

Enhancing the Human Dimension
in Saudi Municipal Work

Riyadh: a Paradigm

Abdulaziz bin Mohammad bin Ayyaf



In the Name of Allah, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate

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Riyadh: **a Paradigm**

Abdulaziz bin Mohammad bin Ayyaf

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Acknowledgement

I would like firstly to acknowledge with gratitude the great role of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, who was previously Governor of Riyadh for more than half a century, for his dedication in promoting humanization programs and projects. These would not have come about were it not for the blessings of Allah and the support of the King. Thanks to Allah, Riyadh has been blessed by a leader who continues to love and have a bold vision for the Saudi capital. The resulting great strides in development of the city have filled him and its citizens with pride. There is no doubt that he has given the city, its citizens and the humanization effort, all the support, interest, guidance and fervent follow-up it deserves.

I have been honored to work under his enlightened leadership which has always been open to new ideas, keenly aware of the interests of citizens, caring for their affairs, sensing their needs and ensuring they are a priority. Furthermore, I remember with appreciation how the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques taught us that while our rejuvenated Riyadh continues to head towards a brighter future, it will not face difficulty in synchronizing its glorious past, along with its established social and culture values with its aspirations for modernity. Such a vision has ensured that Riyadh competes with other Arab and global cities. His understanding for the need to effectively combine tradition with modernity has inspired my awareness for the necessity of reaching towards modernity in our city while preserving our glorious past. Therein is the essence of the humanization effort.

It is equally worth noting that I have received from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques every possible personal support and guidance, before and during my work at the Riyadh Municipality. He was, and still is, my chief mentor; advising me both practically and personally in my official capacity, as well as in my social and philanthropic work. I have also learned from him how to love my country through public service. Working under him has provided me with sustained mentoring in incisive thinking that has yielded for me significant results and generated a sense of passion for my work.

Riyadh is fortunate to have enjoyed remarkable progress - as ordained by God to man - under the sponsorship of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and all his brothers. Dreams, many of which seemed impossible at times, have come true thanks to his fervent and continuous efforts. He has established ambitious development plans with a pragmatic and sagacious mind, an honest spirit, a perfectionist will for implementation, in addition to a caring and sincere devotion. These attributes have culminated in Riyadh becoming a role model at both regional and international levels in which, despite the many challenges faced, developments have successfully targeted people with ever-increasing success.



Preface

“Humanization of the City” is an uncommon expression in the literature of municipal work and practices in Saudi Arabia. I have been unable to find mention of this term in any published text. To some, it is a term that might indicate an interest in the human dimension of municipal work, without really establishing it institutionally within its vision and scope of duties. Of course, “humanization of the city” neither implies that our cities are not humane, nor that municipal work is inhuman. Far from it, for no city is devoid of a human dimension. However the fact is that, somewhat unknowingly and in the midst of our preoccupation with comprehensive and rapid urban development, we appear to have lost some of what it takes to make a city more human. Humanization, in broad terms, has to do with providing facilities and activities that make life more attractive, caring and humane. Therefore, I have chosen to underscore the concept of “the enhancement of the human dimension” in order to acknowledge what has been done in the past and what is currently occurring. After all, even though a city is built for the human being in the first place, the human dimension requires more attention and consolidation so as not to diminish its importance in the wake of rapid urban development.

Moreover, there is a realization that Riyadh and other cities in the Kingdom are in need of development and institutional efforts that aim to manifest the city and its programs in ways that emphasize and promote the human dimension. This should be realized while placing the human being, both theoretically and practically, as a top priority in municipal work including all urban development plans and projects.

In view of the above, key questions to be considered include:

- What is the best way in a city the size of Riyadh to synchronize the urban fabric with the soul and spaces shared by its citizens?
- How can the human dimension be incorporated in constructing, developing and managing the city?
- Can the concept of humanization be incorporated at later stages of development?

The issue of humanization has concerned me throughout my life: as a student at King Saud University, as a professional, starting from my professorship at the College of Architecture and

Planning at King Saud University; and subsequently as Mayor of Riyadh where I was responsible for administering the municipal affairs of our cherished capital city.

The humanization projects that were started as initiatives by the Riyadh Municipality (which I will now refer to as the Municipality), have added a positive aspect to municipal work, specifically by increasing the bonds between the citizens and those who are administering their city. It was also achieved by touching the daily lives and thoughts of most of the citizens thereby increasing their level of satisfaction and interaction.

It is worth noting that the weakness, or sheer absence, of the human dimension in urban development constitutes a major dilemma in modern cities. Modern cities, as we all know, develop in huge leaps and bounds and are therefore prone to suffer from this dilemma throughout the different phases of their development. As both a citizen of Riyadh, and one who has become experienced in its affairs, I have come to realize how strides in the city's development have posed challenges despite the remarkable and exceptional achievements of the past century.

However, that is not to say that rapid urban development has not had negative spill-overs that continue to challenge Riyadh. To address them, the only way has been to mitigate the effects by adopting an integrated and balanced vision for urban development. Thus, the welfare of citizens started to be regarded as a social entity that constitutes the focus of every developmental, urban and organizational initiative undertaken by the Municipality. That is why we have decided to label our approach as "the enhancement of the human dimension" in municipal work, or in short, "humanization." This approach has aimed to replace alienation resulting from diminished opportunities and spaces for interaction with direct liaisons between neighbors and others, throughout the city.

Humanization is further concerned with creating balance that establishes the human dimension in developing modern Riyadh as an urgent priority bolstering its status as a political and economic capital. In my pursuit of such a goal, furthermore, I have been similarly guided by the notion that the human being is the target of all development. Accordingly, I have strived to place people at the core of all planning, implementation and appraisal functions that I and my colleagues at the Riyadh Municipality undertook to implement. .

In addition, humanization in municipal work has yielded an opportunity to apply a new method and an alternative thinking process, both of which are valuable for all those who are seeking higher levels of citizen satisfaction in the city. It has also made us assume the responsibility of upgrading the quality of services offered by the Municipality to match modern urban and social development. Further, since we did not have the luxury of waiting for a consensus between the leadership and society to put our capital on an equal footing with the great cities of the world; we raced to strengthen

the city's capacity to develop. This was done in a way that reflects the capabilities of the Kingdom as a regional and global heavyweight. Given that this international dimension for the development of Riyadh constituted an extra challenge facing the plethora of city projects and services; it was necessary to match the criteria and global development trends of urban conglomerations with contemporary planning and implementation models. The latter were specifically required to fulfil the rising expectations of the population and needs of business sectors in the city. The Municipality realized the weight of this challenge and its administrators and professionals collaborated in generating ideas and creative initiatives. Last, but not least, the support of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the then Governor of Riyadh, who presided over, and sponsored the development and renaissance of Riyadh with the assistance of HRH Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz (may Allah bless his soul) was key to these efforts.

Given the daunting task, there were those who may have assumed that humanization programs and projects came at the expense of principal municipal projects and missions. This has not been the case. In fact, humanization has mobilized and maximized the municipal role in the lives of people while bringing the Municipality and its employees closer to the real lives, expectations and needs of the people. Rather than detract from the allocations of municipal projects; humanization initiatives have generated important items and programs in municipal budgets that did not previously exist. For example, they led to the establishment of leisure activities that have increased the effectiveness of public amenities and the way in which people interact with them. Furthermore, the interest in promoting celebrations, entertainment and cultural activities has proved to be of minimal cost given the significant payback to the population, and the fact that resulting direct economic and social dividends are enjoyed by different levels of society.

Additional misconceptions about humanization had to do with which administration was responsible for what. Some thought that municipal plazas with their associated playing fields, gardens and walking paths, are the responsibility of the General Directorate of Youth. Others assumed that the celebrations of holidays, national events or weekends are the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and Information and that the price index and consumer protection programs including stimulating markets on Farmer's Day and the Date Festival, or the regulation of street vendors; fall within the jurisdiction of other ministries. Such misconceptions had to be addressed because, by and large, all over the world these activities lie at the core of municipal work. Municipal work entails the integration, synchronization and cooperation of all the relevant specializations pertaining to municipal systems. As a result, observers of the development of Riyadh can now recognise the many positive urban and societal benefits that have resulted from setting priorities within the humanization programs.



One such priority is the concept of administrative and spatial decentralization. This led to re-dividing the city of Riyadh into 15 domains with independent administrative centers. Each center is home to all types of services including municipal affairs, police, passports, legal affairs, a committee for the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice, civil defense, telephone and water services. Sub-municipalities also became independent both financially and administratively. The Riyadh Municipality even went as far as suggest to HRH the Governor of Riyadh, that the sub-municipalities be treated as independent entities just like other entities within the Province of Riyadh. Though fundamentally emanating from an administrative interest, our push for decentralization was guided by a desire to enhance the human dimension in the city aiming at facilitating the life of the citizens by increasing their accessibility to service centers that cater to their needs.

The concept of humanization in municipal work has further emerged as an umbrella for the major works of the Municipality in construction, infrastructure, operation systems and administration. The Municipality has followed through by implementing smart and creative initiatives that responded to the social needs of the people. It has established interaction based on mutual trust and mobilized citizen participation with the sole aim of developing the citizen of Riyadh. This development has been achieved through a human orientation that views municipal success as being by the people and for the people.

The mantra “by the people and for the people,” summarizes my long and rewarding career path at the Municipality of Riyadh, where thousands of our national professionals have served its citizens with a spirit full of dedication and sincerity to Allah, the nation and its caretakers. By retaining people as the focus of all the humanization initiatives, the Municipality has managed to oversee the birth and growth of a fascinating capital despite all its environmental, structural, service and organizational diversity.

Through the humanization initiatives, moreover, our message to the citizens of Riyadh was, and still is: “you mean a lot to us.” We have therefore used “serving the citizen” as a bridge to building confidence while demonstrating the extent of our desire to give and care for the citizen through the mobilization of all our capabilities. We have also sustained a continuous effort to understand the needs of the people, respect their desires and preferences while being sensitive to their values and privacy. A “Riyadh for the people” became the goal, and accomplishing the aspirations of its citizens constituted the mission for which we became responsible.

That said, a reference is due to the stellar contribution of HRH Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Deputy Governor of Riyadh Province, and later Governor (may Allah bless his soul); to the Municipality, the city in general and the “humanization” initiatives in particular. His contribution ranged over the inception of the initiative and supervision of its details. I have personally learned



from Prince Sattam how deeds speak for themselves. Through him, I have learned how to celebrate accomplishments, give credit - in all modesty - to whoever it is due regardless of age. I have also taken heed of his close association with these initiatives, not only at the level of sponsorship but also through his keen follow-up and honest advocacy.

Thanks are also due to HRH Prince Mohammad bin Saad bin Abdulaziz, the former Deputy of the Prince of Riyadh with whom I have been honored to work briefly. During that time, I had the opportunity to learn of his many kind traits, clear vision, firm management, gentle attitude and modesty. He was, and still is, a big brother as far as attitude and caring are concerned.

I equally acknowledge with all appreciation and gratitude my generous brother, HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abduaziz, President of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, who is at the forefront of those who call for taking care of people in the development of the Kingdom's cities and rural areas. He has worked, and is still working, at developing tourism and heritage that intersect and integrate with the different sectors of municipal work.

In addition, I would like to thank HRH Prince Miteb bin Abdulaziz, the former Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs, whose tangible support for the municipal sector has positively impacted the comprehensive development of the Kingdom. Likewise, I would like to thank HE Dr Mohammad Al-Jarallah for his support while presiding over the Ministry.

I would also like to mention HRH Prince Mansour bin Miteb bin Abdulaziz, the former Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs, for his support of the Riyadh Municipality. Naturally, my due gratitude for him caps my thanks for all the municipal employees in the Kingdom who helped elevate the standards of our provinces, cities, towns and villages.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the humanization projects could not have been realized without the efforts of all the numerous and sincere professionals whose efforts complemented those working at the Municipality who deserve a particular mention wherever and whoever they are because of their sincere efforts. Combined, their efforts have helped develop our cherished Riyadh, making it a star among world capitals. In fact, all those who will read through the initiatives included in this book, or wander through Riyadh, will realize that the accomplishments are shared by all due to their perseverance and patience. May you all accept my sincere appreciation!

The Concept of Humanization of the City

As the urban phenomenon acquires more complexity, it becomes more difficult to arrive at a universal definition for the concept of humanization of the city. By contemplating the experience of the Riyadh Municipality, we have attempted to deduce the components of this concept. This experience indicates that the concept is the resultant of the sustained and mutual relationships between the citizens in their human groupings, the space constituting their existential environment and the events that are created through the social responses of the citizens in a place. It represents the transition from a silent space to an active urban place where individuals fulfil their personal pursuits and the community establishes its social identity.

Simply put, humanization of the city is an approach to remodel the relationship between the urban space and the human being so as to respond to human social instincts calling for liaisons and creative interactions with others. The following requirements are essential for a meaningful human urban development, thus becoming the subject of concern for all those involved with municipal affairs and the programs of humanization:

- Redirecting the focus of all the technology-competent municipal employees towards thinking about the human being while regarding technology as merely bolstering human capabilities. Given this, people should become the ultimate aim in every development by eliciting their opinion and taking their needs into consideration.
- Underscoring the social dimension in every activity undertaken by the Municipality. In addition, attention should be given to the social needs of the citizens in the planning, design and mechanisms employed in the administration of the city.
- Investing in the symbolic cultural and historical human dimension in a given interactive space while bringing municipal work closer to the citizens. This overlap between the social and cultural dimensions, on the one hand, and the economic and construction dimensions on the other; is mutually reinforcing and creates a sustainable urban environment.
- Emphasizing the establishment of equal opportunities in urban development. As an example, municipal professionals should enable people with special needs, as well as others, to enjoy equal



opportunities and access to municipal services and public amenities without discrimination in rules and regulations.

In addition, the following are the principal characteristics of the humanization initiatives:

Smart: By delivering effective responses to the real needs of the citizens, humanization encourages the active interaction of the beneficiaries, understands the expectations of citizens and incorporates their appraisals in municipal work.

Integrative: By combining more than one developmental approach; humanization integrates social, technical, and administrative dimensions in balanced initiatives.

Participatory: By creating a bond between the service recipients and municipal decision makers; humanization integrates people's inputs and ideas throughout the implementation process.

Flexible: By guaranteeing a variety of services offered by the Municipality; humanization takes in consideration the diversity of the beneficiaries.

Targeting the human being: By promoting a sense of social commitment amongst citizens in neighborhoods; humanization facilitates their interaction with public amenities, and informs them about team work so as to articulate positive social attitudes which are compatible with their place of residence.

Adaptive: Planning makes it possible to forecast the future orientations, understand current and future needs of citizens, as well as help modify and adapt programs to suit the needs of the service users, in particular, or beneficiaries in general.

Humanization and Municipal Work

- Man before place: Establishing a new perspective for municipal work
- New criteria for neighborhood development reinforcing humanization
- Concepts relevant to humanization

Humanization and Municipal Work


Thanks to quantum urban and population leaps, Riyadh has become one of the biggest desert cities in the world, spreading over an area exceeding 2,000 square kilometers and housing some six million inhabitants. Developing a desert city on this scale implies a long journey and meeting exceptional challenges by those involved with municipal work in Riyadh since its inception.

The rapid population growth, as well as changing life, residential and consumption patterns have yielded massive urban expansion which, in turn, has presented the Municipality with environmental, administrative, financial and technical challenges. These have combined to make the effective delivery of services all the more difficult with limited human and financial resources, as well as the initial modest quality of municipal professionals. Municipalities were forced to involve the Ministry of Finance in setting priorities and financial allocations and as a result projects were launched under direct or indirect pressure and many were left semi-completed. Examples of such projects included the construction of thoroughfares lacking technical specifications, lighting, sidewalks and tree planting. In some instances, projects were cut back to cope with financial constraints. However municipalities still had to provide adequate infrastructure to their projects whenever opportunities arose at a later date. Needless to say, it would have been more feasible to incorporate them in original budgets and schedules. Such practices and occurrences cast municipalities as incapable institutions with little credibility in the eyes of citizens. Municipal workers also became complacent as they realized that they were not part of the decision making process and had no financial independence.

When the Riyadh Municipality realized that it was in a difficult and uncomfortable situation, it adopted a future vision to salvage itself from a complacent, unprofessional and subjective culture. The vision advocated decentralization, a professional setting of priorities, as well as financial and administrative independence. The aim of the vision was to regard the citizens, first, as human beings, and second, as active partners in municipal projects so as to gain their confidence, satisfaction and ensure active and positive contributions. To realize this vision, moreover, the Municipality saw a need to proceed in phases.

The administrative and financial independence of municipalities in general, and Riyadh Municipality in particular, is not the subject of this book, although it merits a future separate study.

**Statistical Table of the Population of Riyadh
since 1935 -2016 (1354-1437 H)**

		
Hijri	CE	Population
1354	1935	35.000
1364	1945	80.000
1374	1955	110.000
1385	1965	231.000
1395	1975	670.000
1405	1985	1.200.000
1416	1995	2.800.000
1426	2005	4.3000.000
1437	2016	6.000.000

As a starting point, however, the Municipality sought financial and administrative independence as well as the retention of its revenues. We approached the idea cautiously so as not to abort it. We also repeatedly argued and stressed that financial and administrative independence is not exclusive to the Municipality, but could also be established through the municipal council that represents the citizen and lends itself to regular supervision, questioning and auditing. We also decided that any increase in municipal revenues or their retention, although a justified goal, should never be at the expense of citizens and residents. Instead, the Municipality sought to mobilize its many resources and properly invest them. As a result, and upon the direct instructions of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz (who was Governor of Riyadh at the time), the Municipality participated in setting up two companies, Al-Maekliyah and Arriyadh Construction. Establishing them created the opportunity to increase Municipality revenues over the short and medium terms without depending on the Ministry of Finance. The Municipality went further by showing its readiness to allocate part of its budget to the governorate of Riyadh in a bid to bolster and develop its projects. The existence of semi-elected municipal councils ensured that citizens would not be burdened by extra costs or fees, and enabled the Municipality to raise the standards of its services. Unfortunately the Ministry of Finance has yet to fully understand and appreciate the extent of the Municipality's efforts and the real need to delegate decision making.

In a different vein, the Municipality chose to align with the citizens in order to regain their confidence, satisfaction and positive participation in its humanization programs. The success of these programs greatly increased the credibility of the Municipality. Citizens came to recognise its capability to deliver, provided it enjoyed proper opportunity and support. As a result, citizens became more familiar with and aware of the Municipality' requesting that it expand its activities to other fields based on the many positive spin offs of its various humanization programs.

It is significant that the Municipality's experience is also valuable in that all those concerned with urban development can benefit from it in achieving qualitative improvements in welfare and city life. Benefits accrue from applying a disciplined and systematic approach and a modus operandi that revolves around people. New relationships are forged between the Municipality and citizens and people are inspired by the way the Municipality provides services that suit the many different needs of citizens. This has been achieved while at the same time focusing on and attending to new urban expansion programs and continued upgrading of the service quality in neighborhoods.

