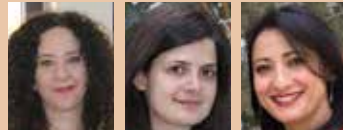




Bethlehem's Municipality Plans for a Successful Future

By **Carmen Ghattas,**
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and **Raida Hanania**



Bethlehem, the city of the Nativity, is home to a multi-cultural community that brings together the local, indigenous population and the large number of internationals - tourists, pilgrims, and volunteers - who visit the city every year. To raise the quality of services provided for Bethlehem's citizens and visitors, to promote the city on various levels, and to improve vital aspects of development, the current municipal council has developed a number of programs that shall be outlined in this article.

One of the crucial areas, essential for the growth of the city, is the issue related to the city's organizational borders. Traditionally, the Municipality of Bethlehem has been diligent in its work to expand the natural borders of the city, starting in 1973 with the Northern Area (part of Block Four). In the past three years, Bethlehem has expanded in three different directions to include the *Bet Bassa* area (Block Two), *Wad Mussallam* area (all of Block Four), as well as *Sabat Mountain* near Al-Doha. The expanded area covers 2.25 km², making the total area of Bethlehem 7.38 km².

In the year 2013, an initiative funded by *Global Communities* kick-started the upgrade of urban planning strategies in Bethlehem, which included the introduction of new masterplans that approach Bethlehem in a holistic manner. The main purpose of these plans is to map out the long-term strategies for land use and potential growth of the city. Bethlehem's first masterplan was formulated and approved by the Jordanian Hashemite Government in 1958 as part of an initiative to organize the development of the cities in the West Bank. Since then,

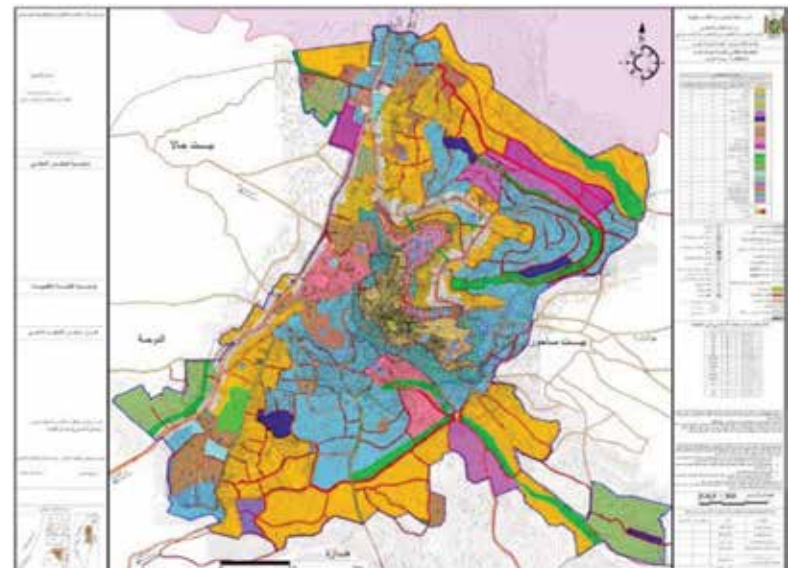


Members of the SDIP Committees.

it has seen various amendments, most notably in the year 1973 when Bethlehem's masterplan was expanded significantly toward the north. But like most Palestinian cities and for many various reasons, Bethlehem has expanded exponentially and grown in irregular growth patterns in dramatically little amount of time and thus, since the early 1990s, the existing masterplan has become inefficient in regulating development.

In order to go about this project in a successful manner, the Municipality of Bethlehem has collaborated with a specialized firm, Centre for Engineering and Planning (CEP), in order to create the plans and manage priorities. The Bethlehem Masterplan has currently been submitted for governmental approval.

The new Masterplan for Bethlehem.





Development of a sanitation master plan for the agglomeration of Bethlehem agreement signed between the Mayor of Bethlehem Ms. Vera Baboun and the Mayor of Paris, Mme. Anne Hidalgo.

