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Redefining The Core of Baakline

Reinvisiung Rural Villages/Baakline - El Chouf

Maya Zeid

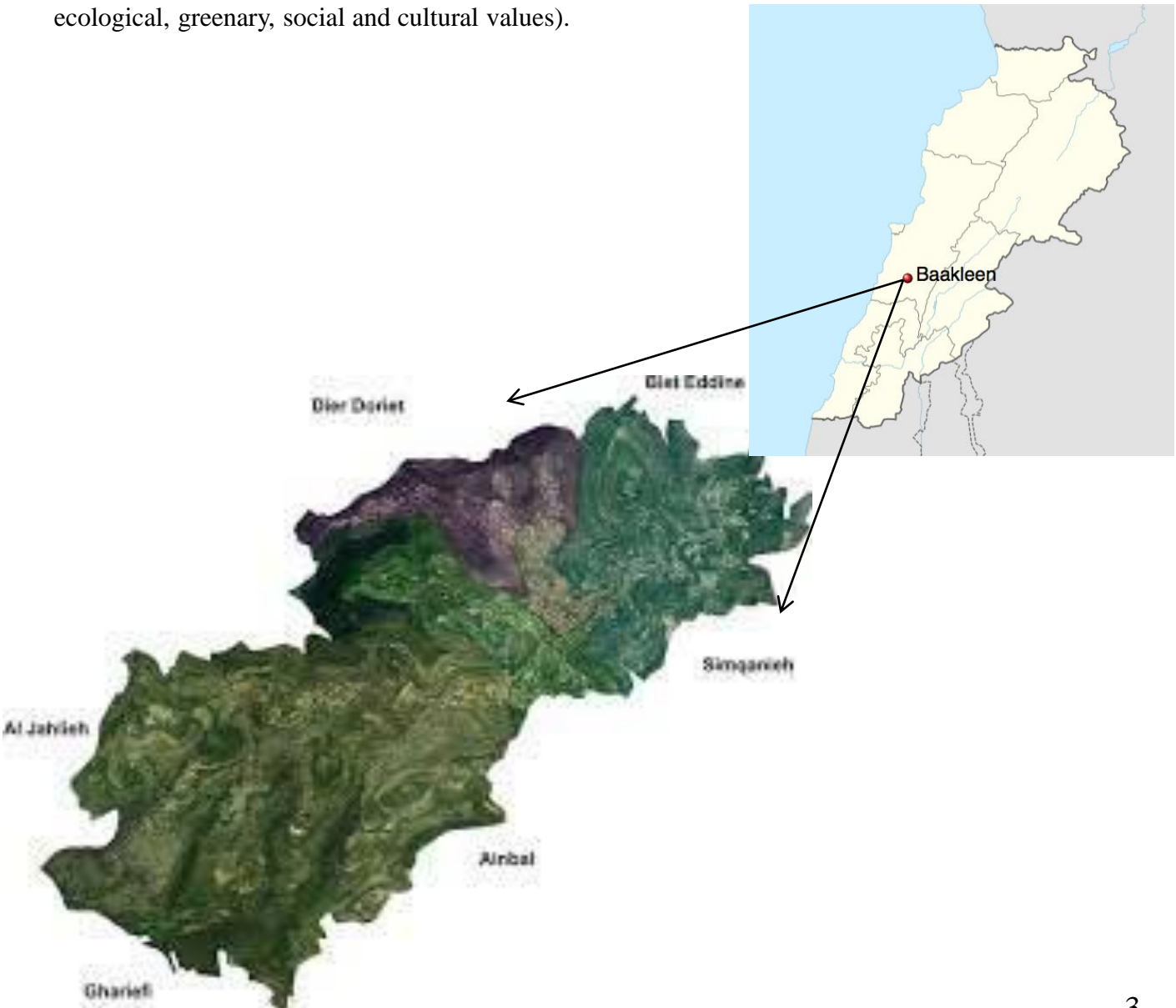
CONTENTS

A- Introduction	3
Background & Existing Problems Research Design Questions	
B- Methodology	5
C- Review	6
Literature Case Studies	
D- Context	11
Site Selection Background Site Inventory	
E- Investigation	16
Site Analysis (social, cultural, ecological, perceptual...)	
F- Proposal	18
Project Statement Strategy	
G- Proposed Design	20
Landscape Functionality Main Features Design Layers Design Plan Design Sections Design zoom ins	
H- Acknowledgements	35
E- Final Sheets	36

Introduction

History of Baakline and Existing Problems

Baakline is a mountainous village founded in the 12th century by the Maan Emirs. It used to be the capital of old Mount Lebanon until the Maan Emirs decided to move to Deir El-Qamar due to the shortage in water supplies. Today, Baakline is still the same village with less importance. Moreover, it developed haphazardly. Its streets and the old town are full of old stone historical buildings such as the national public library and the Hamadeh palace that was built in the 1591 and still standing till today. As the time passed, this glory started to fade away leaving few historical monuments behind. The town's economical, ecological and historical values are becoming less important day after another. Although Baakline is a rural village but it is affected by the urban sprawl in an unorganized way. People are building their houses in a random way and are also parking on the sidewalks. The sidewalks are filled with garbage bags and the streets (even the tiny ones) contain all types of cables indicating the improper infrastructure dominating the village. These issues are affecting the overview of this town and is playing a major role in fading Baakline away. The aim of this project is to glow up Baakline through out a well designed plan and hence highlight the values of this town (historical, ecological, greenery, social and cultural values).



Design and Research Questions

Existing Problems:

Some of the main problems in Baakline are the lack of public spaces. The inhabitants can not find a public space to go meet in and spend their time in. It is more like a residential rural village nowadays. The unorganized spread of the buildings and small houses is affecting the general view and the culture of the town. The infrastructure is also messed up, cables and garbage are everywhere and in every corner of the village. Moreover, people park their cars on the sidewalk, thus there are no well defined sidewalks in the main street of the town. Knowing that most of the historical monuments are along the main street of the village, many people do not realize or even know about them.

When I first chose this town to work on I asked myself many questions, some of which are: Why many people in Baakline do not know its history? Why the people there do not mind the fading of their home village? Why don't they try to fix all the major problems they are facing (garbage, cables)? How can I deal with all these issues at the same time? These few questions came up to my mind at first. It was hard to find answers to my questions because I could not find a lot of information online and the information gathered from the community was not satisfying. It is important to mention that many public figures (writers and politicians) are from Baakline.



Methodology

Projects are approached with different methodologies. I was inspired by the methodology of Peter Howard in his article Making A Community Plan. I willing willing to approach my site as follows:

- 1- Understand the history of Baakline and how it is used now.
- 2- Communicate with the inhabitants to understand their needs.
- 3- Prioritize the key issues (historical, ecological, cul- tural, social, agricultural...)
- 4- Start collecting data and mapping the area to get a clear vision of the town.
- 5- Create models to help express the ideas and the validity of each.
- 6- After studying all the pros and cons of this village, come up with a well studied design to solve these problems and allow Baakline to shine again.

Review

Literature

I searched several articles based on several notions that are very important to my site. Those notions are: highlighting the historical monuments of Baakline, perception (how do people see the site), accessibility, visual connections and some other important notions. These are few articles I read with a brief summary and how each relate to my site.

Highlighting the Historical Monuments:

A1: PENN CENTRAL TRANSPORTATION vs NEW YORK CITY

It discusses how New York City adopted a law on how to preserve the historic landmarks in the city. It also promotes the use of these landmarks for as interior landmarks, educational purposes and a place to please the inhabitants of the city.

A2: Historic Landscapes Without History? A Reconsideration of the Concept of Traditional Landscapes

The author discusses the difference between traditional landscapes and historical landscapes indicating that historical landscapes undergo very slow changes as time passes and thus preserve their characteristics.

Perception:

A1: What is Main Street?

Main streets are the centers of social, economical and cultural activities. It is the center of the town and the community. Such streets tell who we are and how did change from the past till now describing our social, cultural and economical statuses.

A2: Density Perception on Residential Streets

The aim of this article was to explore the physical characteristics of the main streets based on the façade areas and the size of the small buildings, the great buildings articulations and the number of houses there. In addition to the visual characteristics such as forms, color, vegetation, materials and patterns.

One important aspect I read about was the street as a town center and the important principles within a town center. According to the Article: “Successful town centres – developing effective strategies” the author indicates that the characteristics of a town center are as follows:

- Serves the needs of the local community
- Leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities
- Access to public and private sector services
- An employment and business sector
- Accessibility by a number of transport options
- The perception by the local community as their town center

In addition to that, the author indicates 4 personality based town centers: Community-focused entrepreneurs Sustainable destinations. Specialists. Global celebrities.

Kensington Street

info (at) landezine.com

Kensington Street offers immense possibilities – a built fabric comprised of some of Sydney’s oldest workers cottages, terraces and warehouses.

The first imperative was its physical connection a process of boiling down – carefully understanding the history and many heritage qualities of the street. the main vision was to reactivate the heritage buildings along the street and redevelop them for contemporary food, lifestyle, artistic and commercial endeavours. Kensington Street’ public realm demonstrates leader- ship through the following key areas:

Placemaking:

The aim was to transform the street to a social network street in which people can sit and socialize.

Creating a shared zone:

The street presents motorists with a succession of sub- tle physical and visual restraints designed to encourage slow driving.

Retaining the site’s heritage qualities:

Kensington Street’s highly innovative design and carefully executed heritage adaptive reuse strategy has revitalised one of Sydney’s oldest streets into a vibrant new public place that contributes to the evolving street typology of the city.



