

3.4 SUR BAHER

Jerusalem South - Sur Baher Zone

SURVEY OF PALESTINIAN NEIGHBORHOODS IN EAST JERUSALEM

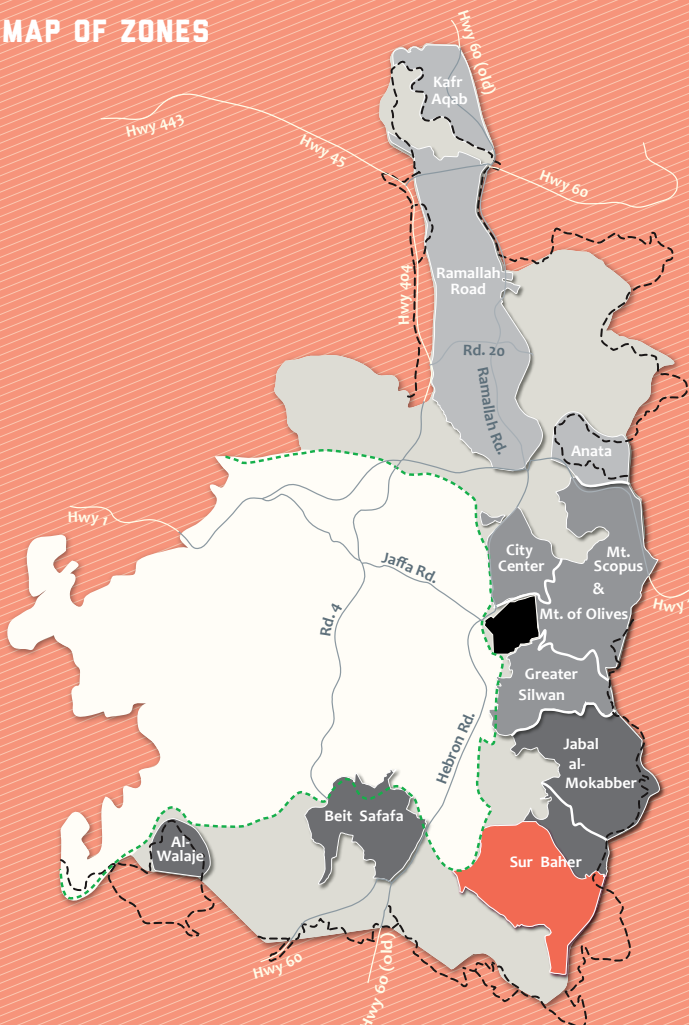
ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Sur Baher, along with adjacent village of Umm Tuba, is the largest Palestinian neighborhood in southeast Jerusalem, and one of the largest in all of East Jerusalem. Sur Baher developed over the centuries along a mountain ridge extending eastward from the regional watershed line, with the smaller village of Umm Tuba developing on its slopes. Today the two villages span a sequence of ridges branching off of the main one and constituting a single administrative unit, though the residents continue to organize separately. Sur Baher borders on the 1949 armistice line (the Green Line) and Kibbutz Ramat Rachel to the west, on Umm Laysoon and the post-1967 Israeli neighborhood of East Talpiyot to the north, and the Israeli neighborhood of Har Homa, constructed during the height of the Oslo period, to the south.

Sur Baher was established in the 16th century as an agricultural village along Wadi ad-Darajeh (the Darga Valley) and was an important stop on the route between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. At first the inhabitants lived in natural caves, and later they

built houses around familial courtyards. During the 19th century the village developed at a fast pace and came to number in the thousands, with its lands stretching in the north from what is known today as the Armon Hanatziv ridge, to the outskirts of Bethlehem in the south. Under Israeli control since 1967, Sur Baher has undergone an accelerated process of urbanization, and much of its land has been expropriated for the erection of Israeli neighborhoods and related infrastructure. Yet the infrastructure within the neighborhood itself remains terribly inadequate. On the eastern edges of Sur Baher are three residential areas that are either not recognized by the Jerusalem Municipality or have no planning status. These areas spill over beyond Jerusalem's municipal boundaries but are cut off from the rest of the West Bank by the Separation Barrier. The residents of these areas – Deir al-Aamud, al-Muntar, and Nu'eman – have struggled over the years to receive the basic services they need to live in dignity.

MAP OF ZONES



FACTS

Population 21,500
Area 5,754 dunam



MAP LEGEND

East Jerusalem	Old City
Expropriated Land	Green Line
Northern Zones	Separation Barrier
Central Zones	Roads
Southern Zones	West Jerusalem

MAIN PROBLEMS IN SUR BAHER

Intersections and Pathways

While the existing system of roads in the neighborhood is lacking and plans offer no real solutions, there are a number of intersections and pathways that demand immediate attention. A planned path at the top of the hill, next to several school buildings and essential for the safe passage of children from home to school, remains undeveloped in spite of repeated requests by the residents. Instead, the children must take a circuitous and dangerous route, walking on streets with no sidewalks. At the hazardous and busy intersection in the heart of the village, the children have to walk on a narrow and steep sidewalk, and even in the street. Here too, the residents have requested, in vain, that a stairway be built to redirect the children away from automobile traffic.

