383, and retain the building's use as a neighbourhood mosque. In addition to the mosque's historic significance and community value, it forms an important visual landmark along al-Darb al-Ahmar Street. Moreover, it marks the entrance to the Tarabay area as well as the future southern entrance to al-Azhar Park.

- Create a southern entrance to al-Azhar Park from the Bab al-Wazir neighbourhood. This will involve a general cleaning of the area and the introduction of street furniture, paving, lighting, as well as the re-organisation of pedestrian circulation. The design for the southern gateway itself calls for the creation of an axis aligned with the Khayer Bek minaret and includes a terrace overlooking the complex of Tarabay, thereby creating a viewing point and circulation node in a key location overlooking the area's monuments. As this entrance will be directly connected to the Park, it will attract visitors to the Bab al-Wazir neighbourhood, boosting the area's commercial activities and promoting the historical and cultural resources of the area.





THE KHAYER BEK COMPLEX AND ITS OPEN SPACES

The restoration of the Khayer Bek complex is one of AKTC's key initiatives, comprising the Mamluk palace of Alin Aq, the mosque, the mausoleum and sabil-kuttab of Khayrbek and two Ottoman houses, covering a total area of approximately 8,000 square metres.

The boundaries of the Khayer Bek complex extend to the Ayyubid Wall and include a large open area currently used as a community sports club and storage area. Given its location adjacent to the southern gate to al-Azhar Park and next to the monuments of the Khayer Bek complex, this open area is ideal for re-use as an open-air theatre for the local community. Combined with improvements to the existing sports club, this cultural facility would not only attract local residents but also Park visitors and tourists who could attend a variety of local events.

The initiative would ameliorate the area's social and cultural level while offering residents a wide range of upgraded community services. In particular, AKTC proposes the following for the Khayer Bek complex and its adjacent open spaces:

- Complete the restoration of the Khayer Bek Mosque to render this outstanding monument a major tourist attraction and finalise the restoration and reconstruction of the two Ottoman houses (Nos. 25 and 27) in Bab al-Wazir Street for re-use as community service offices.

