

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref.GB/TA/1721_Add.Inf

Charenton-le-Pont, 9 October 2023

H.E. Ms Leena Al-Hadid
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
to France, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO
Permanent Delegation of the Hashemite
Kingdom of Jordan to UNESCO
Maison de l'UNESCO
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75732 Paris Cedex 15

World Heritage List 2024 – Additional Information Umm Al-Jimāl (Jordan)

Dear Ambassador,

ICOMOS is currently assessing the nomination of “Umm Al-Jimāl” as a World Heritage property and an ICOMOS technical evaluation mission has visited the nominated property to consider matters related to its protection, management and conservation, as well as issues related to its integrity and authenticity.

In order to allow us to further evaluate this property, we would be grateful if the State Party could provide us with additional information on the following points:

Justification for inscription under criteria (iii), (iv), (v)

From the information provided in the nomination dossier, it appears that Umm Al-Jimāl stands out among Hauranian sites due to its size and level of preservation as the “*network of ancient villages and towns in Northeastern Jordan and Southern Syria, others of which are smaller in size, have been disturbed by modern development, or have not been subject to substantial research and excavation*” (pp. 106-107).

In light thereof, ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could clarify whether a conclusive appraisal of Umm Al-Jimāl as the largest Hauranian rural settlement is possible at this stage. How can the size of the site in the 5th-8th century CE be understood in terms of the regional importance of Umm Al-Jimāl in Late Antiquity?

- Criterion (iii)

With regard to the justification for criterion (iii), Umm Al-Jimāl is said to be an exceptional example of “*a sustainable agricultural settlement that retained its strong local character over centuries of outside change and influence*” (p. 11) and a testimony to “*the perseverance of cultural traditions over periods of imperial, religious, and economic change*” (p. 108).

With reference to imperial influences, the nomination dossier states that Umm Al-Jimāl experienced periods of extraordinary transition, with the Roman Empire, Byzantine Empire and Islamic Caliphate representing strong outside influence (p. 108). Yet, within the boundaries of the nominated property only the town from the 5th-8th century CE is included. The earlier local vestiges were destroyed and building material reused (p. 96). Moreover, the Roman imperial structures within the town walls that are said to be the “*testament to the architectural influence of Rome*” (p. 108) (such as Castellum or Praetorium) were repurposed when they were no longer needed/functional.

With reference to religious change, the nomination dossier states that the changes of religions from polytheism to Christianity and then to Islam are attested in Umm Al-Jimāl's architecture and in the

process of reusing or repurposing religious structures like the temple, or cultic stones and tomb stela in later constructions (p. 108).

Also, it is acknowledged in the nomination dossier that some churches would have been turned into mosques following the Islamic conquest of north-eastern Jordan in 636 CE (p. 96-97).

With regard to economic change, the nomination dossier states that *“Umm Al-Jimāl is also an important record of local responses to economic developments and shifts over time. The need for arable land and grain to sustain the growing urban populations was a catalyst for the creation of the water system and the original agrarian settlement”* (p. 109). ICOMOS, however, notes that *“the ancient town of Umm Al-Jimāl is the best-preserved aspect of the wider domestic-funerary agricultural landscape. Due to the sprawl of the modern settlement and the poor condition of most ancient remains outside the town, these additional structures, burials, water system features, and field are not included in the nominated property”* (p. 26). It is also noted that *“the decline of settlement of Umm Al-Jimāl in the 8th century was due in part to economic changes, such as the shift of key trade routes away from the site”* (p. 109).

In light of the above statements, could the State Party clarify how the notion of perseverance or resilience of local culture should be understood, in relation to the evidence of adaptation over centuries of imperial rule and religious and economic change?

ICOMOS would also be pleased if the State Party could elaborate on the economic shifts referred to in the nomination dossier, and outline which physical structures within the nominated property can be said to reflect them.

- Criterion (iv)

With regard to the justification for criterion (iv), Umm Al-Jimāl is described as *“an outstanding architectural ensemble of late antique buildings constructed according to local Hauranian tradition, unique for the quantity of structures, their varied functions, and their remarkable preservation”* (p. 109). The preserved structures, mostly domestic and religious, are said to represent a *“distinctive regional architectural style”* (p.110).

Could the State Party further elaborate on the justification of this criterion as to why it considers the architectural ensemble dating to the 5th-8th century CE as outstanding, beyond the number of structures, as well as what *“significant stage in human history”* can this settlement be said to illustrate?

- Criterion (v)

As a justification for criterion (v), the nominated property is said to be *“a stunningly well preserved ancient rural town, sustained by a complex water system designed and built according to local Hauranian traditions. The sprawling settlement is testament to the skill, innovation and tenacity of local communities under centuries of outside authority”* (p. 12, nomination dossier).

Could the State Party provide more information on the above-mentioned water catchment system? ICOMOS would be interested in knowing which elements of the system are still preserved: are they located within the nominated property? In what sense can the system be considered innovative or exceptional in relation to other similar systems in the region?

Buffer zone

ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could clarify the rationale for the delineation of the buffer zone of the nominated property.

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **UNESCO World Heritage Centre** with the above information by **Friday 10 November 2023 at the latest**.

ICOMOS appreciates that the timeframe for providing this additional information is short. Brief responses are required at this stage, and can be discussed further with the State Party if needed during the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation process.

Please note that the State Party shall submit a copy of the additional information to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and a copy to ICOMOS so that it can be formally registered as part of the nomination dossier.

We thank you in advance for your kind cooperation.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin
Director
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to Department of Antiquities of Jordan
 UNESCO World Heritage Centre

Re: World Heritage List 2024 – Additional Information Umm Al-Jimāl (Jordan)

Dear Sir or Madame,

In response to your letter of 9 October, in support of the ICOMOS assessment of the nomination of “Umm Al-Jimāl” as a World Heritage property, please find below replies to your questions.

Justification for inscription under criteria (iii), (iv), (v)

From the information provided in the nomination dossier, it appears that Umm Al-Jimāl stands out among Hauranian sites due to its size and level of preservation as the “network of ancient villages and towns in Northeastern Jordan and Southern Syria, others of which are smatter in size, have been disturbed by modern development, or have not been subject to substantial research and excavation” (pp. 106-107).

In light thereof, ICOMOS would appreciate if the state Party could clarify whether a conclusive appraisal of Umm Al-Jimāl as the largest Hauranian rural settlement is possible at this stage. How can the size of the site in the 5th–8th century CE be understood in terms of the regional importance of Umm Al-Jimāl in Late Antiquity?