Many of the humanization programs have not been costly in terms of either finance or use of huge human resources. Yet they have positively impacted the lives of citizens in ways that have far exceeded their actual costs. We can therefore assume that whenever the municipal sector adopts humanization programs, whether independent or included within its projects, it raises the level of



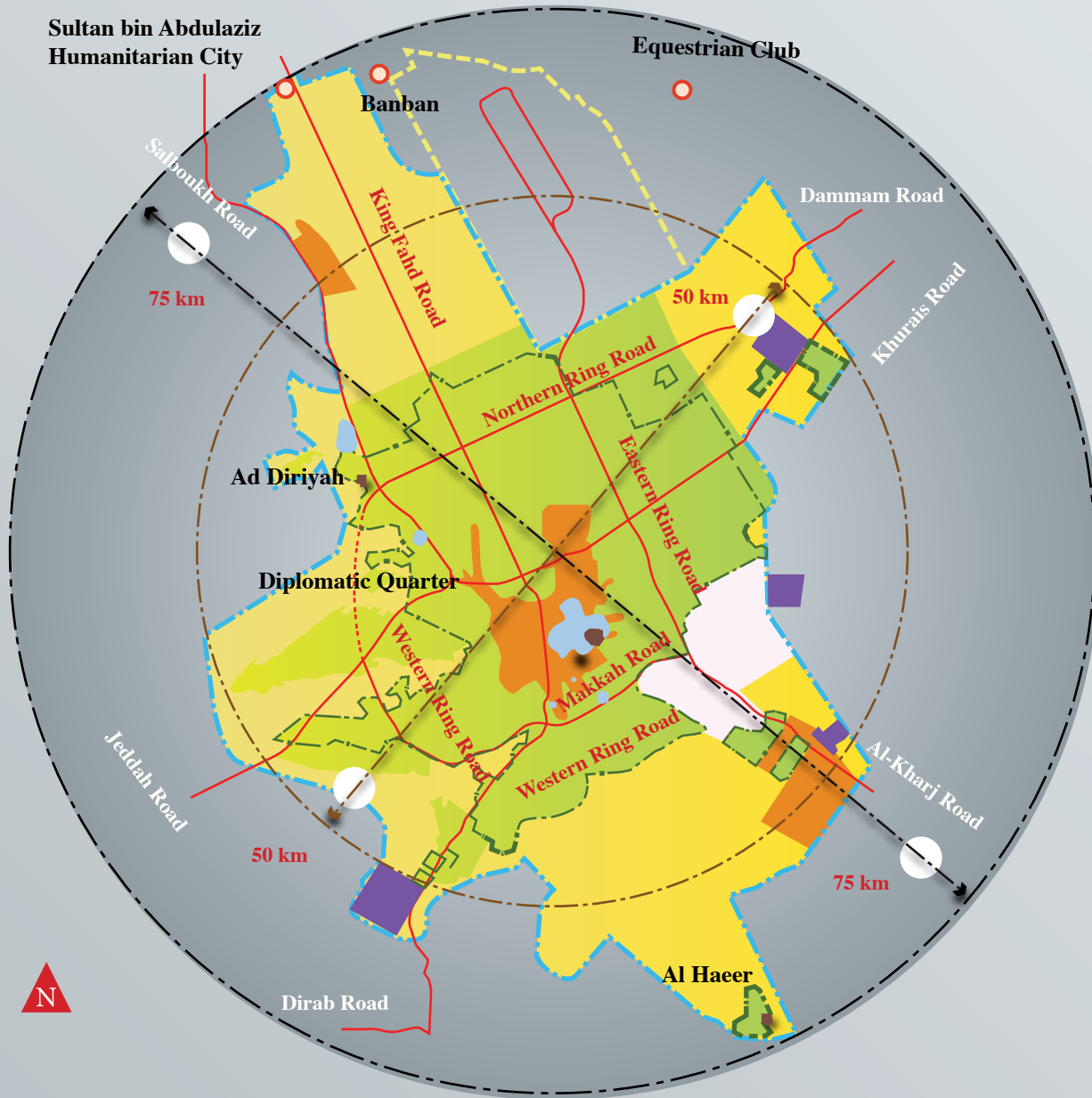
satisfaction and appreciation of the residents at little cost. What appears more important for success is careful thought and planning, enthusiasm, teamwork and citizen participation at all stages in the humanization programs and projects.

The positive interaction with Municipality initiatives has been unprecedented, especially given their spread beyond the city of Riyadh. Many of the particulars of the projects and programs have been replicated all over the Kingdom, as the Municipality projects became a source of inspiration for launching new initiatives and ideas. In fact, some of its programs have been followed and officially enforced in other cities. Examples include a decree issued to annually celebrate Eid and National Day throughout the Kingdom. Likewise, in one of the annual meetings of Governors, all municipalities in different regions and cities were instructed to follow Riyadh's example in constructing municipal squares to serve as entertainment and sports outlets for youth and families. Another royal edict was issued to establish units for women in all government bodies, following the success of the Riyadh Municipality initiative in establishing such female facilities.



The Municipality humanization projects and initiatives have been recognized with numerous local and international awards for its accomplishments. In 2003 (1423H), the Municipality received the Organization for Arab Cities Award for Greening the City, followed by two awards in 2004 (1424H), the Organization for Islamic Capitals and Cities Award for Authorship, Research and Translation in 2004 (1424H) and the Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Personal Award for Arab Management. In 2007 (1427H), the Riyadh pedestrian-friendly project received the King Abdullah II Award for Creativity, followed in 2009 (1430H) by the Global Institution for Vital Societies Award in recognition of Riyadh's humanization and human dimension projects that in 2010 (1431H) also received the Prince Sultan bin Salman Award for Urban Heritage.

The Urban Development Phases of Riyadh since 1912 (1330H)



- Riyadh 1912 (1330H)**
- Riyadh 1950 (1370H)**
- Riyadh 1970 (1390H)**
- Riyadh 1990 (1410 H)**
- Riyadh 2016 (1437H)**

The populated area covers a circle 50 kms in diameter extending from the Yasameen neighborhood in the north to the industrial city in the south, and from Al-Tantheem neighborhood in the east to Dirab in the south. The limits of Greater Riyadh are bound by a circle 75 kms in diameter covering an area of 4,419 sq.kms, extending from Banban in the north, to Al-Ha'er in the south.



Citizens Precede Place: Constructing a New Perspective for Municipal Work

The urban context of defining the environment in which people live is one of the determinants of human behavior, orientation and values. Interaction with the urban fabric also shapes personal and world views. If we add economic and cultural contexts to the big picture, the complexity of municipal work is underscored all the more.

Understanding the overlapping nature of human life highlights the importance of the humanization effort, since there is a need for harmonizing socio-cultural behavior and attitudes of human beings. Undoubtedly, the development of the urban environment facilitates the voluntary adaptation of the individual to it while augmenting the sense of satisfaction, security and proactivity. It also reduces alienation.

In essence, humanization aligns with the human instinct for a gradual and disciplined evolution. When this is established in private and public spaces, it increases positive interaction between the individual and the urban fabric, accentuates the vitality of the place, reduces the sense of alienation; and promotes a sense of familiarity with place. Hence, the urban space transforms into a social domain where municipal structures, be they buildings, plazas, parks or roads; become places for social interaction in the modern city.

Environmental variety in the urban fabric articulates and enhances human sensibilities. Upgrading the sense of beauty, for instance, can result from diversifying street patterns, improving the attractiveness of amenities, buildings and activities, while avoiding standardization. Equally important is the need for simplicity and attention to individual values, whilst eliminating any sense of marginalization, or feelings of being lost in vast spaces.

The Municipality has attempted to address and deal with contradictions manifest through the various orientations and visions of its citizens regarding their city. Such contradictions were revealed when a sector of the population appeared nostalgic for the old city, with its characteristic intense level of human interaction and its intimate social fabric. Another sector, however, demonstrated ambitions for a modern contemporary city that best responds to changing life patterns, increasing internal migration and the advent of foreign labor in different fields.

As a result, the Municipality had to search for a balanced development alternative incorporating both the past and its heritage with the future. This was especially important since the growth in construction and urban development left no alternative other than to emphasize the modernization of the city while attempting to regenerate its distinct traditional humanistic values. This has been achieved through the humanization approach that has ensured reclaiming the human aspect of Riyadh, reinforcing its urban fabric, opening up the core of neighborhoods to social interaction, and fostering harmony. The natural outcome of all of the above is marked by civilized behavior and communal activities that have helped eliminate social alienation so often associated with modern cities.

The traditional city has provided us with valuable wisdom that concurs with the findings of modern studies linking social and psychological aspects with urban development. A chronological review of traditional Riyadh, its urban heritage and social characteristics proves that personal visions of one's city result from bonding with the place that articulates personal identities. Likewise, the character of a city is formed by the attitudes of its people, their relationships with its fabric, their interactions with its thoroughfares and markets, the way they communicate with one another in communal areas and finally, the collective psyche that emanates from the history of the place and the architectural icons of the city.

Personal visions of the tangible environment, whether built or natural, are fundamental to the culture of individuals, affecting their behavior, substituting negative attitudes for positive attitudes, and culminating in a sense of collective urban responsibility. Of course, visions vary from one individual to the other, following variations in living standards, culture, social status, nature of work, the quality of daily interactions, and urban stimuli that prompt certain attitudes and create bonds with places.

New Parameters for Neighborhood Development Enhance Humanization

There has been a wholesale transformation in the design of neighborhoods which has occurred simultaneously with the rapid development of modern Riyadh. Though we have been aware of the requirements that are necessary to cope with and assimilate modern technology and lifestyles; many traditional components of the city's identity have unfortunately been lost. This has been particularly evident in modern neighborhoods where the following three elements have become increasingly absent leading to a growing sense of alienation and confusion.

Scale

Any observer of modern neighborhoods in Riyadh can easily realize that the city's morphology has been primarily concerned with the motor vehicle which has become indispensable as a mode of transportation. With the increase in living standards, human scale was side-lined in master plans that were imported from other societies. Thus, developers, including the governmental sector, prioritized vehicular traffic. Gone were the old labyrinths of paths and vernacular buildings which offset the hot climate and provided pedestrians with shade. In their place, modern neighborhoods featured broad and straight avenues surrounded by high-rises that were not sensitive to the climate. Designers assumed that new technologies and mechanized cooling systems would keep pedestrians off the streets. What really happened was that the marginalization of pedestrians in the modern capital drove an alienating wedge between the citizens and their city.

Familiarity

The social composition of traditional neighborhoods centers on family ties, the intimacy of kin and relationships through marriage, in addition to the bonds forged between the residents on local streets and in neighborhoods at large. However, the social mix of population transformed significantly as people moved from traditional to modern neighborhoods, and migrated from other areas and cities to Riyadh. This form of social splintering was inevitable: mixing with strangers became the norm and the privacy that people were long accustomed to was jeopardized.

Security

The security of pedestrian movement was exacerbated by large avenues that were designed to accommodate demands of vehicular traffic. Pedestrians became increasingly vulnerable due to the absence of a gradual transition from their private spaces and homes to public spaces and thoroughfares. Streets were transformed from constituting a natural link and a smooth transition between residents' private spaces and their residential milieu, to newly formed barriers. People became separated by ever-expanding walls. Street designs also failed to shield residents from the changes they faced when moving from their homes to sidewalks and beyond to local and main streets, and thence to major highways.

These factors began to present major challenges for the Municipality professionals. The important question was how to retain or indeed reclaim the needed traditional human elements for residents. This was a challenge of moving from an informal urban fabric to a planned setting and modern urban environment.

This challenge inspired us to search for a balance between the fundamental elements of the past and the essential elements of the present and future. The search initiated a journey that aimed to articulate the urban fabric with infusions of humanization to reclaim familiarity with the street and the neighborhood. As a result different municipal departments started to re-think street morphologies, offer alternatives and solutions to re-establish scale wherever possible, and promote security aimed at fostering new behavioral attitudes and stability in neighborhoods. The Municipality has been able to succeed in adding value to its original urban development functions as well as creating new infrastructure that have enhanced the social and human dimensions of the city and the degree of interaction between citizens.

Concepts Relevant to Humanization in Municipal Work

1-Social responsibility

Humanization is based on a mutual relationship between the institutions that offer municipal services, and the beneficiaries. A solid and healthy relationship between the two can never be established without the support and participation of the community including individuals, firms, social and philanthropic institutions. This creative interaction between municipalities and the beneficiaries of its services reinforces and develops a real partnership. It also provides for and enables a voluntary sharing of responsibility. It is this responsibility that has become the cornerstone of a positive culture that embodies amenities and services in a way that engenders normative attitudes toward the city and its neighbourhoods.

2-Prioritization of the human scale

Human scale is a fundamental principle in urban design defining the relationship between man and the built environment. It includes guidelines that direct planners and municipal professionals toward placing people as the priority in urban development, while taking into consideration the psychological dimension in urbanism. It also underscores the need to overcome the problems of the modern city in a way that ensures the employment of technologies that are appropriate for both the development of Riyadh and humanization programs.

3-Symbolic capital

Deepening the cultural dimension in urban initiatives should enhance the culture of the city, consolidate the sense of belonging to the Kingdom, as well as reinforce the belief in its values, leadership and orientation. To achieve this, humanization initiatives have invested in available symbolic capital by mobilizing cultural and traditional elements that are part and parcel of the Kingdom's heritage. This cultural dimension should create a strong bond between the citizen and the city with special reference to upcoming generations that will hopefully build a more prosperous future.

4-Sustainability

The humanization approach supports the goal of balanced environmental development. It fulfils this by taking into consideration the need for the wise and sustained use of resources so that they can continue to be available for future generations. It also entails re-orienting behavioral attitudes, establishing a balanced development of lifestyles combining cultural, social activities, sport and entertainment that promote positive attitudes in public spaces; as well as providing amenities that help engender a new social culture.

My conviction has always been that humanization constitutes a solid base for initiating change in our municipal institutions. It provides a new vision for leaders and helps them outline with confidence development goals that are widely acceptable. The adoption of this approach also stimulates the community to rally around municipal projects as partners.

The Municipality sought to expand shared responsibility and opportunities for governmental and non-governmental partners to contribute. It also strived to lead change from within its institutions by promulgating ideas, attracting partners and establishing the principal of commitment before compliance. As a result, an extensive internal operation was set in motion to develop this approach and guide municipal professionals toward ambitious skills development programs that effect change. The overall sustainability of effective humanization has hinged on the realization of the following goals:

- Viewing municipal work as a modicum for upgrading quality and anticipating the needs of citizens with criteria and guidelines therefore set to regulate and improve performance.
- Innovating and developing municipal services, allocating investments to realize creative ideas, benefitting from international expertise and enlisting the help of national experts to ensure the continuous development of service delivery and access. Forging partnerships with universities and specialized institutions in urban and social development.
- Giving due consideration to participation by initiating mechanisms for active societal interaction and the stimulation of the role of civil work in support of the humanization approach in municipality initiatives.
- Regarding special groups through a different qualitative lens and considering their empowerment as a fundamental mission of the Municipality in every activity it undertakes.
- Adopting effective plans for communication and social definition through special departments that target the largest number of citizens with relevant information.

The following are just some of the core values and principles that have guided the humanization initiatives:

People come first

Humanization initiatives target the citizens of Riyadh by offering a comprehensive development plan with people at its core. The plan reinforces the socio-cultural dimension in every task undertaken by the Municipality to encourage citizens to participate by sharing their views and opinions while giving them due support.

Nurturing knowledge and science

By recruiting expert consultants, engaging in specialized studies and research, reaching out to colleges and relevant institutes; humanization programs have been enhanced through scientific methodologies. This has also ensured proper planning and implementation according to specific success and qualitative criteria. Nurturing knowledge and science in turn has led to the modernization of management systems and the employment of modern technology.

Leadership and the anticipation of accomplishments

The numerous modern developments and accomplishments witnessed in Riyadh over past decades point to the visionary leadership that has not only been aware of the needs of its citizens, but has worked sincerely to realize them. Furthermore, it is a leadership that has successfully adopted tried and effective solutions, as well as utilizing the best brains and expertise to help reach its goals.

Pairing tradition with modernity

Humanization has occurred in a balanced fashion in a way that has not disrupted our relationship with our heritage, values or esteemed religion.



Humanization

Programs and Initiatives

- First: Initiatives that enhance the cultural development of the city
- Second: Initiatives that encourage and enable walking and exercise
- Third: Initiatives that help develop and improve the environment
- Fourth: Initiatives that lead to the expansion of services offered to society
- Fifth: Initiatives, are popular amongst citizens, that protect the consumer and stimulate markets

Humanization

Programs and Initiatives

The affinity of citizens to, and their familiarity with, a city does not occur in a vacuum. Liveable cities have public spaces, streets, paths, parks, markets and buildings with which people associate because of their safety, appeal and opportunities for social interaction while at the same time ensuring privacy and security. When a municipality is given the mandate to bring the individual closer to his surroundings, an effective effort is required to open up new urban horizons which fulfil human needs.

This was my vision for the humanization of Riyadh. The realization of my vision was based on a conviction that it should constitute one of the major fundamentals of the Municipality. My message to responsible colleagues, therefore, was that we should view this vision as a prime objective. We should also strive to realize it not as yet another construction project, but as an essential way of life in a city which we were ordained by Allah to serve. This reflects the social necessities and everyday needs of citizens. This is the reason behind my promoting a new philosophy for municipal work based on a vision which employs non-traditional mechanisms and modern systems for city management. It is one that places a priority on people. Furthermore, the vision calls for citizens to participate in order to maximize their own benefits, at the same time as we focus on them through our planning and execution of projects.

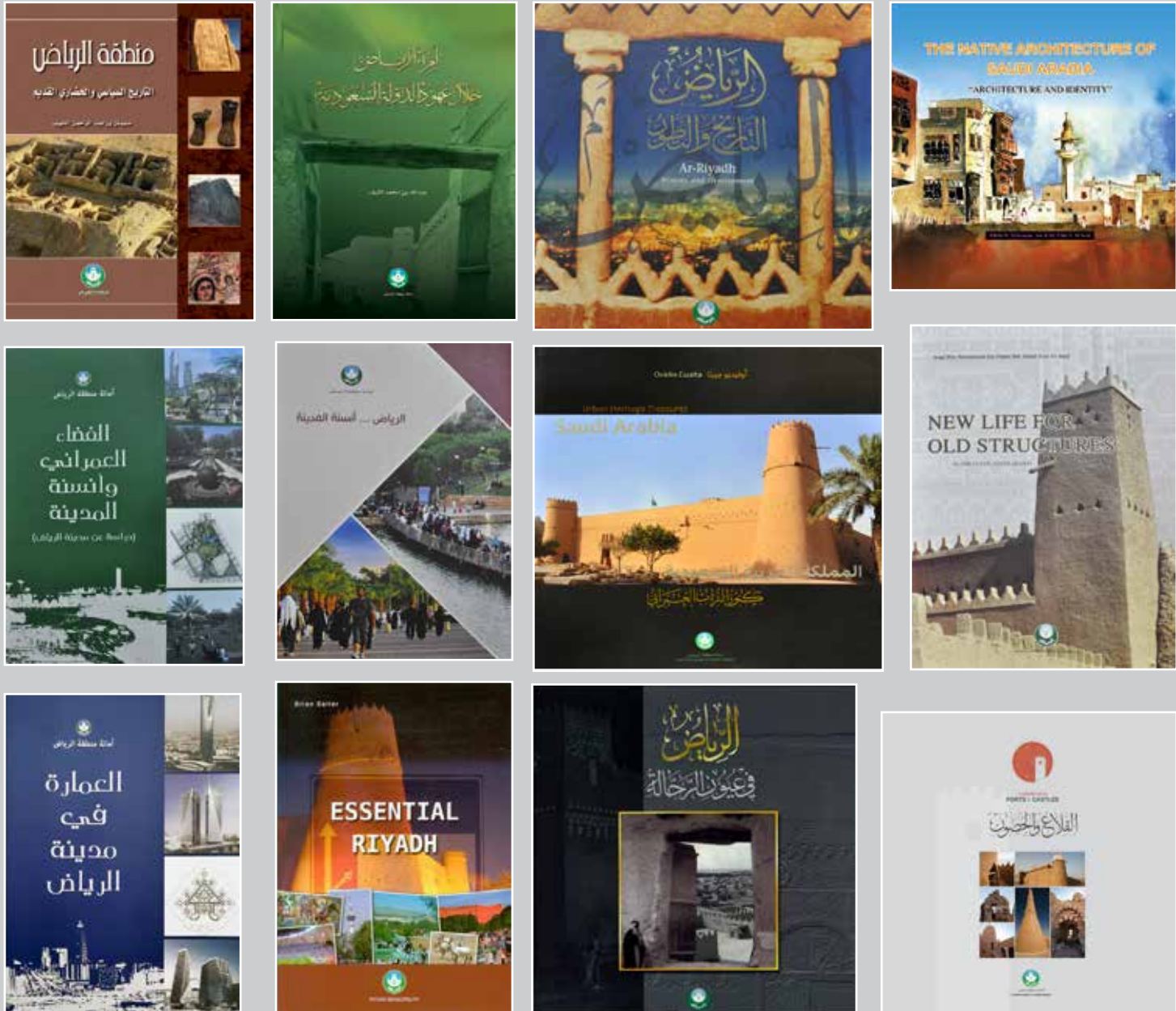
Over the past decade, therefore, the many developments which transpired under this vision to bring change and transformation to municipal functions should come as no surprise. However, though the evidence of developments is often anecdotal, we still have a long journey ahead of us since the concept of humanization in urban development is still in its infancy.