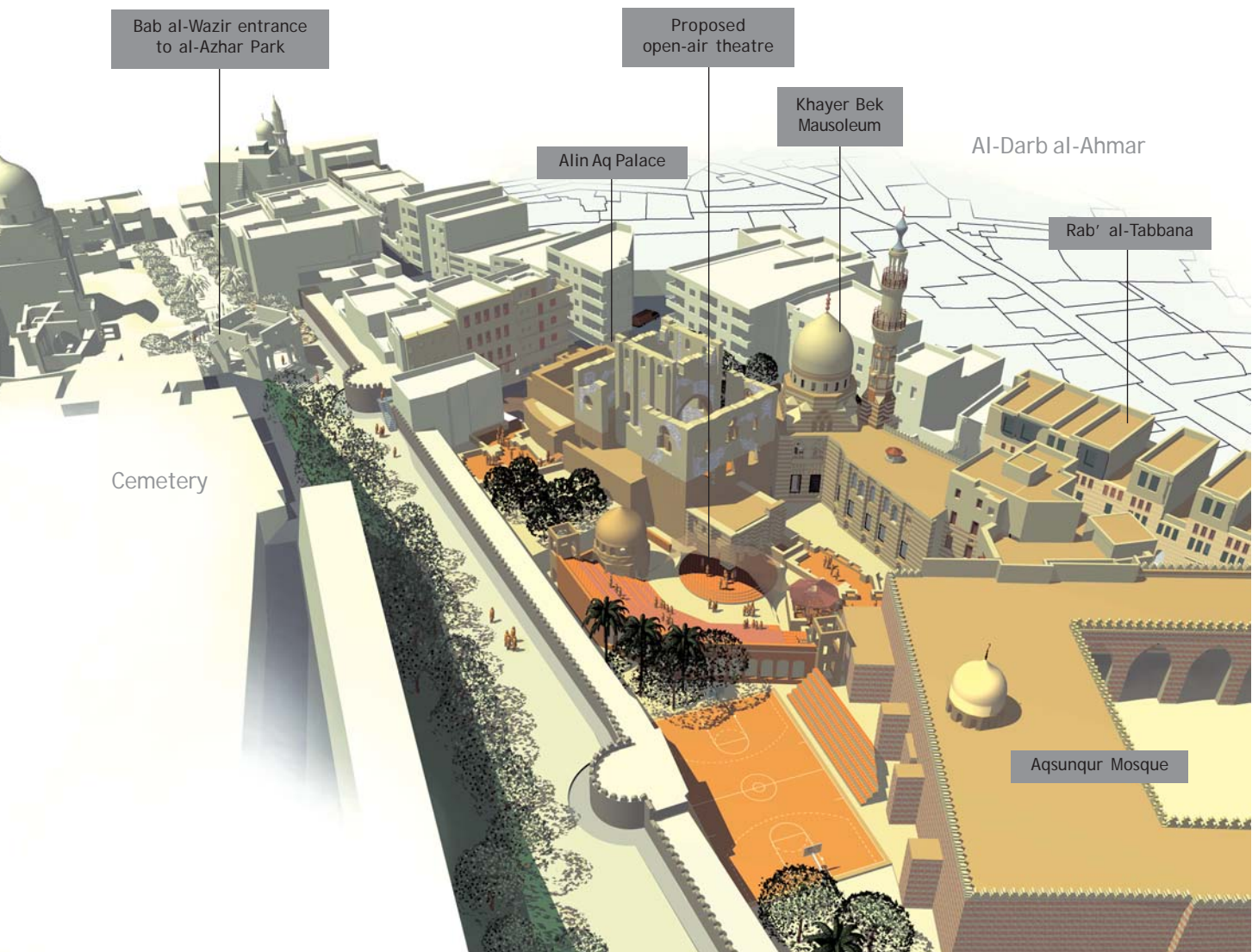
The proposed improvement of Bab al-Wazir Street near the Khayer Bek complex. The plan foresees the remodelling of the street and its related open spaces in conjunction with the restoration of monuments and the adaptive re-use of the historic buildings lining the street.

- Stabilise and rehabilitate the Mamluk palace of Alin Aq in preparation for its possible re-use as exhibition space for traditional local arts and crafts. This space would be located on the ground floor, while the upper level of the palace is to be preserved as an archaeological ruin to serve as the backdrop for an enclosed performance area for musical events.

- Expand the existing on-site carpentry workshop, which trains local carpenters and provides restoration projects with high-quality fittings. This fast-growing workshop has initiated the revival of traditional carpentry and has helped develop the skills of local carpenters, enabling them to meet the high standards required for architectural conservation work.

Model showing the proposed re-use of the area behind the Khayer Bek complex including the proposed open-air theatre.

- Re-use the area at the back of the Khayer Bek complex as an open-air theatre. This cultural facility, currently lacking in the neighbourhood, is recommended in view of the area's unique location and suggestive atmosphere.



RESTORATION OF MONUMENTS AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE PUBLIC SPACES IN BAB AL-WAZIR

The section of Bab al-Wazir Street between the Wazir Gate and the Um al-Sultan Shaaban Mosque contains both monuments and houses of historic interest. Some of the monuments are registered, maintained and open to visitors, but many others are neglected and used as informal rubbish dumps. However the minarets of the Khayer Bek and Um al-Sultan Shaaban mosques, reconstructed by AKTC in 2003, form positive focal points and the restored facades already constitute a strong visual improvement of Bab al-Wazir Street.

As the main spine between the Citadel and the commercial area of Khan al-Khalili, Bab al-Wazir Street hosts a wide range of commercial activities that contribute to its vibrant character. By day, the street life is predominantly craftsmen and retail activities. In the evening, the coffee shops along the street animate the public spaces surrounding the illuminated monuments. However, the infrastructure along the street is in very poor condition. Blocked drains and burst pipes mean that water often flows down the street, while the poorly managed traffic has adverse effects on the area's socio-economic activities. Parked buses not only endanger the surrounding buildings but also weaken the social relationship between the public spaces and adjacent houses. A large number of houses along this section of the street date back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and although some have been partially modified, most still have their original features. Lacking proper protection, they may be subject to alteration or even demolition and replacement by modern concrete frame buildings that would destroy the integrity of the historic urban fabric.

