
As-Salt – The Place of Tolerance and Urban Hospitality (Jordan)

No 689rev

Official name as proposed by the State Party

As-Salt – The Place of Tolerance and Urban Hospitality

Location

As-Salt Greater Municipality
Al-Balqa Governorate
Jordan

Brief description

The city of As-Salt, capital of the Al-Balqa Governorate, is built upon the slopes and valleys of three closely-spaced hills in the Balqa highland of west-central Jordan, about 30 kilometres northwest of Amman. An important settlement in the area, it was once a prominent trading link between the eastern desert and the west. During the last 60 years of the Ottoman period, the As-Salt region became wealthy through the arrival and settlement of merchants from Nablus, Syria, and Lebanon who made their fortunes on trade, banking, and farming. This prosperity attracted skilled craftsmen and As-Salt was transformed from a modest rural settlement into a thriving town with a distinctive townscape and architecture.

The urban morphology of the historic urban core is characterised by large public buildings and family residences constructed of local yellow limestone, as well as a network of interlinked stairways, alleyways, public squares and spaces, and streets. These tangible characteristics of the nominated property are complemented by cultural traditions of tolerance between Muslim and Christian communities, as demonstrated by their lack of physical segregation, and by particular traditions of hospitality, including the social welfare system known as *Takaful Ijtimai* and the provision of hospitality in *Madafas* (guest houses, known locally as *Dawaween*). These tangible and intangible aspects emerged through a melding of rural traditions and bourgeois merchants' and tradespeople's practices during the 'Golden Age' of As-Salt's development between the 1860s and the 1920s.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

18 November 1993

13 January 2004

2 April 2015

Background

This is a deferred nomination. The first nomination for "The Old City of As-Salt" was examined by the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee, which adopted the following decision at its 19th session (Paris, 1995):

The Bureau decided to defer this proposed nomination until such times as the State Party is in a position to confirm that appropriate protective measures, based on the Plan of Action of 1990, have been adopted and are being effectively implemented.

A second nomination dossier was submitted in 2016 for "As-Salt Eclectic Architecture (1865-1925), Origins and Evolution of an Architectural Language in the Levant." It was a serial nomination of eight components oriented around twenty-two buildings. That nomination was examined by the World Heritage Committee at its 41st session (Krakow, 2017). In Decision 41 COM 8B.13, the World Heritage Committee deferred the nomination to allow the State Party to:

- Develop a comparative analysis including similar properties in the Levant and in the area of influence of the Ottoman Empire,*
- Redefine the criteria, in order to demonstrate what makes this architectural heritage important or exceptional among other historic cities in the region, as the cradle of a new amalgamated expression of different styles,*
- Modify the boundaries of the nominated property, in order to be read as parts of a coherent whole,*
- Further elaborate on the definition of the Outstanding Universal Value of this architectural heritage, in order to be considered an exceptional case in the process of modernisation.*

The State Party was encouraged to seek the advice of ICOMOS, and initial discussions occurred in November 2017. In March 2018, the State Party produced a 'Vision' document outlining a substantial change to the nomination's overall approach. ICOMOS conducted desk reviews on the basis of that document, and an Advisory Mission was undertaken in May 2018. An ICOMOS Advisory Report was provided to the State Party in July 2018. The present revised nomination was submitted by the State Party in 2020 for consideration by the World Heritage Committee.

Consultations and Technical Evaluation Mission

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members, and independent experts.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 3 to 10 December 2020.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 29 September 2020 requesting additional information about the revisions made to the previous nomination proposal, comparative analysis, legal protection, various aspects of the management system, and state of conservation. Additional information was received from the State Party on 23 November 2020.

An Interim Report was sent to the State Party on 25 January 2021 requesting further information on the comparative analysis, the characteristics of interchange or fusion of cultures, intangible heritage, and aspects of the management system, including the demolition of intrusive buildings, planned new developments, the status of conservation plans for individual buildings, and the source of stone for future conservation purposes. Further information was received from the State Party on 28 February 2021. All responses received from the State Party have been incorporated into the relevant sections of this report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

18 March 2021

2 Description of the property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report only provides a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

The revised nomination for As-Salt is oriented around the specific urban and social history of the city, including both tangible and intangible dimensions. The city of As-Salt is built upon the slopes and valleys of the closely-spaced Al Qala'a, Al Jad'a, and Al Salalem hills in the Balqa highland of west-central Jordan, about 30 kilometres northwest of Amman. Now the capital of the Al-Balqa Governorate, As-Salt was a prominent frontier Ottoman trading centre between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, linking the eastern desert and the west.

The city's urban core includes approximately 650 significant historic buildings. Its urban setting and morphology include intricate networks of public stairways, alleyways, squares, and streets. At its centre is Sahat Al-Ain, the city's main square. The visual setting and the panoramic views from many locations are also significant elements of the urban ensemble.

The architectural and urban fabric of As-Salt's historic urban core is linked to the tangible and intangible characteristics that were established during the city's 'Golden Age' from the 1860s to the 1920s. The architecture of the historic buildings in the nominated property demonstrates the economic transformation of As-Salt during this period, including new building typologies and technical know-how, as reflected in urban residences, mosques, churches, schools, and hospitals.

A number of the 19th-century residences in the nominated property exhibit a blend of European Art Nouveau and Neo-Colonial styles combined with local traditions in a mixture of vernacular regional and high-style architecture. Housing types such as the central-hallway 'three-bay' house were imported from neighbouring cities such as Damascus, Beirut, Nablus, and Jerusalem, where they had already developed, as well as from large Ottoman Anatolian cities and Europe. Substantial townhouses and multi-storey residences are prominent in the nominated property. The urban landscape expresses the integration of a new urbanism and architectural language introduced by the migrating merchants and facilitated by the different reforms by Ottoman officials and European Christian missionaries.