The Creative Corridor: A Main Street Revitalization for Little Rock

Federal Highway Administration

The Creative Corridor offers a vision for the reclamation of a neglected Main Street while providing an affordable downtown living option presently unavailable in Little Rock. The vision is to serve a mixed land-use that includes residential, tourism, work, and the cultural arts rather than Main Street's traditional retail base. The challenge involves restructuring a public realm conceived for workaday commercial throughput to now serve 24/7 urban lifestyles with a high level of livability. The Creative Corridor demonstrates Complete Street principles wherein streets for downtown contexts are designed to accommodate all transportation users—pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transit users of all ages and abilities in a safe manner. The Creative Corridor expands amenities for pedestrians, provides dedicated bicycling lanes, rationalizes parking, calms traffic, and plans for the eventuality of rail transit. Complete Streets also reward walking, meaning that streets are vibrant frameworks supportive of nontraffic functions related to gathering, recreation, and shopping. It also deals with the traffic and communication problems.



The Creative Corridor: A Main Street Revitalization

Town Square

Location: Cumbria

Lead Landscape Architecture: BCA Landscape

The aim of his project is to create a new public space that can act as the center of the town, attract new visitors and enhance the existing business in the town and create a less vehicle dominated and a more pedestrian friendly street to make the area area safe.

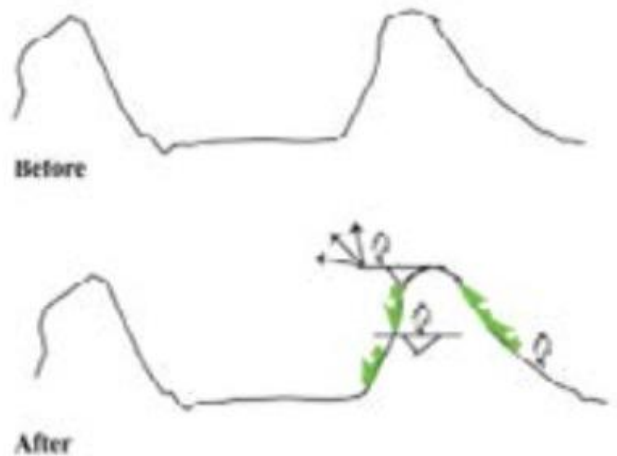
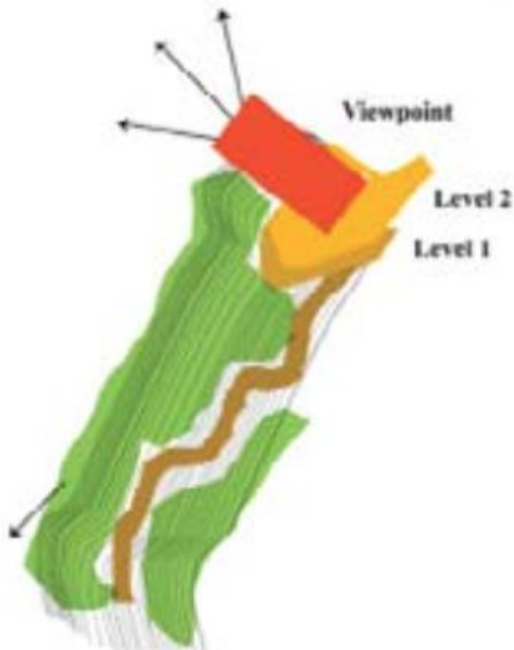


Look Outs

Location: Ecuador

Lead Landscape Architecture: Jorge Andrade
Ben- itez I Javier Mera

The project is located in the top edge of an active volcano with an active lake inside and it overlooks attractive natural surroundings and at the same time to the lake inside the volcano



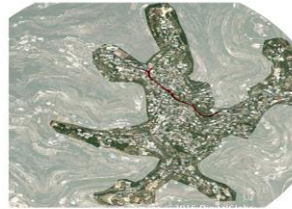
Context

Site Selection & Background

As stated previously, My site is the town and mainly the residential side of Baakline. The history of Baakline in settled in these alleys and the development of this residential area is what affecting Baakline today. The new generation knows nothing about the history of there village, the glory it used to have, the historical monuments left there and the reason behind the fading this village is facing. The lack of outdoors public spaces, the messed of infrastructure are some well noticed reasons affecting Baakline negatively. The following diagrams shows the evolution of Baakline throughout history.



1962



2010

2003



2015

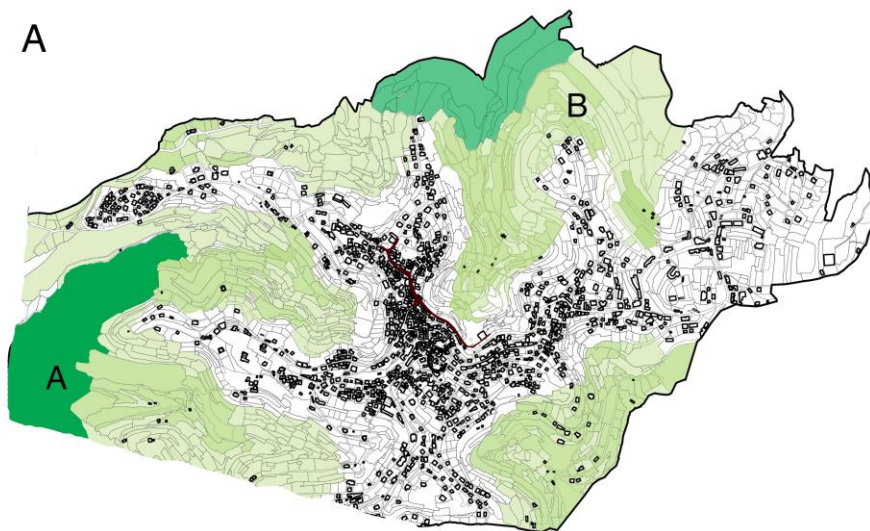


Site Inventory

Mapping the collected data about Baakline made the vision clearer and thus helped me to understand this village more and more. I mapped the vegetation, circulation, residential/commercial and the landmarks layer on the larger village scale. Then I mapped the same layers but on the intermediate scale to be able to analyze the street scale layers and thus draw conclusions from them.