The efforts of the Municipality that fall under the umbrella of humanization, include a package of initiatives and development projects that have been relevant to the different dimensions of urban development. Some of the initiatives are concerned with enhancing the culture of the city and upgrading its current environment. Others are concerned with stimulating the socio-economic aspects of the city. I will review these efforts, starting from their causes to the conditions under which they materialized. I will also touch on their beginnings so as to underscore the extent to which the city has been transformed. I will then delve into the accomplishments, explaining how the initiatives were managed and the stages they passed through until they became facts on the ground. Lastly, I will reveal the developmental impact of the initiatives, the growth opportunities they have generated and how people have received them.



First Initiative: Enhancing the Cultural Development of the City

This initiative is aimed at enhancing citizens' collective awareness of their city, strengthening their bonds with it, and stimulating their positive participation in national and public events. It is made up of a number of subordinate initiatives that encourage citizens to interact at will in cultural and leisure activities. They include various art and folklore festivals. These are held periodically and help introduce the culture of the city and its intellectual capital to its citizens so fostering a sense of belonging and love for it.



1- Cultural and Awareness Publications Initiative

Given its vast database, the Municipality realized that one of its duties was to develop those cultural aspects of the city which document its history. In addition, the Municipality decided to go beyond traditional municipal publications, such as regulations and instructional pamphlets, and become an active participant in documenting the history, heritage and architecture of Riyadh. As a result, the Municipality's publications became valuable and accredited references which are now prominently displayed in the city's libraries and bookstores.

Examples of publications that are concerned with the province and the city include Riyadh in

the Eyes of the Travelers, Riyadh: History and Development, The Princes of Riyadh throughout the Eras of the Saudi State, and The Province of Riyadh: Ancient Political and Urban History. Other books covering the heritage of the province and city have also been released in Arabic and in English. They include four Arabic titles: Treasures of Urban Heritage, Citadels and Forts, Doors and Windows, and Mosques and Minarets, as well as the English book, A New Life for Old Buildings which documents the urban heritage of the province.

The Municipality has been keen to contribute to the development of urban thinking. As a result it has published books that inform the reader on the history and scope of the development of Riyadh. Examples of these books are, Architecture in Riyadh, Homes and the Residential Environment in Riyadh, and Urban Space and the Humanization of the City. The Municipality has also capitalized on some of its projects to produce a cultural lexicon of the names of the streets of Riyadh, which include short definitions on the names, as well as the Guidebook of Riyadh Maps. The Municipality has also documented its programs and development projects in publications that offer experiments, scope and ways to replicate them. In a precedent, moreover, the Municipality has documented all the municipal rules and regulations which other municipalities can also benefit from.

The Municipality has also developed the publication, The City of Riyadh, that offers useful cultural material about the city, its history, heritage and urbanism, as well as details of new projects and activity programs. Finally, the Municipality has produced a multi-lingual documentary on the city of Riyadh.



2- Eid and National Celebrations Initiative

Riyadh possesses a significant inventory of cultural heritage which is an outcome of an awareness of its place, community, values and traditions. The city could have used this inventory to shape the citizens' awareness of its visual and aural folklore. Unfortunately, however, this concept of cultural capital has not been adequately invested in to reinforce the modern image of the city and enrich the life of citizens with a sense of belonging and allegiance.

I was aware of this longing for folklore and heritage in the eyes of the citizens who regard both as part of their collective psyche. I was also concerned and disturbed seeing many of Riyadh's families travelling to celebrate events, feasts and vacations abroad, leaving behind them a rather forlorn capital; a city that appeared forgotten. Those who did not leave stayed indoors doing nothing, while those who left pursued entertainment in destinations, some of which had lifestyles and forms of entertainment which were not compatible with the values of Saudi citizens. I wondered, therefore, why Riyadh did not have real celebrations worthy of its magnificent heritage and traditions.

In the past, citizens of Riyadh often left their city because of the absence of viable and significant attractions compatible with their values and culture and that understand their needs, and respond to them effectively. More pressing was the question that if some citizens were financially

capable of traveling abroad; what of those unable to even visit shopping malls, let alone travel abroad? What could the Municipality offer them? The subsequent attempts to seek solutions have helped outline the Municipality's programs for Eid. These were successfully implemented and have not only brought leisure and cultural offerings to low-income groups in the capital, but have also attracted the relatively well off.

The Municipality's adoption of a policy of humanization has also enabled it to serve the low-income citizen, on both Eid and official events, by offering free-of-charge leisure and entertainment activities. As a result, the team at the Municipality was heartened to witness the joy of ordinary heads of families as they accompanied their children to various Eid entertainment activities across Riyadh following afternoon prayer and lasting up until midnight. The happiness of citizens was greatly valued by the Municipality for it revealed their satisfaction and love for the city, and by extension, for the Kingdom.

It is worth noting that before the advent of these municipal initiatives, recreational activities in Riyadh were rare and, for the most part, restricted to traditional activities after the Eid prayers in just one or two sites. Few attended those activities and their economic returns to the service and commercial sectors were very limited.

The Municipality realised that there was no real reason for failing to turn Riyadh into an attractive city offering socially acceptable pleasure and entertainment activities. This was made more obvious by the fact that the capital can boast many renowned artists whose works have attracted attention and made an impression abroad. Riyadh also has many valuable natural and urban assets, a rich deeply-rooted heritage and a public ready to savour, appreciate and enjoy art and culture.

The Municipality therefore began to actively explore ways to conceive and establish celebrations that would benefit Riyadh and bring happiness to its citizens on feast days and other national events. During the weeks preceding the celebrations of Eid in 1998 (1419H), we discussed a series of innovative ideas at the Municipality. We concluded that we had an opportunity to experiment. When I sought the permission of the Governor and his deputy, I gained their unequivocal support. I also consulted some of the municipal and cultural leaders and won their solid backing. Despite widespread support, however, I was met by reservations and fear of a new idea, as well as cynicism regarding concerns that the Municipality might be substituting its core mission for celebrations and entertainment. Yet, I was convinced that the only way to deal with such reservations was through experimentation. I believed that if we succeeded, then people would most certainly support us in the future.

Though modest and simple, the starting point and first steps were very promising. It includ-



ed a poetry event with a modest variety of entertainment at the exhibition grounds along the Eastern Ring Road. In 1999 (1420H), one year after the launching of the initiative, more than 60 shows took place all over the city. This signalled the real launch of the expansion of the quality and quantity of celebrations for all segments of society throughout the capital.

This early experiment helped us identify the criteria for the success of the initiative and we went on to seek the assistance of a bigger and more effective municipal team to outline and scope a full and attractive program of events. We then mobilized the capabilities and resources of the Municipality to serve the nascent initiative and identified and selected additional activities of wider public appeal in order to avoid antagonizing any of the population. Where there were reservations and concerns we made sure to try to address them realistically and with care. Our experiments became bolder when one of the city's main thoroughfares, King Abdullah Road, was closed to traffic and temporarily made over for the use of pedestrians who eagerly converged along it to watch an impressive display of fireworks. After this event, the first of its kind during Eid, we were overwhelmed with positive and popular reaction from the public. This encouraging feedback helped us to further improve and develop the program over subsequent years.

Success did not always come easily however. I remember an incident which highlights worrying aspects of our first experiment. As part of our Eid celebrations program, an announcement was

made that there would be a firework display on the evenings of Eid. The person responsible for preparing and launching the fireworks was supposed to arrive in the Kingdom 10 days before the event. But he did not arrive on schedule. Amidst considerable anticipation and expectation there was frustration and concern, which reached a peak after Eid prayers when the fireworks had still not arrived. We were all relieved to receive them later in the day and after seeking and securing the support of the Governor, the Municipality was then able to meet the schedule. When the fireworks lit the skies of Riyadh and the crowds cheered and applauded, we were filled with happiness as we sensed the people's admiration for this new festive mood. The Eid Festival included plays, shows and games, and was still organised on a limited scale. But the experience filled us with hope and determination to repeat and build on the experiment. What was more gratifying was that, in the following years, the Municipality succeeded in making some of the events permanent by contracting various tasks to Saudis. In addition, one of the Saudi contractors and his sons successfully undertook the organisation of and responsibility for the firework displays after going through intensive and specialized training sessions.

In 1999 (1420H), Royal instructions were issued that mandated the organization of Eid celebrations throughout the Kingdom. The country's wise leadership also assisted the efforts of the Municipality in spreading a culture of happiness amongst the people based on accepted norms in the Kingdom. The Municipality received the instructions with great satisfaction since this meant our efforts over previous years were acknowledged. In addition this meant that the decisions we had made were recognised as the right ones worthy of crucial official support. The celebration initiatives developed over the years and became a cornerstone of municipal culture. As they developed over subsequent years they involved various partners, both from the government and the private sectors. Thanks to an impressive celebration program for Eid and national events, featuring the city's cultural heritage and rich history, Riyadh has been transformed into a city of colourful and popular festivities. The Municipality did not stop here. It went on to encourage and oversee spreading the celebrations to other governorates in Riyadh Province. The Municipality was particularly pleased to see other Saudi towns and cities follow the example and replicate Riyadh's successful Eid celebrations.

The Municipality's long experience with organizing celebrations has proven that such events promote the culture of the city, help articulate its image in the minds of the citizens and define its identity. Today, these events showcase the arts, display culture and use urban spaces and amenities to help spread happiness throughout cities and towns that have followed the lead of the capital, Riyadh.

This approach to cultural development links individuals with their cities and their memories.

Indeed, there is no great city in the world without a culture distinguishing it. Such a culture reflects the feelings, history and civilization of its citizens.

The Municipality's approach for the celebration of Eid was premised on "instilling more fully in the youth of society its values and moral precepts through entertainment." This is an approach which many global cities have adopted to effectively reveal and manifest their cultural and social settings. Its effectiveness emanates from its establishment of the image of the city and its identity, better referred to as "the culture of the city." Following this concept of culture, events have been designed to imbue citizens with a refined knowledge and awareness of heritage rooted in the Kingdom's history and accomplishments and its folklore as well as an appreciation of that of other nations.

King Salman bin Abdulaziz, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (then the Governor of Riyadh), called for the formation of a supreme committee to supervise the celebrations. Given the scope and diversity of the celebrations, it was only logical to form such a body to manage these largescale events and mobilize the efforts of all the governmental and non-governmental bodies which contribute to it. The committee, headed by the Municipality, included representatives of relevant government bodies under the supervision of the Governor of Riyadh and his deputy, as well as a number of municipal leaders. The program for every Eid was set by the supreme committee through the effective contribution of the Municipality, the private sector and institutions of civil society. We should also recognise the support of the Deputy Governor at the time, HRH Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz, who sponsored Eid celebrations and made a point to personally participate by visiting various sites and sharing happy moments with citizens.

As well as the official support provided, the Municipality was keen for citizens to participate in helping to frame the outline for the celebrations as well as to evaluate past activities. As a result, when we designed further celebration programs we took into consideration opinions sent by mail, or published in the press and those collected through questionnaires. By so doing, we were able to meet the expectations of the different segments of the population while optimizing the cultural and entertainment values we aimed for. The value of these steps was further boosted by discussing and debating every proposed program with relevant responsible officials in public bodies and society before implementation.

As partnerships deepened year after year, the Municipality decentralized the celebrations by inviting social institutions to hold events in parallel with those held by government bodies during the feast. Gradually, the Municipality's role was transformed into one of building a model for social institutions to follow in promoting happiness. It also gave significant attention to the issues of communication and stimulating public participation. Thus, a communication program was established



to inform the citizens of the sites, schedules and provide updates of different activities. Equally important was the new role for the press as well as broadcasters, including satellite channels, which transmitted reports on the air from the celebration sites.

The soundness of the parameters for selecting sites for the celebrations added to the success. Site selection targeted gathering areas in Riyadh which included historical venues, parks, public spaces and large marketplaces. In addition, the Municipality instructed other municipalities and governorates to mobilize their resources for arranging the celebrations in conjunction with government bodies. Safety also featured high on the Municipality's agenda which deemed it essential to providing enjoyment for the citizens in an atmosphere of security and comfort.

Adopting entertainment as an approach to cultural and knowledge development was instrumental in attracting the citizens of Riyadh to participate in public celebrations. The efforts of the Municipality in applying this new approach to promote the city won the support of a public that craved for different forms of art and activities. This prompted the Municipality to develop the programs of celebrations further to expand offerings of contemporary and traditional art as a tribute to an audience which heartily applauded the celebrations and strongly interacted with them. The following is a breakdown of the programs of the celebrations:



A-Traditional Folklore Shows

The Municipality was keen to give special attention to folklore. Many activities were held under tensile structures where arts and crafts, as well as music and dance performances including Al Ardhah al Saudia (Saudi traditional dance), bands playing popular songs on the Rababa (rababa lute-like instrument played with a bow), al Samiri, al Khebaiti, al Semsemia And al Mezmar, were displayed. Many of these arts were about to become extinct but they were re-introduced to the public.

B- Municipal Theater Activities

The Municipality also gave special attention to theater much to the pleasure and approval of the public. In addition to the public's accolades, the content of the theatrical performances, which conformed to local values and targeted young and old of all social segments, was widely acclaimed in the media and the press.

The municipal theater became one of the most important features of the celebrations program and, according to many critics, has strongly contributed to rejuvenating Saudi theater. Statistics were equally telling: the theaters in Riyadh presented some 65 theatrical performances targeted



at adults, 30 for children, and another 10 for women. In 1433H, tens of operettas and 243 theatrical performances were offered for young and old.

Despite occasional resistance and scepticism, the Municipality stayed its course. It believed that instilling values and moral precepts more fully in the youth of society through entertainment is an essential component of the humanization process. Thus, the municipal theater was transformed to a “father of arts,” substituting art for classic indoctrination which could have been anathema to the audience.

The conclusion is that, rather than sit on our laurels, we should strive to maintain the standards we have set by offering refined and appropriate entertainment which appeals to all, and make visiting the city worth the trip. In addition, when the public watch local artists who reflect their culture and heritage, and speak their dialect; patriotism and national pride are boosted.

C- Art Exhibitions for Children

Throughout the celebrations of Eid and National Day, the Municipality supported different



forms of art for children, organized group shows, art competitions, puppet shows and other activities to entertain, educate and develop the emotional and mental aspects of children.

D- Poetry and Literature

The Municipality organized many literary evening events for classical Arabic and Bedouin poetry. Large numbers of the public warmly welcomed the traditional poetry and literature events.

E- Visual Arts Exhibitions

The Municipality sponsored visual artists including photographers and recognized the photos they took of Eid celebrations, decorations and the festivities. The Municipality also held an exhibition of historical photos. The exhibition depicted the story of the Kingdom since unification by the founder King Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud thus helping to highlight national symbols and reinforce the identity of Saudi citizens.



F- Exhibiting the Arts and Culture of the World

The Municipality paid tribute to residents from other nations by offering them a chance to showcase their arts and culture. Their shows were a bridge that fostered love, respect and appreciation between Saudis and international communities. It also made them feel at home and happy to contribute to the festivities of Riyadh.

The Eid and National Day festivities reflected many facets of the Municipality's work, contributing to the socio-cultural scene as well to the economic stimulation of the city. The celebration initiative proved to be a multi-faceted developmental effort which boosted urban development, commerce and creativity. Providing an opportunity to witness the development capacity of the city, its daily administration, the high level of its infrastructure, the readiness of its road network, the professionalism of its municipal workforce and the success of the Municipality in its endeavour and preparation, have all added value to the celebrations while casting them in a new light.

The following is a summary of some of the elements and values that guided the approach to the Eid and National Day festivities:

- Locating the activities in distinguished sites that capitalize on the assets of the city, reflecting its spirit and reinforcing the sense of national identity in the minds of the audience.
- Beautifying the city through lighting, tree-planting, signage and other urban design features that project a festive mood imbued with the sense of national identity.



- Incorporating attractive events such as firework displays, challenging competitions and other activities which fill the audience with joy.
- Encouraging audience participation and raising their awareness of its worth to their needs, in addition to informing them of the sites and how to access them through pamphlets, publications, the internet and the media. The latter, in particular, is of particular importance in communicating a message of happiness and joy.
- Ensuring the active participation of the Saudi family to establish it as an essential component of Riyadh's society. Participation helps eliminate the marginalization of women or children in the festivities by offering them a safe, appropriate and joyful atmosphere.
- Attracting youth by encouraging fair competition, and an opportunity to show a mix of new and traditional cultures that aim to educate the public about history and nation.
- Providing young men and women with job opportunities in designing, administering, implementing and supervising the activities.
- Promoting local tourism and shopping, in collaboration with economic institutions and agencies, by merging venues for activities and shopping.





3- The King Salman Neighborhood Science Oases Initiative

Citizens of Riyadh and other cities repeatedly requested neighborhood libraries for themselves and their families. Given the importance of these projects for certain segments of society, especially those interested in culture and education, and since most of the young had no other outlets but for malls and restaurants, I and my colleagues decided to attend to this request.

Our conviction was that the cultural characteristics of an individual are not formed except through reading and the acquisition of knowledge. In big cities, moreover, this is a quintessential matter. As a result, the Municipality invested in non-school education in recognition of its importance for urban development. To achieve this, a project for continuous learning was set in motion and has been developing year after year. It started with the King Salman Neighborhood Science Oases initiative, which invested in an integrated program of non-traditional learning, science and

culture for all segments of society. It also involved the upgrading and development of traditional neighborhood libraries to keep pace with and embrace modern technology, comprehensive knowledge, and the all latest in the field of non-formal education that the world has to offer.

This initiative also aimed at honing the skills of the young in different scientific fields by stimulating their interest in technical applications. The project was planned to include a network of self-education centers where each individual, regardless of age, could gain more scientific knowledge and skills by questioning, seeking feedback, and getting the input of others. In sum, the Neighborhood Science Oases had the following goals to realize:

- Instilling more fully in the youth of society values and moral precepts by promoting reading and encouraging students to borrow books from the library.
- Endearing the pursuit of science and belief in God through programs that highlight the beauty of the universe. Offering technological skills development and simplified science courses for youth.
- Facilitating scientific experiments for those interested, as well as using entertainment tools to understand scientific facts and fill leisure time with useful and socially acceptable activities.
- Enhancing social interaction and cooperation in neighborhoods.

