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**PROJECT: CENTRAL ARRIYADH FRAMEWORK STUDY**  
**Topic: Project overview**  
**Date: 18 June 2008**

## **01 BACKGROUND**

Arriyadh City has transformed from a small town in the 1950s with a total land area of only 1 hectare into a sprawling metropolis with a rapidly growing population of around 4.3 million population covering a land area of approximately 950 square kilometres.

Various planning strategies have impacted upon the spatial development of the City, notably the Doxiadis Associates plan (1968) which proposed the imposition of an orthogonal 'super block' pattern (2 kilometres by 2 kilometres) across the City. Central Arriyadh is, however, characterised by a finer grain of land uses within a more organic pattern of the development.

This central area contains important historic/ religious edifices, government buildings and vital commercial centres. The building stock within the Study Area ranges from simple mud built houses (1-2 stories) to concrete blocks of flats up to 5 stories high. The majority of houses are occupied by expatriate workers. Large tracts of mud buildings within the central area have been identified as being in poor physical condition.

The Arriyadh Development Authority (ADA) established in the mid 1990s set about work on the preparation of the Metropolitan Development Strategy for Arriyadh (MEDSTAR). The following studies have since the mid 1990s been produced by ADA to provide a framework strategy for the regeneration of the city centre and includes the following:

- (a) Land use & development systems.
- (b) Economic development strategy.
- (c) Environmental Strategy.
- (d) Transport strategy.
- (e) Public utilities strategy.

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- (f) Housing strategy.
  - (g) Public services strategy.
  - (h) Central structural plan
  - (i) Land use plan.
  - (j) Local structural plans.
  - (k) Urban management plan.
  - (l) Full report.

The High Commission for the Development of Arriyadh now wishes to have in place a report which provides a *Road Map* which can be followed by the authorities to bring about the successful implementation of the MEDSTAR.

The Services will be done in two stages:

Stage 1: Legal and Planning Framework

Stage 2: Implementation Plan

## **02 PERCEPTION OF THE CHALLENGE**

The Study Area constitutes the Historic centre of Arriyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. It acquires as such, importance and significance which goes beyond its geographical boundaries. In addition to its cultural symbols of national nature and key administrative functions, the Study Area has many traditional and modern markets, business activities and residential quarters.

However, the Study Area also faces serious problems that undermine its potential as a thriving and attractive city centre. Once a sought after residential area by Saudis, it has become deserted by most of its original dwellers and occupied by foreign labour. This has been accompanied by the dilapidation of many residential areas. This population substitution has affected the attractiveness of the area as a centre of commerce and business, but this is by no means irreversible.

One of the key tasks facing future development of the area will be to define its role and functions within the expanding Arriyadh metropolis, and this in turn will be a key issue for its future sustainability. Economic, social and cultural

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dimensions must be considered. The way to deal with the Study Area problems must be guided by a clear strategy of economic, social and cultural revitalisation that will guide the formulation of physical development plans.

The future development of the Central area of Arriyadh is likely to involve a mixture of planning actions including rehabilitation, conservation and building renovation, infill development and redevelopment. All these planning actions must be carefully phased to maintain a working infrastructure at all times. The complexity of planning actions will necessitate measures of expropriation, valuation and compensation, the reconstitution of lost land ownership deeds with potential claims and counter claims, and may be faced by the refusal of some property owners to cede some of their rights.

Redevelopment or even the rehabilitation of specific areas may result in the displacement or temporary loss of access to some businesses and residents. All these conflicts must be anticipated and mechanisms for their speedy resolution put in place to avoid delays in implementation.

It is clear that the implementation of a successful development plan for the Study Area will involve the cooperation of Government, the private investors and property owners and other right holders in the Area. The roles, obligations and responsibilities of each party must be well defined as part of a comprehensive implementation framework. In that respect, Government has to enact a legislative framework for implementation which encompasses all stakeholders and which defines the status, composition and prerogatives of the implementation agency (real estate company, public private venture, royal Commission etc.), and sets up general principles concerning implementation mechanisms and how they relate to various stakeholders, methods of finance, infrastructure provision, etc... It is usual for Government to be responsible for approving all the planning studies, undertaking the land valuations and necessary expropriations within the framework of relevant Saudi laws and to exercise development control and enact all other regulatory matters.

The contribution of the private sector in the development of the Arriyadh central area is of utmost importance in the success of the Project. The private sector can provide finance thereby reducing the burden on Government, can share infrastructure provision and contribute to the management and actively engage in

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real estate development. To motivate private developers to invest in the Study Area, a marketing campaign must be conducted to explain the benefits of the Project, its economic soundness, various investment opportunities and the commitment of Government for its success.

Government commitment is essential and will provide a feeling of security for the prospective investors. In this respect, a clear regulatory framework organising the relationships of investors with Government and landowners is of utmost importance to convince investors that potential conflict resolution during development will be swift and will not result in delays and losses. The private developer will also need to know precisely his development rights, and for this, the planning and zoning regulations must be translated into a developers friendly format, which can take the form of a development brief for each development block/parcel incorporating all the information required to specify the total allowable building area, applicable parcel coverage, building setbacks and heights, special elevation controls, parking requirements, advertisement controls, etc..

In conclusion, the issues to be addressed are multiple and of complex nature. They must be resolved by the Study in a clear and systematic way to pave the way for the preparation of a comprehensive and implementable Master plan for future development.

### **03 Case Study Tour**

Case studies will be undertaken for a series of cities around the world, all of which have adopted different approaches in response to the different challenges faced by the respective city authorities towards achieving the sustainable redevelopment / regeneration of their cities and in their marketing. In each of the case studies, the city authorities has established a development agency whose authority, functions and objectives has been designed to most effectively respond to the particular challenges facing the respective cities. The following case studies are proposed:

- Beirut, Solidere
- Singapore
- Dubai, UAE

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- Birmingham, UK
  - Fatimid District, Cairo, Egypt
  - New York, America
  - Barcelona, Spain

Each case study will follow the structure set down below.

**Challenges** - Review of the challenges facing the case study cities. For example, for the Beirut case study a brief account will be provided of the challenges faced by the city after years of civil war of reconstructing the downtown district of the city without a functioning institutional framework in place.



**Responses** – Review the responses made by the city authorities to the challenges facing the cities. In the case of Beirut an account will be provided of the private development agency 'Solidere' established by the City leaders to bring about the reconstruction of the downtown area of Beirut.



**Lessons for Riyadh** – Identify responses adopted by the respective city authorities which could potentially be adapted for use in Arriyadh.