Skilled Palestinian stonemasons, builders, carpenters, and other tradespeople were largely responsible for the new constructions. They introduced modern styles whilst also incorporating the cultural traditions of architecture in the Levant. A distinctive yellow limestone was obtained from nearby quarries, and stone blocks from ancient buildings were reused. The colour and texture of the stone is a feature in the city, and its workability enabled the characteristic built forms and decorative elements. Other typical materials include glazed ceramic tiles and coloured window glass.

For many centuries As-Salt was a small but regionally important rural village at the crossroads of several of the region's main cities. In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire decided to extend its sovereignty to the southern limits of its Arab provinces. The series of reforms (*Tanzimat*) transformed the village, leading to the rise of economic, social, and healthcare institutions as well as schools, public buildings, mosques, and many shops. The various Ottoman reforms and an intensified security brought economic prosperity, which encouraged urban merchants from nearby cities in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon to migrate here and open businesses, thereby transforming As-Salt into a prosperous city. Traded products included livestock, wool, butter, dried yogurt, grains, grapes, raisins and a plant known as 'kali', an ingredient in soap making. As-Salt also benefited from its position on the Syrian pilgrimage route to Mecca and the opening of the from Damascus to Medina at the turn of the 19th century. Its population grew from 4,000 in 1868 to 20,000 in 1913. The Municipality was established in 1887.

Encouraged by the stability of the Ottoman Empire, the new middle-class population invested in building large family homes that changed the architectural character and morphology of As-Salt. This period also saw the reconfiguration of Sahat Al-Ain and changes along Al-Khader and Hammam streets, two of the town's main thoroughfares.

The emergence of local cultural traits and practices came about through a fusion of the cultures of local people and the in-migrating merchants. Europeans also arrived in greater numbers. Merchant activities drew Transjordan into the regional economy of Ottoman Syria and the

Mediterranean world and generated huge fortunes through trade, banking, and farming. Christian missionaries were another major catalyst of change, introducing new forms of education and medicine and constructing buildings. An Anglican Church was built in 1867, and French missionaries built the Latin Church in 1869-1870. A culture of tolerance developed, demonstrated by aspects such as the lack of physical segregation of the Muslim and Christian communities, guest houses (*Madafas*), systems of social and financial support between families (*Takaful Ijtimai*), and the uses of shared spaces.

The prosperity of As-Salt declined after 1921 when the newly founded Emirate of Transjordan established its capital at Amman. This transfer of power left vacant sites, empty buildings, and houses in poor repair as As-Salt's economy reverted to one based on agriculture. Now an agricultural market and an administrative centre, the city has then witnessed rapid urban development since the 1980s.

Boundaries

The nominated area totals 24.68 hectares, and is enclosed by a single buffer zone of 71.12 hectares. The property boundary accords with the historic urban core of As-Salt, and with the zoning established by the As-Salt City Core Special Regulations. ICOMOS notes that the boundary is based on the location of the nominated property's proposed tangible attributes as well as natural and urban morphological factors.

The single continuous buffer zone established by the State Party surrounds the perimeter of the nominated property and includes the three hills that overlook the historic city centre. ICOMOS considers that the buffer zone provides an additional layer of protection for the nominated property, including protection of significant aspects of the immediate setting, and also accords with provisions of the management system, particularly in relation to development controls.

ICOMOS considers that the boundary and buffer zone are well-defined and appropriate.

State of conservation

The As-Salt City Development Unit of the As-Salt Greater Municipality has completed physical condition assessments for approximately 20 percent of the historic buildings in the nominated property. The condition assessment classification of the buildings has a four-step scale of very good, good, poor or neglected. Specific condition problems have been recorded.

Physical condition assessments have also been conducted for public urban stairways, sidewalks, streets, squares, and spaces within the nominated property. Drainage issues, intrusive plants, graffiti, exposed pipes and electrical wires, and damaged surfaces have been recorded. Needed maintenance, repair, and conservation works are noted, utilising the geographic information system (GIS) that has been developed for the city. The

State Party estimates that this work will take a further 5 to 7 years to complete.

Although As-Salt has experienced rapid urban development since the 1980s, the State Party considers that the general condition of most of the historic buildings and urban fabric in the nominated property is good, or at least acceptable. Based on the information provided, ICOMOS concurs that this is the case for many elements, but also notes that the state of conservation varies across the full extent of this urban area. Problems in the buildings include surface cracks, cracked lintels, leakage, humidity problems, rising damp, peeling and discolouration of the yellow limestone, disrepair of doors and windows, rusty balconies, and so on. A number of key historic buildings have been maintained in good condition, such as the Anglican Church complex, but others have suffered from vacancy and damage, such as the Fakhoury House and Hattar House. These conditions are recorded and acknowledged by the State Party, and have been incorporated into the planning for conservation works.

Historically there were stone quarries on the slopes of the Al-Salalem area (now closed). The State Party has advised that suitable stone for future conservation purposes is available from the *Dair Allah* in the *Ghore* area and from the *Mafraq* region.