In order to improve the condition of the buildings and the quality of the public space, while strengthening the economic and social fabric, AKTC proposes a number of initiatives. The first is to register a group of presently unlisted buildings on the SCA list of monuments. These include the Zawyet al-Sheikh Morshid, which was built in the fifteenth century. Currently in poor condition, the former shrine is being used as an informal rubbish dump by the surrounding houses. The other significant structure is the Rab' al-Tabbana, a traditional residential building constructed in 1522 in front of the Khayer Bek complex. The latter is four storeys high and consists of fourteen vertical units accessible from the rear façade. Uncontrolled modifications by individual owners, however, have led to the partial destruction of the *rab'*: Several of the units have recently been pulled down and new buildings have replaced these, without any reference to the old building's architectural and historical value. AKTC proposes to re-use the *rab'* as a community facility. The rehabilitated *rab'* and the restored Khayer Bek complex together constitute an important piece of a larger redevelopment plan for the area.



(Top) This food stand in Bab al-Wazir is one of the many popular cafés and restaurants which give the street its vibrant and lively character.

(Above) The Zawyet el-Sheikh Morshid, a fifteenth-century shrine, is one of the monuments lining Bab al-Wazir Street.



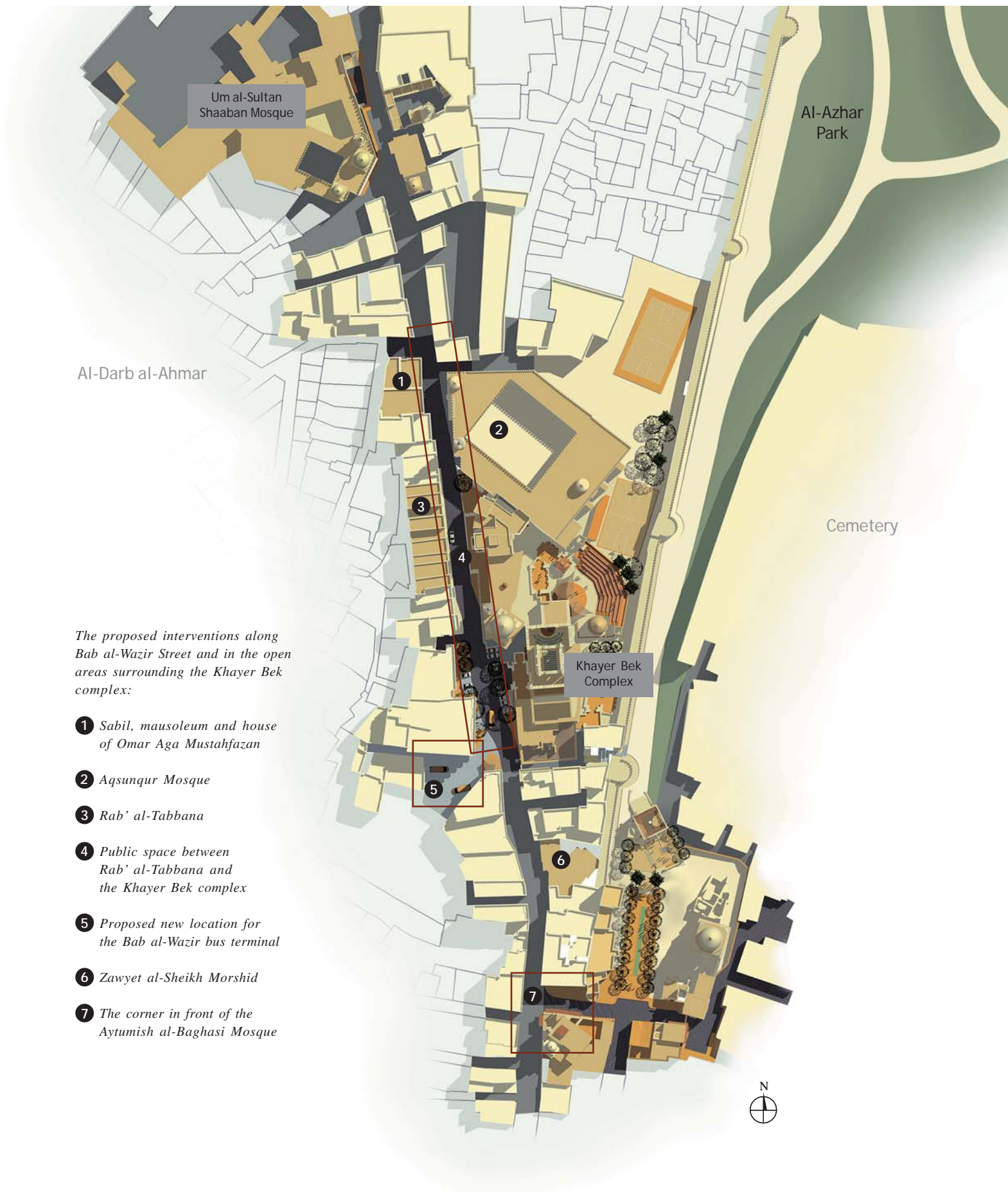
(Top) A view of the Rab' al-Tabbana, the sixteenth-century residential complex located in front of the Khayer Bek complex. (Above) The bus stop opposite the Alin Aq Palace to be relocated to a nearby vacant plot. (Opposite) A model showing the proposals for the southern section of Bab al-Wazir.