Knowledge about the Hauran region, including sites now lost to modern development, is greatly enhanced by accounts, maps, and drawings from the 19th and early 20th centuries. One of the earliest descriptions, by Cyril Graham visiting in 1857, particularly notes the size and preservation of Umm Al-Jimāl in comparison to other sites in the region, referring to its “enormous” size and describing it as “among the most perfect” of those encountered on his journey.¹ The single most informative source about the Hauran region prior to major modern development are the lengthy publications of the Princeton University Expedition to Syria². Howard Butler and his team photographed, drew, and mapped sites large and small in the region, giving us an important look at what the area was like and what features and sites looked like before later 20th century developments. Following up on this work, the excellent publications of the *Institut Français de Proche-Orient* in the Hauran (titled Hauran I through VII and part of the *Bibliothèque archéologique et historique* publication series)³ have been indispensable in establishing trends in Hauranian architecture and tradition, as well as improving on Butler’s work and extending research to even more sites. While their work has primarily been survey, rather than excavation, this allows for an excellent approximation of the extent of the other towns/villages in the region and a good sense of their basic features. In addition, satellite photography remains an important aid, especially when compared to older images in order to see changes in the landscape. Taking all the available evidence into

consideration, we can confidently assert that there is no other Hauranian town or village that was larger than Umm Al-Jimāl, now or in the past, and that there is certainly no other complete town that remains so well preserved. Umm Al-Jimāl is an expansive rural site that did not develop into a city, as happens to some large towns.

Size should not be the only factor in a site's importance, but it is significant because of Umm Al-Jimāl's place in a network of smaller towns and villages. The large settlement of Umm Al-Jimāl includes architecture/remains linked to services that would not be available at all minor settlements. Three examples can help to illustrate that point. First is that evidence of a marketplace in the Castellum in Late Antiquity shows that Umm Al-Jimāl was an economic hub, as merchants would travel to cities or larger towns to sell their wares rather than travel to each small settlement.⁴ Second, scholars believe that the large inscription of Emperor Anastasius was originally displayed at Umm Al-Jimāl (it was taken to Qasr Hallabat in the Early Islamic period), which indicates that the site was the ideal place to spread important imperial messages in the region.⁵ Finally, while the presence of multiple churches at sites in the Hauran is not unusual, the nature of these churches and their size is notable at Umm Al-Jimāl. Most Hauranian churches are built into/against houses or are standalone small chapels, while at Umm Al-Jimāl such churches are present, but are supplemented by larger, freestanding churches that allow for public access, such as the Cathedral and the West Church. Such churches would be ideal for travelers, merchants, pilgrims, and others who sought services at the site.

Criterion (iii)

With regard to the justification for criterion (iii). Umm Al-Jimāl is said to be an exceptional example of *"a sustainable agricultural settlement that retained its strong local character over centuries of outside change and influence"* (p.11) and a testimony to *"the perseverance of cultural traditions over periods of imperial religious, and economic change"* (p. 108).

With reference to imperial influences, the nomination dossier states that Umm Al-Jimāl experienced periods of extraordinary transition, with the Roman Empire. Byzantine Empire and Islamic Caliphate representing strong outside influence (p. 108). Yet, within the boundaries of the nominated property only the town from the 5th-8th century CE is included. The earlier local vestiges were destroyed and building material reused (p. 96). Moreover, the Roman imperial structures within the town walls that are said to be the "testament to the architectural influence of Rome" (p. 108) (such as Castellum or Praetorium) were repurposed when they were no longer needed/functional.

With reference to religious change, the nomination dossier states that the changes of religions from polytheism to Christianity and then to Islam are attested in Umm Al-Jimāl's architecture and in the process of reusing or repurposing religious structures like the temple, or cultic stones and tomb stela in later constructions (p. 108).

Also, it is acknowledged in the nomination dossier that some churches would have been turned into mosques following the Islamic conquest of northeastern Jordan in 636 CE (p. 96-97).

With regard to economic change, the nomination dossier states that "Umm Al-Jimāl is also an important record of local responses to economic developments and shifts over time. The need for arable land and grain to sustain the growing urban populations was a catalyst for the creation of the water system and the original agrarian settlement (p. 109).

ICOMOS, however, notes that "the ancient town of Umm Al-Jimāl is the best-preserved aspect of the wider domestic-funerary agricultural landscape. Due to the sprawl of the modern settlement and the poor condition of most ancient remains outside the town, these additional structures, burials, water system features, and field are not included in the nominated property (p. 26). It is also noted that "*the decline of settlement of Umm Al-Jimāl in the 8th century was due in part to economic changes, such as the shift of key trade routes away from the site*" (p. 109).

In light of the above statements, could the state Party clarify how the notion of perseverance or resilience of local culture should be understood, in relation to the evidence of adaptation over centuries of imperial role and religious and economic change?

We define the resilience of local culture and how it is seen in the site's remains in three main ways, architectural tradition, language, and enduring cultural traditions, which are also reflected in the architecture.

Hauranian architecture, as described in the dossier, is an important shared tradition in the region, with some typical variations between sites and micro-regions. The choices made in architecture—multi-story buildings surrounding courtyards, with mangers for animals on the ground floor and living quarters above—have social implications. For example, the architecture shows that multifamily/extended family homes indicate the importance of familial or tribal affiliation as a part of identity and tradition. These same strategies are present in the modern community, even if they no longer live in "traditional" Hauranian homes. Courtyards remain a key feature of local architecture and serve as social gathering places for familial groupings. For another example, while there is obvious imperial influence through Roman or Byzantine military buildings, they continued the use of Hauranian construction techniques and therefore have features that are an unusual blend of traditions (such as the Praetorium or an atypical rampart in the Castellum).

Furthermore, language study is essential to understanding the people who lived at Umm Al-Jimāl and how they/their families wanted them to be identified. Hundreds of funerary inscriptions and many other primarily religious inscriptions show overwhelmingly local roots to names or to deities. The local population would best be defined as a mixture of agrarian and nomadic peoples from the steppe and the Eastern Desert.⁶ Meanwhile, imperial powers such as Nabataea and Rome certainly had impact on language, with some adopting names according to those traditions, while continuing the same funerary practice. When a wider regional

conversion to Christianity reached Umm Al-Jimāl, this was reflected again in many Christianized names in inscriptions or evidenced in the array of inscriptions on the Barrack's NE tower. Less funerary evidence from the Islamic period exists, but the Double Church inscription highlights an important transition to modern Arabic writing. Ultimately, change was gradual and not forced—the progression of a culture on its own terms, responding to changes over time.

Through the course of imperial and religious transition, there is continuation of local architectural practice and local cultural traditions as seen through the persistence of Hauranian architectural forms and techniques (and social norms reflected within), as well as in the act of repurposing imperial structures for more practical local use.

ICOMCS would also be pleased if the state Party could elaborate on the economic shifts referred to in the nomination dossier, and outline which physical structures within the nominated property can be said to reflect them.

