

Track 4

Knowledge economies & identity: planning for culture

Forward Thinking on Culturally Urban Imprint in the Contemporary Era

Rejuvenating the Traditional Neighbourhood Values and Characters:
An Urban Morphology Review on Qatari Cities



55TH ISOCARP
WORLD PLANNING
CONGRESS



Harini Septiana | Noora Al-Neama | Lolwa Al Khaldi
Ministry of Municipality and Environment (MME), Qatar

AIM OF RESEARCH

Develop strategies for creating stronger character and identity on the contemporary urban imprint for neighbourhood design in Qatar

Focus

Neighbourhoods' Morphology

Methodology

Empirical Study;
Literature Review &
Desk Research



study context | QATAR



A peninsula at the northeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, neighbouring with the other Gulf Countries (i.e Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE)



Area : 11,581 km²



Population : 2,638,657 (PSA, June 2019)



| content

1



**Morphological
Transformation**

2



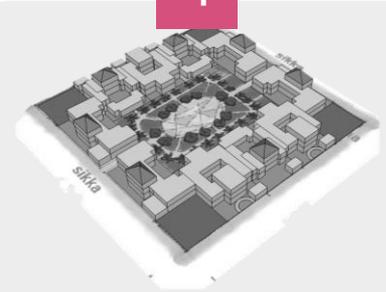
**Understanding
the Culture**

3



**Rejuvenating Traditional
Neighbourhoods'
(Fereej) Values**

4



**Towards Future
Neighbourhoods**

1 | MORPHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

The origins of Doha, the capital city, is a small pearling village which transformed into a global city with man-made features as the driver. The early expansion was facilitated through the establishment of the Ring Roads (A, B and C) and Corniche, enabling the emergence of other commercial centres and developments throughout the city