In addition, AKTC plans to participate in the restoration of two other important monuments. The first is the Aqsunqur Mosque (Blue Mosque) built in 1346 by the Mamluk Amir Aqsunqur. Although this mosque is a major Bab al-Wazir area landmark and one of Islamic Cairo's most visited mosques, it is currently in a very poor state of conservation. The second is the Omar Aga Mustahfazan sabil, mausoleum and house, dating from 1652 and located opposite the Blue Mosque. At one time, the building was used as an office by the SCA, only to be abandoned due to its poor state. The upper storey of the sabil has collapsed. Once restored, the building could be re-used by the SCA, allowing them to supervise the monuments in the area close at hand. There would also be room for keeping historic documents and information about the area's historic properties. Finally, AKTC's plans include the upgrading of the following open spaces:

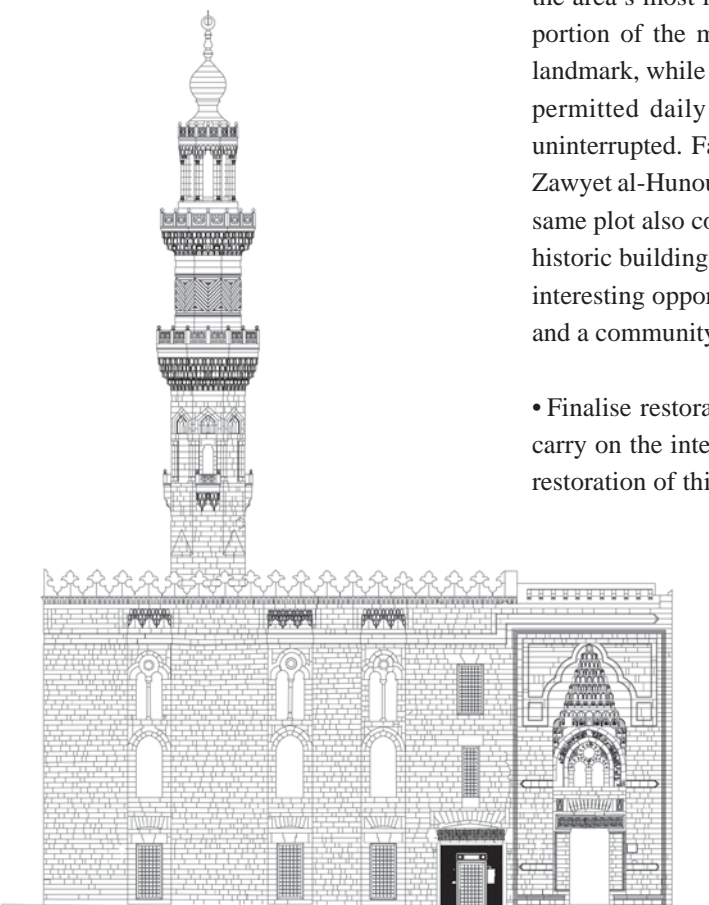
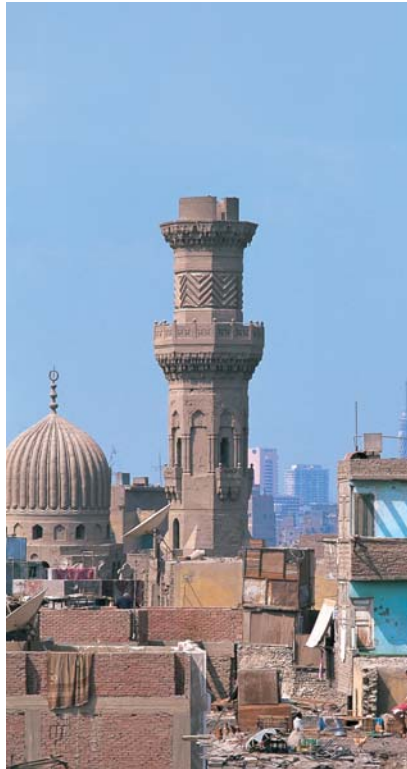
- The busy intersection and corner in front of the Aytumish al-Baghasi Mosque, starting with the replacement of the deteriorated infrastructure and improvement of public services. Located at the junction between Bab al-Wazir Street and the road leading to the Wazir gate, it is an important node that brings together various activities, including several coffee shops and small craftsmen's workshops. It is also an informal meeting place where casual labourers wait for people with work to offer.
- The public open space between Rab' al-Tabbana and the Khayer Bek complex. This is lined with historic buildings but the infrastructure is in a very poor state, with water often over-flowing into the street. The area is in need of basic upgrading and rehabilitation. Also parking needs to be limited as it endangers the surrounding historic buildings.