The economic shifts are responses to changes in regional historical, social, and/or political changes. Four of the key shifts and how they are visible at the site are outlined below:

1. The very first economic change came with the extension of the Nabataean kingdom to the North, and the expansion of Bostra and subsequent founding of smaller settlements in its hinterland. Umm Al-Jimāl's Early Village is in large part a result of the sedentarization of a formerly nomadic region in order to adapt to regional wants and needs, in this case, a need for grain and food supply in order to sustain a growing population. While the Early Village is not included in the property because of its lack of preservation/integrity, its destruction and the dispersal of ruins occurred in antiquity and archaeological evidence displayed in the site museum incorporates this early settlement into the history of the nominated property.
2. Another example incorporates the study of ceramics, as displayed and explained in the site museum, and the physical remains. It is through a combination of studying the architectural remains of the Castellum and the ceramic remains that a rare rural marketplace was identified. Umm Al-Jimāl was a place for trade and exchange, no doubt established in response to a general population boom in the Hauran in Late Antiquity and a greater demand for goods outside of cities.
3. House XVII-XVIII's archaeological history and remains show personal economic prosperity in the Umayyad period, when the complex was heavily refurbished. The finely cut pavement stones, remains of painted plaster, and exposed water drainage system are on display for visitors.
4. The features discussed in (3) and indeed the general excellent preservation of Late Antique/Early Islamic architecture is largely due to the abandonment of

permanent settlement in the 8th century. Subsequent seasonal or other visits to the site over centuries rarely altered its architecture. The economic shift that led to abandonment is the movement of the Islamic capital from Syria to Iraq. With that change, Umm Al-Jimāl was no longer situated on the main trade route running through the region. Along with probable climate change and plague reoccurrence, this led to the sedentary population leaving for other places or shifting back to the cultural tradition of nomadism.

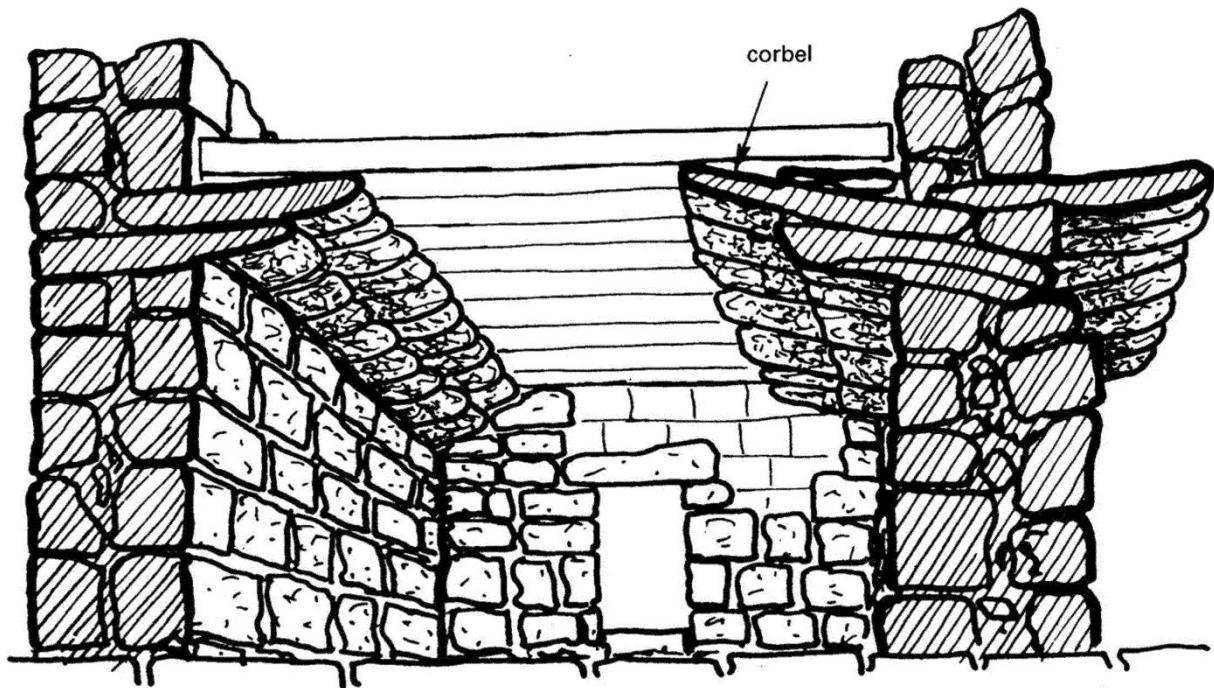
Criterion (iv)

With regard to the justification for criterion (iv). Umm Al-Jimāl is described as "*an outstanding architectural ensemble of late antique buildings constructed according to local Hauranian tradition, unique for the quantity of structures, their varied functions, and their remarkable preservation*" (p. 109). The presented structures, mostly domestic and religious, are said to represent a "*distinctive regional architectural style*" (P.110).

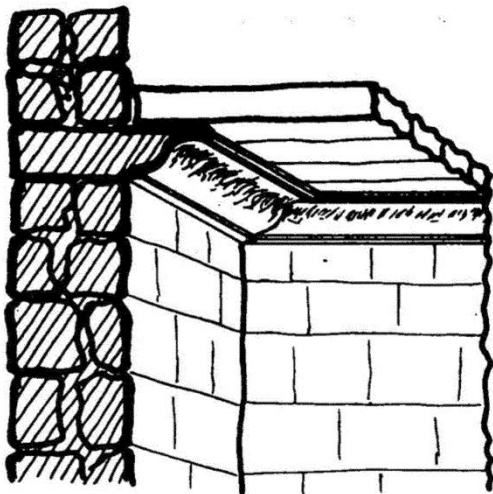
Could the State Party further elaborate on the Justification of this criterion as to why it considers the architectural ensemble dating to the 5th–8th century CE as outstanding, beyond the number of structures,

Umm Al-Jimāl is an outstanding ensemble of structures representing the Hauran's distinctive architectural tradition, which is characterized by techniques such as corbelling, cantilevering, lintel relief, and interlocking stones, among others. It is remarkable because of a range of factors including the site's size and the exceptional number of structures that are so well preserved, but also because of the diverse range of building types and variations of the Hauranian architectural techniques that can be seen within those structures. While all of the ancient buildings at Umm Al-Jimāl reflect a distinctive style developed by builders working within the cultural and material constraints of the region, particularly those imposed by reliance on volcanic basalt, they are not all the same and there is nowhere else in the region where such a wide range of variation within this regional style can be seen in one place, nor preserved as completely as at Umm Al-Jimāl. Building types include large public buildings such as the Praetorium, military structures such as the Early Castellum and later Barracks, places of worship representing three different religious traditions (pagan, Christian, and Islamic), and domestic homes from the simple to elaborate. Within this variety of building functions, builders made individual decisions to address specific challenges in ways that adhere to regional standards and reflect a recognizably Hauranian approach, while demonstrating creativity and individuality. Almost all buildings featured arches and corbelling, for example, but not all arches and corbels are the same. A comparison of corbels (Fig. 1) in the room above the gate of House XVI, in House XVIII, and in the southwest corner of the Barracks/Later Castellum is also illustrative of this diversity. Diversity in the application of architectural techniques is also illustrated by a comparison of lintel reliefs from the site (Fig. 2), demonstrating ways in which local architects employed methods prevalent in the Hauran to relieve the downward pressure on door and window lintels in order to enhance structural integrity. Similar variations can be seen across the site in everything from arches, flooring,