Factors affecting the property

ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the property are infrastructure projects and new development, population pressures (particularly in the buffer zone), gentrification of the historic city centre associated with the loss of intangible heritage practices and traditions, and seismic risk. Transportation, mobility, and access are key challenges for the nominated property. Visitor management is currently not a problem, but could become an issue should the nominated property be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The city's rapid urban development since the 1980s has put pressure on the historic fabric and its integrity through urban encroachments, demolitions, and insensitive adaptations or additions. As-Salt Greater Municipality has graded and designated the city's historic buildings and implemented urban heritage regulatory tools through the As-Salt City Development Projects Unit, including the City Core Special Regulations, which were endorsed in 2014. New projects within the nominated property and its buffer zone go through a design review process coordinated by the As-Salt City Development Projects Unit.

To reduce the visual impact of the network of overhead electrical cables, the As-Salt Greater Municipality signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Jordanian Electric Power Company in 2016 to bury the cables within the nominated property. A similar agreement has been made with the Jordan Telecom Group (Orange Jordan) regarding telecommunications infrastructure in the nominated property.

As-Salt is located in an area of extremely high seismic risk. The State Party is well aware of this and has advised that relevant anti-seismic engineering and design principles are taken into account in the creation of conservation programmes. ICOMOS considers that the urban morphology of As-Salt poses heightened challenges for emergency responses, and recommends that the system for managing risks (seismic, flooding, fire) be further developed, including evacuation plans and capacity building.

3 Proposed justification for inscription

Proposed justification

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- As-Salt has specific attributes of tangible and intangible or living heritage that together demonstrate characteristics of tolerance and joint habitation between Muslim and Christian communities, urban hospitality, and urban social welfare.
- The intangible characteristics of urban hospitality are demonstrated in the density of settlement, the creation and use of shared space, the buildings known as *Madafas*, systems of social and financial support between families and with visitors known as *Takaful Ijtimai'*, and a lack of segregated neighbourhoods based on religion.
- The *Madafas* and social customs of hospitality and cooperation represent a fusion between local Bedouin systems and urban in-migrating bourgeois merchants linking the city and its hinterland.
- The architecture of As-Salt demonstrates cultural exchanges of technical know-how that resulted in a specific mix of vernacular regional and higher-class architectural styles.
- An interesting urban morphology has evolved, made up of public spaces, roads, stairways, and alleyways that link the city's neighbourhoods and respond to the sloping topography of the city.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis is presented in two parts: a comparison with three sites within the geo-cultural region; and a comparison with one site outside the region. The comparisons include two World Heritage properties and other sites with a broadly comparable combination of proposed Outstanding Universal Value and attributes.

The comparative analysis first compares the nominated property with Nablus, Beirut, and Jerusalem (Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls, 1981, criteria (ii), (iii) and (vi)). It then compares it with Mostar (Old Bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2005, criterion (vi)) on the basis that, like As-Salt, it was on the frontier of

the Ottoman Empire and has various shared characteristics of religious tolerance.

The State Party provided comparisons between As-Salt and each of these cities in relation to various parameters: intensity and forms of manifestation of tolerance and joint habitation; continuity of traditions of tolerance and joint habitation; absence of segregated neighbourhoods; urban hospitality; links between urban morphology and the socio-urban welfare systems; architectural significance; and urban morphology. Additional information provided by the State Party also compared the state of conservation of the urban fabric of the city with others, particularly Beirut and Nablus.

The State Party has also provided additional comparative information about the transformations to other small towns in the region due to the Ottoman reforms. The towns of Kerak, Madaba and Ajlun are discussed. These share some common characteristics with As-Salt, but on a lesser scale due to the later introduction of Ottoman reforms and economic activity.

ICOMOS considers that the additional information provided by the State Party has helped to clarify the comparative analysis. ICOMOS notes the historical importance of the nominated property in the context of the development of a Transjordanian identity. It was one of the first hinterland towns to be reached by the modernising wave of the industrial revolution and the related administrative reforms of the late 19th century in the Levant, and was the capital of Transjordan before this was moved to Amman.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis is sufficient to position the nominated property within its historical and geo-cultural contexts.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of the nominated property for the World Heritage List.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (ii) and (iii).

Criterion (ii): *exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property demonstrates a significant interchange of human values in the period from the 1860s to the 1920s between the cities in the Levant and between urban and hinterland areas. The social, economic, cultural and physical transformations of the city were an outcome of Ottoman reforms that positioned As-Salt as a southern urban frontier for trade and cultural exchange. These exchanges built the prosperity of As-Salt, and involved the circulation of urban bourgeois migrants, Ottoman officials, and European Christian missionaries, and a 'fusion' of

rural and in-migrating urban characteristics that are expressed in the tangible and intangible attributes of As-Salt.

ICOMOS acknowledges that As-Salt demonstrates these various exchanges within the Levant during this period of its history. The tangible attributes of the urban centre of the city –architecture, urban morphology, and public spaces –demonstrate the transformations resulting from the Ottoman reforms, and the influx of new urban traders and craftspeople.

ICOMOS recommends that research continues into the important dimension of the ‘fusion’ of rural Bedouin traditions and the early modernism that created As-Salt’s ‘Golden Age’.

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property demonstrates an exceptional example of the continuation of traditions and cultural traits within the historic urban core that are associated with its ‘Golden Age’ period (1860s to 1920s). The State Party considers that these traditions and traits are demonstrated in historic buildings, stairways, and public spaces, as well as in continuing traditions of joint habitation and urban hospitality that were established at that time. While these social characteristics can also be found in other Levantine cities of this period, the State Party contends that the nominated property is distinctive in terms of the different forms of cooperation across religions and the absence of segregated neighbourhoods. The continuing forms of *Madafas* (guest houses, or *Dawaween*) are an example provided by the State Party. The cultures of tolerance, hospitality, and social welfare practiced by the Bedouin peoples of the region were common throughout the area and have contributed to the construction of a modern Trans-Jordanian identity.