Infrastructure and Sewerage

Garbage collection in the neighborhood is severely lacking and street lighting does not exist at all. As far as sewerage is concerned, the municipal system operates only at the top of the hill. Most of the residents of Sur Baher have to drain their sewage into cesspits in the courtyards of their houses. This poses a health hazard as well as a danger to groundwater. In addition, the high cost of digging and maintaining the cesspits falls

upon the residents. Since 2009, the Jerusalem Municipality infrastructure company, Ha-Gihon, began to work towards expanding the sewer system in the neighborhood so that it would be possible to connect it to a new water purification facility. Most of the main lines have been laid, and the residents have received large bills, although their houses have yet to be connected to the lines.

An Un-Implementable Plan

In 1999, a plan (# 2302b) for 410 housing units, at the western entrance to the neighborhood was approved in an expedited procedure. The plan, initiated by the Jerusalem Development Authority, includes a high-density neighborhood intended for the residents of Sur Baher, to be built on lands expropriated from them. The intention was to rely on the centralized development of the neighborhood, via marketing the site to contractors, as is done in many new Israeli neighborhoods. Since the approval of the plan, one school, two kindergartens, and a community center have been built according to it, however the roads and residential areas have not yet been developed, and it turns out that the plan is in fact not implementable: the H-shaped plan of the residential buildings is unsuitable for the steep topography (30% incline) and will incur high development costs for the residents. In addition, the access roads are un-implementable; one of them is too steep and the route of the other is drawn on top of existing houses.

Planning the Qisan Ridge

The Qisan Ridge (branching out from the easternmost ridge of the neighborhood) is zoned in the neighborhood plan for future development. Accordingly, the area must undergo general planning before it can be developed. Over the years, as housing in the center of the village became denser, landowners began to build houses in this area, without formal planning or building permits. The Jerusalem Municipality responded by distributing demolition orders. Subsequently, the landowners organized to draw up a plan that included part of this zone as well as parts of the areas of the adjacent valley that are designated as open scenic areas. In 2004, they presented a detail plan on an area of about

270 dunam to the planning committees for the building of up to 800 housing units, some of which already exist. Despite the efforts of the residents, the plan has yet to be deposited for public review and has been repeatedly obstructed by the planning authorities. Several times, the local planners were instructed to wait until the completion of the general plan for the neighborhood. In 2011 there was an unsuccessful attempt to shelve the plan, and the residents continued pursuing its approval. Recently (2013), anticipating the rejection of the plan, the residents decided to withdraw it for the time being.

An Attempt at Expanding

Deir al-Aamud and al-Muntar are additional areas owned by Sur Baher residents on the easternmost ridges of the neighborhood. These lands are located on either side of Wadi al-Humus, east of the planned route of the Eastern Ring Road, at the edge of the city. Until the 1990s, the Jerusalem Municipality prevented all development here, claiming that the ring road constitutes the eastern border for development in the city. Nonetheless, young residents of Sur Baher, wanting to get away from the dense core of the neighborhood, began to build here. Following pressure from residents, the Jerusalem Municipality changed its stance and enabled planning for the development of the area. This expansion of the neighborhood is included in the as-yet-unapproved Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan as a new urban area for which a general plan is required before the advancement of detailed plans. As in the case of Qisan, coordination of the residents' plans with the general plan is not being advanced by the planning authorities at a reasonable pace. In the summer of 2012, after many delays and a court appeal, the residents succeeded in attaining approval of detailed plans on a small part of the area.

The Separation Barrier Enclave

East of the municipal boundary, in the West Bank, the extension of the Deir al-Aamud neighborhood is trapped between the boundary and the Separation Barrier. Under the Oslo Accords, this area was divided administratively into areas A, B, and C. Today, this enclave is in the anomalous situation of having part of area A (ostensibly under full Palestinian

control) trapped on the Israeli side of the barrier. This area, in which Jerusalem residents live alongside residents of the West Bank, falls between the cracks administratively and planning-wise. The children of the Jerusalemites receive education services in Sur Baher, while the others have to traverse the Separation Barrier, via nearby checkpoints, in order to reach their schools in the West Bank. Following an agreement between the Civil Administration and the Jerusalem Municipality, garbage collection services have recently begun to be provided there.

The Unrecognized Neighborhood

The lands of the small village of Nu'eman, just south of Sur Baher, are split between the Jerusalem Municipality, Area C to the west of the Separation Barrier (trapped between the barrier and the municipal boundary), and Area C to the east of the Separation Barrier. The 200-odd residents of the village never received Jerusalem residency, despite the fact that their houses were included in the municipal area of the city. The construction of the Separation Barrier around 2005 upset the life of the residents dramatically. On the one hand they are forbidden from entering Jerusalem, and on the other hand their access to the area of the Palestinian Authority has become much more difficult. This situation brings with it a range of problems: no basic infrastructure, no educational institutions, no emergency services, daily passage through a checkpoint, and more. The residents have no choice but to travel long distances and purchase goods outside of Jerusalem. In doing so they risk not being allowed to bring these goods past the checkpoint, due to the ban on bringing in agricultural produce from the West Bank to Jerusalem. Furthermore, the Jerusalem Municipality, which wants to implement plans for the expansion of Har Homa on village lands, has begun to demolish houses in the neighborhood. In response, residents have begun renovating abandoned or dilapidated structures, trying to circumvent the issue of building without permits and subsequent demolitions.