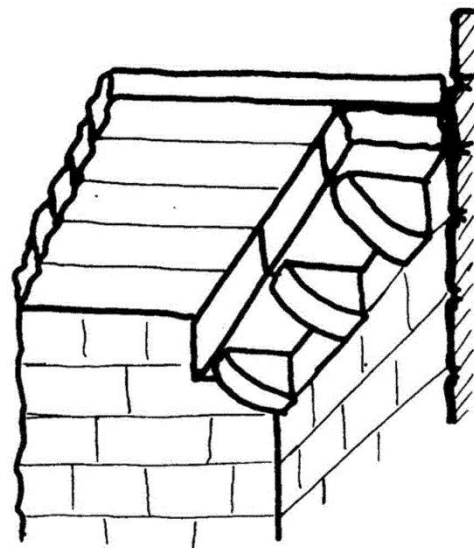
doorways, windows, the cutting of stones (including several examples of interlocking stones designed to strengthen walls where corner towers were present), and the delivery and drainage of water through indoor and outdoor plumbing systems.



room above gate of house XVI



house XVIII



s.w. corner of later *castellum*

Figure 1. Comparison of corbelling techniques at Umm Al-Jimāl (B. de Vries).

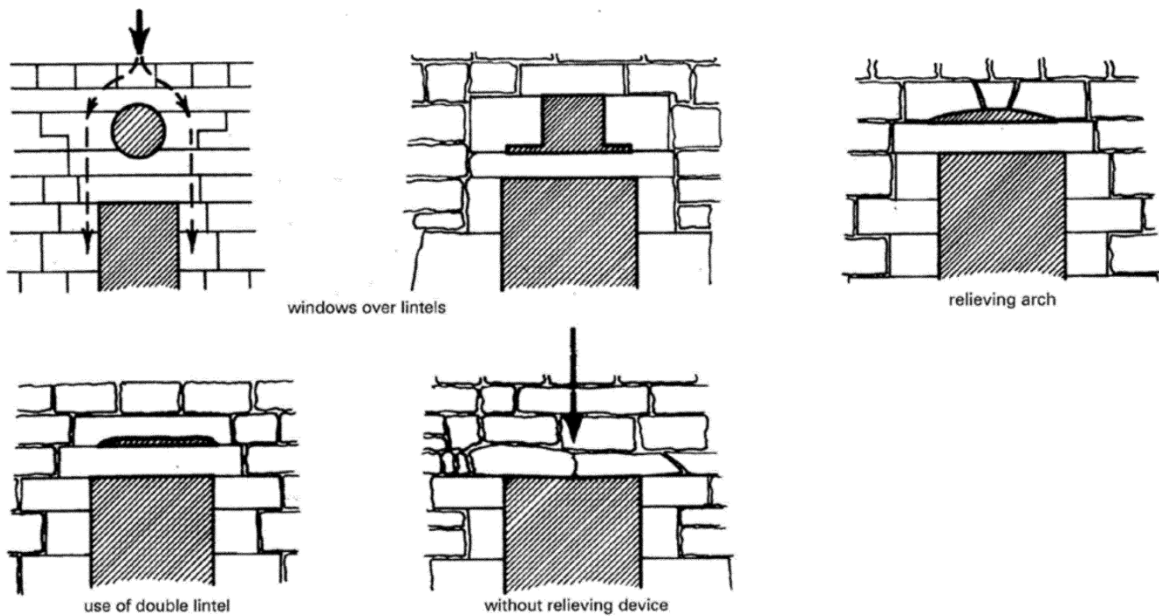


Figure 2. Comparison of Lintel Relief Techniques at Umm Al-Jimāl (B. de Vries).

Both the site's size and the number of structures are important contributing factors to Umm Al-Jimāl's outstanding character as an architectural ensemble of this region's distinctive architectural style, but it is the range of building types and the incredible diversity of architectural decisions made in individual structures that makes this ensemble truly outstanding. Well-preserved remains from this architectural tradition are present at sites across the Hauran but no other site offers the combination of size, number and range of structures, and so many different variations of this regional tradition than Umm Al-Jimāl, and it is for this reason that the site has been recognized as the Hauranian architectural ensemble *par excellence* by visitors ever since the nineteenth century. Still today, the Late Antique remains of Umm Al-Jimāl are unique because they allow for a truly immersive experience of exploring buildings that still have obvious features, such as stairs and walls up to three stories. Normally, rural sites are not preserved to such a level, and therefore it is even more vital to protect and preserve the site. The interpretive trail runs along the ancient walkways/roadways, preserving them and ensuring that visitors today move through the site just as the ancient inhabitants did.

Umm Al-Jimāl's remains are unique because, beyond the remarkable preservation, size in the region, and variety of buildings, the site tells the story of the local people up to the present day. The state party recognizes the importance of community involvement and endorsement

in any archaeological/heritage work and are proud that the local community embraces the site as part of their heritage. That they camped among the ruins and swam in reservoirs certainly helps that connection, but in addition to a physical presence in the ruins in the past, the history of the site is their history. And in that sense, Umm Al-Jimāl is not just extraordinary Late Antique ruins, but rather an example of how a heritage and community partnership can promote sustainable development as well as share an important historical site with the world.

as well as what “significant stage in human history” can this settlement be said to illustrate?

Umm Al-Jimāl illustrates in its founding the sedentarization of a formerly mostly nomadic population, and follows this local population through centuries of religious, political, and economic changes including the height of the Nabataean Kingdom, the Roman and Byzantine Empires, and the rise of Islam. Through the inscriptions, buildings, and artifacts, those historical changes are reflected in the physical remains. Modern Arabic development is seen through the inscriptions, as well as Islamic faith. The site’s abandonment is not the end of the population, but represents a shift in lifestyle, back to traditional nomadism. Sedentarism resurged in the 20th century. These shifts in lifestyle are an important local response to political/economic/environmental changes or pressures, perhaps especially true for populations dependent on irrigation. The local populace adapts in order to survive.⁷ While the 20th century Mas’eid tents are no longer in the site, archaeological and ethnographic studies have identified where the local people lived, and also documented modern inscriptions on doorframes. And, today, the site stands not only as remarkable ancient remains, but as an essential part of modern cultural heritage. Therefore, Umm Al-Jimāl illustrates not only significant stages in human history, but also continuity and change over time across those periods, even until today.

Criterion (v)

As a Justification for criterion (v), the nominated property is said to be “a stunningly well preserved ancient rural town, sustained by a complex water system designed and built according to local Hauranian traditions. The sprawling settlement is testament to the skill, innovation, and tenacity of local communities under centuries of outside authority (p. 12. nomination dossier).

