

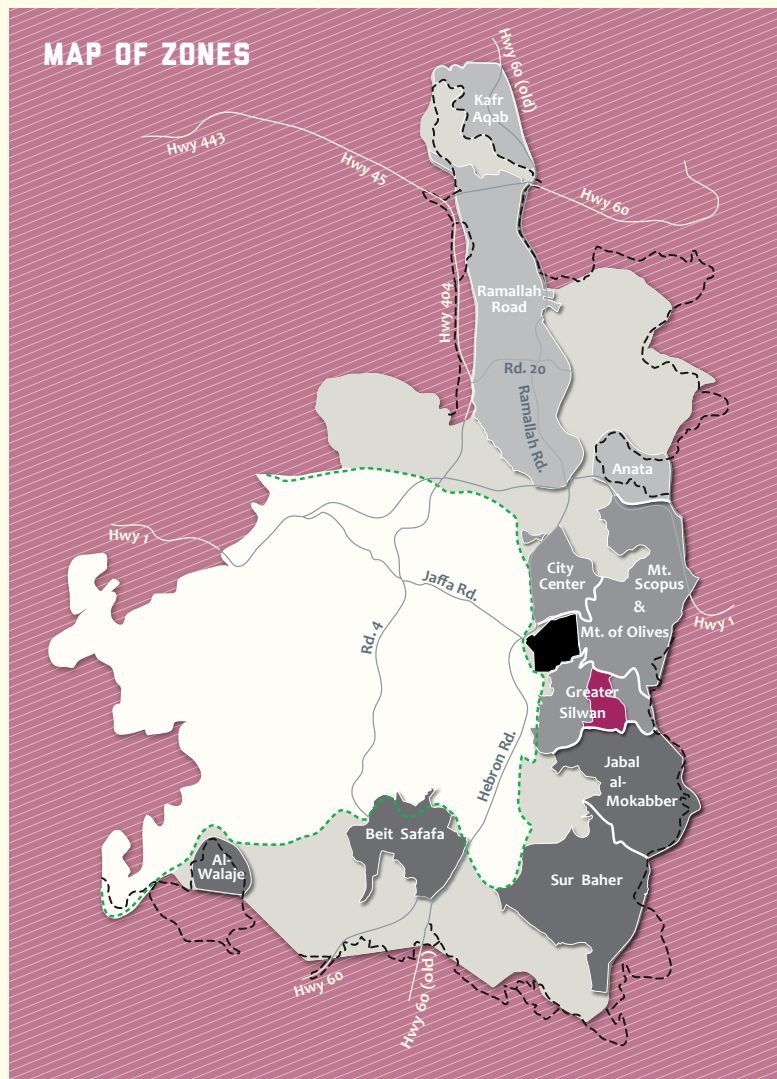
## 2.8 RAS AL-AAMUD

Jerusalem Center - Greater Silwan Zone

### ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The area of Ras al-Aamud is not generally defined as a separate neighborhood of East Jerusalem, but rather as part of the contiguous built-up area of Silwan. Ras al-Aamud borders on Silwan al-Wusta to the west, on the Mount of Olives to the north, on the Old Bethlehem Road and Wadi Qaddum to the east, and on Wadi an-Nar (the Qidron Valley) to the south. The area's steep topography descends from its highest part in the northwest down to the lower part in the southeast. The upper/western section is the highest point; halfway down the slope is as-Sweih; and in the valley is Ein al-Lawza. The strict development restrictions of Plan # 9 for the Visual Basin of the Old City apply to the vast majority of the area, despite the fact that much of it is not visible from the Old City. Ras al-Aamud began to develop in the first half of the 20th century, as a subsidiary of the village of Silwan. In the 1920s it had only about twenty houses, and by the beginning of the 1950s a few dozen more were added. Although the area was sparsely built up, the Jordanian government acceded to the request of the residents to include Ras al-Aamud within the municipal boundaries

of the city. The "new" suburb developed slowly as more families from Silwan moved in and families from Hebron purchased plots from Silwan residents. However, the significant construction boom, which transformed Ras al-Aamud from a peripheral rural area of the city to an intensely built-up neighborhood, occurred in the last quarter of the 20th century, when the area was already under Israeli control. In 1998 the Jerusalem Municipality drew up a new plan (also including Wadi Qaddum), which dictated a rural future for the neighborhood, in contradiction with development trends on the ground. The neighborhood suffers from a severe housing shortage, and as a result many homes have been built in deviation from the plan. In recent years, in glaring mockery of the housing shortage of the Palestinian residents, two of the largest and most upscale Israeli settlements in the heart of Palestinian East Jerusalem have been built in the northern part of the neighborhood.