1947



1959



1973

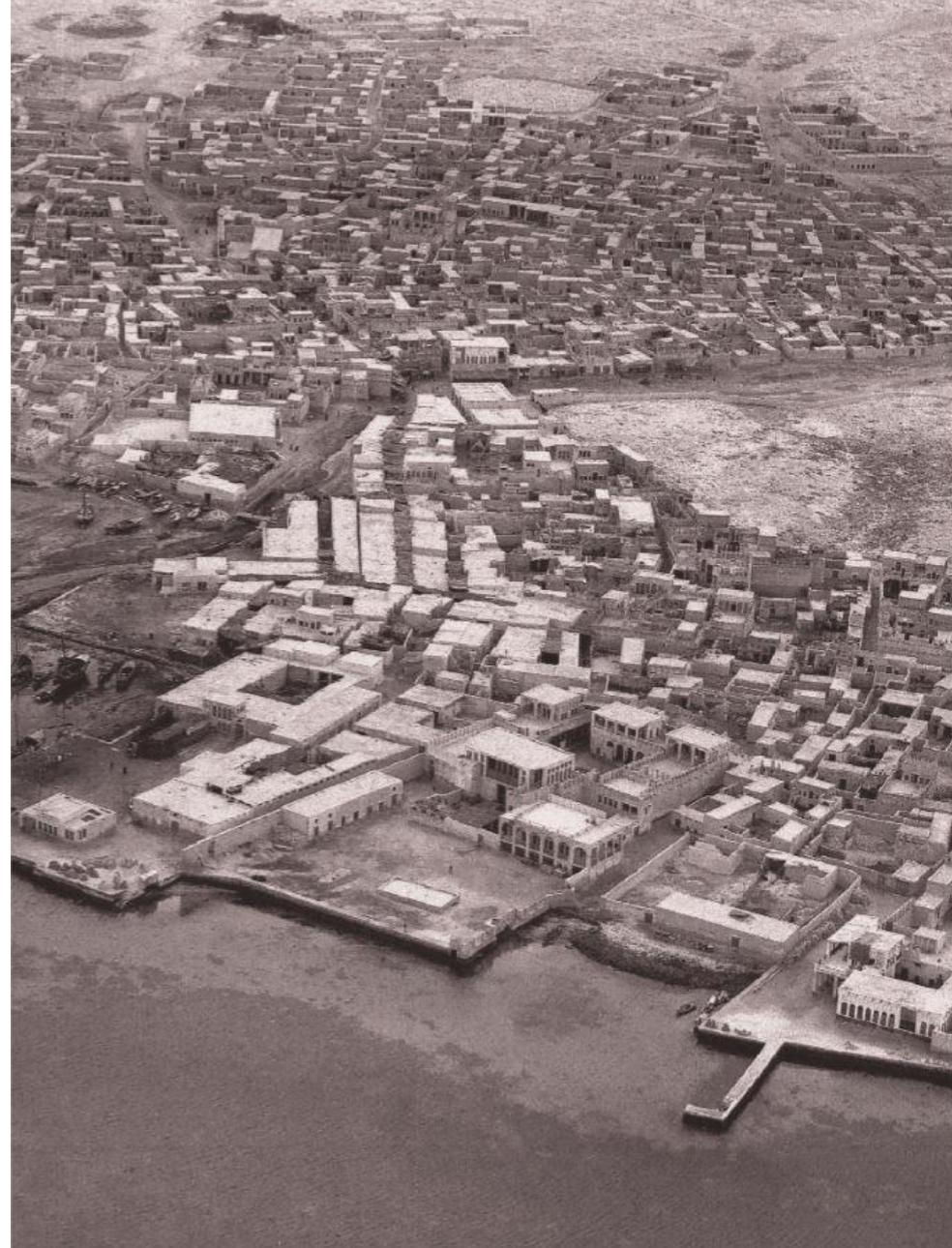


2008

1930s -1940s

Pre-Oil Discovery Settlement: Tribal Tradition – Desert -Water

- Led by the pearl diving and fishing economy, **the coastline became the key driver on the growth of the early settlement.**
- The early traditional settlement took place along the shoreline due to **the need for access to the sea, land distribution to tribal clans, and the availability of water resources.**
- The growth of the **early settlements was also dictated by the natural setting and its geographical features.** Neighbourhoods were gravitated along *wadis* (valley), which brought water to the hinterland, with market and harbor areas as the main centres for social interaction. Each neighbourhood was directly linked to the market and harbour area by narrow streets.
- The structure of settlements was the result of collective building efforts of each family, not a conscious planning. With this bottom up approach, it led to the creation of **organic urban fabric.**



1950s - present

Post Oil Discovery Settlement: Modern Cities

- The discovery of oil has transformed the lifestyle and the traditional occupations (ie. pearl diving and fishing) into oil drilling, refining operations, investment banking, hotel and tourism industry, etc. (Al-Khazraji, 2009)
- This changing the people life style, along with the adoption of the Western planning system, which road system becomes the primary factor in shaping a city, has dramatically **changed the social fabric as well as the city spatial structure, the neighbourhoods structure and the housing design.**



1930s - 1940s

Pre-Oil Discovery Settlement

Traditional settlement

Homogenous neighbourhoods

Shaped by local community-led

Dictated by natural & geographical setting

Organically clustered

Typified by courtyard houses

Integrated traditional neighbourhoods

1950s - present

Post Oil Discovery Settlement

'Oil' settlement

Arbitrary neighbourhoods

Shaped by central authority-led

Dictated by modern infrastructure & market driven

Rigid geometrical grid

Typified by two-storey single family villa

Isolated suburban structures

Image © 2019 Maxar Technologies

Doha Downtown



Al Wakra



Al Khor



Umm Slal



From traces of traditional coastal and oasis' settlements in Qataris cities and towns, some still intact, however the social fabric completely changed

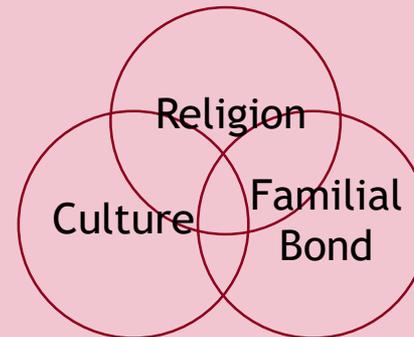
2 | UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURE

| built environment: a medium of social cultural process

- The interrelationship between people and built environment is a continuous two-way process. People influence and change the environment as it influences and changes them.
- Human behavior is inherently 'situational', embedded in physical but also 'social', 'cultural' and 'perceptual' contexts and settings (Carmona, 2003)

| traditional spatial practices

The Gulf States in general are still bound by deeply religious and traditional values in all aspects of life. The religion plays a significant role in their every day life, therefore mosques become the heart of communities, and they are the primary factors of the spatial structure. All the neighbourhoods were located revolving around them. Mosques function as religious centres as well as public arena for community and communal events, and sometimes become court-house to resolve disputes, and religious school in small settlements (Salama, 2013)



2 | UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

long standing traditional & cultural heritage

Despite the glamorous ultra-modern buildings and cities with unprecedented rapid developments after oil and gas discovery, **the societal norms of the Arabian Gulf people in general remain very traditional**, due to the strong attachments and bonds to a historical sense of traditional family values under a tribal communal system (Al-Khazraji, 2009)

from traditional to industrialised culture

Post oil boom, the introduction of new form of mobility –cars- and oil settlements by oil companies for their employees that developed separately from traditional settlements, have changed the lifestyle and social norms. **Car ownership and single family dwellings in suburbs became the preferred standard of living and the norm** for majority of the local population (Salama, 2013)



