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## Socio-economic sustainability approaches applied within the conservation strategies of the historical city of Jeddah "The case study of Al-Balad"

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### Abstract


Sustainability has gained significant attention in recent years due to the critical circumstances of global crises. The historical city of Al-Balad has been the center of attention given to the conservation field aiming to preserve the city's identity while considering its historical role, unique buildings, the past of the city, and its people. Socio-economic sustainability in conserving the old district of Al-Balad is achieved through multiple strategies including the economic opportunities offered for the locals in terms of business development, as well as attracting tourists, increasing property value, and adaptive reuse. The aim of the research is to detail the socio-economic heritage preservation techniques and analyze the efforts made by the Saudi government and civil organizations to create a series of recommendations based on the recent research and literature review to evaluate its effectiveness in protection. The research methodology used is a qualitative approach, with field visits to take a closer look at current activities and progress in the field, as well as peer literature reviews and official sources. The findings of the research show a development in the social and economic aspects of the community as a result of the efforts related to the conservation of the heritage place.


**Keywords:** Conservation, Al-Balad District, Old Jeddah, Socio-economic, Sustainability, Adaptive Re-use.

### خلاصة

لقد حظيت الاستدامة باهتمام واسع في السنوات الماضية بسبب الظروف الحرجة التي يعيشها العالم. ثبت أن تنفيذ استراتيجيات الحفظ المستدامة يزيد قيمة المنطقة وعانداها وفوائد هذا التنفيذ. لقد كانت مدينة البلدة التاريخية مركز الاهتمام في مجال الترميم بهدف الحفاظ على هوية المدينة مع الأخذ في الاعتبار دورها التاريخي ومبانيها الفريدة وماضي المدينة وشعبها. يتم تحقيق الاستدامة الاجتماعية والاقتصادية في الحفاظ على منطقة القديمة من خلال استراتيجيات متعددة بما في ذلك الفرص الاقتصادية المقدمة للسكان المحليين من حيث تطوير الأعمال، فضلا عن جذب السياح، وزيادة قيمة العقارات، وإعادة الاستخدام التكميلي. من ناحية أخرى، يتم الحفاظ على حي البلدة القديم من خلال تقنيات متعددة بما في ذلك الفرص التي توفرها للسكان المحليين من حيث تطوير الأعمال، وزيادة قيمة الممتلكات، وإعادة الاستخدام. الهدف من البحث هو تفصيل تقنيات الحفاظ على التكميلي للتراث. التراث الاجتماعي والاقتصادي وتحليل الجهود التي بذلتها الحكومة السعودية والمنظمات المدنية لإنشاء سلسلة من التوصيات بناءً على الأبحاث الحديثة ومراجعة الأدبيات لتقييم فعاليتها في الحماية. منهجية البحث المستخدمة هي نهج نوعي، مع زيارات ميدانية لإلقاء نظرة فاحصة على الأنشطة الحالية والتقدم المحرز في هذا المجال، فضلا عن مراجعات الأدبيات النظراء والمصادر الرسمية. وتشير نتائج البحث إلى تطور في الجوانب الاجتماعية والاقتصادية للمجتمع نتيجة الجهود المتعلقة بالحفاظ على المكان التراثي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الحفظ، حي البلدة، جدة القديمة، اجتماعي واقتصادي، استدامة، إعادة استخدام تكميلية

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## Introduction

The rapid evolution of cities around the world contributed to the deteriorating state of its heritage fabric (Fig. 01) caused by the neglect of preserving the old buildings in the interest of the new districts within the expansion (Badawy, 2018). Though the development played a vital role in coping with the increasing demand for