### FACTS

Population 14,500  
Area 722 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 RAS AL-AAMUD

### The Old Bethlehem Road

During the Jordanian period (1949-1967), the Old Bethlehem Road served as a main artery connecting Jerusalem to Bethlehem and Hebron. A section of this road runs between Ras al-Aamud and Wadi Qaddum, descending from the Mount of Olives in the north towards Wadi an-Nar in the south. Today, the road is narrow and dangerous, with many layers of old asphalt, no sidewalks or guard rails, and no street lighting. Use of the road is nonetheless quite intensive; it is an important East Jerusalem thru-traffic route, though it no longer leads to Bethlehem. There have been many accidents on the road, in which children have been hurt and cars have rolled off the side of the road into the courtyards of houses in neighboring Wadi Qaddum. A number of schools have been built in its immediate vicinity (see following), leading to an increase in vehicular and pedestrian traffic, mostly of children, and an even more precarious safety situation.

### Schools in the Neighborhood

The schools in Ras al-Aamud serve the children of the adjacent neighborhoods as well. Thus the area of as-Sweih, where a number of schools are located, is known by some as Silwan's "schools neighborhood" (Hayy al-Madaris). Although most of the schools in the plans were indeed built (or are currently being built),

they are still extremely overcrowded. This is because of the complete lack of schools in neighboring Wadi Qaddum, abutting Ras al-Aamud to the east, and the partial lack of schools in Silwan al-Wusta, which abuts Ras al-Aamud to the west. Thus, every morning, flocks of children from Silwan al-Wusta, Batn al-Hawa, Hayy al-Farooq, Ein al-Lawza, and Wadi Qaddum make the steep, dangerous climb to reach their schools, often walking on the shoulderless road.

### Settlements

At the highest point of Ras al-Aamud, near the main entrance to the neighborhood and overlooking al-Haram ash-Sharif (Temple Mount) and Wadi an-Nar, are two adjacent Israeli settlements: Ma'ale Zeitim, which was developed and populated by the settler organization Ateret Kohanim; and Ma'ale David, which is being promoted by the Elad settler organization. When the construction of the 220 or so planned apartments in the two settlements is completed, more than 1,000 Jewish-Israeli settlers will be living on either side of the main entrance to the neighborhood, in closed and fortified compounds. These will constitute the largest of the ideological settlements in the heart of the Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. Settlement activity in Ma'ale Zeitim, west of the Old Bethlehem Road, began in 1997 after a legal clarification determined that the land

belongs to the Chabad burial society, which had purchased it before 1948. That year, the Palestinian families who lived there, Hadiya and Aweis, were evicted from their homes and settlers moved in in their place. Prime minister at the time, Benjamin Netanyahu, initially opposed Israeli settlement on the site and delayed the start of the construction of the new buildings, but ultimately backtracked from his opposition. As in other parts of the neighborhood, zoning in most of this area was for residential structures of up to two storeys. Part of the area was also zoned for a public playground. A new plan drawn up by the settlers cancelled the playground and increased building rights for the settlement. In two stages, in 2003 and in 2006, the original homes were demolished and six four-storey apartment buildings with 117 apartments were built, as well as a synagogue, a kindergarten, and a Jewish ritual bath.