3 | REJUVENATING TRADITIONAL NEIGHBOURHOODS' VALUES

Sustainable Pattern Development

walkable environment

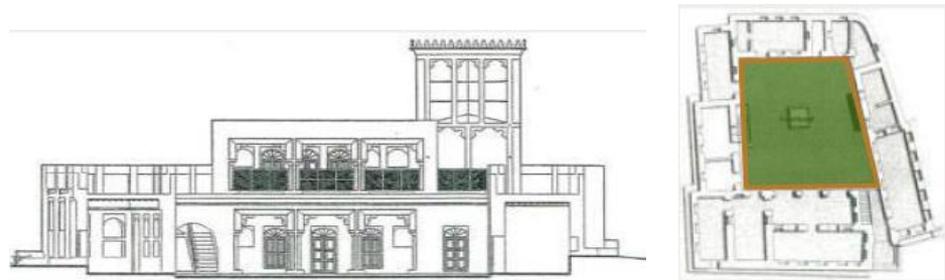
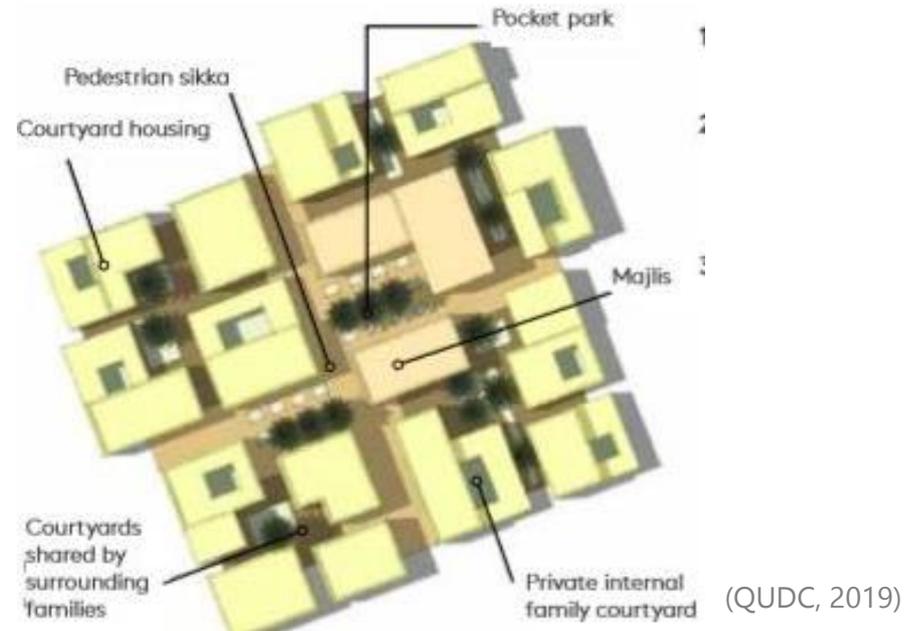
Typified by cluster organic composition of predominantly courtyard houses, which connect to each other by series of narrow-alleys (*sikka*) network, the traditional settlement is the best example of a zero carbon foot print area. pattern of development

culturally sustainable

The traditional settlements were shaped with high consideration on requirements of Islam faith to segregate gender and to ensure privacy. The '**Cultural sustainability**' is a very important aspect of the overall sustainability framework and is regarded as the fourth pillar alongside the other three: environmental, economic, and social sustainability'.

climatic suited

- Courtyard typology, that has long been adopted, proved to successfully combat harsh desert climate:
 - Ensuring good daily light and air circulation
 - Protecting from harsh sun exposure and provide thermal comfort
 - Ensuring privacy level
 - Low energy consumption
- The narrowness of the streets/*sikka* and tight spaces between buildings provide cooling and comfort thermal for pedestrians



House of Mohammed Said Nasser Allah, Al Asmakh (1935)

3 | REJUVENATING TRADITIONAL NEIGHBOURHOODS' VALUES

Neighbourhood (*fereej*) Characters

Neighbourhoods (*fereej*) are regarded as the important urban cells that determine the quality of the whole. The *Fereej* is a fundamental urban unit in the structure of Arabic towns and cities, based on the characteristics of walkability, community and privacy.

| courtyard housing

Traditionally, the *fereej* consisted of series of connected housing.

| narrow alleys (*sikka*) networks

The courtyard housing were interconnected with narrow alleys (*sikka*) and they form pedestrian networks that link internally and externally.

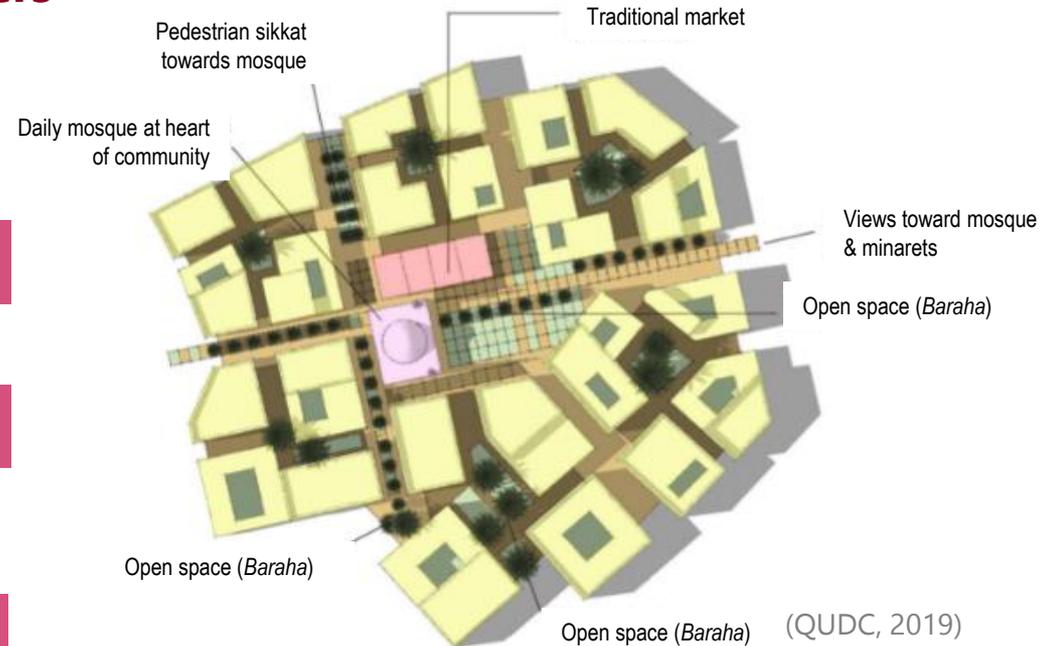
| series of open spaces (*baraha*)

A series of small public open spaces (*baraha*) as social places for community interaction

| mosques (*masjid*)

Daily mosques are served smaller neighbourhood sizes, while Friday prayer mosques usually are provided for larger communities

| market/local retail (*souq*)