A



- Herch Baakline
- Wild Vegetation
- Agricultural Lands



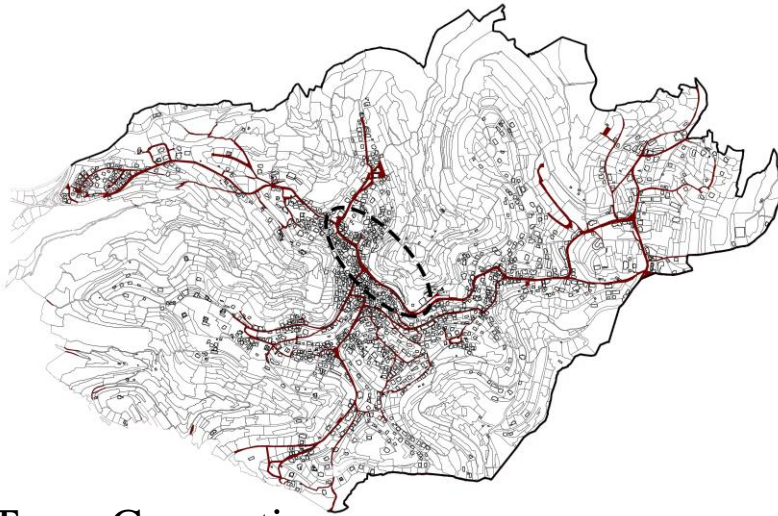
B



C



Town Vegetation Character



Town Connections



Historical Monuments



National Library



Municipality



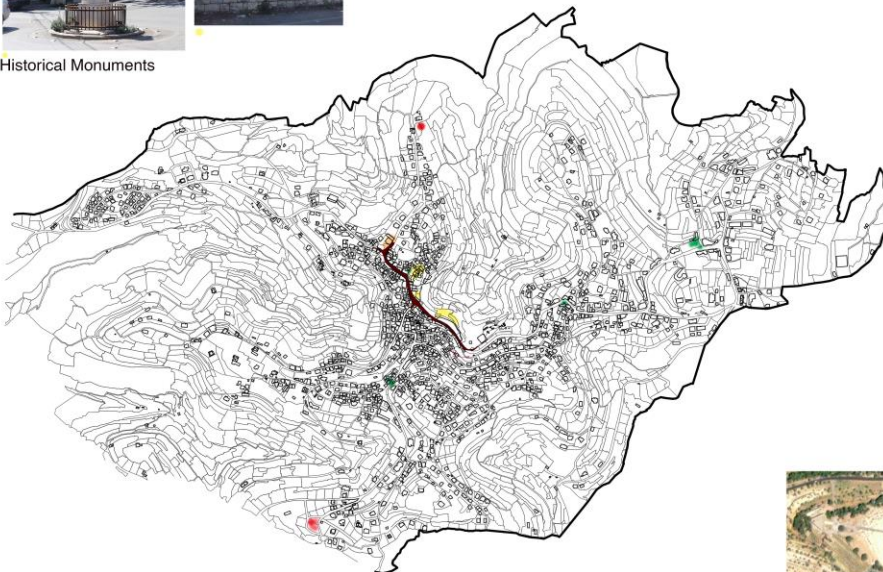
Roundabouts



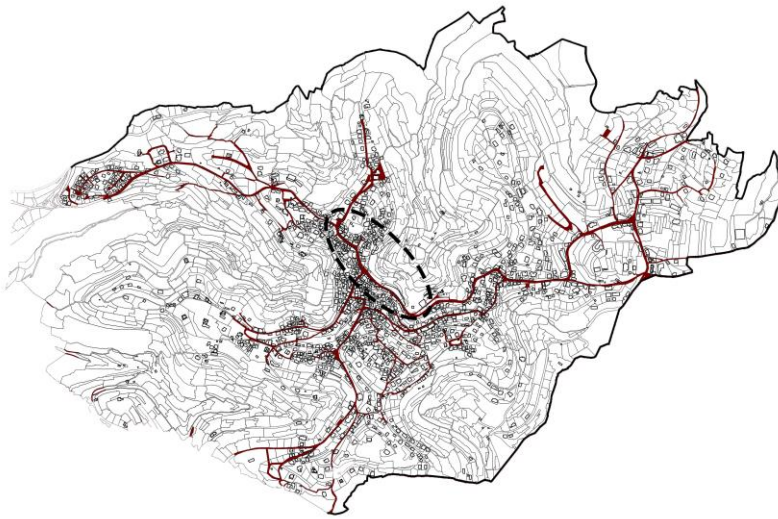
Painted Wall



Triangle House

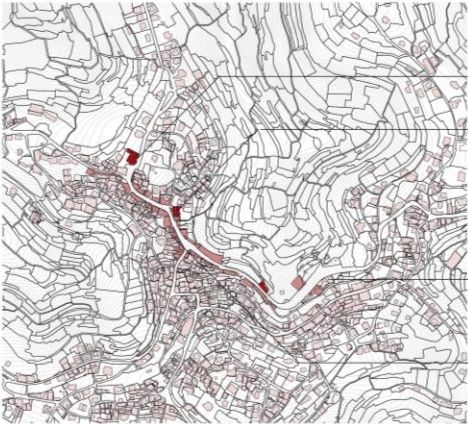


Town Landmarks



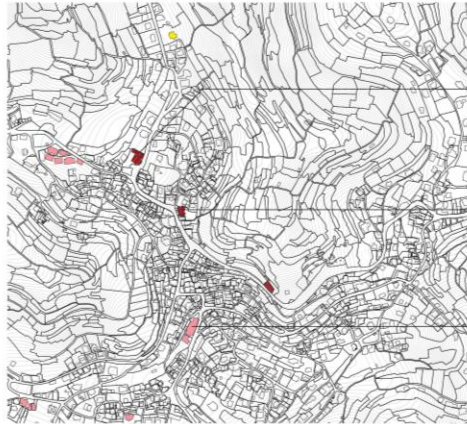
Town Visual Connections

This street is the main road leading to Baakline. It is full of old stone historical buildings such as the national public library, Hamadeh palace that was built in the 1590, the Ottoman cemeteries and the old ain. These monuments represent the architectural value of the street. However, the street trees, olive orchids and agricultural fields represent the landscape values



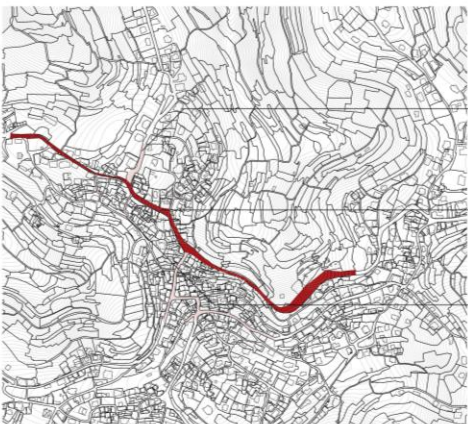
Landuse
Scale 1/4000

- Legend
- Historical Monuments
 - Commercial/Residential
 - Residential



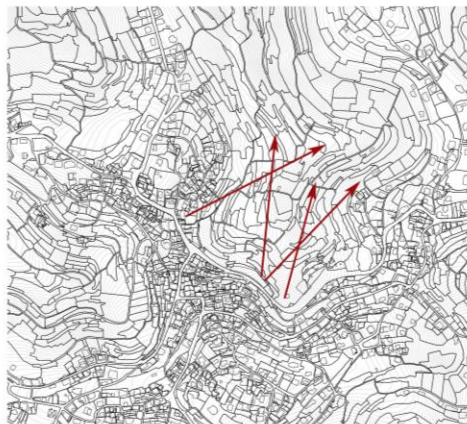
Landmarks
Scale 1/4000

- Legend
- Historical Monuments
 - Schools
 - Municipality



Circulation
Scale 1/4000

- Legend
- Main Street
 - Secondary Roads



View Points
Scale 1/4000



Vegetation
Scale 1/4000

- Legend
- Orchids
 - Street Vegetation



Educational Institutions
Scale 1/4000

- Legend
- Schools
 - Universities



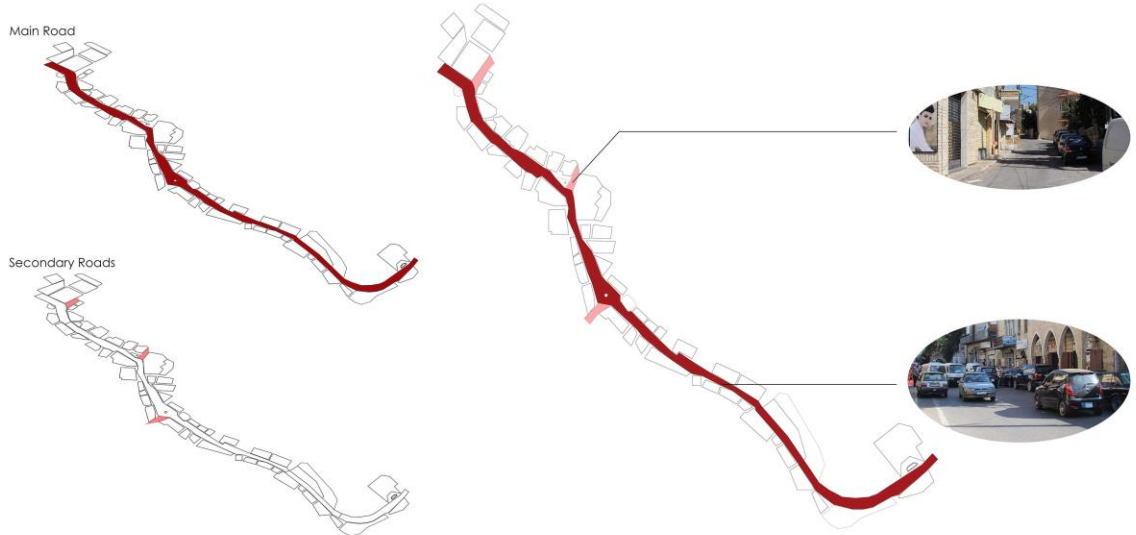
Investigation

Site Analysis

Zooming in to the main town street consisting of the historical monuments, I analyzed it deeply and studied the following layers: vegetation, circulation, landmarks, landuse, and view points. These diagrams helped me draw conclusion and facts regarding this street.

Circulation

Scale: 1/250



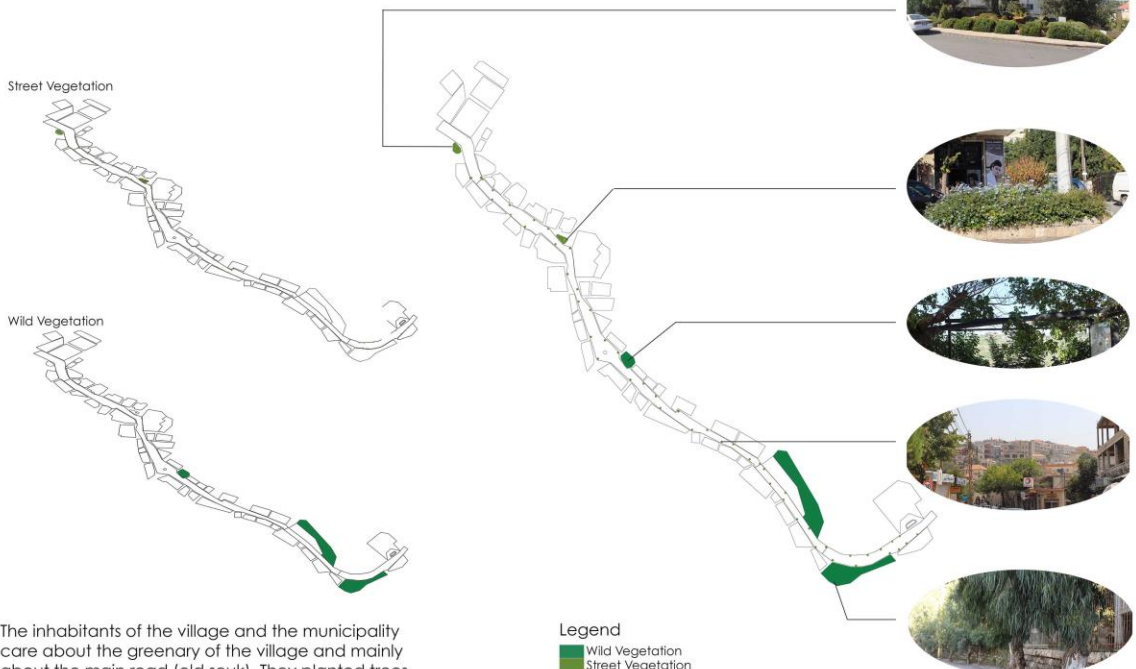
Baakline mainly consists of 1 main road which was the old souk in the history and which contains most of the historical monuments present in Baakline. Out of this main road, small secondary roads lead to the inside alleys of the village

Legend

- Main Road
- Secondary Roads

Vegetation

Scale: 1/250



The inhabitants of the village and the municipality care about the greenery of the village and mainly about the main road (old souk). They planted trees along the road eventhough some of them are suffering due to the surrounding conditions and their quirements