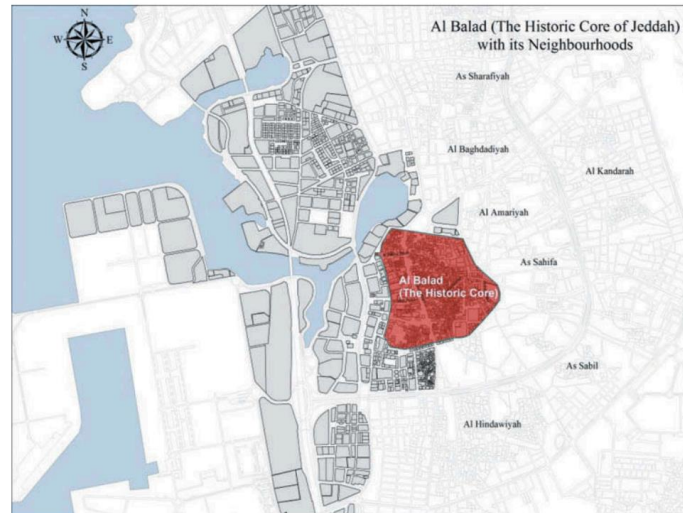
new suburbs to be formed to accommodate the population of the city, the downside was later realized in losing the identity of the nation with the development momentum represented by the neglect of preserving the heritage buildings and its surrounding (Heba, 2022).



**Fig. 01.** The deteriorating state of Al-Balad's urban fabric.

Socio-economic sustainability intertwines with heritage conservation in response to the needs of the local community, preserving its precious history and identity while ensuring the prosperity of future generations (Waheeb, 2022). Thus, a balance with all those factors should be met and carefully analyzed to minimize the faulty measures that could lead to harming one of those elements in the interest of pursuing the other. One of the methods in achieving socio-economic sustainability with heritage conservation is community-based tourism (Gena, 2022). Through engaging the local residents in periodically organized events and ceremonies that will reflect in benefiting the participants with economic returns while promoting the heritage conservation of the area, the participation will enhance the economic status of the residents through creating more jobs and ultimately improving the quality of life of those residents. The other important aspect of socio-economic heritage conservation is allowing the accessibility to the site to tourists as well as all members of society including people with disabilities and special needs. Such measures will raise the feeling of belonging in the heritage areas and create an emotional connection that will attach the present and future generations to their roots (Calogero, 2022). The other factor that should be considered is the participation of the local residents in the decision-making to preserve those sites and taking into account all the different views and opinions which will

eliminate the risk of going in the wrong direction in terms of conservation strategies and techniques. The development of the communities and its heritage site requires the authority and decision-making committees to have a holistic view of the rightful and best-suited conservational approaches to meet the aim set for such an act. The old city of Jeddah, Al-Balad (Fig. 02), carries the rich history of the city's past with its traditional unique architectural buildings, compact urban planning, and narrow streets. It is a clear representation of civilizations blending in terms of Hijazi architectural style (Fig. 03) due to the emigrated people from distinct parts of the world residing in the city and influencing its architecture and culture. Due to its rich heritage which spans thousands of years, the government as well as the civil organizations of Saudi Arabia have spent a lot of effort to preserve and maintain its valuable heritage (El-belkasy, 2022) represented by the unique architectural buildings and its civic surroundings with various techniques and methods across all country and especially in the ancient district of Al-Balad-Jeddah, which its formation goes back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century (AL-BAN, 2016) and was considered one of the utmost trading center and trading route from different continents back in its time when it was a gated city, and now it acts as a tourism attraction spot due to its unique Hijazi architectural buildings and its representation of the living style of the past (AL-BAN, 2016).



**Fig. 02.** The historical area of Al-Balad.

It was later realized the historic significance and value of the area resulted in the declaration of the city as conservation area by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in 1975 with laws

that restricted the alteration and demolition of certain zones within the district (Alzahrani, 2016).



**Fig. 03.** Hijazi architecture style of Al-Balad.

Another step which was taken by the government was the funding of the restoration of many of its buildings (El-belkasy, 2022) which carry historical significance as well as the financial support of the owners to repair and maintain their buildings within the area. In the academic field, tours and seminars were organized to raise awareness of this area's importance and value.

The past, current, and planned efforts to preserve the components of the heritage area have cast its shadow on the social and economic fabric of the district. Balancing all those factors was necessary to be carefully considered and analyzed to minimize the negative effects within the process of preserving the tangible objects within the area.

The aim of the research is to elaborate on the socio-economic heritage conservational techniques and strategies, analyze the efforts executed by the Saudi government and civil organizations to pursue this goal, and lastly propose a set of recommendations based on the conducted research and literature review to enhance the measures taken in order to assure its effectiveness and longevity.