4. TOWARDS FUTURE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Three Key Principles for Shaping Neighbourhoods

4.1 Define the type of neighbourhoods

There are five types of neighbourhoods, as Blowers (1973) identified:



Based on a common territory, spatial proximity



A common environment & identity



Inhibited by particular socio-economic/ethnic group



Derived from the geographical mapping of service provision



Close-knit, socially homogeneous group engage in primary contact

Only number five (5) has the attributes of a community

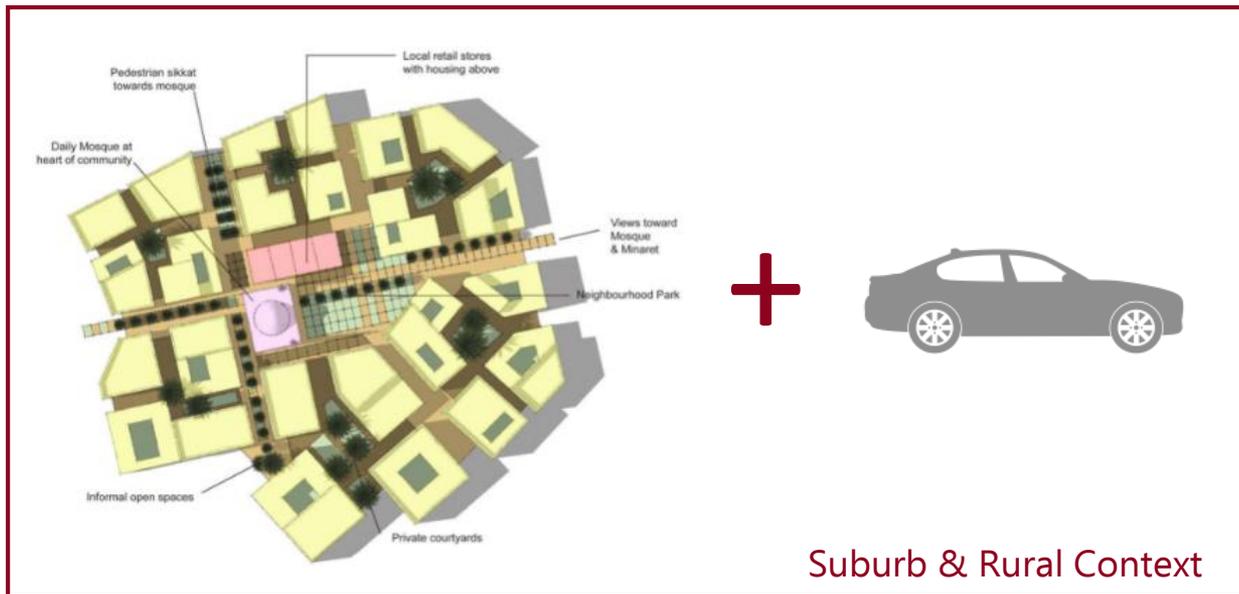
4.2 Mixed communities & mixed-use neighbourhood design

- Socially balanced neighbourhoods and communities, with some element of social mix
- Mixing tenures
- Providing balance community service and facilities
- Providing opportunity for 'lifetime' communities
- Robust neighbourhoods by avoiding housing of the same type
- Natural surveillance for safety and security

4. TOWARDS FUTURE NEIGHBOURHOODS

4.3 Applying Principles and Characters of Traditional Neighbourhoods

- The design of new residential neighbourhoods should be based on the values, characteristics and spatial principles of the *fereej*.
- For suburban and rural context, a compromised approach should be considered: accommodating car-society needs, however vehicle street networks should be carefully designed for not to interfere with the pedestrian networks.