Additional information provided by the State Party has usefully clarified that these traditions are associated with the tangible characteristics of the historic city centre. These are based on three major threads: the intensity of the manifestations of tolerance and co-habitation; the continuity of some of these traditions in the present; and the absence of segregated neighbourhoods. The dense urban morphology, networks of shared spaces and other tangible aspects of the city are related to the development and continuity of these traditions.

ICOMOS considers that the focus of this criterion on the testimony of a particular social and cultural milieu from the 19th century to the present day is appropriate. The described characteristics of the dense urban morphology, together with the cultural traditions of shared welfare are inter-related. The lack of segregation between Muslims, Christians, and various ethnicities occurred in other cities in the Levant and in the Arab region that were part of the Ottoman Empire during this period, but was more

pronounced for As-Salt. Intangible traditions shared by Muslims and Christians in As-Salt include: the sharing of religious festivals and rituals; sharing of food, resources and breast feeding; shared veneration of local saints and prophets; and, shared business and municipal roles. Continuing research is recommended to better understand these intangible traditions, including their relationships with the tangible elements.

ICOMOS considers that criteria (ii) and (iii) have been justified.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The State Party considers that the nominated property is of sufficient size to express the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. The relevant tangible features that occur within the boundary include historic buildings dating from the 1860s to the 1920s, the networks of stairways and public spaces of the urban morphology, and the main intangible characteristics that speak to tolerance and urban hospitality, which are continuing.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property demonstrates sufficient integrity in relation to the continuity of the historic urban fabric, including the landscape setting, the network and hierarchy of stairways that organise the vertical movement between lower and upper levels, the presence of open spaces that support a multi-faith society, and the residential and religious buildings. The integrity is affected by intrusive buildings and empty plots within the urban fabric that affect the property’s visual and cultural/intangible qualities. In response, the Municipality of As-Salt’s programme of works includes conservation of historic buildings and public spaces, landscaping, restoration of slopes, and demolition of some intrusive buildings located in the historic city centre. Some of these projects have already been completed, such as the removal of buildings in front of the As-Salt Great Mosque and the construction of a public space in Al-Ain square. Tall buildings have been removed in the vicinity of the Latin Church and near Al-Maydan square, part of the Oqba bin Nafe’ plaza development project.

ICOMOS considers that the integrity of the nominated property remains vulnerable to the pressures of new urban development, and recommends that rigorous Heritage Impact Assessment processes in line with the ICOMOS HIA guidance document are introduced as a priority.

Authenticity

The State Party considers that the form and design of the architectural and urban elements of As-Salt meet the requirements of authenticity, despite various contemporary projects and adaptive reuses. The distinctive yellow stone distinguishes many historic buildings within the larger urban core, and the retention of

the networks of public spaces, alleyways, and stairways contributes to the authenticity of the nominated area.

ICOMOS considers that, despite many alterations, the authenticity of the structure, materials, form, and design of the historic buildings and urban fabric is satisfactory, although the urban plan is not clearly readable in some areas due to unsympathetic developments.

ICOMOS considers that the integrity and authenticity of the nominated property are satisfactory, although they are vulnerable due to the impacts of new developments and deterioration of the historic fabric. Future loss of intangible cultural heritage practices and traditions are also potential areas of vulnerability.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

Exchanges of additional information has assisted the further refinement of the justification of Outstanding Universal Value presented by the State Party. Although continued research could strengthen some arguments presented, particularly in relation to the local Bedouin cultural traditions that have contributed to the cultural interchanges of As-Salt. ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis is satisfactory. Criteria (ii) and (iii) have been demonstrated, and the requirements of authenticity and integrity have been met.

Attributes

The attributes that contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property include urban bourgeois residences such as central-hallway 'three-bay' houses, 'Bilad al Sham' (Levant) townhouses and local Salti multi-storey residences, mosques, churches, schools, and hospitals, especially those that merged regional influences with imported stylistic and material trends; urban amenities such as the web of stairways and alleyways, public squares, streets, nodes, and panoramic lookouts. Attributes related to urban hospitality and tolerance include *Madafas*, and the dense urban proximity of various functions, shared urban entrances, verandas, semi-private spaces, and urban nodes in front of buildings and along stairways. Intangible traditions include shared religious and cultural festivals, as well as everyday practices of food sharing, dress and a traditional board game (*Al Manqala*) played in the city squares.

ICOMOS considers that the revised focus of the nominated property has provided a stronger basis for presenting the Outstanding Universal Value of As-Salt. The identification of attributes supports the justification for inscription, however continued research in relation to the local Bedouin cultural traditions that have contributed to the cultural interchanges of As-Salt is recommended.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Conservation measures

A Conservation Management Plan provides overarching policies for the conservation of the built elements of the nominated property. Its fourth policy addresses the systems for maintaining and repairing public spaces and introducing new services and infrastructure. Several strategies are proposed, including developing guidelines for continuous maintenance and repair works, provision of services, and urban design; developing a monitoring plan for the urban fabric and public areas; facilitating coordination between the Municipality and infrastructure providers; and preparing capacity building programmes. In 2013-2014, the As-Salt Building Pathology Manual and the Manual for the Conservation of the Historic Centre of As-Salt were produced. ICOMOS notes that some of these initiatives have already commenced, and stresses the importance of having such measures in place.