The research will answer the following questions in order to conclude the objectives of the research: the type of conservation methods adopted by the authority to preserve the old district, the measures taken to enhance the socio-economic fabric of the district, and the effect of the approaches applied to achieve this target.

The objective of the research is to assess the efficacy of the adapted urban and architectural conservation policies and methods for Al-Balad District in conserving the area's historical site of Al-Balad. There are a number of limitations in conducting the research intended, one of them is the restriction of access to multiple heritage buildings, and the other is the limited academic resources of the contemporary conservation resolution and techniques as the organized efforts and the contribution of the academic entities are relatively new. The research methodology used is a qualitative approach with peer literature reviews and findings of the published articles and official resources along with site visits to get a closer glimpse of the current activities and progress at the site.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Heritage conservation and sustainability**

The heritage conservation and sustainability of heritage sites have gained a lot of attention and care in recent years. Heritage conservation evolves around preserving the historical sites and buildings that carry significant and important value due to their unique architecture, the story they can tell about the past, or their connection to notable people, along with others. On the other hand, sustainability is the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Considering both concepts ensures the longevity and sustainable preservation of those areas.

Applied strategies is often challenging for various reasons, one of which is the lack of funding as the preservation of heritage buildings is expensive due to the sensitivity of its conditions and the urban fabric that is usually compacted which limits the usage of the required heavy equipment and tools, and the deteriorating state of the old buildings and the possibility of its collapse if not dealt with carefully, on the other hand, many of those buildings are privately owned and resources might not be available for the owners to renovate and maintain those buildings, thus the government decided to assist in funding the restoration of some of those buildings regarding certain criteria. The other challenge is the environmental impact that results in the waste that is produced throughout the renovation process which might include some hazardous materials, the conventional construction and renovation techniques which are not generally environmentally friendly due to the consumption of a large amount of energy, and

last is the required use of heavy machinery which could potentially have a negative impact on the surrounding fabric of the heritage site.

### **Social sustainability in heritage conservation**

Social sustainability in the process of preserving heritage buildings is vital as it ensures the social returns to the community in various aspects to thrive the social involvement and social return through the conservation of those areas (Heba, 2022). Involving the community in the decision-making process and determining the significant value of what to preserve is one aspect to be considered. Another is the economic value in terms of business creating and creating an economic cycle within the heritage sites. The cultural enrichment and the public perception of the history and customs of the area and its people are another element (El-belkasy, 2022). Lastly is the accessibility of all different groups, genders, cultural backgrounds, and physical abilities to strengthen the bond between the people and their rich history.

### **Economical sustainability in heritage conservation**

Economic sustainability is one of the four pillars that can be incorporated within the process of preserving the heritage area to turn the area into an economic generating source to benefit the local economy and its people. There are different aspects to consider in achieving this goal, tourism attractions bring tourists to explore and know more about the history of the place and generate revenue. Another is the job creation in terms of temporary kiosks, restaurants, cafes, museums, and galleries. The last aspect is the local cultural industries such as arts, crafts, and traditional skills to elevate the handy crafts of the people and become a source of income.

## **Methodology**

### **Study area**

#### **Background about Al-Balad**

Al-Balad district is located in the heart of Jeddah which was once a gated city before its scattered development to the current districts of the city (Fig. 04). Many of the historical district's buildings were inscribed by UNESCO after multiple attempts from the government to shed light on the importance and value of the area for a global recognition (Adas, 2013). The district consists of many buildings that are distinct for their architectural unique style which is a blend

of multiple styles from different Islamic countries introduced by the Muslims migrants who came in to fulfill their religious duty of Hajj and Umra and then resided in the city (Ghazze, 2020). The main characteristics of the city are its narrow alleys, traditional coral stone buildings, architectural elements such as intricate

latticework windows and balconies, Mashrabia, and engraved wooden doors. Restoring and preserving the heritage value of the district and its buildings and fabric has been one of the goals within the development process and strategies of the government.



**Fig. 04.** Jeddah City growth progression, a set of maps shows the rapid growth of the metropolitan area of modern Jeddah city through the last fifty years. From “Sustainable urban heritage conservation strategies—a case study of historic Jeddah districts” by Badawy, 2018, *Taylor & Francis Group*.