SOME CHILDREN DESERVE MORE THAN OTHERS

Decades ago, the residents of Umm Tuba built a soccer field for their children on their lands, but today they are not allowed to enter it. In 1997, years after they built the field, Har Homa was built to the south of Umm Tuba, and the access road to it ran along the football field. Another road, unofficially named "Lieberman Road," because it is a short-cut to the West-Bank settlement where Member of Knesset Avigdor Lieberman lives, was paved on the other side of the soccer field, thus cutting it off from the neighborhood. Nonetheless, the children of Umm Tuba continued to use the soccer field. In 2011, the Jerusalem Municipality erected a kindergarten compound for the children of Har Homa in temporary structures adjacent to the field. Recently, the children of Umm Tuba came to play on the field but were told to leave. Their parents, who came to sort things out, were also hassled and treated disrespectfully. Apparently the residents of Har Homa think that this field is theirs, and even raised money to renovate it. Moreover, the Jerusalem Municipality allocated more than four million shekels for the renovation of the soccer field for the children of Har Homa. The municipality proposed that the residents of Umm Tuba give up the land and build a new field nearby, on state land, but provided a very limited budget for this, such that most of the costs will fall on the shoulders of the residents.



A Typical Street (photo Bimkom)



The Soccer Field (photo Bimkom)

APPROVED PLANS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Outline Plan # 2302a for Sur Baher and Umm Tuba	3,280.0 dunam
Outline Plan # 2302b for the western neighborhood of Sur Baher	96.0 dunam
Parts of Plans # 4585d,e,f for the Eastern Ring Road (“f” is pending approval)	275.0 dunam
Total planned area	3,651.0 dunam
Unplanned area	2,103.0 dunam
Total area of neighborhood	5,754.0 dunam

Over the years, some 25 detail plans were approved, with no added area for the neighborhood.

ZONING STRUCTURE ACCORDING TO APPROVED PLANS ▪ DESIGNATION VS. USE

Designation	Plans		Land Use
	dunam	%	
Residential*	1,555	27	The plans designate relatively dense urban construction for the neighborhood core and sparse rural-type construction for the periphery of the neighborhood and its four ridges. In the western neighborhood, the plans allow for much denser construction via higher building rights. Construction in the center of the neighborhood is de facto denser than what is allowed, while construction on the various ridges remains sparse due to a lack of paved roads, problems of access, and bureaucratic difficulties.
Open Spaces	1,026	18	Roughly a quarter of the planned areas in the neighborhood are designated as open scenic areas, which preserve the agricultural landscape of the valleys. In addition, the plans contain 25 plots (on a total of about 45 dunam) that are zoned as open public area, and one plot (on about 18 dunam) that is designated as a sports and leisure zone. Only one of the plots has actually been developed. The neighborhood has no playgrounds.
Roads	672	12	The vast majority of the approved roads in the neighborhood plans have not been implemented, and existing roads designated for expansion and development have been expanded and developed only partially. The neighborhood contains roads that serve the residents, but these are severely neglected and have not been upgraded for years. Having no formal status, no future development of them is foreseeable. In addition, a number of roads that exist in the plans cannot be implemented due to existing structures on their planned routes. Of the 670 dunam designated for roads, some 210 dunam are reserved for the future Eastern Ring Road.
Public Buildings and Institutions	112	2	The planned areas of the neighborhood include 22 plots that are designated for public buildings and institutions. Out of these, 19 are designated for educational structures (schools and kindergartens), two are designated for a community center, and one for a family health clinic. Effectively, construction has been carried out on only seven of these plots (even before the neighborhood plans were approved, in two of the cases). The rest, most of which are designated for kindergartens, have remained undeveloped. There is zoning for private institutions in six places in the neighborhood. These have been built, three as mosques, and three as private educational institutions.
Other	490	8.5	Including areas zoned for future planning (216 dunam), commerce (1 dunam), and a cemetery (20 dunam). In addition, some 40% of these 490 dunam are unplanned.
Deir al-Aamud and al-Muntar	494	8.5	To the east of the planned route of the Eastern Ring Road. Only 30 dunam of the area have statutory plans (see: An Attempt at Expanding).
Deir al-Aamud Enclave	957	16	The extension of the Deir al-Aamud neighborhood, which is trapped between the municipal boundary and the Separation Barrier (see: The Separation Barrier Enclave).
Nu’eman	448	8	A separate neighborhood adjacent to and beyond the municipal boundary. There is no planning for the neighborhood (see: The Unrecognized Neighborhood).
Total	5,754	100	

* The most common residential zoning type in Sur Baher allows a 50% building ratio, with sparse construction of up to two storeys. Exceptions to this are the village core, where building rights reach a 70% ratio, with three storeys, and the areas of the western neighborhood, where building rights are 165% with four storeys.