Decades of work have created the basis for the documentation of the historic fabric of the city, and the State Party has provided detailed descriptions of studies and conservation projects carried out since the early 1990s. These include major restoration and adaptive reuse projects for individual historic buildings such as the Small Mosque, Touqan House, Mouasher House, Qaqish House, and Abu Jaber building; cleaning and repair of façades, including Sahat Al-Ain and the Great Mosque; work on the paths, stairways, and façades along Hammam Street; and renovation of the main city square. The Municipality has purchased several historic buildings with the aim of conserving them, and is in an ongoing dialogue with private owners to establish partnerships.

ICOMOS notes that there is a clear intention and commitment by both local and national authorities to conserve the historical characteristics of the nominated property, and of As-Salt generally. The conservation measures will require sustained implementation, funding, local and national government support, and partnerships with private owners. A number of restoration and interpretation projects are underway. In continuing to plan such projects, it will be essential to address the conservation of the less pretentious as well as the most outstanding and iconic buildings and urban fabric. These include the modest surviving 'farm' houses, a rare but important testimony to the long history of As-Salt.

The State Party has confirmed that Conservation Plans are being prepared for each of the twenty-two most significant historic buildings, including plans for renovation and/or adaptive reuse. These are currently at different points in their development. ICOMOS considers that these are important for the long-term conservation of these buildings, and encourages their timely completion.

The Conservation Management Plan has been substantially updated from the version that had accompanied the previous nomination. It provides a detailed understanding and assessment of the nominated property and current conditions, and reviews previous

conservation projects. The factors affecting the state of conservation are described and analysed.

ICOMOS considers that there is an evident commitment for the conservation of the tangible elements of As-Salt. Improvements are evident in relation to studies and documentation of the elements of the nominated property. Many important conservation projects have already been completed, and others are underway and/or planned.

Monitoring

A proposed monitoring system includes indicators and monitoring responsibilities. Proposed indicators are oriented to measuring the state of conservation of historic buildings and public spaces (streets, alleyways, stairways). Indicators have also been devised to measure visitor pressures. ICOMOS notes that the proposed monitoring system is not yet fully operational.

ICOMOS also considers that, while the monitoring system is generally adequate for the proposed tangible attributes of the nominated property, further development of the monitoring system is needed to take into account the proposed intangible attributes by means of key indicators.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation measures are appropriate, but will require sustained implementation, funding, local and national government support, and partnerships with private owners. The monitoring arrangements are not yet fully operational. ICOMOS considers that the monitoring indicators are generally adequate for the tangible attributes, but appropriate key indicators are missing for the intangible attributes.

5 Protection and management

Documentation

Studies to document As-Salt's architectural heritage were initiated in 1984 and 1990, followed by several land survey and restoration projects that were initiated by foreign and local institutions. A geographic information system (GIS) database details plot parcels, building surveys, ownerships, materials, dates of construction, and current uses. Approximately 4,400 buildings have been surveyed (including all historic buildings and newer buildings in the city's core area), and a conservation manual has been developed.

The As-Salt City Development Projects Unit has completed the production of measured drawings for about 75 buildings (Grades 1 and 2) and has plans to finish all of the more than 650 historic buildings within the next five years. Since the early 1990s, measured drawings have been produced for other tangible elements such as historic stairways, streets, squares, and panoramic lookouts through an urban conservation project funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Publications featuring the existing documentation and condition assessments have been produced by the Municipality.

ICOMOS considers that these documentation processes are essential baseline tools for managing the nominated property. ICOMOS notes that the documentation of important views has commenced and recommends that consideration be given to assessing the impacts on these views in the planning of all proposed developments.

The State Party has also provided information about projects aimed at documentation and inventorying of aspects of the intangible cultural heritage of As-Salt, including traditions of food and dress, speciality shops, markets and shopping streets, and a traditional board game known as '*Al Manqala*'. Some of these are linked to the development of local tourism products, and others are oriented at youth engagement.

Legal protection

Two national laws provide protection for the nominated property. The Law of Architectural and Urban Protection (N° 5, 2005) is the primary national law for the protection of cultural heritage in Jordan. Administered by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, it provides protection of architectural and urban heritage, regulates the conservation processes and the conditions for conservation work, and specifies required documentation, such as municipal registers of historic buildings.

The Cities, Villages and Buildings Planning Law (N° 79, 1966), administered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, provides for the establishment of planning authorities and processes, including the regulation of construction. This law does not establish specific arrangements for heritage buildings/sites, although does provide for the development of regional and structural plans that can include heritage conservation. In practice, this provision has not been utilised. A third national law, the Antiquities Law (N° 21, 1988), which applies to moveable and non-moveable antiquities dating prior to 1750 CE, is not generally applicable to the nominated property.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities supported the development of special regulations for four historic towns in Jordan, including As-Salt, with funding provided by the World Bank. The As-Salt City Core Special Regulations apply to the nominated property and the buffer zone and provide for the grading and designation of historic buildings and guidelines for conservation and new design. A five-level grading scheme for historic buildings has been established by the Municipality, and policies for retention and intervention are applied to each grading level. Special Conservation Areas and Special Development Corridors have been identified. The delineation of the nominated property boundary accords with the boundary of Zone 'A' (City Core) in the Salt City Core Development Control Map; within Zone 'A' are further zones ('B' and 'C'). Each zone establishes permitted land uses and associated regulations. The As-Salt City Development Projects Unit was established by the As-Salt Greater Municipality to coordinate conservation and safeguarding efforts and establishes the management system for the nominated property.