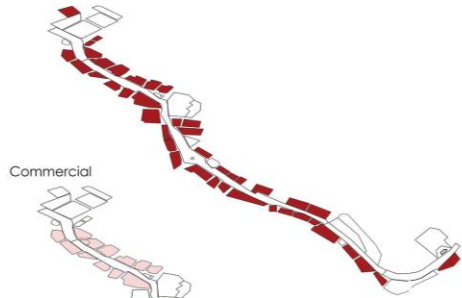
Legend

- Wild Vegetation
- Street Vegetation

Landuse

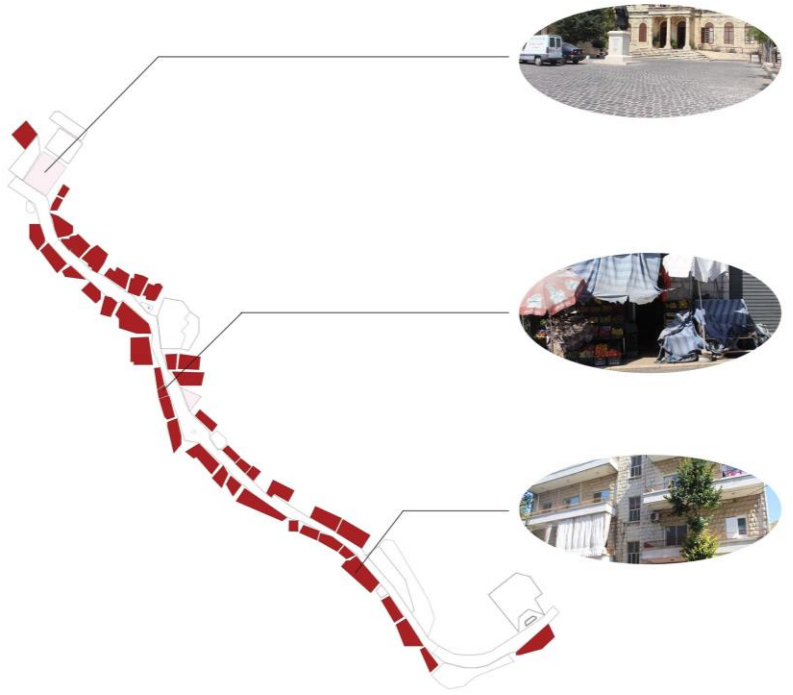
Scale: 1/250

Residential



Commercial

Parking Lots



Legend

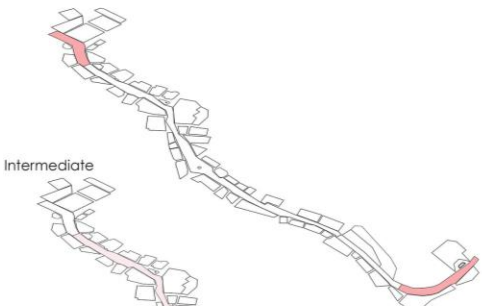
- Residential
- Commercial
- Parking Lots

the main road which the old souk is made up stores all over (cloths, shoes, banks, supermarkets...) It is also residential where people have their houses above the shops. Moreover, 2 parking spots exist in this street and are not used efficiently

Road Width

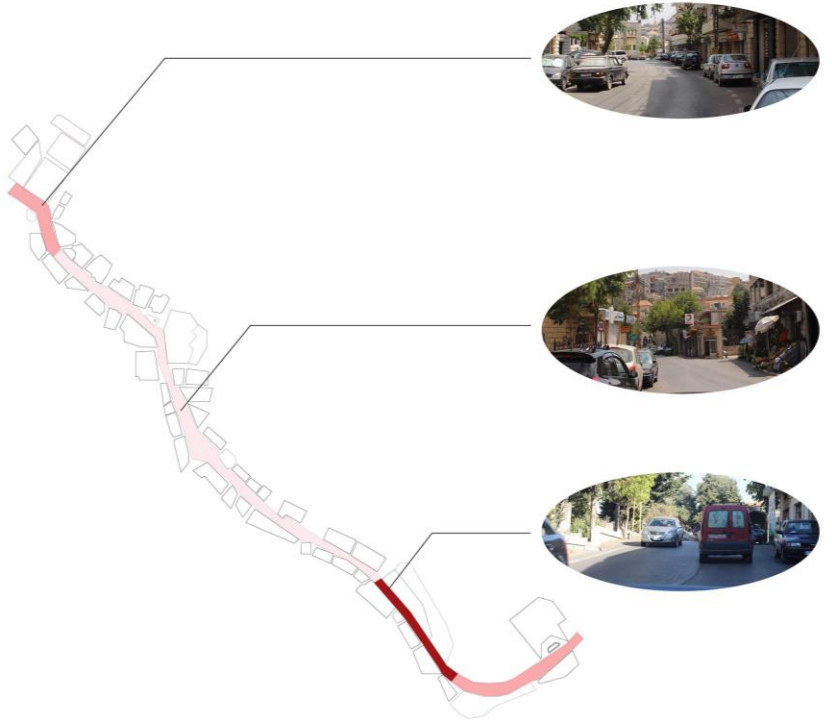
Scale: 1/250

Widest



Intermediate

Narrowest with NO Sidewalks



Legend

- Narrowest
- Widest
- Intermediate

The road width varies with the same main street. It starts wide and as you move in towards Baif Baakline it narrows down. The narrowest strip is an unsafe strip with no sidewalks. Moreover, this road is a fast lane in which the cars pass by fastly without recognizing the surrounding

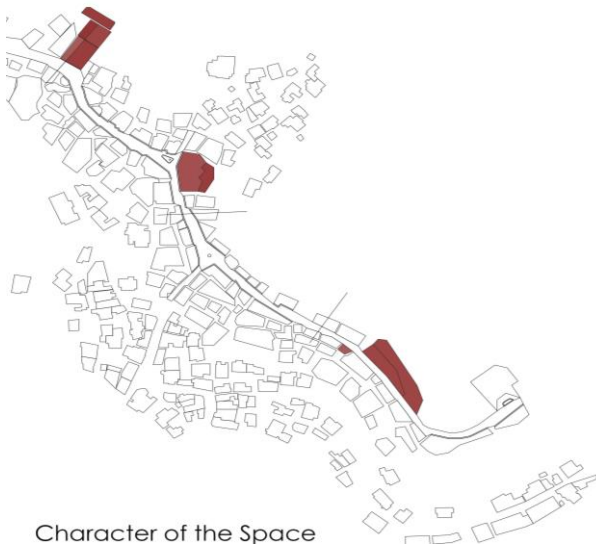
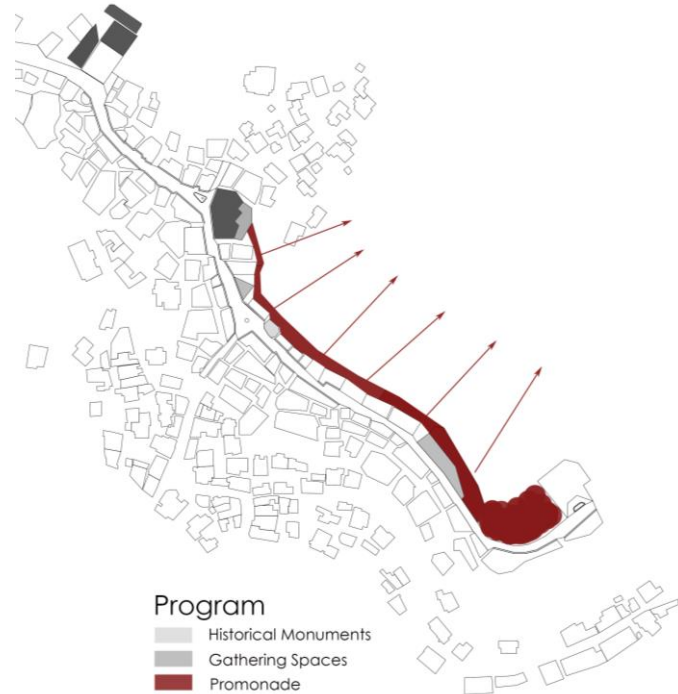
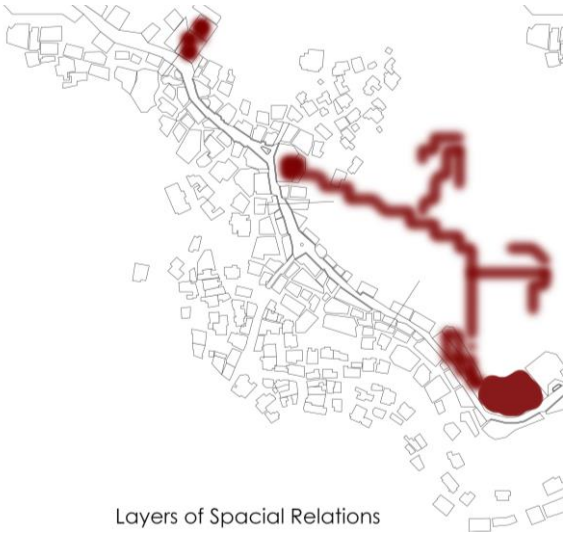
Proposal

Project Statement

The aim of the project is to redefine the core of Baakline, transform the street into a pedestrian friendly one and create new gathering spaces with different functions along it.

Strategy

Understanding the spaces characters, their relationships to each other and the program of the street resulted in a pedestrian trail strategy, which aims to push people towards the landscape by creating pedestrian connections away from the street and highlighting the main building with there spaces thus creating 3 main nodes. This will allow for more views.