old traditional neighbourhood case - urban context

Active Conservation Strategy

Physical Elements

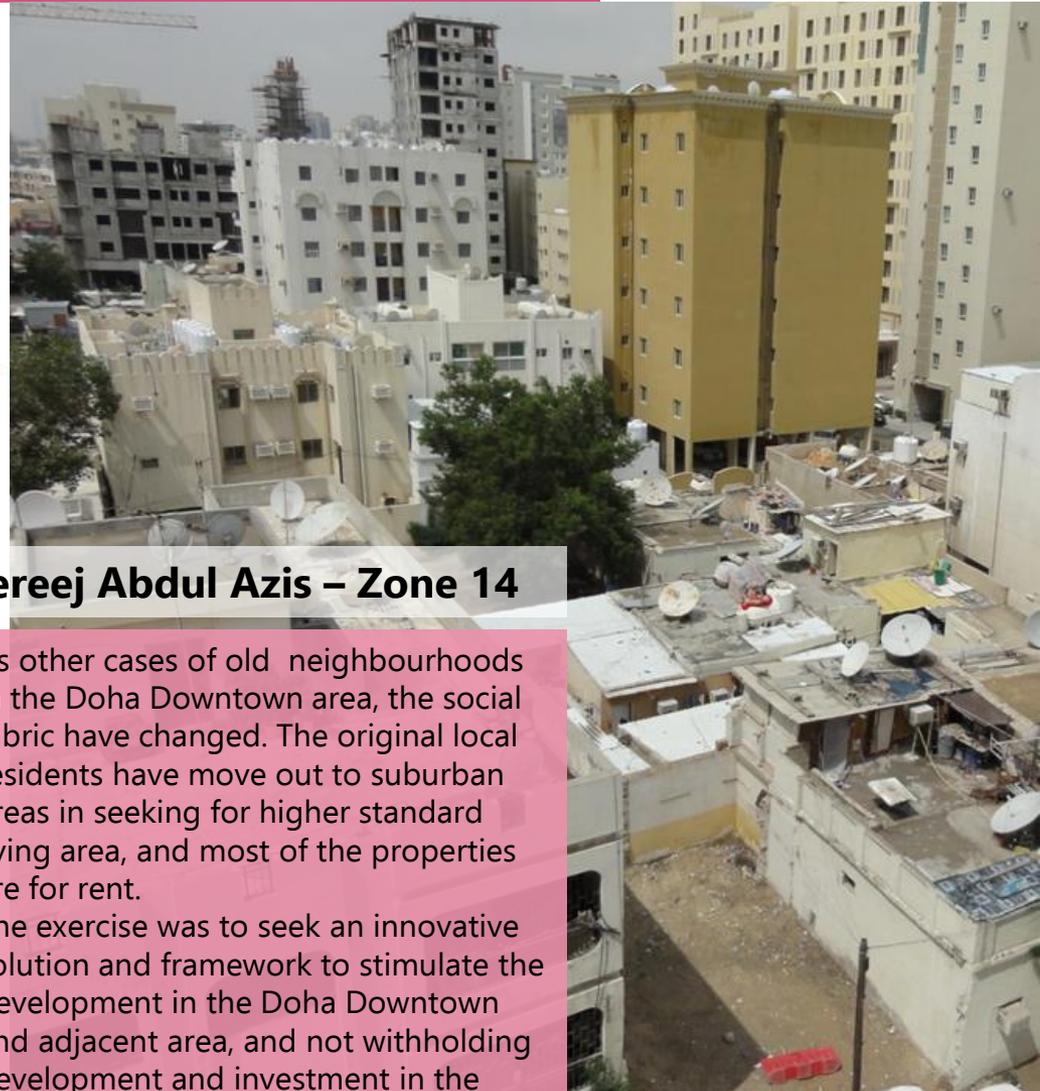
- Conserve the morphology (sikka, courtyard old houses, building placement, landscape);
- Conserve and restore the seven (7) old courtyard houses as the original massing;
- Upgrade the sikka, public realm and elements facing to the public realm
- Rebuilt the destroyed houses
- Design-reinterpretation

Proposed Alternatives of Theme and Use

- Art Cultural Quarter;
- Media Quarter (music studio, media related-workshops etc)
- Home Stay /Guest House/Boutique Hotel;
- Specialty Shops with Living Workshop;
- Specialty restaurants and cafes;
- Designer offices
- Low density residential
- Small-medium enterprises

Proposed Alternatives Regulation

- Heritage Overlay;
- Active conservation and regulatory-lead redevelopment for the entire Zone 14



Fereej Abdul Azis – Zone 14

As other cases of old neighbourhoods in the Doha Downtown area, the social fabric have changed. The original local residents have move out to suburban areas in seeking for higher standard living area, and most of the properties are for rent.

The exercise was to seek an innovative solution and framework to stimulate the development in the Doha Downtown and adjacent area, and not withholding development and investment in the area.

old traditional neighbourhood case - urban context

Summary of the Proposal

Concept 1

Minimum Intervention

Preservation and Conservation approach



- Reviving the heritage cluster as a part of the traditional neighbourhood
- Preserving the old townscape
- Preserving the old morphology
- Preserving or conserving the existing traditional courtyard houses typology
- Rebuilding the old buildings

Concept 2

Moderate Intervention

Conservation and Redevelopment approach



- Preserving/conserving traditional courtyard houses in the small plots
- Sympathetic Redevelopment for larger plots (>600 sqm)

Concept 3

Maximum Intervention

Full-fledge Redevelopment approach



- Sympathetic Full-fledge Redevelopment with courtyard concept, for all plots:
 - Option 1: Maintaining ownership of plots
 - Option 2: Full-fledge land consolidation

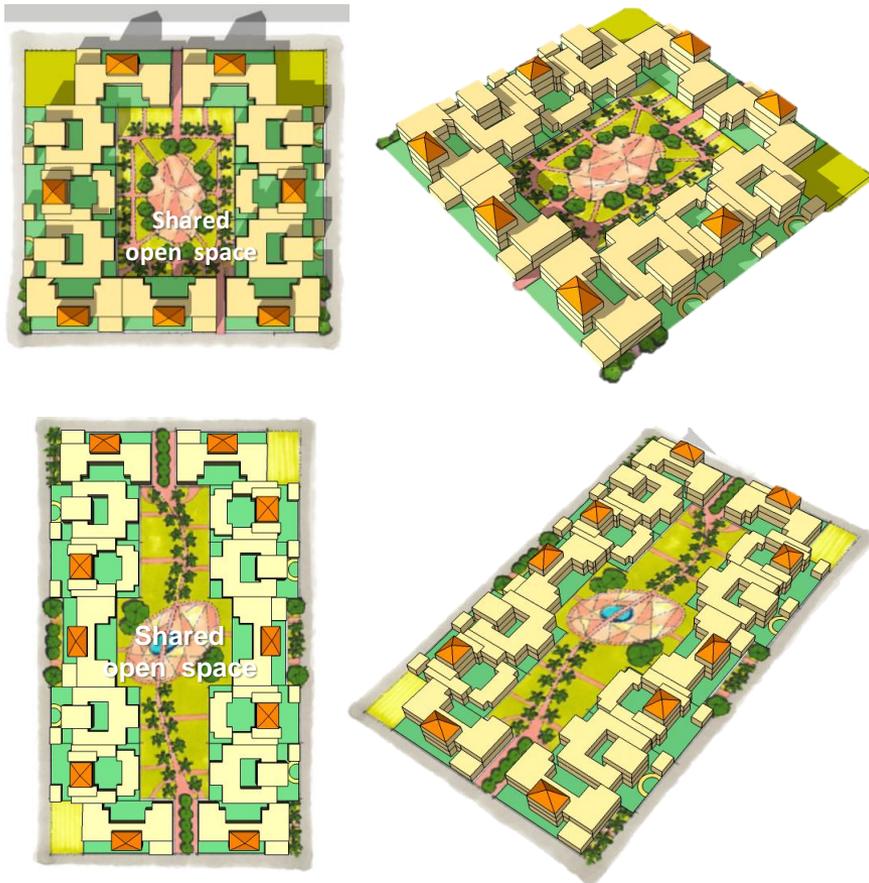
old traditional neighbourhood case - urban context