Examples of the activities of the Oases:

- Fables and stories that include scientific information for young children aged four to seven
- The “Read and Win” program for encouraging the young to read
- The “Book loans for members” program
- Sessions to develop student skills in information technology, aimed at enabling them to learn and conduct research
- Program for simplifying scientific theories by the use of compositions
- Periodical scientific shows that are entertaining and useful such as robot and cosmic shows.
- Competitions for technological inventions in collaboration with Microsoft.

In the first phase, the Municipality planned to implement Neighborhood Science Oases in 15



locations covering the sub-municipalities in Riyadh, while being linked by a network to the principal King Salman Oasis which includes the Philanthropic Riyadh Science Foundation and King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST). In the second phase, the Municipality was given the task of implementing a number of these oases in all the provincial governorates to provide a network that would serve the new generation in the fields of science, entertainment and knowledge. In the third and last phase, the Municipality planned to extend the oases project all over the Kingdom and its provinces in order to build up the largest knowledge network across the Kingdom.

The Science Oases program was designed to enable its subscribers to explore the world using methods that strengthen team work, inventive thinking and communication skills. The interactive program provides information on the universe in a way that stimulates imagination.

In addition to the classic children's library, each Science Oasis was designed to include an electronic library containing simple scientific references that are colorful and interesting, as well as an amphitheater for children's plays, entertainment, seminars and lectures covering scientific subjects.

The Science Oases constitute a good investment in education and non-classical culture, and an integrated scientific package directed towards the entire society of Riyadh. Six Science Oases are destined for inauguration in the near future while others will be available at a later date. These will add to Riyadh's cultural and scientific assets transforming it into a destination for young and old who are in pursuit of research, knowledge and entertainment.



Second Initiative: Encouraging Walking and Exercise

The leisure and walking initiatives responded to an increasing social need for safe walking on proper and fully equipped sidewalks. The initiative involved the construction of pedestrian paths, habilitating the sidewalks of main roads and the construction of municipal plazas with playing fields, children games and leisure activities.

1- Walking Paths

It was unusual for Riyadh, a huge city, home to about six million with a road network extending over 2,000 square kilometres; not to have paved pedestrian paths as other global cities do. I used to observe citizens trying in vain to move on foot from one place to the other seeking a safe place to walk. In consequence, the Municipality tried to identify locations where people elected to walk despite their unsuitability and lack of amenities. I wondered whether we could provide places where people could walk and feel familiar and comfortable with the city and its streets. Was it possible for our city to have such useful facilities and venues? This was the dream which we have translated to creation of walking paths in the city.

We started by offering a new pattern of longitudinal paths that would facilitate walking. This was essential given that those who loved to walk were not able to do so without being frowned upon, or exposed to unnecessary risk, even in the very few places where it was possible in Riyadh.

I would pass by King Abdullah Road taking note of women who walked along a narrow unequipped sidewalk full of obstacles. That sidewalk was known as the “path of pregnant women” because it was mostly frequented by women in their last months before delivery. The scene haunted me as we discussed the rehabilitation of streets and I asked my colleagues: “Why don’t we offer pregnant ladies an opportunity to walk safely and securely?” Was this not our responsibility so that we should attend to it? We therefore decided to upgrade that very walking route, preparing designs based on an idea initiated by the people. Thus, we fulfilled a social need with a human dimension.

To elaborate further, this path was in a very modest state. Most of it was poorly paved, had no seating areas and no lighting. The Municipality prepared a new vision for the site involving rehabilitating, widening and preparing it for pedestrians. As a result, we doubled the length of the old path and extended it around King Sultan University. We constructed prayer corners, toilets, and facilities for ablutions. In addition, we provided the site with trees, adequate furniture, and sprinklers to enhance the climate along the north side of the path.

The project was welcomed by the citizens of Riyadh who exercised by walking. It also attracted new walkers. This strong start motivated the Municipality to replicate the idea in other locations in the city. We introduced an ambitious program to rehabilitate a number of sidewalks and transform them into safe pedestrian paths, spaces for socialization and sitting. In the first phase, implementation started with a series of distinct streets with little traffic and thus presented low threat levels for pedestrians. The street designs were modified to be sensitive to environmental and urban aspects, as well as regain the urban balance between the needs of vehicles and pedestrians.

Upgraded walking paths gained popularity amongst all age groups. Worth noting are the paths around King Fahd Medical City, Prince Nasser bin Farhan Street, King Sultan bin Abdulaziz University, Prince Majid bin Abdulaziz Street, Prince Abdulaziz bin Mussad bin Jalawi Street, Prince Abdulaziz bin Saad bin Abdulrahman Street in Al Olayya, King Abdullah Park in al Malaz, Imam Mohammad bin Saud Islamic University, in addition to many other streets which are currently being upgraded.

When designing the new paths, the Municipality was committed to quality design standards that aimed to preserve the three elements of humanization in streets, human scale, familiarity and safety. The developments also considered the needs of different groups of pedestrians, namely, men and women and different age groups.

Observers of this initiative know how it was met at the start with scepticism from some sectors of society. Many feared harassment or other behavior which conflict with our values. However, people came to realize that the benefits of the initiative far outweighed perceived drawbacks. Soon, the majority elected to develop their city, its streets and sidewalks in a way that would establish good healthy habits, reduce the ailments associated with modern lifestyles, and enhance the joyful experience of walking safely. The uses of pedestrian paths varied between walking, shopping and entertainment, as is the case with Prince Mohammad bin Abdulaziz (Tahliya) Road where the Municipality opted for maintaining a balance between vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Major improvements were introduced to the layout and furniture of the street, encouraging the proliferation of cafes and restaurants alongside the road. It also introduced modifications to construction codes. Code modifications permitted building setbacks, wider sidewalks to accommodate commercial activities and act as frontal space for shops as well as improved street parking. In addition, side lanes were eliminated to provide more space for widening sidewalks and pedestrian crossings with signals were provided. Upon completion of the upgrading, the street was transformed to become one of the best commercial venues in Riyadh, a destination for patrons of cafes and restaurants, as well as strollers and joggers.

The concept of pedestrian paths was established throughout the city as a network which would serve the human dimension, link the society and enhance its health and entertainment aspects. This was and still remains our objective. One such network is that starting from Sheikh Abdullah Al-Anqari Road to Mussaed Al-Anqari Street, then to Abdullah bin Soliman Al-Hamdan Street onwards to Prince Mohammad bin Abdulaziz Street, and then through to Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Street, ending with Prince Abdulaziz bin Mussaed Street which leads to King Fahd Medical City. Further, the Municipality intended to complete this network to link up with another pedestrian path that was nearing completion around the Equestrian Club in al Malaz. In the future, this network can be extended to areas in the middle of Riyadh, such as the King Abdulaziz Historical Center and the Qasr Al-Hokm area, to form an integrated system linking different parts of the city. This will be possible when the upgrading of King Abdulaziz (Al Batha) and King Faisal (Al-Wazeer) roads are finalized, based on the vision of the Municipality which aims to transform them into one-way thoroughfares. These are expected to change the nature of the commercial center of Riyadh.

This connected network is similar to that found in the commercial area located between King Fahd Road and Al Olayya Street, starting from Makkah Road in the south, up to King Salman bin Abdulaziz in the north. That project included rehabilitating the commercial area, implementing a complete network of sidewalks, tree-planting and lighting. All of these have enhanced the human dimension and placed people as a priority above that of vehicular traffic. When the upgrading pro-



ject is completed in this commercial area, landlords are expected to re-open garages under buildings, use them for parking, and cooperate with the traffic department to enforce one-way vehicular circulation thus transforming this area into one of the best in the city. The citizens will also have the opportunity to enjoy the area’s amenities including libraries, commercial and residential buildings, restaurants, cafes and leisure facilities which will enhance the human dimension in the city.

2- Neighborhood Municipal Plazas

The failure to accommodate adequately the needs of youth is worrying families and society as a whole in Riyadh. Its importance arises from the growth of this segment of the population,



which makes up over half the total and their vulnerability to the influence of vice. At the Municipality, we debated which amenities we could offer youth. Our inspiration came from the soccer matches they played in public spaces.

The Municipality adopted the transformation of public spaces where youth played soccer into municipal places equipped for the sport. The first municipal plaza to be allocated for soccer in Riyadh and the Kingdom was established in Al-Suwaidi neighbourhood (Al-Frayyan) in the month of Shaaban, 1492 H. Within a few months, the Municipality had transformed the dirt fields into a modern sports field with modern equipment and made it freely available to all.

Thus, the Municipality pioneered integrated service and sports plazas within the neighborhood that are easily accessible and include attractive amenities such as jogging tracks, a park and a children's playground. These plazas help families in Riyadh spend time usefully; interacting socially, while promoting good companionship in a country where two thirds of the population are young and teenagers. However, their use is not only restricted to youth but also is available to

women, the elderly and children.

The Municipality expanded the initiative in response to its impressive success by planning to construct 100 municipal plazas of different sizes in spaces allocated to general activities and parks. The Municipality was also keen to distribute them all over Riyadh to serve all neighborhoods. This ambitious project was planned in stages with priority given to low income neighborhoods.

The municipal plaza in Al-Suwaidi neighborhood, located at the intersection of Abdulrahman bin Fryyan and Ali Al-Sukkari, covers 11,500 m² and has the following amenities:

- Roller skating and scooter tracks
- A number of multi-purpose stadia and fields for soccer, handball, volleyball, and basketball with lighting fixtures for night use
- A park with seating
- A children's playground equipped with different games
- Shelters and green areas
- A jogging track
- A cafeteria
- A parking lot
- A visitors' center
- Toilets for males and females.

The Municipality's achievements included the construction of 30 municipal plazas and by Eid al Fitr of 2011 (1432H), some 66 had been built out of the 100 planned in total.

The Municipality was keen to apply international standards and ensure quality. A number of parameters and regulations were therefore set in place to determine the morphology and area of the chosen sites. According to these parameters, the plazas were categorized into three types. The first type was independent plazas that overlook main streets in large neighborhoods. Their areas range between 5,000 and 30,000 m², serving the neighborhood where they are located, in addition to adjacent neighborhoods. Examples of this type include those found in Al-Suwaidi, Al-Uraiya and Badr. The second type is attached to existing gardens or parks, with areas ranging from 3,000 to 9,000 m². Further, they complement the amenities of the parks to which they are attached. Exam-



ples of this type include the ones attached to Mohammad al FitrAl-Qassim, Al-Rawdah, Ad-Doh and Al-Khalidiyah Parks. As for the last type, they are small plazas located at the core of residential neighborhoods with areas ranging from 3,000 to 4,000 m² like the one found in Al-Yasameen neighborhood.

At present, municipal plazas witness a number of sports activities including soccer competitions (for example, Ramadan championships) where players of different ages compete for cash prizes that stimulate competitors. Competitions for children, strength and challenge tournaments, roller skating as well as awareness campaigns take place in municipal plazas as well. The Municipality has also constructed electronic screens in parks and municipal plazas to project documentary material of national and sporting events in conjunction with Saudi TV networks.

These plazas facilitate athletic activities that help keep youth and teenagers engaged, busy and out of trouble. As a gathering place, furthermore, the plazas are attractive and secure for activities within neighborhoods. They offer opportunities for promoting different sports and bringing potential champions to the limelight. That is why the Municipality has been keen to manage and

operate them through specialized and professional experts in culture, entertainment and sports. They were also given the responsibility of organizing different competitions amongst all the many plazas.

The development impact of the municipal plazas proved to be substantial, given the integrated nature of the initiative which focused on human social and physical development needs. The amenities of the plazas strongly attract different segments of society, are economically viable, require little maintenance and funds, and take little time to implement.

Besides becoming meeting points for the elderly as they too were drawn to jogging tracks that are good for their physical and mental health, the plazas have environmental benefits as well. They are green spaces which add to the beauty of neighborhoods and constitute a pleasing vista for those living adjacent to them. The rapid proliferation of sidewalks and plaza projects in all the governorates and small towns of Riyadh Province became a fundamental aspect in municipal work. In consequence, the Municipality had to introduce new items in the budget that did not exist before.

Because of their success, moreover, the municipal plazas were replicated in other cities and provinces in the Kingdom. The Minister of the Interior acknowledged and discussed their positive impact in his meeting with the provincial governors and requested that they replicate the idea throughout the Kingdom.

Third Initiative: Environmental Development

This initiative included various projects and programs that targeted re-establishing balance to the urban fabric, restricting the invasion of asphalt and concrete, increasing green areas and natural beauty, spreading shade, and tempering the harsh climate. In addition, the initiative aimed to turn the city into a series of environmental lungs where citizens can breathe fresh air, enjoy the weather and nature, and stay away from the noise of the city. Lastly, the initiative aims to preserve environmental resources, conserve wildlife and maintain the health of the environment in general.

Observers of global cities realize that the importance given to establishing public parks is not a luxury. It signals a civilized need that is further established in the Surat An-Naml, verse 60 of the Koran, “He who created the heavens and earth, and sent down for you out of heaven water; and We caused to grow therewith gardens full of loveliness whose trees you could never grow. Is there a god with God? Nay, but they are a people who assign to Him equals!” Souls become cheerful when watching the beauty of nature. In addition to the aesthetic and psychological dimensions, green areas have well known health benefits such as improving air quality, filtering out dust, vapors and residues, as well as improving the urban micro-climate. Further, one of the interesting coincidences has to do with the meaning of Riyadh’s name, “gardens” in Arabic, since it was historically surrounded by palm groves and farms.

In the wake of rapid development and modernization, Riyadh was faced with environmental challenges emanating from its harsh desert climate, water scarcity, limited trees and greenery, and exposure to solar radiation. All these factors kept citizens away from open public spaces, worsened social alienation, and increased the dependence on cars. I, for one, felt a certain antipathy between pedestrians and the street. This antipathy forced citizens to abandon walking in public open spaces and opt for shaded areas and air conditioned malls instead.

In recognition of these facts, which characterized the city’s urbanism over the years, the Municipality noted the negative social and health aspects and was determined to mitigate them. It also aimed to reclaim elements of environmental beauty in the city and expand green areas to reduce the impact of harsh weather. These efforts, I must hasten to say, complemented the much appreciated efforts of our predecessors.

As was the case with public open spaces, I have always wondered why our citizens stayed away from visiting the many parks in Riyadh. We found that the design of those parks was faulty and inappropriate to the needs of Saudi society. Rather than leave the parks deserted and abandoned, therefore, we consulted a number of specialists to conduct studies and reviews and make them more appealing to people’s preferences. As a result, the Municipality launched three tracks:



First Track

Adopting a new approach in dealing with existing parks.

Second track

Developing new parks in a way that enables the Municipality to offer new and different ideas for open spaces in the city. Instead of forming small and scattered arcs, the Municipality aimed to merge them into bigger parks.

Third track

Establishing parks with a total capacity of a million visitors all over Riyadh or, at least, earmarking sites for that purpose in the first stage.

The following is a more detailed explanation of the three tracks:

First Track: Adopting a new approach in dealing with existing parks

A- Rehabilitating Al-Rawabi Neighborhood Park

The first practical steps involved removing the fences of the Al-Rawabi Park and opening it to the public. The park lacked diversity in its plantings, activities and spaces. The results were im-



pressive on two levels: the interaction and participation of citizens were boosted, and the positive impact of the park on its urban surroundings was noted. We also ended up with a new perspective which we started to apply throughout Riyadh in order to improve the conditions of existing parks. The new perspective is detailed as follows:

- Transforming the park into an open space by eliminating fences and making it accessible directly from the streets. This would provide a green breathing space for the neighborhood while ensuring privacy.
- Innovating in site planning, articulating attractive paths, emphasizing plant diversity, and employing new irrigation systems and high quality materials during implementation.
- Giving special attention to youth by providing them with sports activities and allocating a safe and secure municipal plaza at one corner of the park equipped with services, toilets and a cafeteria.
- Caring for children and their entertainment needs in a safe atmosphere that ensures quality time for the family.
- Serving people with special needs, providing suitable paths for their movement, special toilets, Braille signage, sound alerts and special parking lots.
- Rehabilitating these parks to serve as places for entertainment and multi-cultural events in Eid, national events and vacations.

B- Rehabilitating the Zoo and its external Plazas

The Municipality introduced many improvements to the Riyadh Zoo in al Malaz. The Zoo has an area of 161,000 m² featuring wildlife in its natural habitat. Its rehabilitation included the construction of an environmentally equipped external space covering 10,000 m², the provision of meandering pedestrian paths running the length of 2.5 kilometers to view wildlife, and the expansion of green areas by a further 14,000 m².

C- Rehabilitating Mankh al Malikk Abdulaziz Park

King Abdulaziz Manakh is one of the most prominent historic landmarks in Riyadh. Over 30 years ago, the Municipality sought to surround it with a pleasant heritage park which provided the citizens with a natural space for leisure. After its rehabilitation, it became a distinguished venue for



environmental festivals, such as The Gardens' Festival , which is extremely popular. The park also hosts awareness, commercial and traditional crafts events.

D- Rehabilitating Al-Suwaidi Park

Al-Suwaidi Park was constructed over 30 years ago. The Municipality gave the responsibility of rehabilitating and expanding it to one of the urban development companies that developed an adjacent residential neighborhood. New pedestrian paths were introduced and it became one of the important locations for festivals during Eid, national events, and vacations.

E- Tree-planting and beautification of streets and roads

The Municipality adopted an ambitious program for tree-planting and beautifying streets and roads out of conviction that greening has a positive impact on citizens. It gave special attention to the landscaping of streets and planting them to mitigate the harshness of the climate and promote aesthetics.



A system was further introduced to ensure the sustainability of greening and the proper selection of suitable trees that do not consume a lot of water. As a result, local types of planted areas familiar to the citizens, good for the soil, in addition to reducing pollution and dust, were developed.

The Municipality also rehabilitated a number of principal squares in the city (such as Cairo, Damascus, Etisalat, Beirut, Prince Meshaal bin Abdulaziz Road Road, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait Squares) in its effort to conserve the environment, realize traffic flow and ensure safety. Finally, the Municipality made a point of providing every square with sculptures reflecting the nature of its name, like the pyramids sculpture in Cairo Square.

F- Initiative of Municipal “Al Baraht (plazas)”

“Al Baraht (plazas)” are expanses, or variations of neighborhood parks, that are rooted in traditional cities. Older generations are familiar with “Al Baraht (plazas),” where children used to play safely inside neighborhoods. They were also a meeting place for the residents of the neigh-



borhood. We thought that rejuvenating this urban feature and developing it in every neighborhood was important. A new modern design, combining traditional elements with pedestrian paths and entertainment spaces for children and youth, was introduced. The new free-of-charge “Al Baraht (plazas)” were made available for Eid celebrations. By the time the initiative is completed, Riyadh will be home to around 100 of them.

G- Celebrations and environmental initiatives

Regaining the close relationship between citizens and amenities is one aspect of enhancing the social dimension by innovating approaches to attract people to once deserted parks. A number of festive activities have been established in parks to stimulate visits and the enjoyment of their patrons. These include:



1- The Riyadh Spring Festival

The Municipality initiated an annual Spring Festival to promote the attractions and beautiful aspects of horticulture in Riyadh. Over the years, the Festival developed to include different flowers, decorative flora and shade plants. A number of entertainment activities including a children theater, puppet shows, drawing and coloring competitions, cultural and environmental education, conservation practices and ways to care for the green environment, were introduced. The Festival also has an exhibition for specialized horticultural and landscaping firms where visitors can buy their different products.