Strategy Plan



Sections



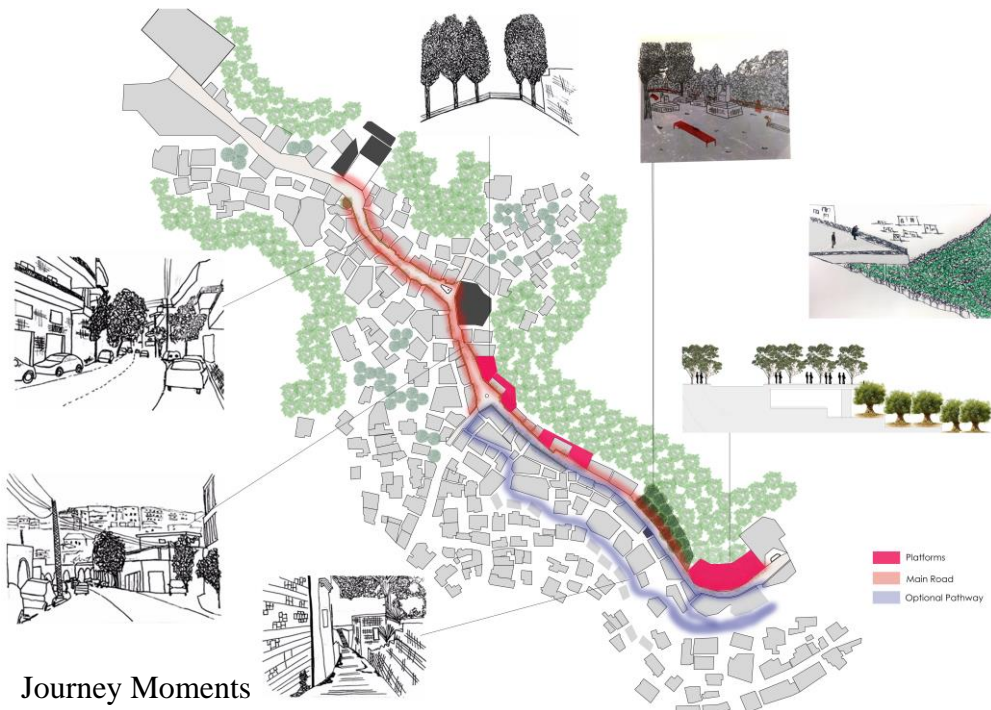
Proposed Design

Landscape Functionality

The landscape functions differently under different conditions, such as the performance layer which indicates the social, ecological and the cultural values of the spine. The journey moments reveal different moods in different places resulting in a continuous pedestrian flow.



Landscape Performance



Journey Moments

Main Features

The main design features are a main platform, a walkway that leads you to terraces, and sidewalks leading to an ending space. A religious platform is overlooking the views, from which a walkway takes you to the orchids creating spaces in between them bringing you back up to the terraces from which sidewalks direct you towards the educational space. These spaces linked together form the main spine of the design.



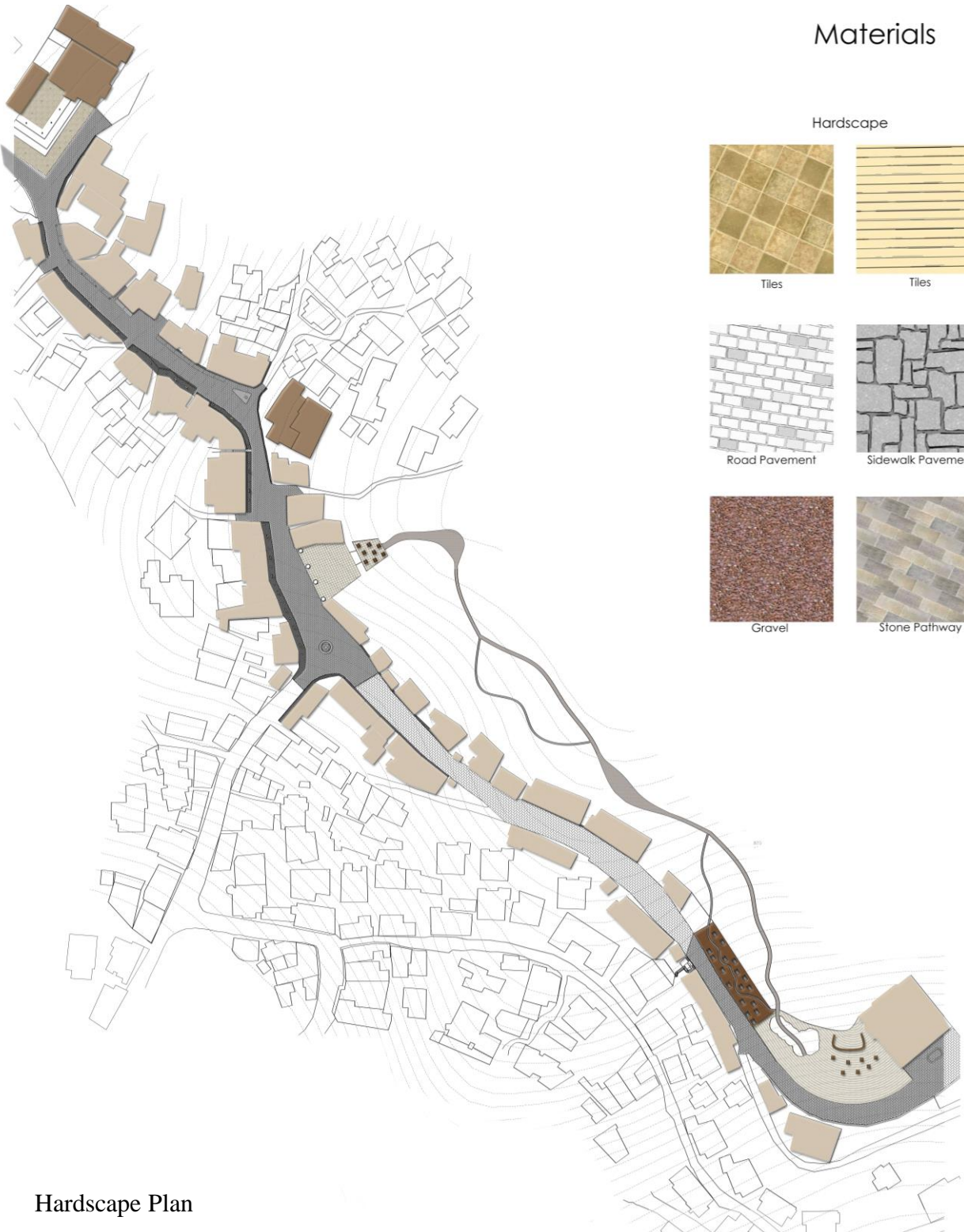
Main Spine

The main element in the project is the spine which links the 3 main spaces to each other. Along this spine several spaces are created the floating platforms are one example



Design Layers

The materials used define the space and add identity to it. The roads are stone paved and slightly elevated, the sidewalks are widened with some benches to allow visitors to sit and are also stone paved. The religious, cultural and educational platforms are tiled allowing a comfortable access to each. The pathway along the orchids is made up of stepping-stones revealing the natural mood of the space.



Materials

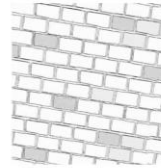
Hardscape



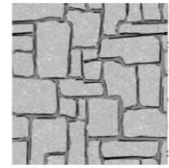
Tiles



Tiles



Road Pavement



Sidewalk Pavement



Gravel



Stone Pathway

The vegetation is used for its environmental, aesthetical and walkability values. Thus the street trees help regulating the speed, purifying the air and transforming the street to a pedestrian friendly one. The Podocarpus Macrophyllus is used as the main street tree because it doesn't need a lot of maintenance and can survive the weather conditions in Baakline. Moreover, the municipality started introducing this tree in the town. Pine trees are planted in the educational platform because they do not block the architectural view of the library.



Softscape



Pinus Pinea



Podocarpus Macrophyllus



Bauhinia Variegata



Olea Europea

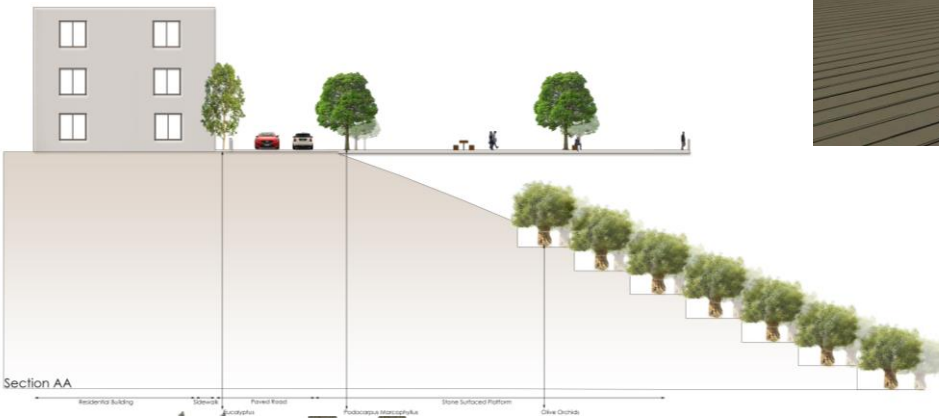
Design Plan

Redefining the core and not only the street is emphasizing on the historical and ecological layer and thus creating a network that will bring back life to Baakline. This network consists of the street as the spine of the village, a religious place, a cultural place and an educational place.