Recommendations

1	<p>To encourage ordinary land owners/home owners to improve the condition of their properties, MME -as the institution that is responsible to planning and design practice- should consider several approaches, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Provide flexibility/relaxation within current regulations towards small plots of old traditional courtyard houses, multi-tenement plots, etc2) Provide Design Guidelines that addresses physical built form3) Set planning incentives:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GFA incentives and or,• FAR incentives• Flexibility in the conservation guidelines
2	<p>Reach out to the land owners/ home owners regarding the approaches/ programmes</p>
3	<p>Enhance the Qatar identity by reconsidering the strategy for heritage and character areas for Doha Downtown and the adjacent zones that bear historical morphology and typology. Rarity and representativeness values should also be one of criteria, not only the buildings that have architectural merit.</p>
4	<p>Establish 'a Touristic Programme of Historical Trail' within Doha Downtown and the immediate vicinities with historical morphology and typology</p>

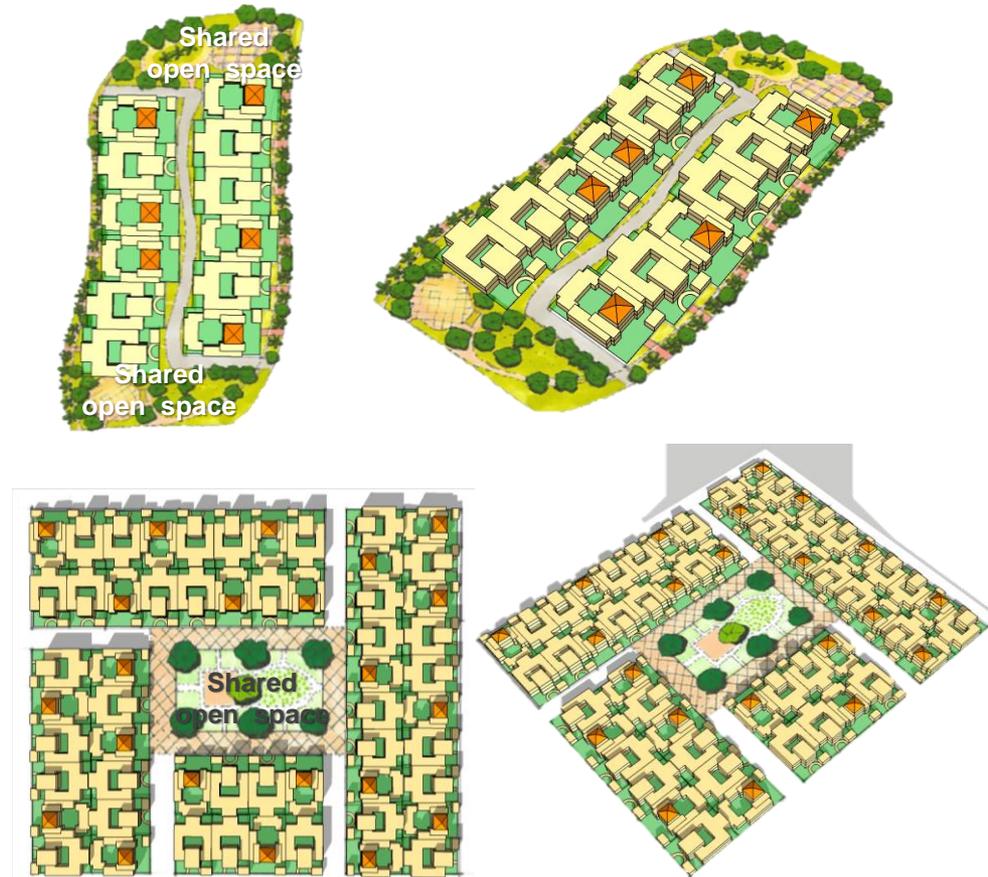
| shaping new contemporary neighbourhood- suburban context

| exploring enclosed-cluster typology



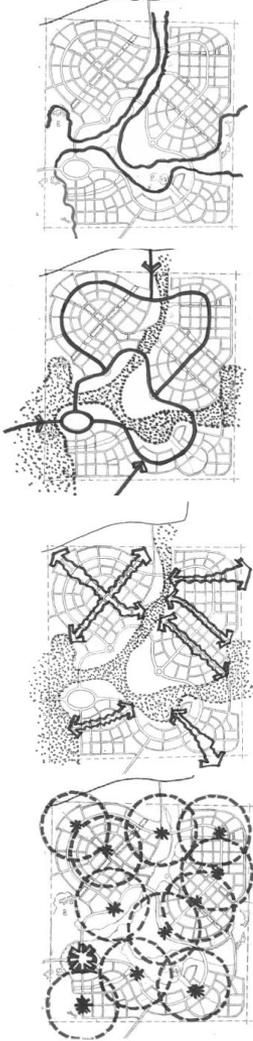
- Suitable for local population
- Allow high level privacy
- Homogenous type