Additional information provided by the State Party in November 2020 indicates that a design review board within the As-Salt City Development Unit of the As-Salt Greater Municipality enables the review of proposed interventions such as conservation projects, adaptive reuse, and infill development. In some cases, the design review board requires a heritage impact assessment and/or environmental impact assessment. The State Party advises that the Municipality and its Development Unit are planning to expand the design review board to include additional national experts, and to develop criteria for conducting heritage and/or environmental impact studies. ICOMOS considers that the development of a Heritage Impact Assessment process that is clearly aligned with the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property is of importance. The requirement for Heritage Impact Assessments should be fully integrated into the legal protection regime and management system of the property.

There is a mixture of public and private ownership of the buildings in the nominated property. Apart from four buildings now owned by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the As-Salt Greater Municipality (the Abu Jaber, Qaqish, Touqan, and Mismar houses), the heirs of the merchants have largely kept the historic mansions and villas in family hands.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection and measures in place are adequate.

Management system

The management system has been described in the Conservation Management Plan and clarified in the additional information provided by the State Party in November 2020.

The As-Salt Greater Municipality is the central actor in the management system, particularly through the establishment of the As-Salt City Development Projects Unit. The Unit is housed in one of As-Salt's key historic buildings, the Jaghbeer House. It has developed permitting processes for demolitions, alterations, and conservation and rehabilitation works within the nominated property and the buffer zone. Development proposals require the approval of the Municipality. The Services and Maintenance department within the Unit is charged with the maintenance, protection, and improvement of the elements located in the public realm.

A local planning committee has been established by the Municipality to assist with decisions such as building permits, designation of historic buildings, and public realm improvements. All recommendations from the city's Development Projects Unit are presented to the local Municipal planning committee. The Al-Balqa Governorate also has a planning committee, as does the national government through the Higher Planning Council, where zoning and planning proposals of the Municipality are approved and enforced.

A Conservation Management Plan dated September 2019 was submitted with the revised nomination. Ten specific policies are indicated, each with detailed strategies for implementation. These deal with recognition of the specific significance of As-Salt, historical research (including oral history), building conservation, maintenance and enhancement of public spaces, conservation beyond the property, interpretation, tourism management, financial resources, awareness raising and education, and capacity building.

The third policy focuses on the protection and conservation of historic buildings. It is envisaged that further development of this policy will detail the approaches to protection, stabilisation, conservation, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and new additions to historic buildings. Proposed strategies include preparing conservation guidelines for different forms of conservation interventions; understanding historical contexts and conservation techniques; establishing requirements for the work of conservation professionals and institutions; creating capacity-building programmes for Municipal staff; and creating a Technical Heritage Design Review Committee within the Municipality to review applications. ICOMOS notes that some of these initiatives have already commenced while others have not.

ICOMOS considers that the implementation of the Conservation Management Plan should be advanced as a priority, including a timeline and indication of resources for its implementation. ICOMOS also considers that the State Party should consider applying the approaches of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011) when further developing the management system, plans, strategies, and actions.

Visitor management

Promoting heritage tourism is an objective of the As-Salt Greater Municipality. Although visitor pressure is currently not a major factor affecting the property, tourism is a relatively recent focus, and it is expected that tourism numbers will increase should As-Salt be inscribed on the World Heritage List. One of the overarching policies outlined in the Conservation Management Plan concerns presenting and interpreting the nominated property to visitors. Strategies include creating a general vision for interpretation, and developing content.

Two museums have been identified by the State Party as supporting the presentation and interpretation of the nominated property. The Historic Old As-Salt Museum in the former Abu Jaber House presents the social history of the city during its Golden Age (1860s-1920s) and serves as a starting point for visitors to the city. An archaeological museum located in the historic Touqan House focuses on the archaeology of As-Salt and its hinterland.

An eco-museum concept developed with the support of the Japan International Cooperation Agency is being implemented, with three trails (themed as 'harmony', 'educational', and 'daily life') led by local guides and

involving home visits. These trails would benefit from upgraded signage, information, and guiding.

The Municipality has increased the number of parking spaces outside the historic urban core for coaches and private vehicles. The Oqba bin Nafe' plaza development project is close to completion and should support improved service facilities, parking, and public spaces, although accessibility is an ongoing challenge for visitors to the historic city centre. A project to upgrade the bus terminal (near the edge of the buffer zone at the entrance to the city) has been planned but has not yet been financed.

A Tourism Awareness plan has been prepared, and the As-Salt Tourism Distinctive Destination Plan (2018-2020) has been funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to enhance tourism products and services. These aim to attract new visitors, upgrade visitor amenities, and create an image for the city based on its heritage and modern-day hospitality. The plans have included community engagement and incentives for private owners of historic buildings, along with increased youth career opportunities in tourism.

ICOMOS considers that, while current visitor facilities and interpretation are limited, a viable framework for visitor management and interpretation is under development. ICOMOS recommends the current tourism strategy work be completed, and an overarching interpretation plan that can guide the setting of priorities be developed. In the continued implementation of the eco-museum concept, attention should be paid to maintaining the privacy of residents to avoid them abandoning the historic city centre.

Community involvement

The State Party estimates there are between 80,000 and 95,000 inhabitants in the nominated property and buffer zone, amounting to approximately 65 to 78 percent of the 125,000 to 150,000 inhabitants of the city of As-Salt. The Greater Municipality, which includes other nearby villages and towns, has a population of about 190,000.