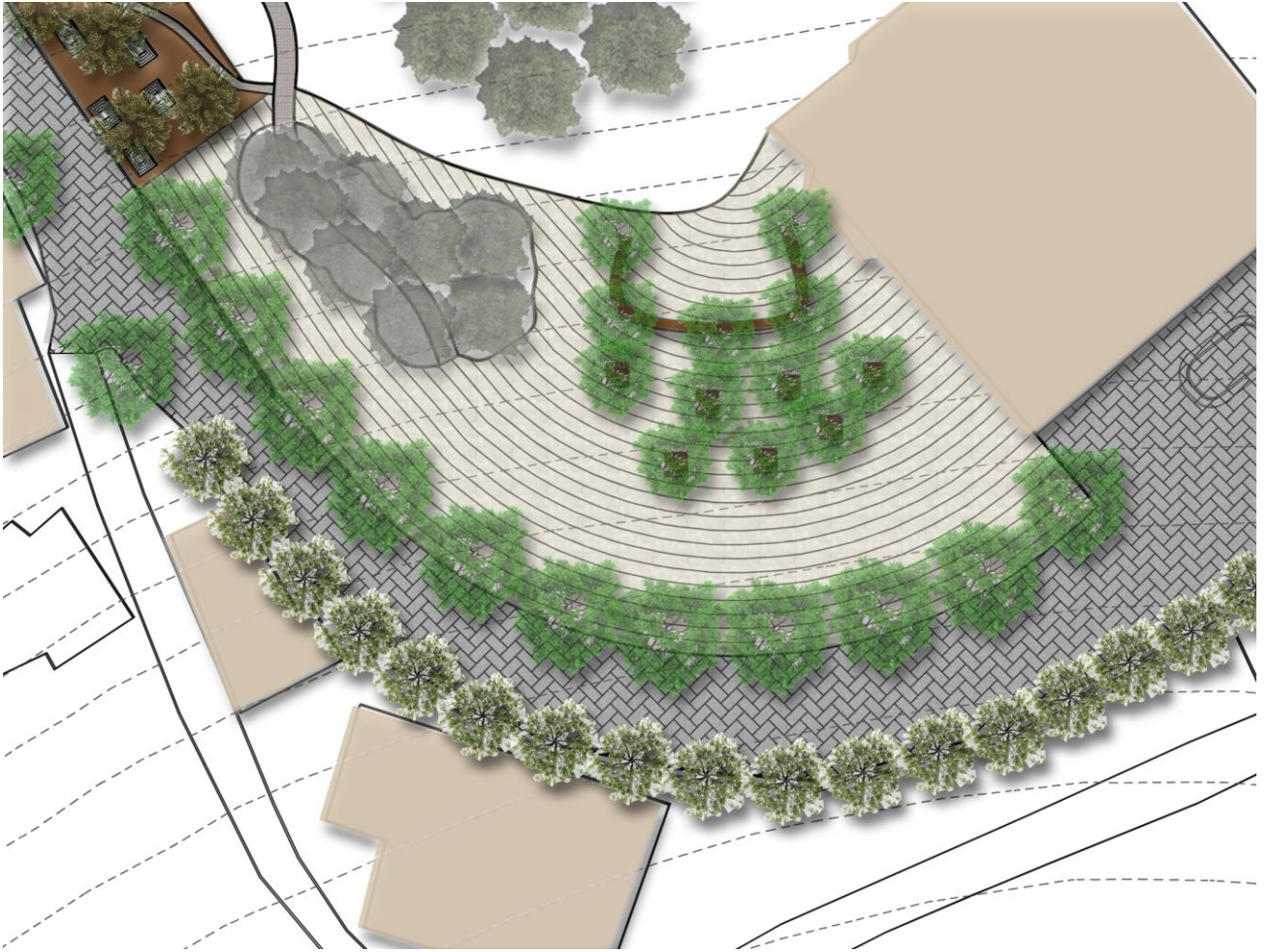


Extension of Religious Activities

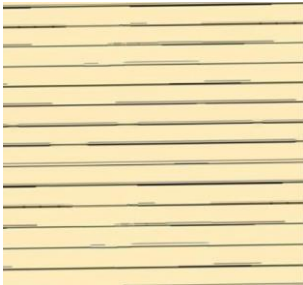
The religious space is next to Bait Baakline (a religious building in which weddings, funerals and events take place). It is a tiles surfaced floating platform overlooking the olive orchids. It consists of a hole existing in this platform to allow the people to go down into the orchids, a bench overlooking the view and a series of tables and benches on which the outdoor religious activities take place.



Detailed Religious Space



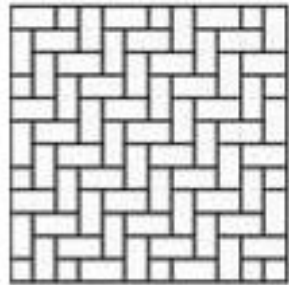
Materials



Tiles



Wooden Benches



Road Pavement



Podocarpus
Macrophyllus

Walk in the Ottoman Cemeteries

The pathway goes through the cemeteries and links to the one in the orchards allowing the visitors to discover the historical Ottoman cemeteries.



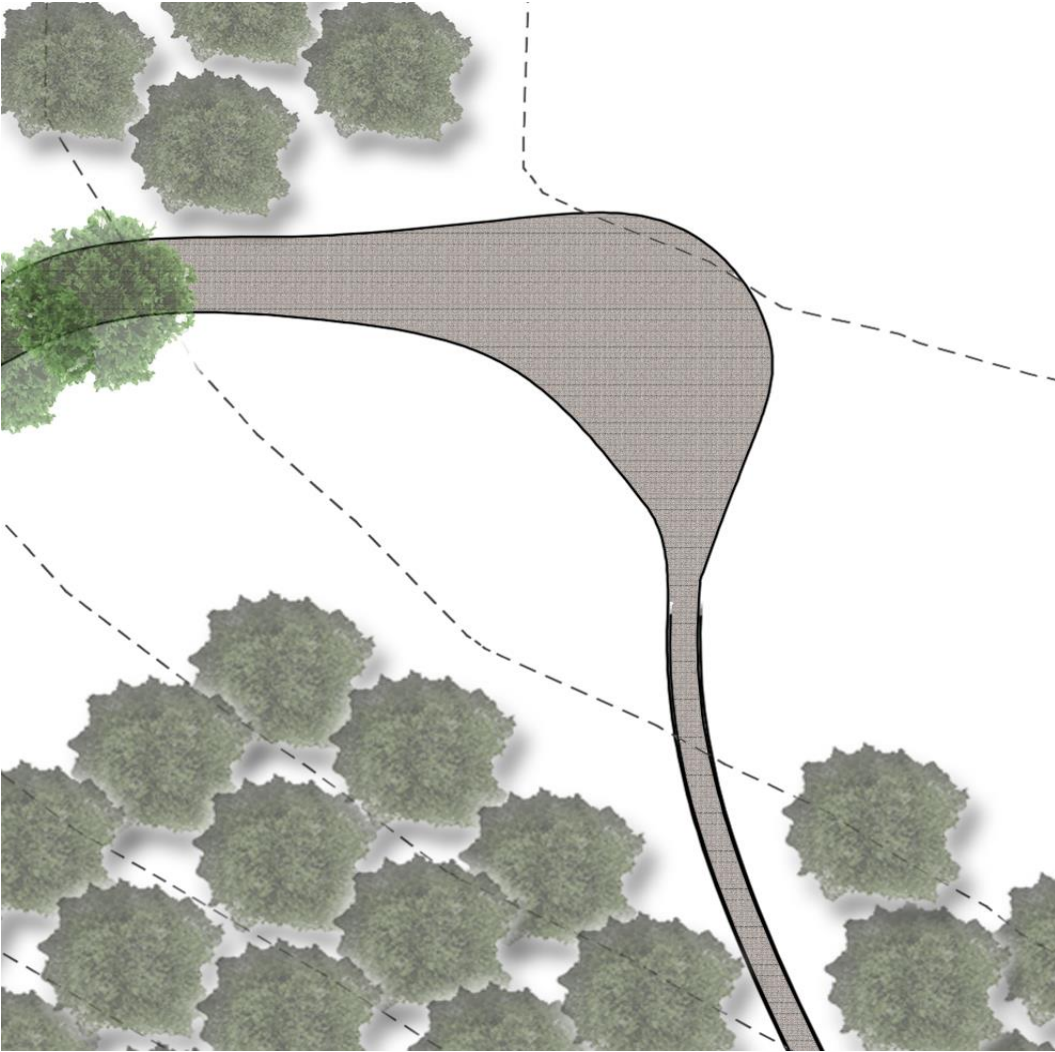
Informal Picnic Area



The informal picnic area which allows people to sit under the orchids and enjoy a picnic there.



