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Entitled

*Studying the Impact of Urban Densification on Social Sustainability: The Case of Bida Bin Ammar
Neighborhood in Al Ain, UAE*

by

Lubna Mohammad Ghaffar Shekfa

Supervisor

Dr. Khaled Galal Ahmed, Department of Architectural Engineering
College of Engineering

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2:00PM

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Online, Microsoft Teams

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Abstract

As cities are going under the influence of rapid development, industrialization, modernization, and globalization, a key task for local authorities, urban planners, and residents is to understand what makes a neighborhood socially sustainable. In Al Ain City in the UAE, urban sprawl has been a persistent sustainability problem caused by low urban density and led to the heavy reliance on private cars. To overcome this problem, urban densification sustainable planning approach has been recommended by several urban planning scholars. Al Ain 2030 Plan has adopted this approach for redevelopment of Asharej District. This research aims at studying the application of urban densification tools and their impacts on social sustainability in the Bida Bin Ammar neighborhood, Asharej district in Al Ain City that has started in 2010. The study highlights the dichotomy of the urban densification approach, where although it is an advocated sustainable solution to limit urban sprawl, but it has its pitfalls that should be considered as a challenge. The research answers two main questions: what are the applied urban densification tools in Bida Bin Ammar neighborhood as an example of a neighborhood going under transformation towards higher urban density? and what are the impacts of the application of the urban densification tools on the social sustainability principles in Bida Bin Ammar neighborhood? The research adopts a qualitative case study method utilizing field observation as the primary source of primary data, while the analysis of CAD drawings, census, Al Ain Plan 2030, land-use plans, and Google Earth maps form a secondary source of data for this study. Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that urban densification has been a prominent method for enhancing social sustainability in Bida Bin Ammar neighborhood but in various degree of success. Some social sustainability principles including mixed use and accessibility have been partially achieved in the study area, while density, mobility, social capital, quality of life, sense of belonging, and safety and security have been weakly achieved. Finally, the results of the research study determined what measures of urban densification succeeded in achieving social sustainability in the study area and what did not work well and why. This will inform decision-makers in the city and maybe in the UAE about the outcomes of the applied urban densification tools, hence, these tools could be revised to ensure that the redevelopment of existing neighborhoods is meeting the social sustainability principles.

Keywords: Urban Densification, Sustainability, Neighborhood, Bida Bin Ammar, Al Ain, UAE.