The Riyadh Spring Festival has become one of the tourist attractions in the city as local tourists converge on Riyadh to enjoy it. The Festival has also been transformed to a large cultural marketplace for plants, interior and home landscaping.



2- The Gardens' Festival

“Pearl of Parks” is the name given to the festival held in the park surrounding the historic landmark of Mankh al Malikk Abdulaziz Park. The Municipality holds this festival to attract citizens to the heritage and history of Riyadh. The festival includes a large number of activities, cultural and entertainment shows. Some of the most famous are the car stunts presented by a Saudi team which competes with the best Chinese and Japanese teams. The traditional folklore theater presenting art and poetry (such as Sheilat and Traditional poetry) from different areas in the Kingdom is another attraction. The Gardens' Festival is also home to a Public bazaar where different craftsmen exhibit their handicrafts. Finally, the festival holds a popular event on Eid.

3- The Preservation of Wildlife Initiative

A large majority of Riyadh citizens still prefer frequenting the desert in pursuit of calm, privacy and natural beauty. Some go for camping and other wilderness sports. This prompted the



Municipality to keep the wilderness clean by reducing its pollution and the proliferation of garbage in order to protect its flora and fauna.

Raising environmental awareness and spreading a culture of handling the wilderness with care is one of the tenets of municipal work. In 2005 (1426H), therefore, the Municipality established a number of awareness centers in famous locations. These centers which are mostly frequented by visitors at the peak season running for four months, offer free services such as providing water, firewood and garbage bags. They also organize competitions among wilderness fans, raise their awareness and direct them to the best ways to preserve wildlife.

In addition, the Municipality mobilized society to contribute to preserving the natural environment by organizing environmental awareness campaigns for the young. One such campaign involved school children who were taught how to grow plants, take care of environmental infrastructure and become friends of trees. The Municipality also established programs for environmental clean-up and garbage re-cycling. Other programs included a special “Cleanliness Watch” to monitor vehicles violating litter regulations, a program for the development of landfills, and one for the enhancement of the private sector participatory role in city clean-up activities.



4- The Million Square Meter Clean-up Campaign

In collaboration with private institutions and societies, the Municipality offered a number of innovative campaigns to get rid of waste and raise awareness for keeping the wilderness clean under the following slogans: “Wilderness without Waste,” and “Clean Your Site!” The campaigns targeted participating groups to clean a total area of one million square meters of wilderness parks. Schoolchildren were taken on trips and encouraged to participate as part of their community service. They were given lectures to raise their awareness of wildlife, its components and how to preserve it. Fun competitions, prizes and gifts were also used to stimulate them. These campaigns had a positive impact by boosting the culture of volunteering and environmental awareness.

Second Track: Parks in the new Master Plans

The Municipality held the view that citizens avoid pocket and small neighborhood parks because they consider them unsuitable for outings. Their small size, moreover, made it difficult for the Municipality to diversify their activities and services, as well as maintain, operate and manage them efficiently. In consequence, the Municipality decided to merge small parks in the new master plans and offer them as open green spaces with pedestrian paths, children playgrounds, various seating areas and playing fields in plazas that could be set up.

In conjunction with the privately owned Arriyadh Construction Company which has planned an area of one million square meters north of Riyadh, the Municipality set out on a new and ambitious path toward the establishment of large parks. Standard planning criteria were employed and small areas, which were earmarked for green spaces, were bundled up in single sites totalling 100,000 m² resulting in a large beautiful public park. This became a thriving core and an environmental lung for the neighborhood. The promising and positive results convinced realtors and developers to incorporate such large parks in their upcoming residential master schemes.

Third Track: The Million's Parks

This is an orientation which complements the previous development tracks. It is concerned with establishing Million's Parks all over Riyadh. The Municipality has therefore embarked on identifying and reserving suitable sites that can accommodate large regional and national parks to serve the citizens of Riyadh and its visitors.

The Million's Parks are diverse and unique and the following reviews some of them that were planned by highly professional consulting firms.



A- King Salman Nature Park at Banban

Located to the north of Riyadh on an area of 3.5 million m², this park is in the final stage of construction. The Municipality oversaw the implementation of many of its stages which include a natural wild garden, safari park, camping areas for families and singles, a chalet area and a game park.

Before elaborating further, I would like to note the story of determining the site for the park and the efforts of King Salman in this regard. When the King Khaled International Airport Authority (KKIAA) started fencing the airport area, which covers 250 million m², it wished to allocate a buffer protection zone of between 100 and 200 meters width running around the airport. King Salman appointed me to chair a study committee to discuss KKIAA's proposal. The committee reached a decision that it was impossible to realize the protection zone because lands surrounding the airport were privately owned and would have to be expropriated. This decision was matched with a proposal put forward to the then Minister of Aviation and Defense the late HRH Sultan bin Abdulaziz to set aside a protection zone running along the perimeter of the airport as a desert buffer zone. This would link up with the historically significant area to the northwest of the airport, home to King Abdulaziz and al-Shioukh caves, as well as with the hills and valleys that citizens visit on outings.

As usual, King Salman zealously followed up in person with HRH Prince Sultan whose response was that it was impossible to implement the aforementioned proposal because the contractor had already completed a significant amount of work on the project and any modifications would disrupt submissions, commitments and progress. However, out of respect for King Salman, his love for Riyadh and the public interest, HRH Prince Sultan proposed to allocate 3.5 million m² to the northwest of Riyadh as a gift to the city and its citizens. I remember King Salman calling me at the time and reiterating: "I have done my share! What remains is your share at the Municipality to take care of the site, as well as to expedite design and implementation so as to offer a new outlet for the residents of Riyadh and its surrounding governorates."

The proposed site was one of the best sites in the area from a topographical perspective with reefs and tributaries permeating it, such as the Banban reef. Through proper design, the Municipality was able to retain the wild nature of the site, and though work is still incomplete, the park is already attracting many visitors especially during weekends, vacations, in the spring and rainy seasons. In consequence, I have high hopes that once completed it will be a remarkable and iconic national park.



Riyadh Region Municipality
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مبنى وحدة التعليم



مجرة حورية لخدمة الترفيهية وملاعب أخرى



مساحة الاحتفالات المتعددة الأغراض



Master Plan

- 1- Singles' area
- 2- Exhibition center
- 3- Shops
- 4- Aquarium
- 5- Hot-air balloon center
- 6- Large Children's playground
- 7- Exploration park
- 8- Science oasis
- 9- Children's playground
- 10- Administration and maintenance



B- King Abdullah Park in al Malaz

This is a new park covering an area of over 300,000 m² in al Malaz which was previously earmarked for the Equestrian Club race course. However, the racecourse ended up in the middle of the city because of urban sprawl. In addition, the club needed a bigger and better equipped site. One of the suggestions tabled at the time was for selling the land for residential and commercial use and using the proceeds to build a new racecourse somewhere else. When the committee responsible for pricing the land and selling it was about to go ahead, King Salman intervened at the right time and gave instructions to turn the site into a public park to serve the citizens of the city. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah (who was Crown Prince at the time) also issued a royal decree to compensate the Equestrian Club with an adequate amount for building a new club in Jenadriyah, in return for relinquishing the site of the old club to the Municipality to turn it into a public park for Riyadh.

In designing and planning the park, we paid special consideration to incorporating the new municipal ideas and humanization initiatives. We therefore aimed to increase the city's green footprint, and enhance the entertainment activities of the residents. In addition to its large area in the center of the city, the park was equipped with attractive amenities with a human dimension including pedestrian paths, celebration plazas, water fountains and green areas. The park also had a project as part of the King Salman Science Oasis, and a guest reception center with an exhibition hall for municipal projects showcasing public parks which enhance the human dimension. In addition to venues for hosting carnivals and national events.



C- The King Abdullah International Gardens

After the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, ascended to the throne, Riyadh residents wanted to honor him and celebrate the occasion. We had a meeting in the then Governor of Riyadh Prince (now King) Salman's office to discuss the subject. He was succinct and straightforward in asserting that the citizens of Riyadh have a special and distinct cultural tradition that comes to the fore on such occasions. But tradition has it that honoring a King is usually through ovation rather than celebration. He suggested that the occasion be honored by a project in the name of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques that would benefit the city and its citizens in the future. He also enumerated similar projects which were built in Riyadh in the past such as the Memorial School, King Fahd National Library, King Salman Social Center, King Abdulaziz Historical Center, Prince Sultan University and other projects which mark and celebrate happy memories of national dignitaries.

Meetings with citizens assured that the project would be befitting to the status of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and the decision was made to build the King Abdullah International Gardens. The design was made the subject of an international competition to which a number of international consulting firms submitted entries. The Municipality then selected a comprehensive design which received many international awards over following years.



The project is located along the Jeddah road on an area of about two million square meters and comprises various scientific, cultural and unique environmental gardens which include:

- Botanical garden
- Botanical museum housing two laboratories for preserving seeds and plant genes
- Scientific gardens, including species of birds, butterflies and wild flowers in addition to sound and light shows and explorations
- International park for children
- Seating and leisure areas.

Through financial contributions from citizens and businessmen, the Municipality was able to start contracting out the plans and designs, and followed up with the first implementation phase which involved fencing and preparing the site. It is hoped that the second stage will soon follow. However, the Municipality was forced to extend implementation over multiple phases due to budget constraints. We are still looking forward to its completion since it will constitute a qualitative leap in leisure facilities that will incorporate educational, cultural, and entertainment aspects all at once. This should place Riyadh among the few world capitals that host such projects.





D- Rehabilitation of Wadi Al-Selay

Wadi Al-Selay dissects Riyadh longitudinally, extending over 100 kilometers from north to south at Khashm Al-An. Its rehabilitation is extremely significant since many regard it as a lifeline that carries off storm water that helps prevent torrential flood damage. Hence, it became imperative to restore the Wadi to its former role as a natural drainage system for rainwater and floods in Riyadh. Regarding this as one of the most important environmental projects in Riyadh is no exaggeration. Once completed, furthermore, it will certainly stand out as a remarkable project as it will serve the environment as well as offer leisure activities to citizens at large.

It is always worrying to think that such an important environmental feature could have been forgotten and left to degrade in favor of buried storm drainage and sewage systems. Nobody can imagine Riyadh without Wadi Hanifah, which has become more important and beautiful after rehabilitation. Likewise, the day will come when nobody can imagine Riyadh without Wadi Al-Selay. We have named this project the “Rehabilitation of Wadi Al-Selay.” However it is more than that. It involves saving and rejuvenating an important environmental feature which was about to become extinct. It is also worth noting that had it not been for the high level of awareness at the Municipality, Wadi Al-Selay and Wadi Al-Batha would have disappeared. Municipal work is therefore adopting a new approach premised on future thinking and proactive action.

The Municipality has started rehabilitating Wadi Al-Selay following the disappearance of most of its features under the weight of rapid urban sprawl, especially along its eastern side. Thus, it embarked on engineering and water resource studies, a vision for developing the natural habitat along its course, and researched ways to use mechanisms for draining storm water runoff by different channels into the Wadi.



Many of the violations and obstacles that faced the Wadi came as unintended side-effects of the planning of the city. The Municipality was well aware of that. Its primary plans to design the course of the Wadi was based on many factors, most important of which is the suitability of various solutions appropriate to the state of the Wadi at times of drought, light and also torrential rains. New land uses were proposed to make the environment attractive based on effective use of rainwater.

Following its development, the Municipality has also defined the main features of the Wadi including a running water stream, watersheds for capturing rainwater, side and local surfaced roads, in addition to paved and unpaved tracks within the Wadi. The Wadi will also include hiking paths, jogging tracks, landscaping works (including tree-planting, nurseries and orchards), entertainment venues, wild parks, seating and shaded areas, barbecue stands, children playgrounds, sports fields for soccer, volleyball, and basketball, and stone screens for providing families with privacy.



E- Salam Park

This is a large park that is located in midtown Riyadh in one of its old neighborhoods. It was named after a palm grove owned by the late Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman. The park was about to be subdivided for residential and office uses like other adjacent groves and farms were it not for the intervention of King Salman and his special care. He insisted that the park remained for public use and made every effort to compensate the General Secretariat for the Education of Girls and replace its ownership with that of the Municipality. The Secretariat moved to a new location on the Eastern Ring Road and the Municipality contracted with the High Commission for the Development of Arriyadh to re-design the park as an environmentally integrated project featuring diversity and distinctiveness.

F- Rehabilitation and Development of Wadi Hanifah

Wadi Hanifah is one of the most distinct environmental phenomena in Riyadh. When King Salman was Governor of Riyadh and Head of the High Commission for the Development of Ar-

riyadh he advocated the rehabilitation and development of Wadi Hanifah, regarded it as a priority, mobilized the necessary resources. He brought the High Commission, the Municipality, the relevant ministries of Water, Electricity and Agriculture together to work as a team.

The environmental rehabilitation project prepared by High Commission covered all the Wadi's components. In April 2010 (20 Rabia Al Akhar 1431H), King Salman inaugurated seven sites within the project which included open parks, a number of lakes and a biological water treatment plant.

Based on the principle of humanization, the Municipality of Riyadh was able to build a new institutional framework and vision that combined the development and rehabilitation of existing neighborhood parks making them more accessible, expanding central parks in residential areas to increase activities, and finally, constructing Million's Parks in the city. The future of the latter, in particular, is promising given that the Municipality has a large land bank which will help articulate the city's environment.

Fourth Initiative: Expansion of services offered to society

These initiatives include expanding the programs and projects of the Municipality to target all sectors of society. Some sectors were not properly served in the past because of issues of gender, special need or the nature of jobs. Various initiatives were therefore launched to enable women to enjoy equal job opportunities and access municipal services according to Sharia. Other initiatives facilitated the lives and welfare of people with special needs. To serve this group, the Municipality spared no effort to provide them with municipal services, full care and equal opportunities.

1- Initiative for Establishing a Women's Unit

The Municipality has long suffered a deficiency in dealing with, and enabling, women to secure their rights and work. I used to observe a number of women lining up in anticipation and unsuccessfully seeking to finish their transactions. I felt responsible for them as they sat on sidewalks in embarrassment, waiting for someone to attend to them. My sense of responsibility intensified when I heard about complaints from divorcees and widows who were deceived, or exploited by the agents they paid to assist with and complete their transactions. I wanted, therefore, to find a way to help women accomplish their transactions more humanely and with dignity, just as our societal values direct that they should.

The matter was indeed difficult because we did not have female employees to take on transactions instead of men. But I saw an opportunity in the growing numbers of female graduates who started to outnumber males. In addition, females comprise 49% of Saudi society.

Hence, an initiative was born at the Municipality to prepare and qualify a special service unit for women in an independent building. The new unit took care of municipal transactions, and followed up on municipal work that required the involvement of women. This was in line with the Kingdom's 6th Five Year Plan which highlighted the independence of Saudi women, as well as their role in a number of projects and various activities like shopping malls, fashion houses, tailoring, beauty parlors, private schools and private dispensaries.

As was expected, the Municipality's vision clashed with the paucity of financial resources available for establishing a Women's Unit. In 2001 (1422H), the Municipality sought the approval and support of the Governor of Riyadh to establish the Unit. The approval was granted, and the Municipality's efforts to facilitate women's transactions were further boosted three years later by the decision of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Abdullah bin Abdulaziz to grant women the right to work according to certain rules.

It is no secret that the Municipality was brave enough in realizing its vision and urgently implementing it despite the lack of financial resources. In consequence, the Municipality was able to open only one Women's Unit with a couple of employees. Following that, the Municipality started contracting with female employees on an annual basis to serve in sub-municipalities and a few general administrations while linking them with the head office of the Women's Unit. Shortly thereafter, 18 offices with 600 female employees, many with bachelors and master's degrees, proved to be of great worth and professionalism while preserving the conservative traditions of Saudi society.

Though annual contracts were a risk, they were very welcome. They represented a sincere effort for the public good guided by our belief in Allah, and our wise leadership which spared no effort to reform the nation and support its people. Subsequently, upon completion of the project, a royal decree was issued to change the annual contracts to permanent government positions for all those who had helped realize this project. Hence, the daughters of the nation, as well as the women who benefited from the service and the Municipality all came out as winners. I am proud to have overseen this national project, in collaboration with my female and male colleagues. It is a project that deserves appreciation and acclaim.

The royal decree has come to affirm a fact that many have reiterated regarding the need to preserve the privacy of our women as a basic and obligatory religious tenet. Privacy does not mean that they should be isolated and banned from public domains. Islam ordains that women have a right to learn and work, to own, and to deal with their finances independently. Despite that, it is interesting to note that formalizing and applying this right in government and the public sector was delayed because of a social resistance rooted in a culture that is generally apathetic to women's education and work. Opponents were also sceptical about the capacities of women and they wrongly thought that female work environments would lack the safety and dignity required for women. We had to change such perceptions by presenting successful alternatives that prove the feasibility of women's work within the guidelines of Islam, especially since such archaic views of women are not sanctioned by Islam. Thus the Municipality has become one of the pioneering institutions in the fields of the employment of women and equal opportunity in service provision in Saudi Arabia.

The Establishment of the Women's Unit

In 2006 (1427H), following the creation of a work team, conducting necessary studies and identifying goals and visions, the Municipality decided to establish the Women's Unit. It had the specific mission of enabling women to finish and facilitate their transactions, as well as settle their problems with the Municipality. In Ramadan, 2007 (1428H), the Women's Unit started as a head



office with eight women working in an independent unit within the Municipality. In four years, the size of the female municipal workforce reached 600 employees spreading over 18 branches in sub-municipalities and general administrations.

Weak awareness of the importance of women’s work and the scepticism associated with how they are viewed dictated the need to prove otherwise, and to send messages to society about the efficiency of women so that they could become more acceptable. This was not easy because not only was our initiative unwelcome, but also we lacked a female cadre with skills matching those of men filling parallel posts. We had to engage in capacity building, adopt a huge project to recruit the best women professionals with enough experience to train others, as well as support, and generously finance the whole effort. This resulted in multiplying the number of qualified and trained female professionals, thus enabling the Municipality to serve women and change the way they were dealt with. As was the case with previous successes, other service ministries and municipalities made their way to the Municipality to seek our advice as to how to replicate our efforts.

Women moved from a situation where they were marginalized and neglected by municipal bodies to one where they found respect and ease in dealing with the Women’s Unit. The latter facilitated their transactions in a way that is more familiar with their nature. This human approach reflects the principles and values of the Kingdom and its rich social heritage. Despite our significant success, however, we must acknowledge the existence of internal individual resistance, and a lack of confidence in women’s capabilities and their ability to assume leadership positions and take on more responsibilities. As a result, our administrative systems need further reform.

Women's Municipal Work

A Women's Unit was established in all of the fifteen sub-municipalities in addition to two women's administrations that deal extensively with women. These are the General Administration for Environmental Hygiene and the General Administration for Cleanliness. This network structure for enabling women to access municipal services has facilitated and reduced the time needed for transactions. Moreover, it has helped improve the quality of municipal services and added value to the city's economy and activities. All this was done while respecting privacy and abiding by the conservative social norms and Sharia principles. As a result, women's services were housed in independent buildings with entrances and exits completely separate from men to ensure the full freedom of the employees and visitors in a strictly female atmosphere. In addition to the bureaucratic work in organization, service and monitoring domains; the Women's Unit contributed to implementing a number of humanization initiatives as follows:

A- Eid Celebrations for Women

The Municipality has allocated eight sites out of 40 Eid celebration sites for women's activities and events under the supervision of the Women's Unit. Fifty employees organize task forces to oversee the proper management of the events, distribute responsibilities, evaluate feedback and report on a daily basis to the celebration committee. The events take place at eight sites and include both women and children offering culture, competitions, theater, traditional shows, games and puppet shows.