Additional Information provided by the State Party in November 2020 notes that community engagement is facilitated by a local planning committee (*Lajnah Mahaliyah*) made up of local community representatives. Local residents are consulted prior to decisions on development, planning or zoning. Scoping sessions are held at the neighbourhood level to ensure community participation.

There is evidence of support for the conservation of key buildings by private owners. The local community has been involved in the development of the nomination of this property to the World Heritage List. Community members and business leaders are involved in the implementation of the eco-museum concept for sharing the intangible heritage of the city, including handcrafts, traditional food, games, rituals, and other aspects of daily life.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection is adequate. The management system seems appropriate and the commitment of the As-Salt Greater Municipality is evident. However, some of the management strategies and tools are yet to be developed. ICOMOS notes that there are insufficient provisions for the intangible cultural heritage aspects of the nominated property. The tools and framework developed for the implementation of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape could be usefully applied in the further development of the management approach.

Visitor management and interpretation are the subject of new and continuing projects. The involvement of communities in the development of the nomination and the ongoing management of the nominated property is noted.

ICOMOS considers that the current legal protection is adequate, and that the management system seems appropriate but needs to be further developed and fully implemented according to the proposals outlined in the Conservation Management Plan. Policy development for intangible cultural heritage is currently insufficiently addressed in the Conservation Management Plan and its associated policies.

6 Conclusion

The State Party has developed a substantially different rationale for the nomination of As-Salt to the World Heritage List. This considers the core of historic city centre, its topography and its intangible heritage. During the city's 'Golden Age' (1860s to the 1920s), local cultural traits and practices emerged from a fusion between local Bedouin cultures and migrating bourgeois merchants drawn to As-Salt from nearby Levantine cities of Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon after the Ottomans extended their rule. The revised nomination therefore represents a significant shift in focus.

Based on exchanges with the State Party and the additional information that has been provided, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of the nominated property for the World Heritage List, and that criteria (ii) and (iii) have been demonstrated.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the nominated property are satisfactory, although the integrity is vulnerable due to the impacts of new development and deterioration of the historic fabric. Future loss of intangible cultural heritage practices and traditions are also potential areas of vulnerability.

The legal protection is adequate. The requirement for Heritage Impact Assessments should be fully integrated into the legal protection regime and management system.

The management system seems appropriate, though some elements are yet to be further developed and implemented. ICOMOS has provided recommendations to improve the management of the property, particularly in relation to the documentation and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, which is insufficiently addressed in the Conservation Management Plan and its associated policies.

Key monitoring indicators for the intangible attributes need to be developed, and the resulting complete monitoring system needs to be made fully operational.

ICOMOS notes the commitment to the conservation of the tangible elements of the nominated property through studies and projects conducted over the past 20 years, and the activity now occurring to develop sustainable tourism and interpretation strategies.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that As-Salt – The Place of Tolerance and Urban Hospitality, Jordan, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (ii) and (iii)**.

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis

The city of As-Salt became the capital of Transjordan and a thriving trade centre during the late Ottoman period, experiencing a 'Golden Age' between the 1860s and the 1920s. The effects of the Ottoman '*Tanzimat*' reforms brought enhanced security, administrative structures and trade. As-Salt became central to trade networks between the eastern desert and the west, and grew in wealth through the arrival and settlement of merchants from Nablus, Syria, and Lebanon who made their fortunes on trade, banking, and farming. This prosperity attracted skilled craftsmen and As-Salt was transformed from a modest rural settlement into a thriving town with a distinctive townscape and architecture.

The city features large public buildings and private residences characterised by a central hallway and three bays, constructed of yellow limestone. These demonstrate a mix of vernacular and modern architectural influences, and skilful craftsmanship. Adapted to the steep folded topography, the urban morphology of the historic urban core is characterised by network of interlinked stairways, alleyways, public squares and spaces, and streets. The result is a dense urban fabric connecting the city's resident neighbourhoods with public spaces and streets. These tangible characteristics have

shaped the urban cultures of the city, including distinctive cultural traditions of tolerance between people of different cultural groups and religions. Muslim and Christian communities share many traditions, demonstrated by a lack of physical segregation between them. These traditions of hospitality are understood to reflect a fusion of local cultures and the incoming bourgeois traders during the 'Golden Age' of As-Salt's development, and include the social welfare system known as *Takaful Ijtimai'* and the provision of hospitality in *Madafas* (guest houses, known locally as *Dawaween*).

The cultures of tolerance, hospitality, and social welfare practiced by the Bedouin peoples of the region were common throughout the area and have contributed to the construction of a modern Trans-Jordanian identity.

Criterion (ii): The historic centre of As-Salt demonstrates distinctive intercultural exchanges that resulted in transformations of the Levant in the late Ottoman period. These included flows of culture, people, skills, traditions and wealth within and between the cities of the region and beyond, and between diverse cultural and religious groups that comprised the urban population from the city's 'Golden Age' to the present. These cultural exchanges involved the local Bedouin peoples, incoming merchants, craftspeople and traders, Ottoman officials and Christian missionaries. Together, the city's architectural forms and building techniques, urban morphology, shared traditions and uses of public spaces, and the development of the places and practices of urban hospitality and mutual welfare demonstrate these intercultural exchanges. These are understood to represent a combination of local customs and new urban social norms.