Could the State Party provide more information on the above-mentioned water catchment system? ICOMOS would be interested in knowing which elements of the system are still preserved, are they located within the nominated property? In what sense can the system be considered innovative or exceptional in relation to other similar systems in the region?

Umm Al-Jimal's water system is one of the most comprehensive and best-preserved examples of the type used across the Hauran, representing the basic principles and construction that were previously utilized at many sites at the time. This system was essential to a successful agrarian settlement and is unique in that it supported the largest of the rural settlements in the Hauran.

What is exceptional about the system at Umm Al-Jimāl is, first, that the system is in working condition and provides water to the modern community as it did the ancient one. Revitalization of the system was an important project that not only benefited the local populace, but also allows visitors to see water flow through channels and or full reservoirs.

Some elements of the water system are located in the property (primarily reservoirs and channels running across the site), but other parts extend into the buffer zone and beyond, as these systems must funnel water from a good distance away. The water system within the nominated property represents the most common features: reservoirs and channels of varying size and length, as well as early instances of indoor plumbing and ancient toilets. Some channels have remained partially uncovered so that visitors can see how they were constructed.

In brief, we believe that the preservation of the system and its presentation to the public, as well as its continued use, makes it unique in the region and the best surviving example of methods used by people across the Hauran to sustain their communities in the face of cultural and natural challenges.

Buffer Zone

ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could clarify the rationale for the delineation of the buffer zone of the nominated property.

Three primary factors formed the rationale for the proposed Buffer Zone:

1. Proximity to the proposed nominated property, including bi-directional visibility. All areas immediately adjacent to the nominated property were included within the Buffer Zone and areas from which the nominated property can be viewed, or which can be viewed from the nominated property were prioritized for inclusion in the Buffer Zone.

2. Documented presence of ancient remains. In addition to areas identified by proximity and viewshed analyses, areas where ancient remains have been documented, such as the Nabataean/Early Roman Village and ancient cemetery sites were also prioritized for inclusion. These areas were excluded from the nominated property itself because they retain only trace remains that are not visible or the remains have been removed and/or heavily damaged in antiquity (used to construct the nominated property), as well as by modern developments and looting. They are an important part of the story of Umm Al-Jimāl and therefore even if they lack the integrity and authenticity expected within the nominated property they should receive the level of protection offered by Buffer Zone restrictions. The current condition of known ancient remains in these areas were also considered when determining whether to include or exclude them from the Buffer Zone.
3. Clear unambiguous boundaries. Wherever possible, clearly recognizable and navigable boundaries were selected for the Buffer Zone, choosing well-established roadway edges and formal property boundaries. This priority was established in order to facilitate the most effective monitoring and enforcement of restrictions.

It was not possible to fulfill all the priorities set by these three factors, but the State Party considered them all with relevant stakeholders involved in the site management process—including the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, New Municipality of Umm Al-Jimāl, and the Umm Al-Jimāl Archaeological Project—in order to delineate the most effective Buffer Zone that was informed by them all. In two cases, portions of known ancient cemeteries (to the north and south) lie outside of the Buffer Zone, but these have been thoroughly destroyed. Given each of these factors, the State Party believes that the proposed Buffer Zone will offer a robust zone of additional protection for the nominated property, protecting its own character, and supporting the continued authenticity and integrity of the nominated property's Outstanding Universal Value.

We respectfully submit these replies to your questions with sincere appreciation for the time and attention devoted to the review of this file.

Truly,



MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES
Department of Antiquities

Ref.No. _____

Date _____

Rationale for the selection of the nominated site

The ICOMOS Panel deliberated on the justification for inscription put forward by the State Party, which has been developed around the idea that Umm Al-Jimāl, with its basalt architecture, is an outstanding example of a rural settlement from the 5th through the 8th centuries CE that testifies to the lifestyle of the people inhabiting the Hauran plateau in Late Antiquity, and their skillfulness in sustainably managing scarce resources in a desert-like environment. In reflecting on that, ICOMOS observed that the comparative analysis presented by the State Party seems to suggest that the nominated property is one of many similar settlements of that time, and that its exceptionality is considered largely in terms of the size of the settlement and extent to which its ruins are preserved today, the state of research, and the attachment of the contemporary community through aspects of intangible heritage. In light of these observations, ICOMOS would like to understand better the reasons for which the nominated property has been selected as an outstanding example of an agricultural settlement of the period in the Hauran region.

To that effect, could the State Party provide a description of the broader historical perspective and the geo-cultural context within which the nominated property should be situated and appraised,

RESPONSE:

Umm Al-Jimāl is a multi-period site that reflects centuries of interaction between state-level imperial powers and a local rural population during formative periods in world history. The site's broader historical and geo-cultural context is particularly important in the establishment of ideas about the "East" and the "West," with primary local development toward the end of the classical period to the early Islamic period that saw important interactions between the Greco-Roman and Arab worlds, including the globally significant developments and expansions of Christianity and Islam. The site's initial occupation begins in the 1st century CE, in the final decades of the Arab Nabataean kingdom, and it continues to thrive through Roman, Byzantine, and Early Islamic political control until the late 8th century.

At the broad scale, these historical cultures (Nabataean, Roman, Byzantine, Early Islamic) influenced one another in various ways through cultural contact and adaptation. Large-scale cultural influence is most often explored through the architecture, art, crafts, and literary products of major urban centers, but distinctive local cultures were also produced in the rural hinterlands. As historical and archaeological scholarship has primarily developed understandings of these historical cultures based on the evidence emanating from imperial capitals and other urban centers, Umm Al-Jimāl should be situated and appraised as an exceptionally rare example of a superbly preserved rural settlement



MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES
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from these centuries, giving insights into the dynamics of these cultural interactions from a context that better reflects the rural lives of most of the people who lived during these periods.

The arid basalt plain of the Hauran, normally the domain of nomads and pastoralists, began to be settled during the 1st century. Umm Al-Jimāl was one of these early villages, situated in the Hauran to take advantage of the fertile volcanic soil that was ideal for agriculture and animal husbandry. The rural sites were essential suppliers of grain to regional urban centers, such as Jerash, Bosra, and Abila. By the 5th century, many of these rural sites, including Umm Al-Jimāl, were growing and flourishing. Not only local urban centers were customers of the Hauran; caravans brought wine and wheat from Bosra to Mecca, goods which were produced in the rural Hauran hinterland.¹ Therefore, Umm Al-Jimāl and the other Hauranian sites were an essential component of the economy in various periods, providing the basic staples necessary for state-level populations to survive, and reflective of cultural interactions and change beyond the urban centers.

and clarify what are the most distinctive features that distinguish this settlement among other similar sites within the Hauran region?