Another achievement for the Bethlehem Municipality is The Strategic Development and Investment Plan (SDIP) that was forged when the municipality began a new partnership with Global Communities under the Local Government and Infrastructure Program (LGI) funded by USAID. In line with the strategic objectives of the West Bank's local governance sector, the partnership focused on three key areas of governance excellence: community participation, leadership development, and service delivery. The goal was to further enhance the municipality's ability to meet the needs of its citizens in a transparent and effective manner in order to support the municipality's vision of its becoming more responsive to community needs because the municipality aims to accomplish integrated socio-economic and infrastructure development in the city of Bethlehem. Thus, Bethlehem's municipality has engaged with members of its local community and with sector representatives in shaping the vision, mission, and objectives for sustainable development of the city of Bethlehem; and their involvement and participation has played an effective role, leading to decisions that affect the effectiveness of the project's prioritization, design, and implementation. This has helped and supported the success of the city's Strategic Development and

Investment Plan and has made it the guiding document for local economic and social development. These contributors have enriched the preparation process of the SDIP of Bethlehem city in a number of ways: they identified key developmental issues and supplied suggestions for projects related not only to health, education, women, and youth but also to infrastructure projects that will reinforce the attractiveness of the city's tourism and overall economic situation.

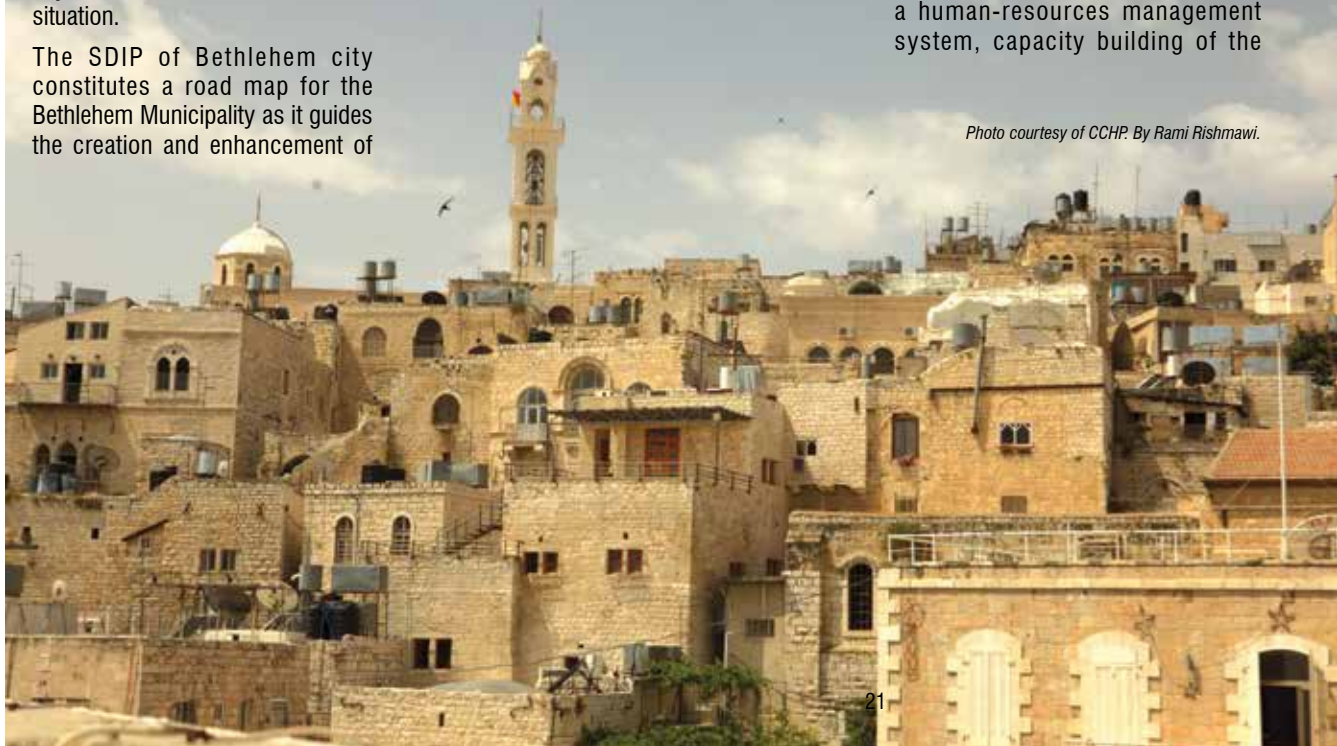
The SDIP of Bethlehem city constitutes a road map for the Bethlehem Municipality as it guides the creation and enhancement of