Meanwhile, across the street, the Bukharian Community Trust demanded to reclaim land that it owned, on the site of the Judea and Samaria police headquarters. In 2007, it was agreed to transfer the police station to a new structure in the controversial E-1 area, outside Jerusalem. The move was funded by Jewish-American multi-millionaire Irwin Moskowitz, and the police headquarters moved to its new location in 2008. Most of the area of the old police station is zoned for public structures, and a small part of it for residential construction. In 2009, the settlers submitted a plan to change the zoning, in which the police structure and additional structures on the site would be destroyed and in their place seven four-storey apartment buildings with 104 housing units, a synagogue, a kindergarten, a country club, and a commercial center would be built. The plan was rejected, but in the meantime the settlers received a special permit to outfit the existing structure for habitation. In 2012 fourteen families moved into what became known as Ma'ale David. Attempts to get approval for the plan and to enable construction of the large settlement continue.

### A Potential Settlement

Along the Jericho Road, about 150 meters east of the Ma'ale David settlement, is another plan for a settlement, on land that was purchased by an Israeli Jew. The plan, which was approved

by the District Planning Committee in February 2012, alters the land designation from an area for a gas station to a residential area and proposes building rights in accordance with the Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan (160% building ratio with four storeys on top of an underground parking garage; see following). The new Israeli project is, first and foremost, a business enterprise. Once a building permit is granted, to build a total of about 30 apartments in three buildings, alongside a commercial structure, the resale value will rise significantly.

### The Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan

In the Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan, still awaiting deposition for public review, two new areas are designated for the expansion of Ras al-Aamud. In one area, to the west of the Old Bethlehem Road and abutting Wadi Qaddum, a narrow strip of land, already entirely built up, is marked for future residential construction; the demarcation would effectively enable the retroactive legalization of the homes. The second, larger and more significant, expansion area covers 218 dunam in the south of the neighborhood. Most of this area (159 dunam) is included in the area of Ras al-Aamud, and the rest is part of Jabal al-Mokabber. About 35 dunam of the area were already zoned in the neighborhood plan (approved in 1998) for roads, housing, and public structures, such that effectively the actual expansion area is much smaller. That being said, it does include some partially built-up areas, which are zoned in the current neighborhood plan as open areas and as a nature reserve. Thus, the outline plan would enable retroactive formalization of existing houses as well as potential for new development. A master plan is being prepared for the entire expansion area by the residents of Ein al-Lawza (see inset). In addition, the outline plan proposes the densification of the existing fabric in the neighborhood through an increase in building rights. However, because of the building limitations stipulated in Plan # 9 for the Visual Basin of the Old City, which apply to most of the neighborhood, additions are limited to two storeys, with a maximum of four storeys per structure. So far, about thirty plot-owners have taken advantage of the building rights proposed in the outline plan through the submission and approval of detail plans.

## A MASTER PLAN FOR EIN AL-LAWZA

Ein al-Lawza lies in Wadi an-Nar – descending from Ras al-Aamud on the northern slope, and from Jabal al-Mokabber on the southern slope – and is a natural continuation of Silwan's al-Bustan neighborhood, bordering on Silwan al-Wusta and as-Sweih to the north, as-Sawahrah to the east, Jabal al-Mokabber to the south, and Abu Thor to the west. Out of about 2,000 residents, living in 226 residential structures and 450 housing units, many have received demolition orders. Until recently, Ein al-Lawza was not recognized as a separate neighborhood, and its area was included, in pieces, on a number of other plans. The northern slope of the neighborhood is included in plans that were prepared for Silwan al-Wusta and Ras al-Aamud, and the land is zoned as open scenic area and a nature reserve. Meanwhile, Plan #9 for the Visual Basin of the Old City is still in effect on the southern slope, according to which the land is designated as open public area. The Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan proposes the recognition of part of the neighborhood by including it in an expansion area, while the rest of the neighborhood remains marked as open, including a neighborhood park. The



development of the proposed expansion area is conditioned, however, on the approval of a general plan for the entire area. In 2007, a group of residents organized to prepare a plan on about 50 dunam (roughly a quarter of the expansion area), where most of the unauthorized houses stand. But their plan was rejected in 2011 because it did not comply with the demand for general planning. Since 2009, residents of the neighborhood have also been working to advance a master plan for the entire neighborhood. The master plan, still in its early planning stages, includes about 390 dunam and intends to zone most of the area for residential construction. The residents, who initiated the plan, hope that construction of about 2,000 housing units will be approved. Keeping with requirements of the planning committees, and in accordance with another general plan for the area, the residents' plan designates the valley bed for the development of a tourist trail that preserves the agricultural heritage of Wadi an-Nar. In a preliminary discussion at the District Planning Bureau, the planners were asked to reduce the area zoned for residential construction and to coordinate it with the expansion area marked on the Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan, thus leaving many existing houses outside of the residentially zoned area. The planners are working to find creative solutions to maintain the houses that are not included in the new development areas.