RESPONSE:

From a present-day perspective, Umm Al-Jimāl is most distinguished from other sites within the Hauran for four key reasons: it is the largest, most complete, and authentic surviving ancient site thanks to its registration in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's Official Gazette in 1972; it has the highest level of integrity of any surviving ancient site; it features the widest range of surviving structure categories and ancient architectural features; and, finally, its local community is the most strongly invested in the integrity, authenticity and management of the site. Any one of these distinguishes Umm Al-Jimāl from other ancient Hauranian sites and the combination of all four elevates its importance and clearly establishes Umm Al-Jimāl as the Hauranian site *par excellence*.

Apart from its size, preservation, and the important community investment in the site, Umm Al-Jimāl stands out among other sites in the Hauran for its unique features and amenities, and due to its historical prominence amongst the other towns and villages. Umm Al-Jimāl was a key settlement in the Hauran network in that it provided services for those living in smaller sites to the east and north. Evidence of a marketplace in the Castellum in Late Antiquity shows that Umm Al-Jimāl was an economic hub within the Hauran. It was situated a day's journey from Bosra and several days from major supplier Jerash, and therefore was well situated as a secondary marketplace. Further

¹ Sartre, M. (1985). Bostra: des origines à l'Islam. Paris: P. Geuthner. Wine was produced in some sites in modern-day Syria.



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supporting Umm Al-Jimāl's role as a prominent settlement within the Hauran are the unusually large, freestanding West Church and Cathedral. These provide public access in contrast to most Hauran churches, which are private or semi-private in nature. These two churches would be ideal for travelers, merchants, pilgrims, and others who sought services at the site. A final illustration of the site's relative importance in the Hauran is the scholarly consensus that the large inscription of Emperor Anastasius was originally displayed at Umm Al-Jimāl (it was taken to Qasr Hallabat in the Early Islamic period), which indicates that the site was the ideal place to spread important imperial messages in the region.² A replica of the inscription is installed in the Interpretive Centre courtyard.

Umm Al-Jimāl also contains important architectural and material culture features that in and of themselves are exceptional within the context of the Hauran. The marketplace described above is a very rare find in the region and in itself a distinctive attribute. The architecture of the Praetorium, in particular its cruciform room, is unique within the Hauran, blending local and regional styles and practices together. And, finally, the huge corpora of inscriptions from Umm Al-Jimāl is exceptional within the Hauran, and includes important pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions.

Finally, the community investment is especially important because the people of the Hauran in Syria and Jordan have their own traditions and identity (see the question about the Hauran below). Their intangible heritage is threatened by modernization, but also by displacement and the destruction across Syria. Umm Al-Jimāl is a rare Hauran site where the tangible and intangible heritage of the region are extraordinarily preserved.

Comparative analysis

In relation to the previous question, ICOMOS noted that among the closest comparators to the nominated property on the World Heritage List is Um er-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a), a property in Jordan inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004. The architectural vestiges of this property can be said to be comparable to the nominated property, the difference lying primarily in the use of limestone rather than basalt in the construction of buildings. On the other hand, two sites where basalt was used for construction are currently on the Tentative List of Jordan, namely Gadara (Modern Um Qeis or Qays) and Abila City (Modern Qweilbeh). The Ancient City of Bosra in Syria, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1980, is also a settlement with monumental architecture that testifies to a similar period and

² Arce, I. (2018). The Anastasius Edict Project: A Preliminary Report. Part 2 – The Archaeological, Architectural and Historical Contexts. Limes XXIII: Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, Ingolstadt 2015. C. S. Sommer and S. Matešić. Mainz, In Kommission: Nünnerich-Asmus Verlag: 682–690.



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preserves both basalt and limestone architecture. Given the similarities between these properties and Umm Al-Jimāl, ICOMOS would be grateful if the State Party could elaborate on the outstanding nature of the nominated property in comparison to these already inscribed properties as well as those on the Tentative List of Jordan.

RESPONSE:

Um er-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a) is located in central Jordan. It is loosely comparable to Umm Al-Jimāl in that it is a rural site and was inhabited and flourished at generally the same time. Um er-Rasas was inscribed due to its unique religious/artistic features: a stylite tower and incredible mosaic artwork. Um er-Rasas is unique because of its monastic/religious significance, whereas Umm Al-Jimāl offers extraordinarily preserved architecture of rural life across several types (for example: churches, mosques, imperial architecture, homes of varying size, and a working water-catchment system). Um er-Rasas was *not* inscribed as an outstanding example of rural settlement because it is simply not extraordinary in that sense. The key pieces of architecture discussed in its dossier are the *castrum*, the stylite tower, and the churches—domestic housing is scarcely mentioned. Umm Al-Jimāl, on the other hand, offers a complete, unique ensemble of domestic and other rural architecture that retains a strong local, Arab character, and reflects important cultural traditions of the inhabitants. It is exceptional because it is a rare site where architecture in a number of types and forms from across centuries survives and allows for a unique glimpse into rural life through religious and political and change.

As discussed in the Comparative Analysis, urban sites are fundamentally different to rural ones in terms of general size, architectural types and influences, and general monumentality. Furthermore, the social experience of urban and rural denizens is different, not only in terms of professions and amenities, but also social structure, house construction, and sometimes faith and language. Historical and archaeological research has often prioritized the evidence from large urban centers, with much less attention paid to their rural hinterlands and the small towns, villages, and rural settlements where significant portions of the population lived their lives. For these reasons, the cities of Gadara, Abila, and Bosra cannot be directly compared to a rural site like Umm Al-Jimāl. These urban centers with (at least partially) gridded plans, monumental temples with heavy Greek/Roman influence, and other imperial-funded architecture look nothing like Umm Al-Jimāl, where houses dominate the landscape, grouped into tribal/familial clusters, and where animal husbandry and agriculture are the dominant professions. While those three cities do testify to a similar period in time, they showcase a very different way of life and their remains bear a much deeper imprint of imperial powers over the years in terms of architectural style and features. Umm Al-Jimāl, on the



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other hand, is extraordinary for a relative lack of long-lasting imperial impact, and for the clear resilience of local traditions, as most visibly reflected in the architecture.

The term "Hauran"

ICOMOS acknowledges that the term "Hauran" generally designates a geographic area – a volcanic plateau that extends from southwestern Syria to northwestern Jordan. However, in the nomination dossier the term is used in reference to both the geographic region as well as to describe the people of this area and their culture (as in Hauranian culture or Hauranian community). ICOMOS would like to seek further information on the use of the term "Hauran" in this second sense, and the relationship between culture (people) and the place; in other words, how has the cultural identity of people been produced in relation to the place? Or is the term used by the State Party simply to designate a people of a specific geographic region?

RESPONSE:

The Hauran is a well-defined geographic area that has given rise to a geographically-bound local culture that has developed in response to the constraints and opportunities of the region's natural resources. This local "Hauranian" culture is most tangibly visible through its use and mastery of the basalt stone that physically defines the region but it is also reflected in various intangible cultural practices.