programs and services for Bethlehem residents over a certain number of years. It is a visionary, strategic plan that outlines goals and objectives for the future and is the principal guide directing land-use policy and decision-making as a "living document" that is not placed on a shelf but continually reviewed, modified, and expanded as necessary in order to reflect changing circumstances and opportunities. Many of the SDIP (infrastructural, environmental, educational, cultural, and organizational) projects were funded by various donors and implemented in cooperation and coordination with active and sectorial organizations in Bethlehem city.

Additionally, the municipality has worked on preparing a Municipal Strategic Corporate Plan (MSCP) in accordance with the LGI's model for excellence in governance and based on a new municipal-capacity assessment tool called Participatory Performance Management (PPM). This tool outlines how the municipality addresses its priorities in institutional development through a self-assessment exercise

and through the evaluation of the core competencies of the municipality staff and leadership. The (PPM) enables the Bethlehem Municipality to transparently determine areas of weakness and strength in its overall performance by utilizing a participatory approach, as the process involves the majority of municipal staff within the departments, sections, units, workgroups, and committees. The MSCP focuses on municipality structures, processes, services, resources, and management issues related to planning processes, enables the Bethlehem Municipality to work within its surrounding environment (including rules and regulations), and guides its interactions within as well as with other institutions and organizations in Bethlehem city and abroad. The majority of the MSCP projects have been implemented; among them the establishment and automation of a Citizen Service Center (CSC), the development of the Geographic Information System (GIS), the finalization of the physical (Master) plan of the city, the approval of the organizational structure of the municipality, the installation of a human-resources management system, capacity building of the

Photo courtesy of CCHP. By Rami Rishmawi.





Workshop on Disclosure and Communication Policies for Bethlehem Municipality Employees and the Local Community.

municipal staff, a computerized system for financial procurement inventory, and the development of the technical infrastructure (software and hardware) in the municipal departments. The MSCP is continually reviewed and modified yearly.

Bethlehem Municipality is one of the first municipalities in Palestine that has given particular attention to international relations, considering them as essential within the scope of its development work. It has established twinning, cooperation, and friendship agreements with cities around the world since 1962, which has promoted the city of Bethlehem in various countries and has built bridges of communication, mutual understanding, and cooperation with their peoples. The twinning agreements contribute to the development of Bethlehem in various vital sectors such as economic, social, touristic, education, health, and infrastructure. Bethlehem has a total of seventy-nine formal agreements, of which eight have been created in the last three years, as well as forty less formal friendships with cities around the world. Many projects were born under a framework of cooperation with international cities: the city of Turin, twinned in October 2015, contributed to the major projects "Bethlehem Smart Water" and "Plan of Innovation, Economy, Redevelopment and Management of Gross Market in Bethlehem;" and the city of Paris, that has a friendship-relation with Bethlehem, has collaborated with the municipality in financing the project "Transport and Mobility Master Plan

at the scale of Bethlehem governorate with a view to economic development."

Lastly, Bethlehem Municipality is proud that as a result of its friendship with the municipalities of Paris and the Grenoble-Alpes Métropole, a cooperation agreement and the necessary funds for the highly important "Development of a Sanitation Master Plan for the Agglomeration of Water Supply and Sewerage Authority in the Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and Beit Jala Area" have been secured.

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