Criterion (iii): As-Salt's historic urban core is an exceptional example of the urban form and cultural traditions associated with the city's 'Golden Age' period (1860s to 1920s). The city thrived and transformed as a result of the Ottoman '*Tanzimat*' reforms, demonstrated by the relatively intact urban fabric, stairways, and public spaces, as well as the large public buildings and private residences characterised by a central hallway and three bays, constructed of yellow stone. The urban form reflects and supports the traditions of joint habitation of Christian and Muslim communities, and specific forms of urban hospitality, many of which are continuing. As-Salt is distinctive in terms of its cultural practices of cooperation across religions and the absence of segregated neighbourhoods. Although these traits are not unique within the Levant, As-Salt is exceptional because of the intensity of these manifestations and the close connections between the cultural traditions and the urban fabric and forms. The particular urban tradition of providing *Madafas* (guest houses, also known as *Dawaween*) is an example of these characteristics, combining tangible and intangible attributes.

Integrity

As-Salt demonstrates integrity in relation to the continuity of the historic urban fabric, including the historic buildings, landscape setting, the network and hierarchy of stairways that organise the vertical movement between lower and upper levels, the presence of open spaces that support a multi-faith society, and the residential and religious buildings. The property is of adequate size, and its boundary and buffer zone are appropriately delineated. The spirit and feeling of the place reside in both the tangible (buildings, houses, churches, mosques, *Madafas*, urban nodes, steps) and intangible attributes (close habitation of different cultural and religious groups, shared uses of public spaces, traditions of social welfare between neighbours). The integrity is vulnerable to development pressures, and has been affected by intrusive buildings and empty plots within the urban fabric that affect the property's visual and intangible qualities.

Authenticity

The historic urban centre of As-Salt meets the conditions of authenticity through the continuity of the different elements of the city's architecture and urban morphology, and in the continuing aspects of the traditions of hospitality. The authenticity of the structure, materials, form, and design of the historic buildings and urban fabric is satisfactory despite development and adaptive reuse projects. The distinctive yellow stone distinguishes many historic buildings within the larger urban core, and the authenticity is supported by the retention of the networks of public spaces, alleyways, and stairways. The strong visual and topological contribution of the setting and the continuity of use of many of the public buildings and spaces are important aspects of the authenticity of the property.

Protection and management requirements

Two national laws provide protection for the property. The Law of Architectural and Urban Protection (N° 5, 2005) is the primary national law for the protection of cultural heritage in Jordan; the Cities, Villages and Buildings Planning Law (N° 79, 1966) provides for the establishment of planning authorities and processes, including the regulation of construction. Implementation of protection is provided through the City Core Special Regulations which were endorsed by the Ministry of Municipalities and Rural Affairs, the Higher City Planning Council of Jordan, and the As-Salt Greater Municipality in September 2014. These provide regulations for urban spaces, designation and grading of historic buildings, guidelines for conservation and new interventions, and guidelines for the design and enhancement of public spaces.

There is a long-standing commitment to the conservation of the tangible and intangible attributes of As-Salt through the efforts of the As-Salt Greater Municipality. The management system has been established, led by the As-Salt City Development Projects Unit, established in 2005 by the Municipality. The main mission of this office is to

coordinate efforts for the safeguarding, conservation, and management of the historic city.

The Municipality is continuing a programme to fully document the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value, and record their state of conservation. The Conservation Management Plan is a satisfactory beginning, and the establishment of regulations and guidance for change, alteration and conservation works are under preparation. Important conservation and adaptive reuse projects have been completed, and others are underway and/or planned. Site-specific conservation plans are being completed for twenty-two of the city's historic buildings as a basis for their conservation or adaptive reuse. Many of the essential management strategies and tools are yet to be developed, and the incorporation of provisions for the intangible cultural heritage aspects require greater attention. Visitor management and interpretation are the subject of new and continuing projects. The development of the nomination and the ongoing management of the property have involved the city's communities.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Deepening the documentation of the intangible attributes, including the traditions shared by Muslim and Christian communities, and the *Madafas* and other social and financial systems of support within the communities,
- b) Conducting an assessment of significant views within the property and buffer zone with the intention of ensuring that these are adequately incorporated into the planning of all new development proposals,
- c) Completing the survey of the physical condition of historic buildings and other tangible attributes within the property and the buffer zone,
- d) Completing the production of measured drawings for the historic buildings in the property so that there is a strong baseline documentation available for management and conservation decisions, including setting priorities for conservation works and expenditures,
- e) Advancing as a priority the implementation of the Conservation Management Plan, including a timeline and indication of resources for its implementation,
- f) Establishing Heritage Impact Assessment processes in line with the ICOMOS HIA guidance document that give priority to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property in the assessment of development proposals, and ensuring these processes are fully integrated into the legal protection regime and management system of the property,

- g) Developing further the risk management system to manage seismic, flood, and fire risks, including evacuation plans as well as capacity building to ensure the effectiveness of the system,
- h) Developing a new policy and associated strategies and actions within the Conservation Management Plan for the intangible cultural heritage of the property,
- i) Developing as a priority implementation plans for the strategies oriented to the maintenance and repair of the tangible elements of the property,
- j) Continuing to develop partnerships with private owners to ensure that buildings are maintained and repaired,
- k) Developing a detailed interpretation strategy for the property, with clear timeframes and priorities for implementation,
- l) Developing detailed plans for mobility, accessibility, and transportation that take into account the visual qualities of the city and the constraints of the stairways and public spaces,
- m) Working with communities and local authorities to develop strategies, tools, and incentives to maintain the cultural practices of the city and avoid the possible gentrification of the historic urban core,
- n) Fully implementing the proposed monitoring system after augmenting it to include monitoring the proposed intangible attributes by means of key indicators,
- o) Applying the approaches of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011) when further developing the management system, plans, strategies, and actions;



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property and its buffer zone