B- "With your Cooperation, we Thrive!" Market Control Campaign

The Women's Unit initiated a campaign to reduce safety and hygiene violations in women's commercial and service establishments, raise their standards, monitor them by the Municipality and impose regulations. The Unit selected one of the biggest markets in Riyadh, the popular village complex, as a starting point for the campaign which registered violations of public health and hygiene regulations, as well as trading malpractices. Through monitoring and inspection, the Women's Unit gave assistance to rectify malpractices and ensure the application of regulations in a participatory atmosphere that was more concerned with awareness than fines. Necessary support was also given to issuing permits, warning of violations, avoiding and alleviating penalties, as well as confiscating harmful products. The task forces were equipped with instruction kits including the necessary tools, and its members were trained to identify priorities, introduce the goals of the campaign and ensure success. Finally, the campaign received publicity to educate the public about the types of violations, as well as unsafe and unhealthy practices in market transactions.

C- Women's stands and the Regulation of Street Vendors

In a survey of the poor state of women vendors in Traditional markets like Souk Hijab in Al-Naseem and Tuweik neighbourhood market, the Women's Unit identified 600 stands run by women (90% of whom were Saudis) who were barely making a living. Many of them were elderly with two-thirds of them over 50 years of age. Of the total, moreover, 80% had no education and their social and economic situations were miserable whether they were bread earners, divorcees, widows or deprived of home ownership. Their stands were informal, primitive and lacked the most basic hygienic standards required for transactions in vegetables, fruit, food and clothing. Studies also revealed that an enclosed market, that would eliminate these stands, was unfeasible since open air markets traditionally attract more customers. Based on feedback from vendors and weighing the various alternatives, the Municipality recommended that women should be allowed to continue selling in their markets according to acceptable standards. In order to upgrade the lot of vendors, the Municipality also initiated modular prototypes that complied with safety and hygiene standards while regulating activities by issuing permits and removing violations.

D- Women's Riyadh Festival

In its pursuit for creating job opportunities for women, facilitating their participation in business, and reinforcing their competitiveness, the Municipality has promoted a number of activities which highlight their creativity and support their products and services. The Municipality has therefore launched an annual festival for all age groups as an initiative to support women's talents, showcase their ambition and boost their commercial competitiveness.

This festival attracts creative women in design, décor, handicrafts, jewellery, food and household items. It offers opportunities for exhibiting and selling their products under the slogan: "Ambition, Idea, Craft," that summarizes the Municipality's effort to sponsor small businesses by women, upgrading them to new levels and building bridges between them and the world of business.

A number of government sectors, philanthropic societies, and private institutions have participated in the festival offering opportunities for women which have been widely and well publicized. Publications supporting promising women, most notably the "Saudi Women Inventors" guide, were also published to effectively connect women with the business world.

In addition, the festival includes numerous cultural and awareness activities, children and school trips and events. The evaluation questionnaire of the second Riyadh Women's Festival revealed a satisfaction level close to 90% amongst those who visited and participated in it.



2- Initiative for Caring for People with Special Needs

Caring for people with special needs was limited, indeed absent, in many aspects of municipal work. The Municipality became aware of the need for including this cherished sector of the population in municipal work and ensuring it is given special attention. A decision was made to activate the General Administration for Social Services. This was part of the organizational structure of the Municipality for years in the past but did not have or play any clear role. As a result of the initiative a variety of its projects and social programs began to be implemented.

The new administration was also given a major role in celebrating Eid and national events, in addition to seasonal and weekly cultural programs previously mentioned in this book. Thus, we opened a window of opportunity for people with special needs and provided them with the services they required. We also conducted studies to identify problems and modify amenities such as sidewalks, parking lots and public toilets to cater to special needs. Lastly, a unit for people with special needs was established to upgrade all municipal services which are offered to them.

Implementation Characteristics

The Municipality's unwavering commitment has translated to instructing all relevant bodies to facilitate the movement of people with special needs in buildings by preparing elevators, ramps and balustrades in all corridors as a first step. Subsequently it has assigned employees to assist people with special needs in accessing services, while educating its workforce regarding the needs and rights of this special group and how to respect them. This made it a lot easier to gain the commitment of other agencies and individuals.

The goal of the Municipality is to remove any obstacles facing people with special needs in their daily chores. It recognises that they are a fundamental component of society who can perform daily chores like the rest of society and who merit respect and appreciation. The special unit embarked on studying their movement patterns from the minute they arrive on the premises of the Municipality, to their access to the toilets and to their use of special counters. In consequence, 100 specially equipped toilets were constructed all over Riyadh, and it is hoped that all public buildings will follow suit in the second stage, and private buildings in the third stage.

The Municipality's initiative in constructing Al-Marwa Center for special needs symbolizes the concern for this cherished group and sets a precedent for the Kingdom. Entertainment centers for people with special needs like Al-Marwa were designed to offer various social, sports, entertainment and cultural services. It gave us great pride and happiness hearing of the enjoyment of those with special needs and their families in this center.

Since the Municipality attends to all aspects of the city and cares for providing the needs of all its neighborhoods and citizens, it is seeking to replicate the center in other neighborhoods in Riyadh where people with special needs can interact with the rest of society. In Al-Hamra neighborhood, for example, the designs for a center covering 40,000 m² have been completed. This is currently under implementation.

The Development Impact of the Initiative

Solidarity with and caring for the disadvantaged are religious duties. The support of people with special needs is beneficial not only for all of them but for society in general. The Municipality recognised the developmental impact of this initiative at an early stage and therefore has sought to integrate special visual, audio, speech, movement and mental activities in all normal municipal and social services so that people with special needs are not isolated.

The concept of integration is one that is both moral and social and stands against isolation and for inclusion. This increases social acceptance of people with special needs, offers an opportunity for social interaction with them, facilitates their contribution to the workforce and creates an enabling environment where they can gain various skills that makes them understand the reality of the world. This is the supreme goal of the initiative.



Weekly Price Index for various retail outlets in Riyadh 6/12/1429H-12/2/1429

Food Consumer Item	Type name	Size	Halawani markets	Omar Balsharaf (except whole-sale)	Mussad al-Harbi	Al-Harbi & Diaa	Al-Othaim (except wholesale)	Sonbola markets	As-Sadhan markets	Al-Makhazen Al-Kubra	Al Jazeera markets	Al Tammimi Markets
Rice	Abu Kas Basmati	10Kg	58.25	60.75	62	62	60.95	59.95	--	55.90	59.75	58.95
	Basmati Al-Muhaidab	10Kg	--	69.50	70	70	--	63.95	--	57.90	--	58.95
	Al-Walima Moza	10Kg	--	64.50	--	--	--	58.75	65.95	53.90	--	56.95
Sugar	Al-Osra Fine	10Kg	19.50	19.50	19	19	19.50	--	18.95	17	20.50	17.50
	Al-Muhaidab	10Kg	--	19.60	--	--	--	--	--	16.90	--	--
Chicken	French Frozen Do	1000g	--	9.75	10	10	9.95	9.75	9.75	8.75	9.75	8.95
	Frozen Sadia	1000g	8.95	9.50	9.75	9.75	8.45	8.85	9.40	--	--	8.95
	Al-Watany Frozen	1000g	--	8.90	9	9	8.45	9.25	--	--	--	--
Cooking oil	Afia Corn	L 2	--	--	16	16	--	13.65	--	--	--	--
	Afia Corn	L 1.8	15.85	15.65	--	--	--	--	--	15.66	--	14.75
	Al-Arabi	L 2	12.70	12.70	11.50	11.50	--	11.45	12.70	12.70	--	12.25
Cheese	Kraft Liquid Cups	240g	6.95	6.85	7	7	6.30	7.25	--	5	6.95	6.50
	Kraft Liquid Cups	500g	10.75	11.25	11.50	11.50	10.75	11.95	--	8.50	11.75	10.95
	Al Marai Liquid Cups	500g	11.50	11.75	13	13	10.90	10.80	11.60	10.70	11.90	11.50
Flour	White Kuwaiti	Kg 1	--	3.75	4	4	--	3.50	2.95	2.70	3.75	2.95
	Super Local White	Kg 2	1.50	2.25	1.80	1.80	--	2.25	--	1.25	2.25	1.50
	Super Local White	Kg 5	--	4.95	4	4	--	5.50	--	2.95	4.25	3.50
Meat	Local Fresh Rump	Kg 1	--	22.95	32	32	18.95	17.95	24.95	16.95	--	19.95
	steak Veal	Kg 1	--	22.95	32	32	22.95	18.95	28.95	20	--	21.95
Milk	Nido Powder	Kg 1.8	52.25	52.25	60	60	--	--	--	50.95	--	57.95
	Liquid Al Marai	L 1	3.25	3.20	3.60	3.60	3.15	3	3.30	3	3.90	3.50
	Anchor Powder	2500g	65.95	63.25	66.50	66.50	--	--	63	59.90	65.95	62.95
Soap	Tide Powder	160g	0.75	0.80	0.75	0.75	0.86	0.85	0.85	--	0.90	0.50
	Tide Powder	Kg 2.5	13.50	13.95	15	15	10.45	13.95	11.85	15	13.75	14
	Tide Powder	Kg 4	19.75	21.50	20	20	19.90	20.45	19.50	--	20.95	19.50
Bananas	Large American	Kg 1	1.75	--	3	3	2.50	2.95	--	--	--	2.50
	Filipino no. 1	Kg 1	1.75	2.50	--	--	2.50	2.95	3.75	3.25	--	2.50
Tomatoes	Local Green house	Kg 1	1.75	3.25	2	2	3.50	1.45	2.95	2.95	--	1.95
	Local Farm	Kg 1	--	--	--	--	1.95	0.85	--	0.85	--	1.95

Fifth Initiative: Consumer Protection and Stimulating Traditional markets

This development package included a number of initiatives which aimed to enhance the economic opportunities in different sectors serving consumers and traders, stimulate popular indoor markets, as well as regulate them to ensure that consumers get the best products at competitive prices.

1- Price Index Initiative

The Municipality faced many requests from citizens to regulate food prices especially given that the Kingdom experienced several waves of price hikes without any justification. Through our monitoring of markets in Riyadh, we concluded that such price hikes, whether justified or not, are never followed by price reductions even if the reasons behind them are mitigated. The lack of a mechanism to adjust prices back to normal was to blame.

Taking humanization as a starting point, the Municipality decided to intervene positively in the markets at a time when public officials were insensitive to increasing citizen complaints. The Municipality launched the Food Price Index as a mechanism to work with relevant bodies to serve and protect the consumer from rising prices by offering a competitive price list for basic food and supply items. Toward the end of 2007 (1428H), a proposal was submitted to King Salman to launch a basic food and supply index for major stores in Riyadh. The proposal won immediate approval and was followed by roundtables to discuss the Municipality mechanism with economists, merchants, store owners and importers to ensure their positive contribution and the project's success.

The concept of the Price Index was simple and did not incur any significant financial or supervision costs on the Municipality. Its benefits were obvious in terms of satisfaction of the citizen given published price lists and the levels of protection that ensued. The Municipality did not impose prices on businesses either, but left it up to them to set. However, by creating a competitive atmosphere, the large food stores opted for lower prices and abided with the prices they declared in order to stay in business.

The Municipality identified a number of basic foodstuffs and requested that large stores submit a list of reduced prices every Wednesday. The Municipality publicized the valid price lists for the following week in newspapers and on its website. The stores were obliged to provide the listed items according to their publicized prices otherwise they would be fined, or even shut down if violations were repeated. Thus, the Price Index led to healthy competition between stores on selected food items and the consumer emerged as a winner.

It has been the case that many of the indices have registered current or past prices. What distinguished the Municipality Price Index is that it is an index of future and intended prices. It obliges stores to abide with prices in the following week thus enabling the consumer to compare and select the best option.

The experiment was encouraging. The Price Index enabled both the Municipality to collect information on food prices transparently, and the consumer to compare and contrast market prices. It also provided a window on consumer preferences and their feedback on markets. Meanwhile, the Municipality used technology to send alerts to consumers much to their satisfaction.

Through the index the Municipality was able to establish a database for consumer prices to monitor future price changes accurately and in a way that was far removed from the rumours that circulated and were often propagated by the media. Consumers also, monitored prices and reported violations to an emergency number (940) which operated around the clock. Violations were then dealt with promptly.

The launching of the index was one of the most effective steps to reduce prices since prices could not be reduced by decree given the nature of the free market economy in the Kingdom, and the absence of a price reference. The Price Index, therefore, has prompted large food stores to compete amongst one another and reduce prices since the time of its launch.

These successes encouraged the Municipality to develop and broaden the index by including more items, other than supplies and food, such as construction and electric materials. Another special seasonal index for sheep slaughtered for Eid al-Adha was also launched for the first time. Employing the same mechanism it used with supplies and food merchants, the Municipality was able to monitor importers and sellers of sheep. As a result, one week before Eid, prices were announced and adhered to as merchants competed to attract customers.

The indices proposal was widely welcomed by citizens. The Governor of Riyadh proposed the idea and the mechanisms associated with it to the Minister of the Interior in 2008 (1429H). The Governor indicated that citizens were very pleased with the steps taken and requested the Minister of the Interior to replicate the idea in other provinces in the Kingdom. Positive feedback in the press and on the free telephone line served to confirm the widespread appeal of the initiative.

The response, encouragement, and acclaim the Municipality received from different sectors proved the success of the humanization approach in the city which responded to the daily needs and requirements of the citizens. Unfortunately, however, the Price Index did not develop as planned when the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs relieved the municipalities of their role in Feb-



ruary 2010 (Safar 1431H), and assumed responsibility for the index after an official inauguration ceremony under the auspices of King Salman bin Abdulaziz.

2- Street Vendors Regulations

The Municipality has suffered from illegal street vendors as much as any other city in the world. In Riyadh this situation has been characterized by the following. First, many of the street vendors were non-Saudi who violate the Kingdom's laws while others have escaped from their sponsors. These are issues that should be dealt with firmly. As for the relatively limited number of Saudis, many of whom were forced to seek temporary employment as street vendors; the view is that they should be supported. However, it was very difficult to differentiate between the two groups since many at first glance appear alike. The monitoring teams suffered as they sought to penalize non-Saudis for violating the system while encouraging and assisting Saudis who fell victim to competition from citizens of other countries. Second, merchandise offered by vendors was occasionally unhealthy, exorbitantly priced, prohibited, expired, or even stolen. Once sold, it was

impossible to identify the sellers, or their whereabouts, since they were always on the move and give no receipts. Third, the Municipality suffered from the locations of vendors which often held up traffic, or were close to shops selling the same merchandise. Thus, regulated shops were harmed as those had official permits, bore operational costs and paid rents.

To alleviate the above problems, and in line with its humanization approach, the Municipality adopted, for the first time ever, the principle of supporting and stimulating street vendors rather than leaving them vulnerable to police pursuit and confiscation. It launched an initiative to regulate vendors so not to deprive them from their source of income and increase their profits given that they are among those in most need. The Municipality assigned certain free locations for Saudi vendors, only after checking their identities and registering them. The locations, which were provided with services, canopies and parking lots, came under the supervision of health monitors like other shops.

The Municipality raised awareness of the initiative declaring that allocating sites for Saudi vendors only was a response to their needs to protect them from the risks they encounter on side and main roads. It was also an effort to eliminate eyesores and relieve traffic obstructions. In a nutshell, the initiative aimed to achieve the following. First, to create job opportunities for Saudis in free-of-charge locations which are shaded and provided with the necessary services. Second, to gather street vendors in a limited number of locations to facilitate access for customers and municipal supervisors. Third, and most important, to regulate the situation of Saudi vendors and ensure their psychological and social stability by shielding them from harassment and the confiscation of their goods.

The Municipality selected a number of locations which were as close as possible to the ones previously selected by the vendors who are smart enough to know where their interests are. The new locations, which are either operational or are still being prepared, come under the auspices of various sub-municipalities in neighborhoods such as Al-Jazeera, Al- Uraija, Al- Naseem Al- Sharqi, Namar, Laban, Shifa, Manfouha.

These free-of-charge locations have greatly contributed to improving the human and social conditions of Saudi vendors by enabling them to exhibit their goods in an orderly manner, and may also lead to settling them in permanent markets in the future. There is no doubt that this regulatory initiative has transformed their previous “illicit” economic activity into an official and legal activity that is subject to safety procedures. It has enhanced the social dimension in supporting economic opportunities, and raised the level of petty traders, craftsmen, and farmers. It has also provided support for consumers, regulated markets, and applied safety standards. Finally, the initiative has liberated streets and roads from informal trading, left no excuse for illegal street vendors, facilitated the flow of traffic and improved the general image of the city.



Likewise, the Municipality dealt with seasonal trading in sheep during Eid al-Adha, when traders move along streets and roads herding their sheep with no accountability. Instead of penalizing them, the Municipality assisted them by allocating orderly seasonal sites equipped with services and parking lots. The Municipality also helped them advertise their locations in the local press and posted signs in streets and roads leading to the assigned sites. Lastly, municipal patrols and employees were mobilized to regulate the sites and offer free-of-charge services, like bottled water and fodder to buyers and sellers. Thus, the Municipality gained significantly as it made citizens' lives more comfortable and saved vendors from harassment and persecution.

In sum, the Municipality's humanization approach in dealing with problems and obstacles confronting municipal work has helped it engage in true partnerships with citizens whether residents, vendors, merchants or consumers.

3- Municipal Complaints and Emergency Call Center Experiment [940]

One day, as I was sitting in my office, I received a citizen with a complaint regarding the presence of street vendors on a certain street where they blocked traffic. I immediately called the head of the sub-municipality and instructed him to deal with the matter and ensure it was not repeated. I

thanked the citizen for his concern and cooperation and informed him that he rendered us a service by communicating with us. Further, I expressed my appreciation for his coming in person to inform us and promised him that the Municipality would promptly exert every effort to receive citizens' observations and suggestions.

This inspired me to launch the Municipal Complaints and Emergency Call Center in 1998 (1419H), to communicate directly with the citizens and engage them in cooperative monitoring with the Municipality. The call center aimed to expedite, facilitate, and unify the complaint, observation, suggestion and enquiry formats as is the case with similar centers worldwide. As a result, the number of those actively monitoring violations in Riyadh jumped from a few hundred municipal employees to millions of citizens.

In collaboration with the appointed communications company, we launched a three-digit Municipality hotline number (940), which is easily remembered. The call center started with a small unit and the nature of the work was simple and limited. Only two employees manned the center on each shift. Work was manual and completed forms were sent by fax to the relevant authority in the Municipality. In case of urgent or important complaints, the responsible person was contacted in person. Shortly, thereafter, the numbers of callers increased and their complaints became more varied. The call center professionals also gained more experience and this prompted us to establish a more sophisticated hi-tech center which records calls and communicates them directly to relevant authorities. The center recruited high caliber experts to apply the highest quality and professional parameters throughout. An electronic database with an expandable capacity was established to accomplish missions and automate operations. The main aim of the center was through automation to eliminate the use of paper and substitute traditional methods with modern methods. This enabled an automatic response system that offered alternatives such as voicemail, faxes, emails, cell phone applications and direct interaction with operators. The center also launched the cell phone application (snapshot and send) which was applauded by the public due to its simplicity. By sending snapshots, the cell phone application can locate the informant on the map and the report is sent electronically to the call center. Following that, all administrations, sub municipalities, civil defense and the traffic department were linked electronically to the call center and were therefore able to deal with any complaints immediately.