### Significance and value

Al-Balad heritage district carries historical significance and value that is persistent to date, such role and importance contributed to the massive attention and care the area has had over the past years. Understanding those values will justify the means and methods the government takes in terms of cost and time spent to preserve its buildings and fabrics. The area carries historical importance as being in the city which is considered the economic capital of the country due to its location as the main gate to Makkah and Madina, the two holy cities for Muslims, and having the port which is access to the majority of the goods and shipments received from worldwide. The other aspect is its architectural style uniqueness within its buildings, Hijazi architecture style is a mixture of multiple international styles from different civilizations (Heba, 2022) that’s been brought by the pilgrims who came to fulfill their religious duty in Hajj

and Umra and then ended up residing in the gated city within the heritage district and reflecting their origin’s style in the buildings they constructed. The cultural significance the area carries is another aspect, the mixed cultures of the people who resided in the area (Table 01) have created a diversity of different backgrounds and merged them into a unique cultural characteristic. The district is considered one of the tourist attraction spots in the region which help generate income for the country as well as the people and at the same time reflect and educate the visitors about the rich heritage and culture of the city. Lastly, it is considered valuable for the local community identity, as many of the renowned families of the region originated from this area (Table 02) and their original homes still exist nowadays and they help with the renovation and preservation measures initiated by the government and the people find it a source of pride as it reflects their identity, history, and culture heritage (Waheeb, 2022).

**Table 01.**




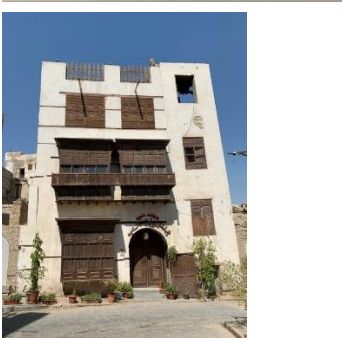

*Population diversity percentages in the city of Jeddah in 2020, The estimation was done through a governmental authority. From, Statistical Yearbook by General Authority for Statistics of Saudi Arabia, 2020.*

Nationality	Percentage
Saudi Arabian	77.9%
Yemeni	10.2%
Egyptian	2.7%
Indian	2.6%
Pakistani	1.9%
Syrian	1.4%
Lebanese	1.2%
Sudanese	1.1%
Bangladeshi	0.9%
Other	2.2%

(Source: Arabia, 2020)

**Table 02.**

*List of buildings within Al-Balad that belong to renowned families.*

Building Name	Image
Bait Nassif	
Bait Baashen	
Bait Matbouli	
Bait Saloum	
Bait Noor Wali	

(Source: Composed by Author)

### Conservation of Al-Balad District

Due to the importance of the heritage district of Al-Balad and with the growing concern about its value and the need to preserve it, the government, in cooperation with civil organizations, has launched several initiatives to preserve the area by adopting different strategies and methods

(Badawy, 2018). The initiatives launched include the establishment of the Jeddah Historical Preservation Society which focuses on the restorations of selected buildings within the district according to certain criteria. Another is the incorporation of planned restoration techniques for deteriorating buildings in order to conserve them. On a social scale, a cultural

center was created in the middle of the district to showcase its heritage, history, and value to raise awareness among the public and the visitors of the place (El-belkasy, 2022). Lastly, the urge and persistence to include the area within the UNESCO World Heritage sites will put the area on a global stage, subsequently earning it more credibility and worth.

**Conservation policies of Al-Balad**

There has been a progression in the conservation guidelines and parameters set by government officials during the 70s and 80s until the present to ensure the sustainability and longevity of the conservation practices within the historical area (Ghazzeh, 2020), Robert Matthew and Jeddah’s municipality were commissioned subsequently to propose and set the policies on which the conservation will be based on.

– **Robert Matthew Policy**

During the 1970s, and as the first initiative from the Saudi government to preserve historical and cultural areas (Gena, 2022), the British architect Robert Matthew was commissioned to develop a

plan for the conservation strategies and guidelines (Fig. 05). The plan was based on the following principles:

- Preservation of the historic fabric of Al-Balad including its buildings, streets, and open spaces which was suggested to be achieved through the adaptation of local materials and methods.
- Involvement of the community is one of the essential points of the conservation process. Public meetings and workshops were held to hear the thoughts and opinions of the residents.
- Sustainability incorporation in the conservation plan. He proposed using traditional materials and methods which will be harmless to the environment.