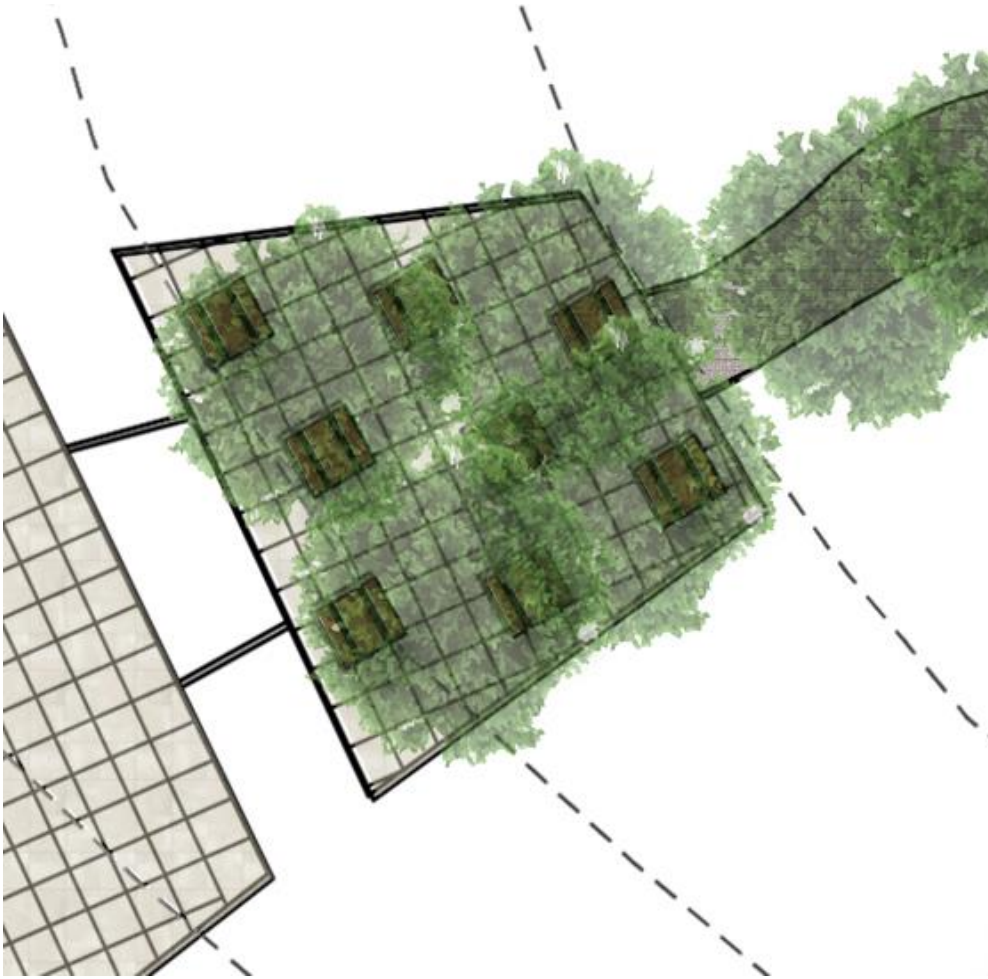
Viewing Platform



The viewing platform from which you can see Deir el Qamar from this platform.



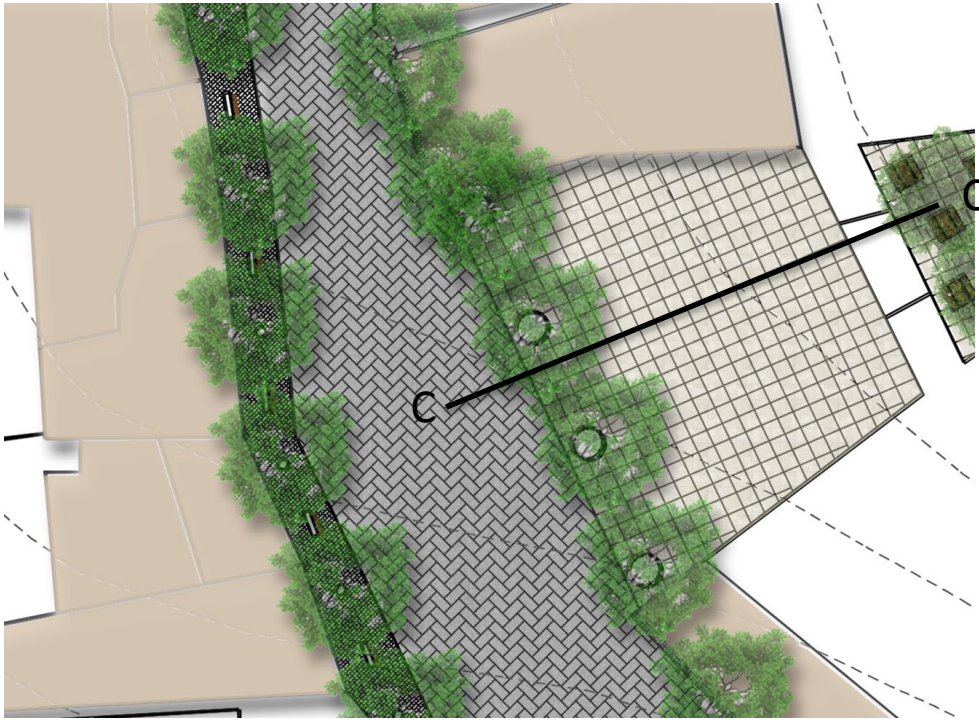
Formal Picnic Area



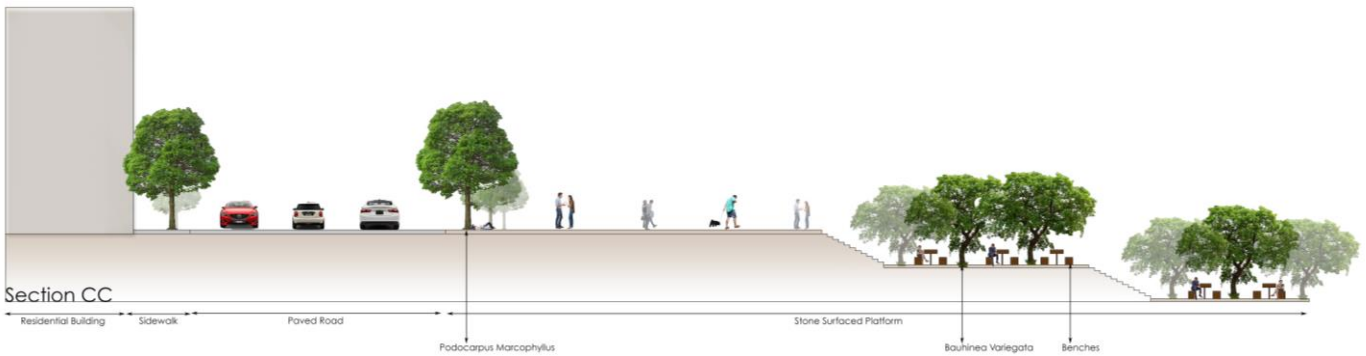
The formal picnic platform, which has a series of tables and benches ready to sit and use.



Cultural Space



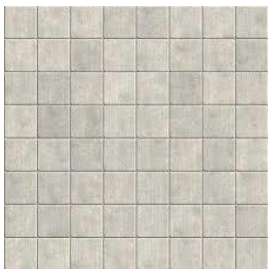
The cultural space consists of a plaza for small events like birthdays or farmers market. It is also the main gathering space at the center of the village. The street and the sidewalks are widened at this level and act as accidental spaces. The street trees enhance walkability by shading the sidewalks. These sidewalks connect the cultural space to the educational space.