| exploring open linier typology

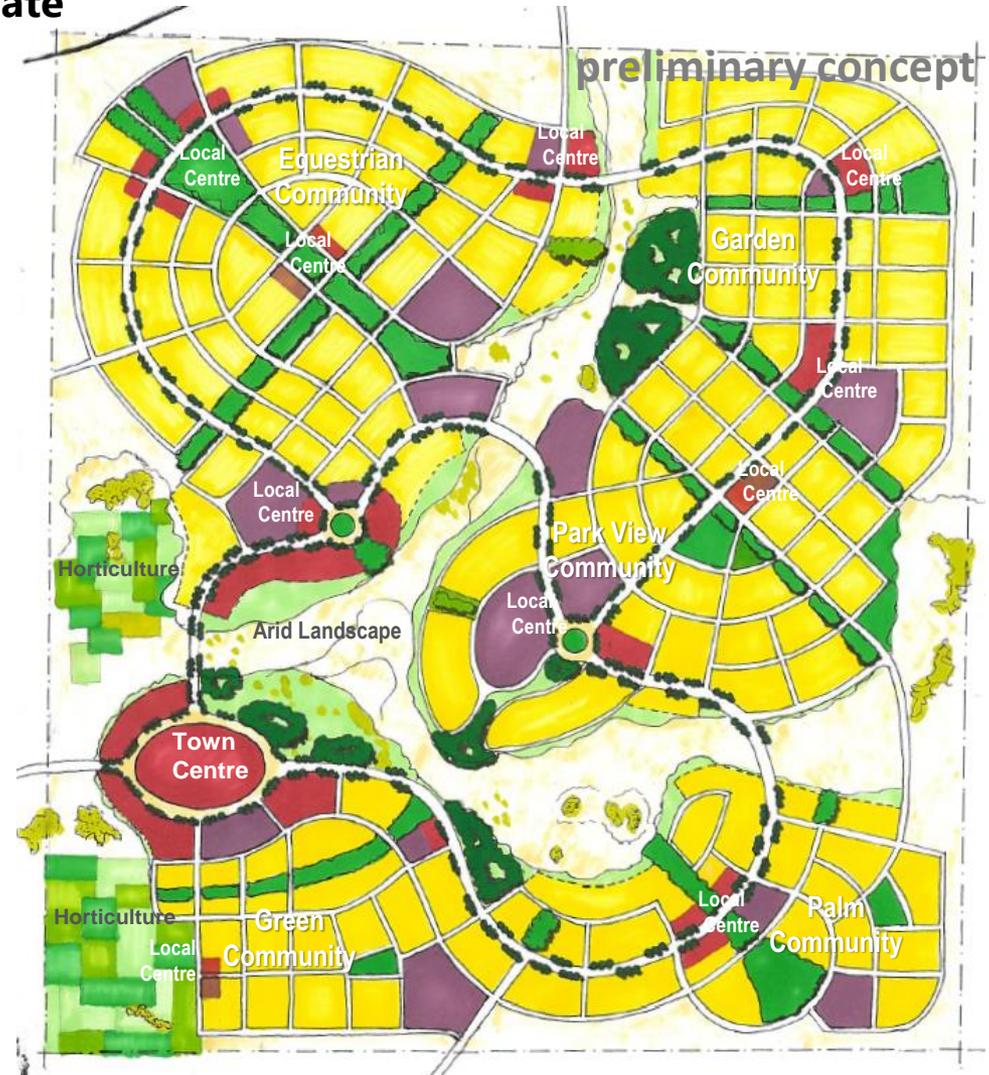


- Suitable for more open-community
- Still allow semi-private level of privacy
- Allow social mix

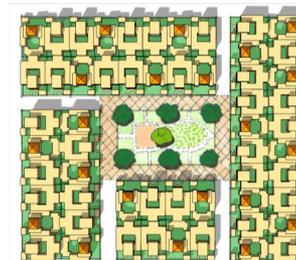
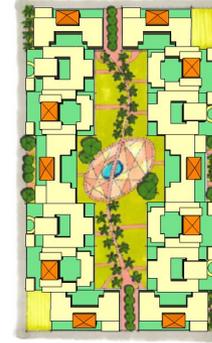
working with nature, environment, climate



- Retain and enhance the existing low land (*wadi*) to be a thriving arid landscape for a centre of community's recreation and leisure
- Served by two inner ring roads and an integrated road and pedestrian network system, to ensure the ease of movement throughout
- Integrated natural and man-made open spaces, to ensure balanced living environment.
- Blocks are structured to embrace prevailing winds from the north.
- Served by a series of local centres, to ensure adequate services as well as to satisfy daily needs of the community



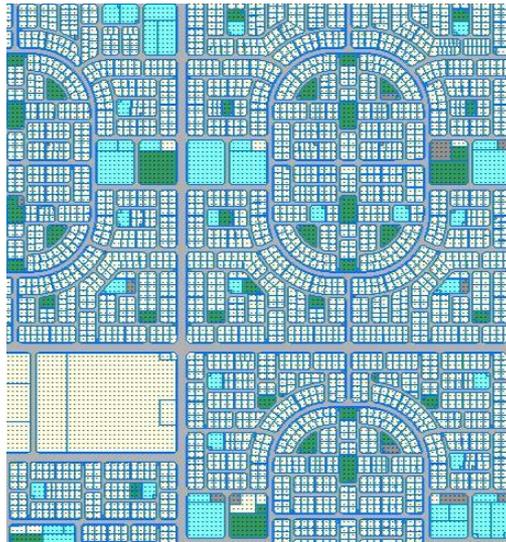
mixing different typologies in one district