The call center recruited ambitious Saudi youth who were adequately qualified after training to accomplish various missions and work under pressure. The center was open 24 hours a day and during national holidays and feasts. It was manned by ten operators, a technical assistance employee, a supervisor and a shift manager working over four shifts. In the future, the plan is that the center will serve all of Riyadh Province and its governorates and become a unified operating center for complaints and emergencies.



4- Adopting, participating in, and supporting various Festivals

The Municipality supported many bodies that organized events to support consumers and small-scale producers. It supported tourism, arts and crafts, as well as various handicraft products. It also assisted with events that stimulated shopping and entertainment in Riyadh over the summer to make the city more attractive for tourists from both the Kingdom and neighboring states.

The Municipality plays a major role in supporting the Chamber of Commerce sales program which offers discounts in the Riyadh Shopping and Entertainment Festival where 145 participants exhibit their goods. This national event allows families to shop and enjoy discounted rates throughout the festival. The program of discounts is subject to the management and supervision of the Chamber of Commerce. It aims to ensure the enjoyment of citizens and visitors, stimulate commercial and tourist activity, support the private sector, develop the national economy, as well as provide a unique experience for the public.

5- Farmers' Day

Rumour has frequently circulated municipal corridors that wholesalers and middlemen have exploited farmers making them the weakest link in the production and distribution chain and those who profit least from the sale of farm products. Farmers end up accepting the lowest prices despite their hard work as opposed to the windfall profits of the wholesalers and middlemen who are commonly known as “Shareetiya.” As the Municipality monitored markets, and to complement the roles of the Ministries of Agriculture and Commerce and Industry; we decided to intervene positively, within our limits, by proposing to create additional non-traditional sales outlets where farmers could market their produce on a weekly Farmers' Day, and an annual Date Festival.

On Thursday, 2nd April, 2009 (6th Rabea Al-Thani, 1430H), the first weekly Farmers' Day was held. On that day, the Municipality aimed to benefit both the farmers and the consumers by enabling direct interactions between them without middlemen. This helped reduce hikes in vegetable prices and served the low income groups. The initiative enabled the farmer to sell directly to the consumer, reassuring both of them that they are immune from exploitation. The Municipality provided free-of-charge locations and management. The first Farmers' Day was held at Souk As-Shamal in Al-Mourooj neighborhood every Thursday from after Fajr until Maghreb prayers. Farmers exhibited their products under large tensile structures and a number of supervisors were assigned the role of offering facilities. Adequate parking spaces were provided, circulation was regulated, guiding signs were posted, advertisements placed all over Riyadh, and media coverage ensured consumers were attracted to the event.

The result from inception has been widespread participation from farmers and national farming companies. Consumers came in droves because of the wide range and high quality of products, reasonable pricing and its convenient timing on the then weekly holiday of Thursday.

The success of Farmers' Day did not come as a surprise to the municipal taskforce, but what was a surprise was the acceptance of the idea and requests to hold it in other locations of the city. As a result, the Municipality developed and widened the above mentioned site and started to construct a special structure to house Farmers' Day and other events such as the Dates Festival, Used Books Fair, Popular Foods Day, Handicrafts Day, Photography and Fine Arts Day. The first stage was to build a new traditional-style market next to the location of the Farmers' Day market. Every week-day, a different event was held in the market and evaluated so that the Municipality could decide to build more venues elsewhere.



6- Date Festivals

Dates are an important part of Saudi culture and diet. No home in Riyadh is ever lacking in dates in its daily diet. No wonder, Saudis are attached to growing date palms at home and whenever there is an opportunity. In 1997 (1418H), the Municipality noted that the marketing and sales status of dates was not up to the standard it deserves with regards to timing, place, organization or ranking. Trading in dates was haphazard and took place in conspicuous corners in the market. Consumers were confused and found difficulty in searching for the quality or the types they wanted. Competition between vendors was all but absent and dates were peddled around the city or sold in small stores. Therefore, the Municipality thought of intervening to improve the situation of the sellers and peddlers, and the consumer who had to buy dates in disorderly locations. As always, the Municipality thought of making suitable locations available, equipped them with services needed by both the buyer and the seller, and supported the marketing and publicity of dates.

The Riyadh Date Festival was first held from mid Shaaban (1998) till the end of Ramadan



1419H (January 1990, as the first specialized festival of its kind. Some 135 well known producers and merchants participated. In the following years, similar festivals were held elsewhere in the Kingdom. Since dates are an important part of the Saudi culture reflecting popular preferences regarding types and offerings, the Date Festival became an annual event which stimulated the date sector and boosted the products of many local producers. In consequence, the Municipality has contracted specialized companies to organize the festival under the supervision of the General Administration of Markets and Safety.

Since its launch, the festival proved to be a success as customers were lost for choice between different types, quality, and pricing. Moreover, the Municipality did not stop there but made a qualitative leap in the marketing of dates by opening the Utaiga Market, which is one of the oldest vegetable and fruit markets in Riyadh, to private developers who were given the opportunity to upgrade it as a market and venue for dates on a year round basis in collaboration with the Arriyadh Construction Company. Once completed, the market will be a new addition to fruit, vegetable and date markets in Riyadh.

7- Falconry Market

Hunting and falconry are popular in the Saudi society. The Falconry market serves falconers and supplies them with their needs. Most of those who work in such markets are Saudis. The state



of affairs has reached unacceptable levels as peddlers and buyers moved from one sidewalk or tree to the other near Qasr Al-Hokm in Riyadh. Some kept their falcons in cages placed in public parking lots near the courthouse. Trading took place informally on street corners and this required the intervention of the Municipality to restore respect for the trade and the falconers.

The Municipality's initiative proposed to build a permanent falconry market and selected an area of around 7,000 m² and an architectural design which reflected the traditional culture and trade. The Falconry Market became an icon and an attractive landmark in the area of Qasr Al-Hokm, which is home to many traditional buildings such as the great courthouse, Salam Park and Sheikh Mohammad bin Ibrahim Mosque. The market includes a plaza for trading in falcons that comprises a falconers' corner, unpaved paths leading to falcon perches, and a shaded area for transactions. The market has ventilators to cool the seating area thus rendering it appealing for visitors. The market also has shops selling falconry supplies, a veterinary clinic, in addition to cafes and toilets.

In addition to regulating the falconry trade, one of the goals of the initiative was to provide a proper environment for dealing with the birds where falconers and hunters can practice their hobby according to international standards, as well as rules and regulations which eliminate informality. Thus, the Falconry Market became a new addition to the humanization of Riyadh rendering support to a sector of society which needed a better environment to raise their performance, income and benefits.



Success Criteria for **Humanization** in Municipal Work

- Transformation of the urban planning perspective
- Interaction with people according to satisfaction criteria
- Maximization of the development impact within the limits of available resources
- Adoption of a stimulus policy to effect change
- Upgrading to sustain the development of the city
- Consolidation of communication and the activation of a mechanism for a dialogue with citizens
- Social responsibility and partnership building

Success Criteria for **Humanization** in Municipal Work

Restructuring social interaction in a city requires a review of its public spaces so that they may better fit the human soul and scale, in addition to responding to urgent human needs. The city, its amenities, and public spaces should also offer effective responses in the domains of safety, hygiene, culture and entertainment. Similarly, the needs of different genders, people with disabilities, and income levels should be addressed. Taking this into consideration, the initiatives, which I have alluded to before, should hopefully reveal the great capabilities of the Municipality in promoting positive social interaction.

A qualitative addition to the fundamental mission of the Municipality has occurred. Furthermore, the best proof of the worth and effectiveness of the Municipality's initiatives is that residents are persistently demanding its replication and application in other places. Pedestrian paths are a case in point. At the outset, they were heavily criticized but are now requested in old and new neighborhoods alike. A pedestrian path has become a social need and is no longer considered a luxury especially since residents have rediscovered its great impact on development. They also regard it as a solution for many health and physical problems. People neither frown upon walking and sports nor on seeing a woman, groups of women or entire families walking together. In fact, they encourage walking given that safety and positive attitudes have made these paths attractive and in demand.

This is only one aspect of change in the culture of people and the way they view the street. It also signals a return to a societal culture that prevailed in the traditional city where narrow and meandering paths were frequented by women, men and children before dependence on vehicles. It is therefore safe to assume that the residents of Riyadh have become more open to new initiatives. Their trust has consolidated the success of the humanization initiatives and eliminated scepticism. This has brought about a massive transformation in the image of the Municipality, from one that collects fees and fines to one that is more hopeful and forthcoming. As a result, citizens requested more quality projects.

Transformation of the Urban Planning Perspective

The routine and spontaneous handling of the urban planning system has, albeit unintentionally, isolated citizens from the process. Though the system claimed to plan for them, it appeared to have ignored the history of Saudi cities and their population who participated in shaping their environments long before the establishment of municipalities. This was a caveat that the Municipality took note of. Hence, we decided that redressing the situation was essential in order to win over citizens as participants in planning initiatives. They needed to be brought into the process and become actively involved in the urban planning system at large.

The road was fraught with difficulties, however. Negative stereotyping, which was rife on both sides, gave rise to a climate of mistrust and a sense of conflict of interest. As a result, whenever a citizen was frustrated or angered as a result of a problem with an amenity, the Municipality was automatically to blame whether or not that problem was within its domain. To eliminate negative feelings, this troubled relationship had to be rectified by inviting citizens to participate in municipal work at all stages. Participation ranged from planning to implementation. This involved needs assessment, proposing alternatives and building consensus regarding the best alternative based on fulfilling the interests of the majority. Implementation embraced interaction with citizens, encouraging ownership of initiatives, and active and engaged participation. Citizens were welcome even in the evaluation stage which involves feedback on initiatives and activities, and assessing the degree of satisfaction.

One of the examples of participation between the Municipality and the citizens is evidenced in projects involving sidewalks and pedestrian paths. In most cases, the Municipality did not select which sites to upgrade. Rather, it was the citizens themselves who chose certain sites where the infrastructure was poor. The Municipality followed by upgrading and developing the infra- and super-structures thus encouraging people to visit and use the upgraded amenities. This was a successful initiative based on the desires, tendencies and choices of the citizens. Likewise, other initiatives for public plazas and street vendors were generated following people's choices.

Interaction with people according to satisfaction criteria

It was imperative on us to assess and understand the social impacts of the humanization initiative, as well show how it supports social cohesion and enhances communication in modern neighborhoods. Similarly, we highlighted the deepening bonds between the citizens and the municipalities as positive partnerships were forged. We also underscored the introduction of new points

of attraction in the city's neighborhoods in mitigating the negative impacts of prototypical urban developments.

Based on the humanization programs, the Municipality introduced tangible improvements in management systems and adopted novel approaches in municipal project designs. This helped in launching new initiatives of distinct qualities targeting youth, families, women, children and, most importantly, people with special needs. We were also keen to ensure a fair distribution of projects and initiatives throughout the city.

Maximization of the development impact within the limits of available resources

Some may have wondered about the costs of initiatives at a time when the city needed additional resources to implement infrastructure projects, while others may have questioned the relevance of these projects to municipal work. These may seem as legitimate inquiries if we do not highlight the following facts.

First, humanization initiatives form an essential component of infrastructure projects in the city though we were not accustomed to them as part of our urban culture and city life. Second, there is no comparison between the costs of initiatives and other municipal projects, especially if we contrast the paucity of resources needed for its realization, with the positive returns, citizen feedback and interaction it has generated. Third, the implementation of those initiatives did not come at the expense of other urban needs or infrastructure. Fourth, when the initiatives were proposed at the outset, the Municipality did not allocate them special funds under a separate item, but invested what had already been allocated in its budget with a different vision, allocation and implementation style.

Bearing this in mind, the usefulness of the initiatives certainly justifies their importance and feasibility. Pedestrian paths, for instance, were originally sidewalks that were developed by the Municipality as part of street rehabilitation. Sidewalks are a quintessential component of municipal works. However, the Municipality took them to a new level that responded primarily to the needs, desires and concerns of people. Likewise, the removal of the fences around parks and opening them to the residents of neighborhoods made them more appealing to the citizens and their desires, simply by working with what was available and streamlining it. All this has been achieved without extra costs, or the rechannelling of allocations in the municipal budget. Rather, it was the new alternative vision for developing the neighborhood and the street that made it possible.

Our colleagues at the Municipality are aware of these axioms. They also sense the pressure and challenges, as well as the constraints and limited resources that have made us unable to augment our financial resources through raising fees, or searching for financing sources other than our allocations in the general budget. In consequence, we maneuvered within our limits without jeopardizing any of the line items in our budget in order to effectively and fairly fulfil the needs of all citizens.

Given the above, the Municipality team is proud to declare that it has succeeded, by citing the positive outcomes of the initiatives, in establishing them solidly within its principal agenda. The team was also able to convince the Ministry of Finance that the initiatives are within the scope of municipal work.

Adoption of a stimulus policy to effect change

Throughout the implementation phases of the initiatives, I have been keen to show that our vision and orientation was concerned with supporting the interests of the people, developing the socio-economic aspects of their lives, providing balanced opportunities, and sustaining their well-being. Some of these interests coincided with the orientations of the initiatives we offered. As for other initiatives, that appeared to conflict with people's interests, we provided a stimulus package because we believed that they were essential. This proved to be a step in the right direction since it expedited implementation, limited uninformed resistance and garnered popular support.

The development of economic stimuli to effect upgrading efforts made municipal work more acceptable to the citizens. They came to feel that initiatives involving the rehabilitation and upgrading of streets and neighborhoods did not conflict with their interests. This was particularly evident where upgraded sidewalks and pedestrian paths raised the value of real estate, stimulated citizens to frequent those streets, and elevated their profile as commercial venues that allowed for shopping and entertainment in cafes or restaurants. The latter was, furthermore, an outcome of the flexibility demonstrated by the Municipality that relaxed some regulations to allow for using parts of sidewalks for leisure activities.

It is also worth noting that the Municipality was bent on balancing the aforementioned modifications with the developmental goal of regulating the urban fabric, preserving aesthetics, streamlining residential activities, and stimulating landlords to modify their premises voluntarily for their own gain. In other words, development coupled with stimulation, as was the case with consumer protection through regulation of markets and prices; was regarded as positive intervention that was warmly received by citizens and beneficiaries. We also sensed similar reactions as we introduced further regulations to safeguard public health that had a significant impact on the quality of life of citizens.

Upgrading to sustain the development of the city

Many questions were levelled regarding the urban planning orientation of the Municipality, its vision for using public spaces, and the integration of the real needs of the users. As a result, we reviewed our vision starting from the domicile to the street, the main road, the neighborhood, and onward to the components of the city at large. As we scrutinized those spaces, the question lingered as to where do people fit in this chain?

To address this question, one has to study the social attitudes of the users closely, so as to devise ways to merge urban spaces with the city's fabric. In addition, a comprehensive treatment of residential safety, ensuring citizens' rights, guaranteeing their welfare and comfort, ensures the sustainability of the city in a way that does not make future generations vulnerable. Sustainability, which links the past with the present and future, entails rejuvenating the city's heritage while recasting some of its social characteristics in a contemporary mould. By so doing, we are able to fulfil future ambitions and simultaneously mitigate fears of change and innovation. That is exactly, what the humanization of Riyadh sought to accomplish through its initiatives.

Consolidation of communication and the activation of a mechanism for dialogue with citizens

I have always maintained that humanization initiatives should not be condescending. As a result, in collaboration with my colleagues, I strove to elicit, both directly and indirectly, the feedback of all those who dealt with the initiatives. People's opinions were first approached at every development of the initiatives. The humanization initiatives have therefore paved the ground for a constructive and indispensable dialogue between municipal officials and the beneficiaries. Dialogue became institutionalized in field meetings, questionnaires, workshops and public seminars. In consequence, the perspective of humanization emerged as promoting smart development that responds effectively to the various needs of different population groups.

To elaborate further, the multiple impacts of the initiatives were highlighted by encouraging and documenting citizen feedback in unbiased field studies such as the "Satisfaction of Beneficiaries with Municipal Services in Riyadh," completed in 2006 (1427H), and "The Perceived Image of the Riyadh Municipality," completed in 2009 (1430H). Both studies offered valuable insights that reinforced the opportunities for a future in-depth dialogue on humanization. To prepare for that, we have to establish the fundamentals of dialogue to embrace different levels. These include the technical level, represented by academics and specialists, with the aim of identifying the scientific and technical dimensions of the humanization perspective, as well as evaluating both positive and negative applications in Riyadh. Another level includes decision makers, leaders in social work,



intellectuals and purveyors of public opinion so as to reveal the socio-political impact of the humanization perspective, and its value in guiding development strategies in Riyadh and the Kingdom at large. The last level of dialogue reaches out to the beneficiaries, directly concerned with the humanization initiatives, in order to appraise their experiences.

At some future date, it may also be useful to engage in an effective public relations campaign to promote humanization initiatives. This should aim to expand public awareness of the humanization initiatives, without exaggeration, in order to attract more citizen interaction. Such a campaign will reinforce confidence building between the Municipality and citizens and decrease any lingering reservations regarding the humanization initiatives. Finally, a new relationship between different municipal bodies and the media which is based on transparency, national interest and constructive dialogue will have to be reformulated for the good of the city.

Social responsibility and partnerships building

There are those who claim that the Municipality interferes in the details of citizens' daily lives from cradle to grave. Though this is partly true, the fact is that the Municipality has overlooked some social needs in the wake of its construction works. The advent of the humanization perspective established that municipal missions are premised on positive interaction and cooperation with citizens, who are partners in sharing a common responsibility in development and future growth. This probably explains the Municipality's enthusiasm for municipal elections. Indeed, the successful preparation and execution of elections merits its own documentation at some future date.

Partnerships have dictated an alternative path to planning, executing and evaluating the outcomes of municipal work. Alternative paths sensed the pulse of the citizens and established the compatibility of existing human activities, both formal and informal, with rules and regulations. It also called for an analysis of the attitudes and social norms governing the interaction with public spaces, visions and preferences for amenities, in addition to pleasing aesthetics. By synthesizing the findings, we were able to innovate and initiate new activities and periodic events that appealed to all.

Social responsibility was the sine qua non for realizing the goals of humanization. It is a defining responsibility that reflects the partnership between different levels: citizens and the Municipality, private and non-government organizations and the Municipality, as well as other government entities and the Municipality. Experience shows that investing in such partnerships is effective in giving depth to the initiatives, and transforming humanization to a compelling mind set for those who opt to invest in similar initiatives.