The Old Bethlehem Road (photo Bimkom)

## APPROVED PLANS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Part of Outline Plan # 2668 for Ras al-Aamud and Wadi Qaddum	597.7 dunam
Part of Outline Plan # 2783a for Silwan al-Wusta	64.7 dunam
Part of Local Outline Plan # 9 for the Visual Basin of the Old City	33.9 dunam
Outline Plans # 11 & 4689 for Ma'ale Zeitim Settlement	20.5 dunam
<b>Total planned area</b>	<b>716.8 dunam</b>
Unplanned area	5.2 dunam
<b>Total area of neighborhood</b>	<b>722 dunam</b>

Eighteen detail plans have been approved, changing the relevant land designation, on an overall area of only about 21 dunam, with no added area for the neighborhood. In addition, about 30 small-scale detail plans have been approved, increasing building rights.

## ZONING STRUCTURE ACCORDING TO APPROVED PLANS ■ DESIGNATION VS. USE

Designation	Plans		Land Use
	dunam	%	
<b>Residential*</b>	311	43	The upper part of the neighborhood is heavily built-up, as are the areas along the existing roads, where no vacant plots remain. On the other hand, in areas where there are no access roads, some areas zoned for residential construction remain vacant. The sub-neighborhood of Ein al-Lawza is zoned as open scenic area (see inset). In addition, approved building rights do not meet the actual needs of the residents, and thus, the built-up areas include more than 100 houses that are built above the permitted two storeys, including some houses of five and six storeys.
<b>Open Spaces</b>	212	29	Most of the area designated as open is located at the edges of the neighborhood, including areas bordering on Silwan al-Wusta that are zoned as a nature reserve but are de facto built-up. These areas are included, for the most part, in the expansion area for Ein al-Lawza (see inset). In addition, there are three plots zoned as open public areas, one of which is designated for development as a public park, in the west of the neighborhood; it was developed partially as a sports field and serves the adjacent schools. Two additional tiny areas, which look like planning “scraps,” function effectively as an expansion of a road and a parking area.
<b>Public Buildings</b>	66	9	The neighborhood has 11 plots for public buildings, which until recently stood empty. In recent years the Jerusalem Municipality has been working vigorously to build and develop some of these plots. Two schools were opened and the construction of a third school is meant to be completed towards the end of 2013. The rest of the plots, which are zoned for schools, kindergartens, and a veterinary clinic, have not been developed, and residential structures exist on some of them.
<b>Institutions</b>	24	3	The area of the Maison d’Abraham pilgrim guest house is located in the structure of an old Benedictine monastery.
<b>Roads</b>	98	14	Many of the existing roads appear in the neighborhood plans and are designated either for expansion, or as combined vehicular/pedestrian passages or public pathways. The roads have never been expanded and they continue to serve the residents in their existing narrow state. In some places, the plans proposed new vehicular/pedestrian passages, but, having not been implemented, the residents continue to use the existing, un-statutory roads. The planned network of roads is sparse in comparison with urban standards. For this reason, and due to the fact that only some of the planned roads actually exist, there are areas in the neighborhood that have no access road whatsoever, seriously hindering development in these areas.
<b>Other</b>	11	2	Hotels, commercial enterprises, and a gas station. Includes unplanned areas.
<b>Total</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>100</b>	

\* On about 13% of the residential areas of the neighborhood, only rural-type building rights are stipulated, allowing a 25% building ratio with one storey. The minimal size for a plot is 400 m<sup>2</sup>. In the rest of the areas, with the exception of the area included in the small privately approved detail plans, a building ratio of 50% with two storeys is allowed, with similar stipulations about plot size.