His plan was implemented during the 1980s and 1990s (Maestri, 2018) which resulted in a remarkable outcome, though the efforts were not enough considering the scale of the heritage area that should be included.



**Fig. 05.** Robert Matthew’s conservation policy for historical Jeddah. The images show the plan for the conservation strategies and guidelines by the British Architect Robert Matthew, From “Sustainable Conservation and Reuse of Historical City Center Applied Study on Jeddah” (Source: El-Belkasy, 2022)

– **Jeddah Municipality Policy**

Jeddah Municipality has issued a set of policies on which the conservation of the heritage area of Al-Balad will be based (El-belkasy, 2022). It is designed to maintain the cultural and architectural uniqueness while thriving the livability of the place. It was based on the Robert Matthew Policy with some alterations (Ghazzeh, 2020). Some of the key principles include:

- Strict policy against unauthorized alteration that includes demolishing, remodeling, or changing the identity of the building. That

ensures the district’s unique architectural heritage is preserved.

- Community engagement by working closely and cooperating with the public as the conservation is a bottom-up process, and that ensures the support of the project and its sustainability.
- Sustainability consideration in the development of Al-Balad, it’s outlined by using traditional materials and methods to minimize the negative impact on the environment.

Due to the implementation of those policies, the heritage district of Al-Balad has become vibrant and a thriving center of culture and commerce.

### Social aspect of Al-Balad Conservation

The conservation of the heritage district of Al-Balad has had a significant impact on the social life of its residents as well as visitors. One of the advantages is the preservation of its cultural heritage as it is home to a rich variety of historical

and cultural sites and buildings including public spaces, private residences, museums, mosques, and others (Heba, 2022). The conservation of those areas (Fig. 06) has enabled access to the buildings for the public. It also helped with increasing the quality of life and social network within the community as it brought people from different cultural backgrounds to interact and increase the sense of community. This all resulted in making the city more livable and an attractive place to live in and visit.



**Fig. 06.** Renovation work for various buildings in the Al-Balad district.

It set an example of the important role that conservation plays in regard to benefiting the community. Conserving the district has helped to preserve the city's cultural heritage, boost the economy, and improve the social fabric of the city (Gena, 2022). Some of the social benefits resulting from the conservation of the heritage area are:

- Preservation of cultural heritage has made the district a vibrant place to visit, and it's boosted the local economy of the residents.
- Improve the quality of life for the residents by creating jobs, attracting tourists, and making the district more livable.
- A sense of community is increased by bringing people together with different backgrounds to interact with one another.

This is a significant example of how historic preservation benefits society by helping to preserve the city's cultural heritage of its people.

### – Social Conservation Approaches

Post-vision era 2030 of Saudi Arabia which was announced back in 2016 (Waheeb, 2022), has reformed and elevated the strategies adopted by the government and in cooperation with civil organizations in all aspects of development, and that includes the conservation of the heritage area of the city.

Periodical events (Fig. 07) are being organized and held in the heart of the heritage area with a variety of activities (El-belkasy, 2022), shows, and content to attract different audiences within a wide range of age groups.





**Fig. 07.** Festival gatherings in Albalad. Periodical festival gatherings included a traditional activity within the historical area. From “Sustainable urban heritage conservation strategies—case study of historic Jeddah districts”, (Badawy, 2018).

Examples of the events are:

- Jeddah Art Week is an annual event consisting of performances, exhibitions, and other shows that celebrate the art state of the city.
- Jeddah Heritage Festival which celebrates the city’s history and culture featuring music and dance related to local culture.
- Jeddah International Book Fair which features books and authors from around the world with historical book reviews and seminars to promote awareness of the history of the place.
- Jeddah Film Festivals (Fig. 08) are held annually with guests of the film industries from all over the world which exposes the area and its heritage components across the globe.
- Jeddah Comedy Festival features international as well as local stand-up comedians which is attended by many different age groups.