Detailed Cultural Space



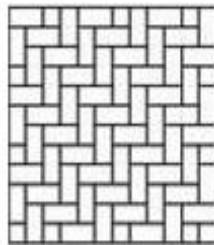
Materials



Tiles



Sidewalk Pavement

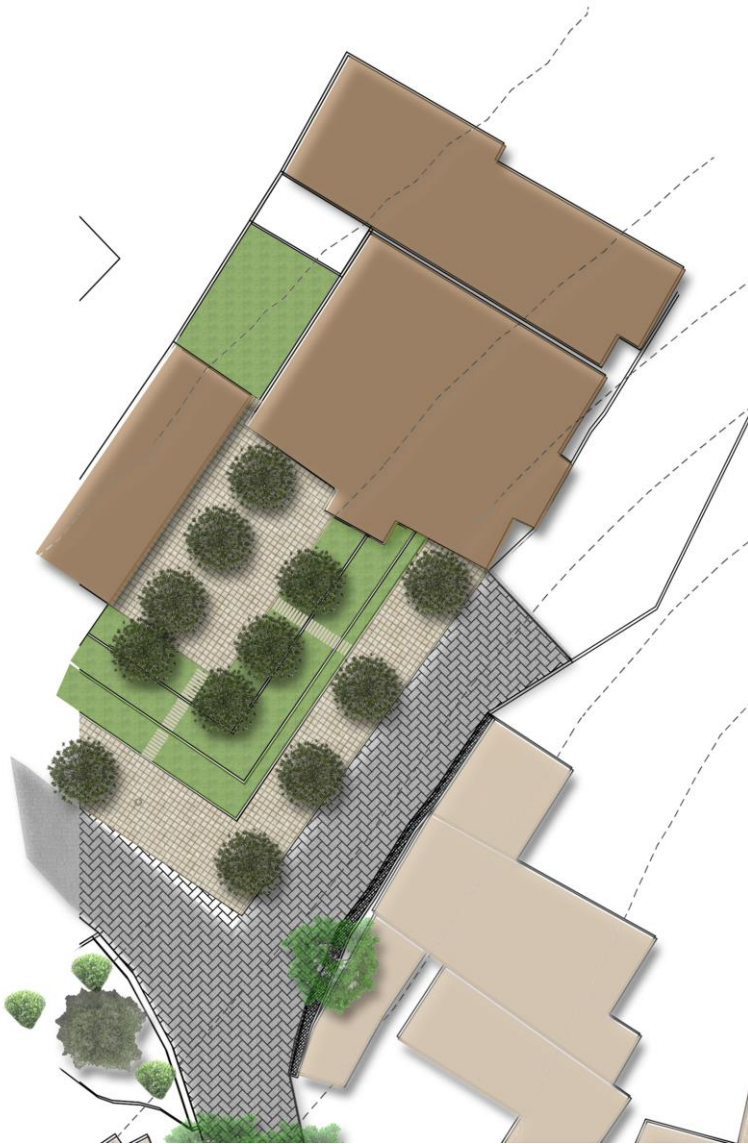


Road Pavement

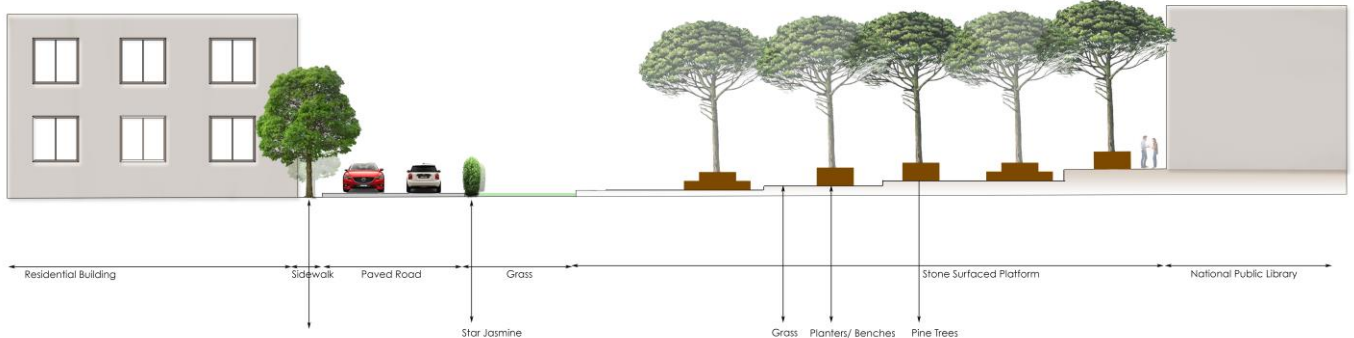


Podocarpus Macrophyllus

Library Extension



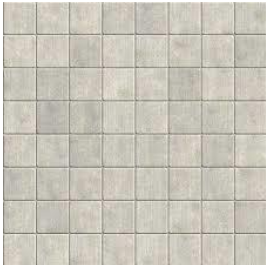
The educational space is the piazza in-front the public national library. It is a seating area dedicated to the library where people read out doors or students do their projects. The pine trees are not blocking the library enhancing its unique architecture.



Detailed Library Extension



Materials



Tiles



Wooden Benches



Graas



Pine Tree

Acknowledgement

- Special thanks to the 3 advisors that played a major role in directing and developing this project: .
Nayla Al-akl, Beata Dreksler and Sandra Frem.

Redefining The Core of Baakline Village



Hardscape Plan

Softscape Plan

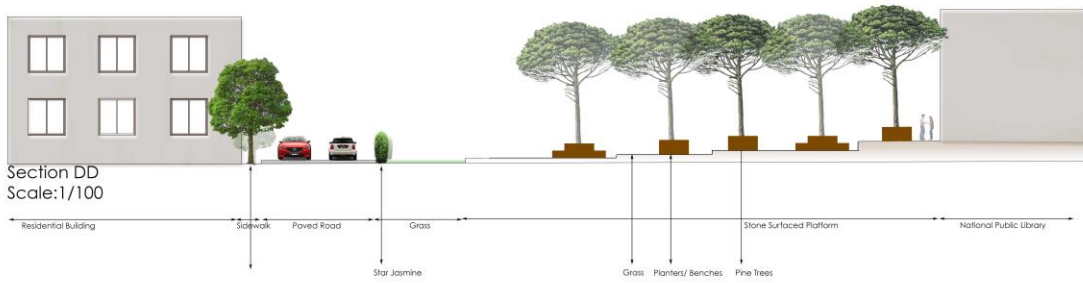
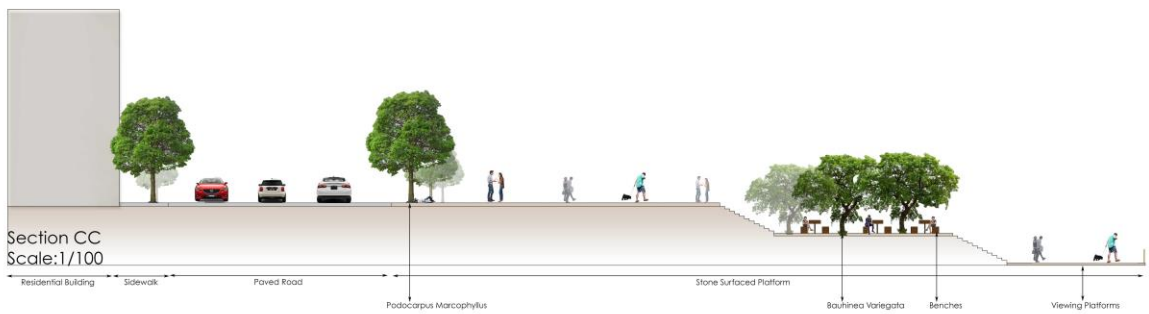
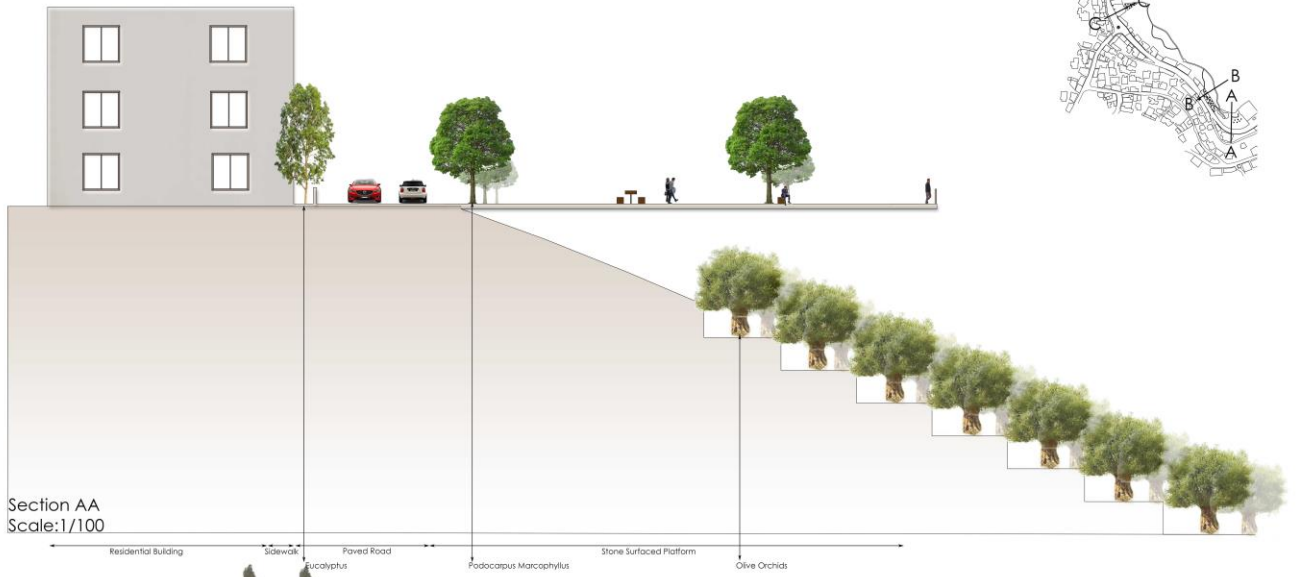
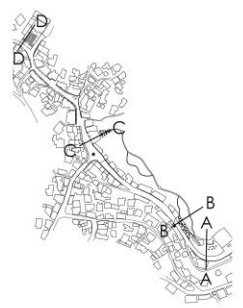
- 1 Baib Baakline. A well known religious building in Baakline in which morning events, weddings and funerals take place
Extension of the religious space and activities occurring there to the open floating stone surfaced platform. This space is a gathering space during the religious events and from which visitors take a ramp all the way to the olive orchids
- 2 Walk in the Ottoman's historical cemeteries
- 3 Elevated stone paved roads
- 4 Gathering platform
- 5 Informal picnic area
- 6 Viewing Platform
- 7 Formal picnic area
- 8 Cultural Space
- 9 Hmadah Palace
- 10 Widened Sidewalks
- 11 Extension of the Library
- 12 National Public Library

- Hardscape Legend**
- Historical Monuments
 - Houses
 - Benches
 - Stone Pavement
 - Sidewalks
 - Stone Pathway
 - Stone Surfaced Platforms

- Softscape Legend**
- Grass
 - Olive Trees
 - Podocarpus Macrophyllus
 - Bauhinia Variegata
 - Pinus Pinea
 - Cupressus Sempervirens
 - Eucalyptus

Scale: 1/500

Defining the Design Elements



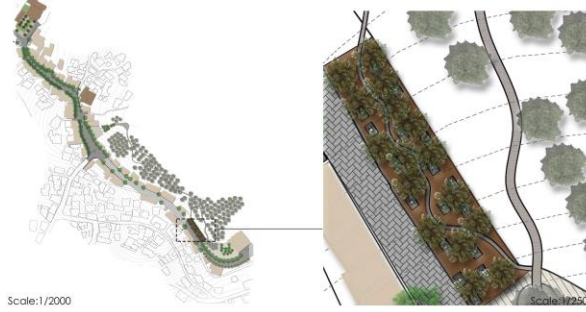
Defining the Design Spaces

Religious Platform



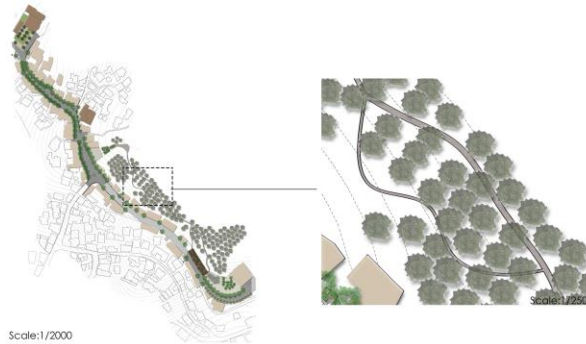
Scale: 1/2000

Cemeteries



Scale: 1/2000

Informal Picnic Area



Scale: 1/2000

Cultural Platforms



Scale: 1/2000

Educational Space



Scale: 1/2000

Materials

Hardscape



Tiles



Tiles



Road Pavement



Sidewalk Pavement



Gravel



Stone Pathway

Softscape



Pinus Pinea



Podocarpus Macrophyllus



Bauhinia Variiegata



Olea Europea