The Hauran's fertile basaltic steppe lands have historically been home to a rural populace under various external powers. These inhabitants were primarily pastoralists, agriculturalists, and semi-nomadic or nomadic people ("Bedouin"), as opposed to urbanites and city elites whose professions, architecture, and ways of life were starkly different. The Hauranian people, therefore, refers to the rural denizens of the past as well as the modern population who identify with this pastoralist background and who retain similar values and social habits, like adherence to tribal family groups. Hauranian lifeways are prevalent in Arabic literature of the region including by renowned Jordanian poet Mustafa Wāḥbi Ṭāḥ. They provide a notable regional character to traditional cultural practices including the dubka (wedding dance); the thickness and pungency of the sauce for Mensaf, Jordan's national dish; a specific spice mix for kubbeh, another traditional dish; and a distinctive dialect. A particular example is the woman's traditional dress, which is characterized by a Hauranian embroidery stitch, a sample of which may be seen in Umm Al-Jimāl's Interpretive Center.

While there is an official border between Syria and Jordan, shared traditions, bloodlines, and sense of identity remain, and these are rooted in a tribal heritage and Hauranian identity that can be more meaningful than nationality. A Jordanian student from Umm Al-Jimāl notes, "We always have our own traditions...and we are different from other Jordanian people because we have our dialect and



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we have our habits." While a Syrian student stated of Umm Al-Jimāl that "[t]hey understand us because it is the same language, dialect, and habits." (Coughlin 2021, 119, 131). The term Hauranian in the cultural sense therefore encapsulates this strong tribal heritage of shared traditions across the Hauran region.

The architecture of the Hauran is linked with social habits, and many of the same cultural traditions and values in ancient times are still espoused in the present day. The ancient physical structures embody some of the key traditions that resonate with ancient and modern inhabitants. The importance of familial/tribal relationships is seen in the courtyards, which function as social gathering places for a family, or for extended family groups living in separate structures and sharing a courtyard. Umm Al-Jimāl's three distinct neighborhoods further emphasize the value of familial/tribal connections. Another key feature are the multitudes of mangers and stables to feed and house animals of various sizes. Animal husbandry was essential in ancient times and remains an important part of nomadic and pastoral tradition and identity, even in modern society. Therefore, the Hauran as a place with its distinctive architecture embodies past traditions and thus also forms an important part of modern Hauranian heritage that transcends borders.

Documentation

The State Party informed in the nomination dossier and the draft Site Management Plan that all structures at Umm Al-Jimāl will be documented stone-by-stone in 2D and 3D. Moreover, it has been communicated that the documentation related to the state of conservation of the nominated property currently contains a detailed assessment and conservation recommendations only for eighteen structures (out of some 170). The assessment of others will be carried out in the future. Given the importance of the baseline documentation for future management, conservation and monitoring of the nominated property, ICOMOS would like to know the expected timeframe for the preparation of the said documentation.

RESPONSE:

Full 3D documentation is projected to be complete by the end of 2026, offering a comprehensive baseline for ongoing site monitoring and management, building on the extensive documentation collected through various means since 1905. Existing documentation includes manual and digital 2D renderings, on-site and aerial photography, and detailed records from archaeological excavations and ground surveys. This documentation is preserved in both physical and digital archives, including academic publications.



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Current photographic, 2D, and 3D rendering is ongoing, using the eighteen key structures merely as a starting point. As of this writing, renderings are complete for the Praetorium, the West Church, the Barracks, House XVII/XVIII, the Julianos Church, the Masechos Church, the Numerianos Church, the Southwest Church, and the Double Church. The Cathedral is currently in process and two of the eighteen points are reservoirs which have been well-documented. The initial eighteen structures will be completed by the end of 2024. The next set of structures will follow as prioritized.

Meanwhile, new technology promises to speed the process of documentation. An initial draft 3D rendering of the West Church using LiDAR scanning was recently completed. The Department of Antiquities and the Umm Al-Jimāl Archaeological Project will launch a comprehensive effort to render the entire site using LiDAR scanning and 3D photogrammetry beginning in the summer of 2024, which will include training for local staff for ongoing monitoring, during a 12-month period. On-site data collection is expected to be completed by September 2025, with 3D models of all structures available within the first half of 2026 and stone-by-stone drawings completed by the end of 2026.

A key aspect of the 2024-25 documentation project is local training and the integration of LiDAR scanning with site monitoring and management systems. This will become a repeated task, creating new 3D models that can be compared to the original baseline in order to identify specific areas that may require attention and/or intervention.

It would also be of help if the State Party could clarify what documentation of the different elements of the water catchment system of Umm Al-Jimāl is in place, or whether it will be included as part of the mentioned 2D/3D documentation project.

RESPONSE:

Within the boundaries of the nominated property, all known reservoirs and channels have been mapped (geo-referenced). More detailed recording is dependent on the type of water system feature. Reservoirs, for example, can be easily recorded in 2D and 3D, and these will be recorded in the same way as the other structures at the site using LiDAR and 3D photogrammetry collected during 2024–26. Since channels were intentionally covered/buried in antiquity to protect the water supply from debris, it is not possible to fully record these features. Targeted excavation was undertaken in 2015 and 2017 by the UJAP in order to understand the history and architecture of the channels. Small portions of channels were uncovered and recorded by 2D drawings, thereby giving insight into the form of the channels and their chronological development without disturbing large parts of the ancient system.



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In the buffer zone and beyond, known ancient water system features have been mapped. The modern population of the 19th century to today has required water management, and therefore the ancient system has been adapted and modified over time, primarily outside of the protected property. While "original" ancient features no longer exist in some cases, this adaptation and reuse should not be seen as destruction; it was common practice to renovate ancient water systems over the centuries, as the UJAP water channel excavations showed. The modern additions to the system will also be mapped, with clear distinctions made for chronology.

Conservation measures

ICOMOS further notes that medium- and long-term conservation plans are being envisaged for the nominated property but are yet to be prepared. No timeframe for their preparation has been provided. ICOMOS understands that the conservation plans are contingent on the preparation of the abovementioned baseline documentation but notes that, in the meantime, regular maintenance is focused only on eighteen selected buildings, and the state of conservation of half of the nominated property is rather fragile since the ruins have been left purposefully "as found" in the northern part of the nominated site, without any interventions. ICOMOS would be grateful if the State Party could share some information with regard to the (intermediary) conservation measures that will be put in place for the entire nominated property, given the expected rise in visitor numbers.

RESPONSE:

The Jordanian Department of Antiquities' current national management strategy 2023-2027 focuses primarily on the sustainable preservation of archaeological heritage, while emphasizing the economic and social well-being of local communities. It incorporates contemporary technology to efficiently and effectively document and safeguard cultural heritage resources, and to prioritize necessary interventions as outlined in the Documentation section above.