**Fig. 08.** International film festival in Al-Balad. Jeddah’s international film festival is held in the historical district of Al-Balad. From Red Sea International Festival, by Screen Daily, 2022 (Source: Daily, 2022)

In addition to other events that's been held periodically which makes the area vibrant and exciting to visit and know more about, and a chance to interact and communicate with others. There are different measures which were taken to ensure the experience worthy of the place for the visitors. First is the rehabilitation of the historic buildings, especially the ones that are being used for the events as the condition of those buildings was deteriorating and in need of maintenance and renovation at different levels (Maestri, 2018). Second by improving the infrastructure of the area as it is expected to host large crowds throughout the year and that includes upgrading the sewer system, sidewalks, roads, and squares. Third, creating a public awareness campaign to educate the residents on the conservation importance in order to sustain the city's heritage and culture. Finally, a management plan to ensure the longevity of the conservation practices and approaches which includes developing a tourism strategy, creating heritage trails, and training the locals in heritage conservation (Gena, 2022).

All the efforts set are aimed at enhancing the social gain from the conservation of the area, some of these benefits are:

- Increased social interaction through the events and included activities in them which promote the social interaction between visitors who share the same interest in the heritage and history of the place and that will subsequently build a social bridge between different communities with different backgrounds.
- Promote cultural understanding, as those events not only enlighten the visitors from other countries about the heritage and culture of the locals, it even so with the

residents from different provinces within the same country, and that increases the patriotic feeling among residents as well as exposing the locals to foreign cultures via mixing and interacting with the visitors.

- Creating a sense of community by bringing people together boosts the sense of ownership over their city.
- Improving quality of life by offering people the luxury of choice to attend different events that are related to entertainment, education, culture, or others.

### Economic aspect of Al-Balad Conservation

There has been a positive economic impact due to the conservation of the heritage district of Al-Balad by creating jobs, attracting tourists, and tempting investment which boosted the local economy and improve the life of its residents (Bagader, 2014). Some of the economic benefits examples are:

- Job creation (Fig. 09) in the construction and renovation of those buildings, tourism, hospitality sector, and stores.
- Tourism attraction from all over the world helps to boost the local economy and job creation.
- Increased property value within the district which benefited the homeowners and businesses in the area, this was due to the development and enhancement of the buildings as well as the infrastructure of the whole area.
- Improved quality of life via making the district more livable with all the added facilities and entertainment, which has attracted new residents and businesses to the area.



**Fig. 09.** Stores at Al-Balad district. The attractive traditional shops in Al-Balad create job opportunities for the locals. From *Classic Saudi Arabia*, by Remote Lands, 2006, (Source: Remote Lands, 2006)

### – Economic Conservation Approaches

There are different measures that have been implemented by the Saudi Tourism Authority to enhance the economic return of the conservation of the area, one of the key approaches is the adaptive reuse of some of the key buildings within the district by turning an old, abandoned building into boutique hotels, museums, and stores to showcase and sell artifacts (Bagader, 2016). Examples of the buildings are as follows:

- Bait Nassif, is a historical building, built in 1872, The government acquired the ownership of the building in the 1980s and turned it into a museum showcasing the history and culture of the place as the house hosted the founder of the country during the early days of his rulership.
- Bait Matbouli, which was once a traditional family house, has been turned into a center for Arabic Language and Culture that offers courses in Arabic language and culture.
- Altayebat International City is a complex of historical buildings that were turned into a museum for Islamic art and culture.
- Al-Balad Theatre, which was originally a traditional market, and has been adopted later on and it now serves as a cultural center and theater hosting concerts, performances, and other cultural events.

Those are some of the examples of buildings that were adopted and rehabilitated to serve a different function than their original one, and that enhances the economic status of the area by generating income via hosting those events and attracting local as well as international visitors.

### Findings

The strategies adopted for the heritage conservation of Al-Balad have significantly been elevated prior to and post the announcement of Vision 2030 (Ghazze, 2020) of the country which one aims is to preserve the city's historic and cultural heritage which primarily includes Al-Balad as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the goals include restoring and preserving its historic buildings, rehabilitating the infrastructure, promoting tourism, and developing a sustainable management plan to ensure its sustainability and longevity.