- The Bab al-Wazir bus stop facing the Alin Aq Palace. It is recommended that the possibility of relocating the terminal to an adjacent vacant plot of land be explored in collaboration with the Cairo Governorate and District authorities. The terminus is essential as the buses provide residents with transport to the rest of the city. However, frequent traffic jams due to the poor condition of the roadbed and the very heavy traffic at peak hours, coupled with the lack of a reserved area for waiting buses have a deleterious impact on the area. The suggested plot of land would allow for a more efficient and better-organized service as it is off Bab al-Wazir Street, with room for several parked buses away from the street. The small coffee shops and workshops along this street would benefit from increased business opportunities occasioned by the move.

THE UM AL-SULTAN SHAABAN MOSQUE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

A large number of valuable monuments and houses of historic interest may be found in the area surrounding the mosque of Um al-Sultan Shaaban, including Bayt al-Razzaz, one of Cairo's finest Ottoman residences, currently being restored by the American Research Center in Egypt. AKTC has already achieved an important goal with the restoration of the Um al-Sultan Shaaban Mosque itself,



(Right) The minaret of the Um al-Sultan Shaaban Mosque before and after its partial reconstruction by AKTC. (Below) An elevation of the minaret and the Bab al-Wazir Street façade of the mosque.



the area's most important architectural asset. The reconstruction of the upper portion of the minaret has reinstated the building's importance as a visual landmark, while the phasing of the restoration work on the mosque proper has permitted daily use of the building by the local community to continue uninterrupted. Facing the monument is a plot of land upon which stands the Zawyet al-Hunoud minaret, one of the oldest Mamluk minarets in the area. The same plot also contains a nursery for children. This combination of a valuable historic building and an important social service on the same plot provides an interesting opportunity to intervene and rehabilitate both a physical landmark and a community service at the same time. AKTC proposes to:

- Finalise restoration of the madrasa of Um al-Sultan Shaaban (phase 2) and carry on the interior restoration of the mosque (phase 3) to complete the full restoration of this exceptional and much used monument.