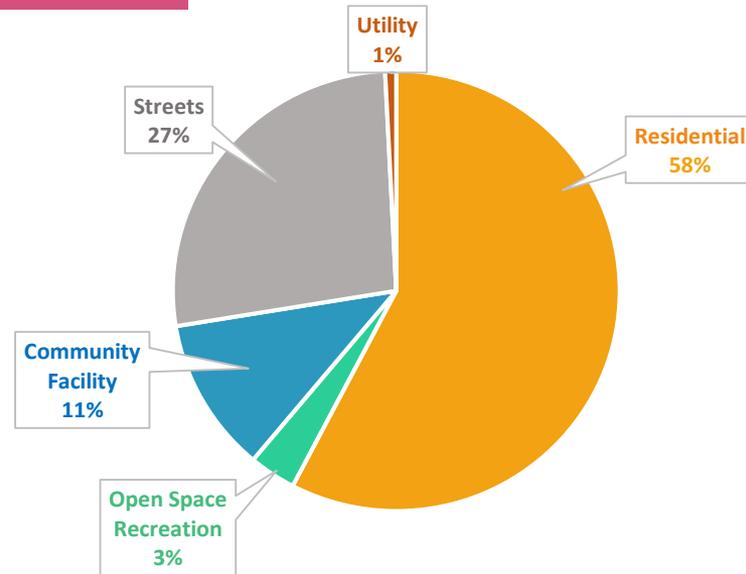
exploring contemporary fashion - suburban

Current practice in shaping the neighbourhoods:

- **Lack of character**
- **Placeless neighbourhoods**
- **Unclear spatial structure**



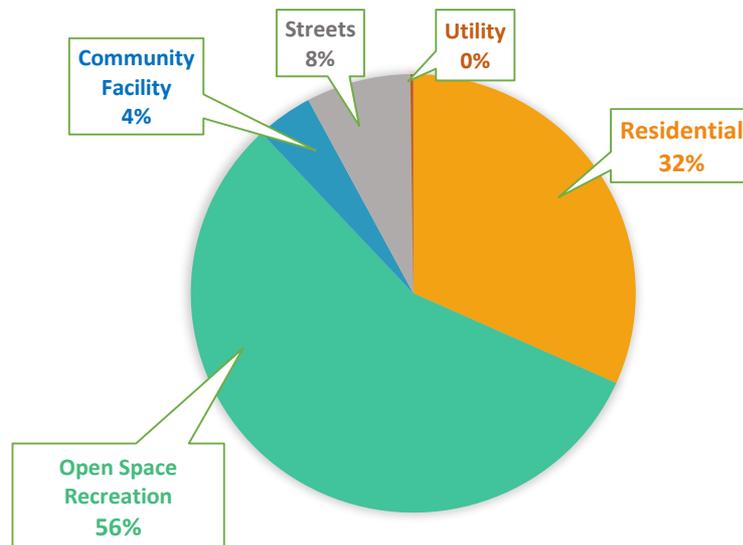
17,000 persons
2,500 units
27 pph



The attempt to create a series of **community-neighbourhoods** which responsive to natural & topographical settings, while addressing the car-society needs to certain level



10,880 persons
1,600 units
17.4 pph



| CONCLUSION

Forward thinking on cultural-urban imprint for neighbourhoods brings us back to **the basic thinking** of the old wisdoms:

- culturally suited
- environmentally and climatically sound
- foster sense of community, religious, and familial bond
- enhance distinctive identity rooted from local intrinsic characters

| From 'placeless approach' to place of character-oriented neighbourhood design

In order to encourage the creation of neighbourhoods with characters, it is imperative for the authority to pay more attention to the neighbourhood planning and designing programmes, taking into account the cultural aspects of the communities, and should avoid 'arbitrary planning' approach

| From homogeneous neighbourhoods to community neighbourhoods

The land distribution programmes for local population should be based on a proper neighbourhood-planning designing guide, and aims to nurture sustainable community

| A Neighbourhood Planning & Design Guide to assist the design of 'old' and new neighbourhoods developments

A full-fledge neighbourhood-design programmes and initiatives requires the authority to prepare all the required necessary tools to assist and to streamline the creation of character and communities neighbourhoods (i.e planning framework, design guide, incentives, cultural strategy, Public Private Partnership –PPP- schemes etc). In addition, an awareness campaign is equally imperative.

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Key findings

1. Forward thinking on cultural-urban imprint for neighbourhoods brings us back to the basic thinking of the old wisdoms:
 - culturally suited
 - environmentally and climatically sound
 - foster sense of community, religious, and familial bond
 - enhance distinctive identity rooted from local intrinsic characters
2. In order to encourage the creation of neighbourhoods with characters, it is imperative for the authority to pay more attention to the neighbourhood planning and designing programmes, taking into account the cultural aspects of the communities, and should avoid 'arbitrary planning' approach

Questions for discussions

1. For the case of the expatriate population outnumbers the locals, is the community-neighbourhood type still relevant to be applied compared to the other types (arbitrary, homogeneous, functional, etc) ?
2. What will be the authority role in the case of encouraging the creation of a cultural-led neighbourhoods design?