In terms of social conservation and due to the measures adopted the following results have been registered.

- The number of people visiting Al-Balad has increased by 50% (Waheeb, 2022) since the conservation of the heritage area has started, and the average length of stay has increased by 20% (Heba, 2022) and that's an indication that people spending more time in the outdoor places within Al-Balad which subsequently increase the social interaction among them.
- The awareness and pride of the local residents of Jeddah have increased as a result of including them in the decision-making in regard to the conservation of the old city. According to a study by Jeddah's Municipality, 70% of the residents expressed pride in their culture and heritage after the conservation (Waheeb, 2022).
- The sense of community and belonging has increased among the residents by 70%, and 60% of the residents said they are more likely to participate in community events due to the readiness of the place and the conservation measures that have been adopted (Ghazze, 2020).

On the other hand, and in regard to the economic aspect, a number of improvements and developments have been observed and registered in varying studies. Following are some of the outcomes related to the economic aspect of the conservation:

- The conservation has helped in increasing the job opportunities which increased by 50% since the conservation project launch (Waheeb, 2022), and the average salary within its premises has increased by 20% due to the increasing demand and thriving of the economic cycle. The number of shops and kiosks has increased by 41.7% from 1,200 stores prior to the conservation project to 1,800 stores and kiosks currently (Waheeb, 2022), aside from the temporary kiosks that are set during organized events throughout the year.
- The property value and demand have increased as well due to the conservation of the historic district, in a study conducted by Jeddah Municipality, it conducted that the property average value in Al-Balad has increased by 50% since 2009, and the property sold has increased by 30% since that time which is unprecedented as the area was considered unfit for living due to the lack of the basic services and infrastructure (Ghazze, 2020).

## Recommendations

Although efforts were made to conserve the historical area and to enhance its livability in terms of social and economic status, there are still areas to improve and develop to thrive and reach optimum results, following are set of recommendations based on the analysis and study of the approaches adopted and its results.

- Public social interaction can be further enhanced by organizing interactive events and seminars, as the current events do not necessarily encourage and offer space for communication between visitors, the building spaces could be used and readapt to host those events and activities.
- Utilize modern communication techniques such as barcode scanning and app development to raise the awareness and knowledge of the visitors about the conservation efforts and importance as well as detailed explanations about the history and stages of conservation that the building has gone through.
- Engage the community in the decision-making to decide the priority and importance of what building to renovate, and the methods used will elevate the sense of community and ownership among the residents.
- Reorganizing the urban fabric of the area in a way to help with the navigation easiness of the key buildings and distributing the commercial kiosk and activities among them, as the current spatial distribution increased the chances of spending time in unwanted territories as it is difficult to get to the required destination.
- Improve the infrastructure of the area for better services within adaptive reused buildings such as internet connection, water supply, sewage system, and others to promote livelihood within those parameters in general.

## Conclusions

An interdisciplinary endeavor called architectural conservation aims to sustain the historical relevance, artistic value, and functioning of existing structures. A unique UNESCO World Heritage Site in Ethiopia, the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela are an exceptional example of religious construction. However, there are serious conservation issues at the site that demand quick action. A thorough and multidisciplinary approach to architectural restoration is necessary to preserve the

preservation of the historical, cultural, and architectural relevance of the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela. This strategy ought to consider the difficulties these structures present. These landmark structures can be preserved for present and future generations to admire and enjoy by carrying out rigorous assessments, putting suitable conservation measures in place, and adopting ecologically friendly activities.

Effective conservation plans should also take the local community's socioeconomic conditions into account. A sense of ownership and responsibility can be fostered by involving the community and spreading knowledge of the value of maintaining cultural property, which will result in more sustainable conservation techniques. Collaboration with international organizations and the creation of specialized conservation funds may also be able to offer crucial assistance for ongoing upkeep and restoration projects. We can guarantee the long-term survival of these important historic sites by employing a diverse and adaptive strategy to the conservation of the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela and comparable architectural marvels. We can preserve these remarkable rock-hewn monuments' historical and cultural significance while also preserving their breathtaking beauty and spiritual heritage for future generations to enjoy.

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