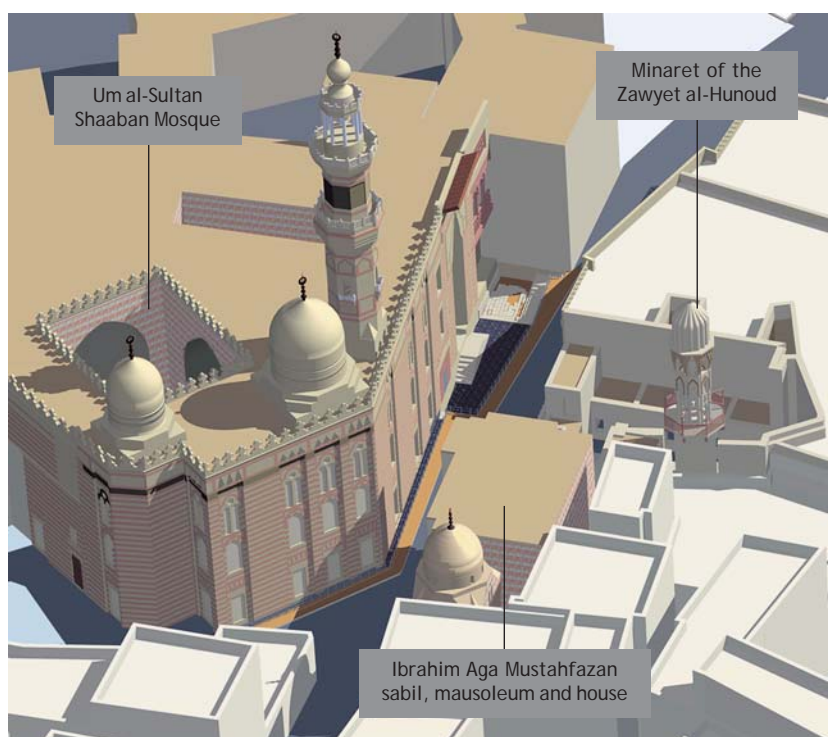
- Register the residential upper floor of the Ibrahim Aga Mustahfazan sabil, mausoleum and house on the SCA list of monuments and restore it. This small group of monuments, built in 1640, includes a sabil and mausoleum of outstanding quality. Their restoration, combined with the rehabilitation of the two Ottoman housing units on the first floor of the building, would provide a good example of small-scale restoration combining several uses (a monument open to visitors with housing units above).

- Improve the open space around Um al-Sultan Shaaban, creating another node along Bab al-Wazir Street. AKTC has already started to restore the infrastructure at the entrance of the mosque, but more extensive general improvements will also be required. The urban treatment of the area in front of Um al-Sultan Shaaban is a starting point for a general improvement of the street paving and furniture. Collaboration with local residents and owners of workshops and coffee shops in the upgrading process will help maintain the area's original activities, while boosting its economic development.

- Restore the minaret of the Zawyet al-Hunoud, built in 1315, located opposite the mosque of Um al-Sultan Shaaban, and improve the nursery located in the grounds of the Zawyet al-Hunoud complex. This nursery is currently run by a community-based NGO and provides a social focus within the neighbourhood. Dominated by the Mamluk minaret, the early twentieth century buildings around the central courtyard contain classrooms and offices. The infrastructure is in poor condition, but the buildings are worth preserving and their rehabilitation would improve the nursery facilities, thus sustaining an important community service.



(Above) The northern section of Bab al-Wazir Street contains numerous monuments earmarked for restoration, including the minaret of Zawyet al-Hunoud shown above. (Below) A model of the area around the mosque of Um al-Sultan Shaaban showing the improved access to the mosque, the restored Zawyet al-Hunoud minaret and the Ibrahim Aga Mustahfazan complex.



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