In Umm Al-Jimāl, conservation planning is continuous with, rather than contingent upon, comprehensive new documentation. As noted, conservation over the last several years has purposely focused on the southern portion of the site to facilitate visitor access. Other than clearing of rubble to improve accessibility and visitor flow, the entire site has been maintained in its "ruined" state except for the House 119 farmstead which serves as the site museum and visitor center. Though ruined as a result of ancient earthquakes and other natural factors over the centuries, the site is remarkably stable. When instability has been noted, consolidation and stabilization through anastylosis of fragile portions of structures has been implemented, most recently at the Cathedral, House XVII/XVIII, the Barracks, and the West Gate.



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Similar interventions are currently planned for fragile elements of the West Church and the Praetorium, for which initial funding has been secured. Structural engineering reports will be complete by spring 2024, with implementation on the West Church to follow within the next two years, and the Praetorium pending additional funding. Other necessary conservation interventions will be prioritized in the initial Site Annual Plan for the entire site based on results of the latest round of site documentation. Research and documentation will continue in the northern portion of the site as there is much more to learn about Umm Al-Jimāl but, similar to Um er-Rasas mentioned above, tourism accessibility will be limited to specific areas.

By design, visitor flow (guided through interpretive elements like the cleared trails with signage and the Interpretive Center) will continue to be concentrated in the southern portion of the site in the interest of overall site integrity. Visitor management at Umm Al-Jimāl has been designed in anticipation of increased tourism to the site. The tourism infrastructure strategically uses both time and behavior management to frame an exceptional and safe visitor experience, while maintaining site integrity. Site amenities like the Interpretive Center, the interpretive trail and various onsite activities anticipate the needs of a range of visitors.

Meanwhile, in keeping with the Department of Antiquities' national strategy and in addition to the ongoing comprehensive documentation, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the state of conservation of the site and tourism infrastructure occurs at regular intervals. Daily visitor logs are kept by the local Ministry of Tourism office, the site ticket office, site guides and Tourism Police. Department of Antiquities (DoA) security staff performs a daily physical inspection of the site for safety and security. Twice-weekly reports are generated on the condition of the site trail, interpretive signage, and eighteen key structures, and maintenance occurs as needed. DoA curators also provide a monthly report on museum and Inscription Garden inventory. The DoA Site Management Unit oversees all of the above and reports to the regional directorate. Going forward these reports will be provided to the newly formed Umm Al-Jimāl Joint Committee per the Site Management Plan.

Management Plan

ICOMOS notes that the draft Site Management Plan presents a general future vision for the site and is a broad framework for the management of the nominated property going forward, without providing specifics. According to the documents provided, the formal processes to protect the nominated site will be established within the next five years, and, in the long term, the nominated property will be developed to serve as a catalyst for the interpretation and development of other sites in north Jordan for research and tourism. The Umm Al-Jimāl Site Annual Plan (UJSAP) should be prepared within one year from the



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approval of the Site Management Plan and will include short-term, medium-term and long-term goals. Given that both these documents – the Site Management Plan and the UJSAP – are yet to be finalised, ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could share more details on the different goals, and expected management objectives as well as anticipated activities, in relation to the presented short- and long- term vision for the nominated property.

RESPONSE:

As the subject of fifty years of contemporary archeological research and many years of regular touristic visitation, the Department of Antiquities already maintains a comprehensive management system for the site in conjunction with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and with the support of stakeholders. The Site Management Unit oversees daily functions of opening, closing, facilities maintenance, ticketing, museum curation, tour guiding and site security. Daily, weekly, and monthly monitoring covers site visitation, curation, and facilities and antiquities conservation (as described above).

The current Umm Al-Jimāl Site Management Plan (UJSMP) formalizes and expands upon the existing management structure to encompass the site and Buffer Zone in preparation for increased visitation, to increase stakeholder engagement, and to fulfill UNESCO mandates. Progress toward these goals in some cases simply entails the compilation of current policies and procedures in one location, a task which is ongoing under the DoA Site Management Directorate. Specific near and longer-term objectives are outlined below, pending formal adoption by the competent authorities.

Management and committees

The first step toward the formalization of the UJSMP is the formation of the Umm Al-Jimāl Joint Committee (UJ-JC). Committee members have been identified and the committee charter and bylaws are in process. The first meeting is anticipated for late spring 2024. This committee will oversee the formation of the management, research, and business development subcommittees, members of which have also been identified. We anticipate the committee formation process to be complete by the end of 2024.

Monitoring and conservation

These are ongoing, as described above, and include the goal of stone-by-stone rendering of the first eighteen structures within the next year. Meanwhile, digital mapping and LiDAR work will begin in the Summer of 2024 (see above). Structural evaluation of the West Church and Praetorium is scheduled for spring 2024, with West Church anastylosis to occur within the next year to stabilize one or two walls. Praetorium consolidation will follow, pending funding. The UJ-JC will compile a list of



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subsequent conservation priorities. Longer-term goals include a digital site-monitoring application and a comprehensive Arches database to centralize the Umm Al-Jimāl archaeological archive, which are currently in process. Once the baseline 3D models are created for each structure at the site, these will become a key part of ongoing monitoring. A schedule for ongoing rescanning will be developed by the UJ-JC to ensure that each structure is rescanned at least once per year, and prioritized structures more frequently.

Research

For the short-term, plans include an early summer 2024 excavation season, which also includes documentation and conservation efforts. Short- and long-term goals include the development and publication of several monographs of previous research. The House XVII-XVIII Project will be first and is expected to be published in 2025. The long-term goal of establishing a Hauran Research Center at Umm Al-Jimāl is in its beginning stages. Umm Al-Jimāl interpretive materials situate the site in the broader context of the Hauran region in Jordan. A longer-term goal is for Umm Al-Jimāl to collaborate with other sites in northern Jordan to support increased regional research and tourism and to more widely share the story of the Hauran.

On-site tourism infrastructure

This is largely complete except for a new ticket office and signage at the site's south entry. Architectural plans and construction documents commissioned by MoTA have recently been completed for the new facility which will replace the existing obsolete structure. It is designed to accommodate a higher volume of visitors including persons with disabilities, and includes additional restroom facilities, improved traffic patterns, and parking for automobiles and tour buses. Construction will begin after the removal of the existing temporary structure and an archaeological study of the location. Longer term plans include a state-of-the-art upgrade to the existing site security program in the next two to three years.

Development and Buffer Zone

The Umm Al-Jimāl New Municipality Cultural Heritage Office is in the process of developing design covenants, conditions, and restrictions for the Buffer Zone to provide tasteful uniformity for any new construction.

Tourism: training, materials

In anticipation of increased visitation to Umm Al-Jimāl several initiatives are in process or in development. These include: ongoing training of a competent pool of local heritage trained service personnel, children's heritage programming for both local schools and visitors, translation of



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interpretive print materials into the dominant tourism languages in addition to English and Arabic, and tour operator engagement with the site and its narrative.

Finally, the most important long-term goal for Umm Al-Jimāl is to ensure that it maintains its unique tangible value which evokes the memory of the daily life of the people of this region over millennia so beautifully.