The Riyadh Municipality Strategy
2012-2022

Riyadh
People
and Place

A Comprehensive View of the Long
Term Future

The Riyadh Municipality Strategy 2012-2022

Riyadh People and Place

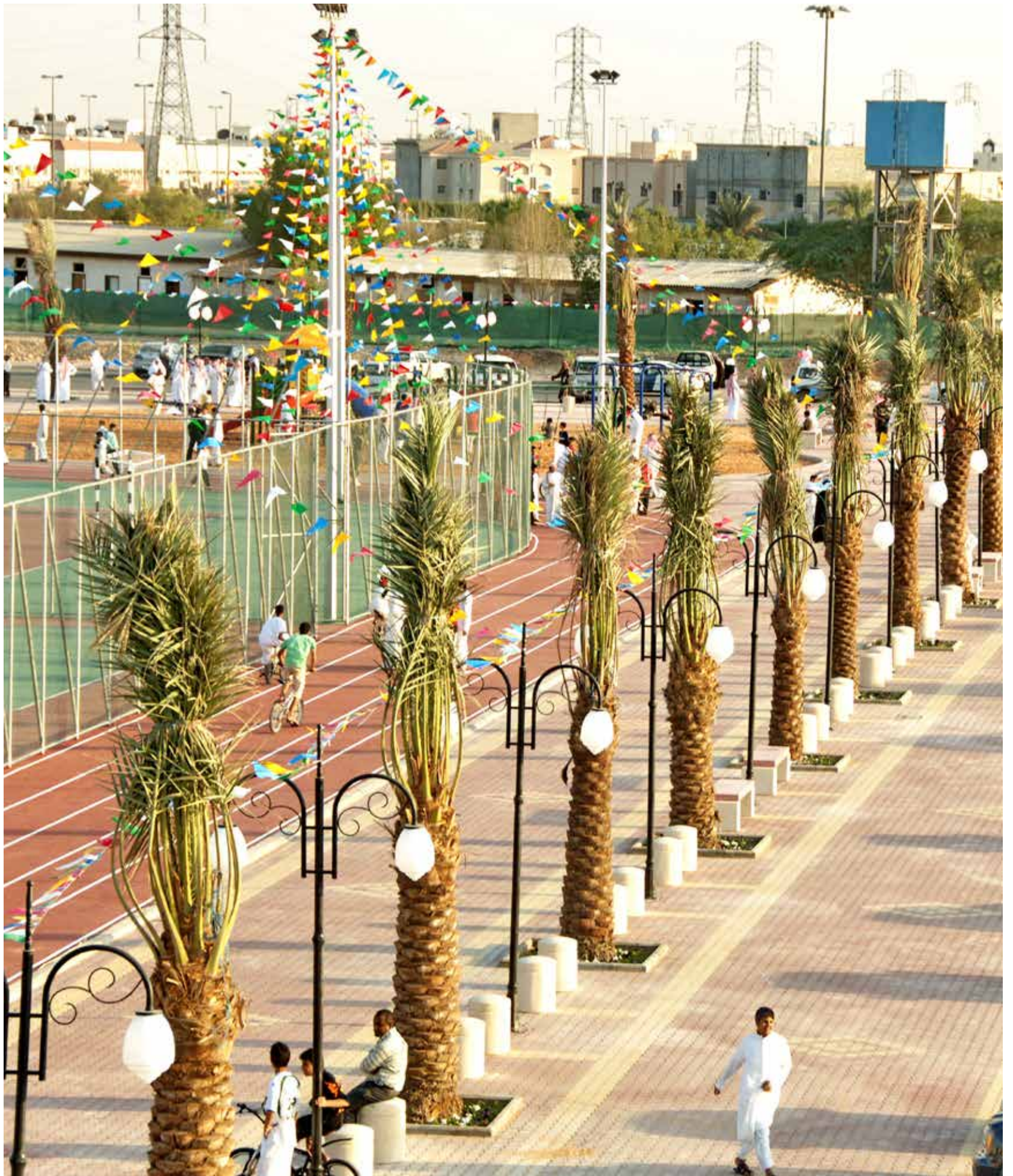
A Comprehensive View of the Long Term Future

In 1992 (1415H), I entitled my PhD dissertation, “Bridging the Gap: Centralization versus. Decentralization in the Saudi Municipal Planning System, and Its Impact on the Physical Environment.” It was preceded, and followed, by extensive research and teaching in the same field over a period of 15 years. In addition to my time in academia, during my 15 years’ experience at the Municipality, I had another chance to apply what I have learned and believed in. Furthermore, in my deliberations with the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, I was exposed to the push and pull between centralization and decentralization, discussed the need for financial independence in the municipal sector, highlighted the absence of public participation in municipal decisions and proposed the human dimension as a fundamental component of municipal work.

Being aware that strategic planning and management have become essential tools employed by all organizations to attain distinctive levels of performance and operational upgrading in order to respond to pressing needs across the board; I set out to realize some important ambitions. These included modernizing and developing the organizational structure of the Municipality, providing it with effective human resources, ensuring the adequacy and growth of its financial resources, upgrading its technical base, offering municipal services that exceed the beneficiaries’ expectations; and finally, strongly contributing to sustainable development. Along with my colleagues at the Municipality, we reckoned that all of these could only be achieved through a comprehensive and bold futuristic vision and a long-term institutional strategic plan. Once completed, the plan aimed to bring about a qualitative shift in the performance of the Municipality to match the development boom in the Kingdom, as well as make municipal projects more distinctive and pioneering.

The Municipality prepared this long-term Strategic Plan (2012-2032) entitled: “Riyadh: The Human Being and the Place”, to upgrade the services provided for six million inhabitants in a geographical area covering 380 square kilometers, while taking into consideration its rapid growth. The following are the major premises of the Strategic Plan.

- The principal ruling system in the Kingdom
- The system of provinces in the Kingdom



- The development plans in the Kingdom
- Municipal work strategy in the Kingdom
- Rules and regulations of municipal work in the Kingdom
- The Comprehensive Strategic Plan for Riyadh under the National Urban Strategy
- The National Urban Strategy
- Comparison of best practices, strategic applications, in addition to regional and international experiences in municipal work
- Municipal leadership visions

The Strategic Plan reviewed best practices, similar regional and international experiments, and contrasted eight cities based on criteria included in the municipal legislative framework. It proposed a framework for action, a model for governance, municipal independence, institutional development and performance management. Other proposals also tackled crisis and disaster management, human resources, the financial management system, sustainable development of the local society, technical performance, partnerships with the local community and rapid urban development.

The Strategic Plan identified major strategic issues by analysing the gaps between the status quo and what was projected for the future. The plan proposed that success would accrue from decentralization in municipal decision making, financial and administrative municipal independence, improved rules and regulations of municipal work, institutional and regulatory municipal reform, as well as the diversification of financial resources. Success would also result from upgrading the technical base, partnerships with the private sector, human resource development, reinforcing relations with relevant government bodies, growth in the degree of satisfaction of the beneficiaries of municipal services, citizen contributions to municipal service delivery; and finally, effective participation in realizing the socio-economic development of Riyadh.

The Strategic Plan was rooted in the many initiatives launched by the Municipality incorporating futuristic visions and including an implementation program. The Action Plan identified the municipal organizational and regulatory framework, analysed the transactional and internal macro and micro environments, and concluded with a strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis. The analysis of the internal environment, in particular, yielded the axes of the

Strategic Plan which are detailed as follows:

- **The regulatory and planning axis**
- **The human axis**
- **The financial axis**
- **The service axis**
- **The technical axis**
- **The development axis**
- **The strategic axis**

The strategic vision aimed to develop a paradigm for an effective local administration that can act both as a reference and a role model. This was made possible by a human orientation that emphasized the importance of people as the cornerstone for development. The vision also translated into a comprehensive development document which tackled capacity building and the improvement of municipal regulations and work rules. The strategic goals are detailed as follows:

1- Modernizing and upgrading the regulatory base

- Institutionalizing the planning process
- Upgrading the organizational structure
- Upgrading the financial and administrative systems
- Upgrading institutional performance
- Consolidation of relations with relevant bodies

2- Provision of adequate and effective human resources

- Institutional planning for human resources
- Development of human resource administration
- Upgrading the performance of human resources
- Provision of an attractive professional environment

3- Realization of adequate and growing financial resources

- Development and diversification of municipal revenues
- Diversification of investment opportunities

4- Modernization and development of the technical support base

- Modernization of the municipal technical infrastructure
- Development of the municipal technical policies
- Development of technical applications and electronic interfaces

5- Provision of municipal services surpassing the beneficiaries' expectations

- Focusing on the beneficiaries
- Development and modernization of municipal services

6- Effective participation in sustainable development

- Participation in realizing a balanced urban development throughout Riyadh Province
- Participation in developing socio-economic and environmental aspects throughout Riyadh Province

7- Development of systems and regulations

- Achievement of administrative and financial independence
- Effective contribution to the development of municipal work regulations

Municipality Initiatives

The Municipality has launched several initiatives in its different administrations and sub-municipalities. These initiatives advocate upgrading procedures, performance and services. They also seek to build on strengths, rectify weaknesses, face challenges and promote positive thinking pertaining to Municipality strategy.

The various initiatives include citations of all the previous initiatives which have either been implemented by the Municipality or are still in progress. The strategic management of the initiatives included in the Strategic Plan will help activate, evaluate and fine tune its performance over the long term. The following is a list of the initiatives.

Category	Related Initiatives
Initiatives for the development of the General Administration of Female Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishing the Women’s Unit in the Municipality ● Developing the functions of the Women’s Unit ● Transforming the Women’s Unit to a General Administration for Women’s Services to be followed by an Agency for Women’s Services
Initiatives for establishing novel or independent units in the Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishing a Traffic Engineering Administration ● Establishing a General Administration for Investment ● Establishing a Unit for Sub-Municipalities ● Establishing a Center for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) ● Establishing a Call Center for Emergencies (940) ● Establishing an Urban Observatory for the district of Riyadh ● Establishing a Consulting Unit for the Cooperation with Academics and Consultants in the Development of the Municipality
Initiatives for the organization of festivals, celebrations, activities, and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organizing Eid celebrations ● Organizing Riyadh Spring Festival ● Organizing the Flower Festival and Shows ● Organizing the Productive Families’ Festival ● Organizing the Farmers’ Day ● Organizing cultural events and activities (plays and community shows)
Initiatives for archiving and documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Archiving and documenting photos of Riyadh ● Electronic archiving initiatives. ● Documentation of circulars ● Press files.

Category	Related Initiatives
Development of general administration initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the service agent desk • Development of the General Administration for Environmental Health • Development of the General Administration for Parks and Environmental Architecture • Development of General Administration for Hygiene • Development of the General Administration for Studies and Design • Development of the General Administration for Implementation and Supervision
Technical initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic municipality project • Project for software and linking sub-municipalities • Municipalities-linkage project • Preparation of the comprehensive strategic plan for information • Operation and maintenance of the Information Technology Center • Establishing an office for the project management of electronic services • Developing the Municipality website • Establishing the electronic services portal
Development of parks and environmental architecture initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy for greening Riyadh (2004-2009) • Development studies for parks and environmental architecture in Riyadh • Construction of large parks and expanding tree planting initiatives

Category	Related Initiatives
Development initiatives for city clean-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishing Municipal Waste Management System in Riyadh (MWMSR) for supervising clean-up projects ● Action plan for damaged cars ● Tracking system for clean-up of vehicles ● The “million” clean-up program ● Initiative for the clean-up chamber ● Development of garbage dumps ● Development of garbage bins ● Garbage management system for transitional plants
Initiatives for developing the health of the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Monitor” project for health monitors ● Health protection project ● “Warning” project for alerting against floods and watersheds ● “Contribute” project for Riyadh restaurants ● Standardization of fencing of operational and closed graveyards ● Establishment of emergency unit for environmental health ● Launching awareness campaigns (food safety, safe haircuts, etc.) ● Comprehensive surveys and evaluation of shops and premises ● Construction of specialized laboratories ● Mobile laboratories
Initiatives for developing market operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Initiative for the localization of shops, fruit and vegetable markets ● Construction of new markets and assigning sales outlets ● Establishment of new free-of-charge locations for street vendors

Category	Related Initiatives
Initiatives for developing social services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishing the Al-Marwa Center for people with special needs ● Establishing special building codes for urban amenities, sidewalks and car parks for people with special needs
Initiatives for developing urban planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central control project for monitoring buildings ● Instant issuance of licenses ● Preparation of environmental survey project ● Monitoring and aerial surveys project ● Initiative for relocating mosques to main thoroughfares ● Organization of signs on main thoroughfares ● Construction of pedestrian paths up to 60 kms ● Reinforcing the human dimension in Riyadh ● Preparation and adoption procedures for land subdivision plans ● Building standards and criteria for residential neighborhoods ● Urban renewal of old neighborhoods ● Technical assistance for monitoring land subdivisions ● Documentation and archiving of urban planning data ● Technical assistance for developing the operations of the building licenses department ● Computerization program for transactions and procedures ● Labelling and numbering guidebook

Category	Related Initiatives
Initiatives for the development of operations and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monitoring of quality control in concrete pre-fab factories in Riyadh ● Managing and maintenance of the road and highway system in Riyadh ● Managing the flood drainage and subterranean water systems in Riyadh ● Tunnel monitoring system ● Emergency flood control plans
Initiatives for administrative development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Issuing the regulations guidebook of the Municipality ● Issuing the regulations guidebook for the newly-conceived units ● Study for determining the training needs for all the Municipality employees ● Study for establishing a special training center for the Municipality ● Development of computer training programs ● Developing 17 training programs accredited by the Ministry of Civil Service for internal training in the Municipality
Initiatives of the Supreme Committee for the Protection of the Environment in the different departments of the Riyadh Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Application of restrictions on the negative impacts of electromagnetic waves ● Mitigation of eyesores and improvement of the visual character of the city ● Location of containers program ● Program for hygiene ● Program for constructing new garbage landfills ● Rehabilitation of the old garbage landfill in Okaz ● The clean-up program for the wildlife habitat ● Program for establishing dumps for oil and petroleum derivatives and other hazardous wastes ● Implementing a pilot project for sorting solid waste ● Establishing a city-wide system for integrated waste management

Category	Related Initiatives
<p>Initiatives of the Supreme Committee for the Protection of the Environment (Contd)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activation of grey water recycling in compounds ● Protection, cleaning and exploitation of valleys and watersheds ● The construction of 100 municipal squares in Riyadh ● Monitoring the use of pesticides and controlling its effects ● Tree planting plan for Riyadh
<p>Initiatives of the Supreme Committee for the Protection of the Environment involving the collaboration of the Riyadh Municipality with other bodies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monitoring of air quality control ● Program for monitoring side effects of air pollution ● Program for reducing noise and controlling its sources ● Program for benefitting from wastewater and sludge treatment ● Program for treatment of medical waste ● Program for reducing rising ground water levels ● Program for monitoring water quality ● Program for the follow-up and rehabilitation of the wastewater dump stations ● Program for the protection and development of the wildlife development areas ● Program for the protection, and regulating the use of farmland ● Launching a botanical garden in Riyadh ● Program for monitoring and developing wildlife markets ● Plan for improving the environmental conditions in South Riyadh





أمانة منطقة الرياض
وكسالة المشاسنة
الإدارة العامة للأرمان والسلافة

مركز خان الخياط، العجادي وشركاه لتتمور
٢٨١٨٠٤ / ٥٥٢١٨٠٨٠٤

تمور القصيم الفاخرة
من مزارعنا بالقصيم يوم

٥٥٢١٨٠٨٠٤

بازار التمور

القصيم

٥٥٢١٨٠٨٠٤

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تمور القصيم الفاخرة
٥٥٢١٨٠٨٠٤

Conclusion

Conclusion

Better and More are Possible

Launching the humanization programs and overseeing their success and sustainability entailed the existence of a vision, plans and mechanisms for implementation. Partnerships with major stakeholders were also essential. Those included enthusiastic teams of municipal professionals, main beneficiaries and citizens, as well as large sectors of public and private interests. In short, the humanization programs should be viewed as societal stakeholder projects, but not as personal or municipal projects. They are projects for both a society and a city, and as such, their success hinges on continuous feedback that elicits the desires of the people.

The municipal sector is a promising sector that is distinct from other service sectors. Its management and performance are characterized by four aspects that seldom exist in any other sectors combined. First, its modus operandi and organizational structure are based on administrative decentralization and financial independence, at least theoretically. Second, its geographical presence extends over regions, provinces and cities throughout the Kingdom, so that it is felt on the ground. Third, it is a sector which is open for community participation in decision making through institutional and regulated mechanisms in municipal councils, half of which are elected. Fourth, its pioneering of a special Women's Unit administered by over 600 trained and qualified female professionals, may be unique to Riyadh with respect to size and implementation mechanisms. These factors highlight the distinctiveness of the municipal sector and its ability to undertake more, beautiful and better, projects provided there is a will to develop and support them.

What the Municipality has accomplished through the numerous and various initiatives mentioned in this book, and others which will no doubt be covered in future publications; is by no means the ultimate in its ambitions. It is only a harbinger of what is yet to come so that it may achieve better and more. The Municipality wants to deliver a positive and clear message that it is capable of meeting the high ambitions of the citizens. As a result, the Municipality has undertaken initiatives that not only serve as stepping stones for a better future, but also signal the urgent need to upgrade the mechanisms of municipal functions in ways that are generally alien thus far to the agendas of municipalities.

The restructuring and rehabilitation of Prince Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Road (Tahliya), or Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Road, where attention was given to paving, tree-planting, regulation of advertisement and shop signs, are examples of finesse and discipline that have rendered both





thoroughfares more beautiful. Likewise, the Eid and national celebrations, the municipal squares, the King Salman Science Oases Neighborhoods initiative, open public parks with capacities for a million people, and other initiatives referred to in this book, are successful projects that prove that the municipal sector is capable of distinguished accomplishments. It also proves that it is capable of launching quality initiatives and changing administrative and financial modes of operation in the municipal sector

This could not have been achieved, however, without a sustained effort to ensure the administrative and financial independence of municipalities so that it can manage its resources and encourage investment through different channels. Municipalities need to support the municipal councils to safeguard and facilitate their participation in municipal decisions, as well. This is based on a conviction that the councils constitute a unique and qualitative human resource which is rare to find in other service sectors.

The Municipality's experience with the humanization programs was a tough but a happy journey, both for me and my municipal colleagues. The journey is still long and ongoing since there is a lot yet to be accomplished. Our experience has proven that we can continue in a sustained manner because there are initiatives that need to be replicated, and others that need support, while others are still on paper waiting to be realized. Thanks to Allah, the Municipality has become an incubator for development ideas and initiatives by men and women. There is also a new spirit spreading



throughout its corridors that is willing to take up challenges to serve the citizens of Riyadh and improve their lives and make them easier.

Despite the achievements, however, there is a need for a fresh drive to strengthen humanization in order to establish its best practices and expand the reach of its benefits throughout Riyadh. This is a mission for the future and I am confident that we have capable cadres who will realize it.

To conclude, I hope this book helps to trigger an insightful and lively debate on the future of the Saudi capital, especially given that the humanization effort has just started and will therefore need more development and expansion. I am equally hopeful that there will be a deepening of the bonds between the people and their municipal institutions in a way that will ensure the sustenance of successful partnerships. Extending the impact of humanization throughout the city administration and development plans to serve citizens honestly, facilitate their lives and make them happier, is another supreme mandate. And, since God has ordained man as a successor on earth, we should work enthusiastically to develop, realize and preserve this for the welfare of all.



Date and place of birth: Riyadh 1959 (1378H)

- Chairman, Board of King Salman Charity Housing Foundation.
- Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors, Ar-Riyadh Philanthropic Society for Science.
- Chairman, the Board of Trustees, Prince Sultan University.
- Chairman, the Board of the Center for Local Governance, Prince Sultan University.
- Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Albir Association in Riyadh and Chairman of the Executive Committee.
- Member of the Board of Directors, the Diriyah Gate Development Authority.
- Member of the Constituent Council, the Development the center of Riyadh.
- Member of the Constituent Council of Qiddiya Project.
- Member of the Constituent Council of Neom City Project.

Academic Qualifications:

- BSc. Architecture, King Saud University, (1981).
- M. Arch, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia USA,(1985).
- Masters in Urban Planning, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia USA (1987).
- PhD in Urban and Regional Planning, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia USA (1992).

Areas of Specialization:

- Architecture and Urban planning.
- Centralization and decentralization in planning and municipal work, local governance, city and municipal management.

Previous Positions:

- Mayor of Ar-Riyadh (1997-2012).
- Secretary General of the High Commission for the Development of Ar-Riyadh.
- Chairman, Municipal Council of Riyadh.
- CEO of Ar-Riyadh Construction Company.
- CEO of Al-Moeqliah Company (Ar-Riyadh Holding).
- Member of the Advisory Board of the Arab Organization for Cities.
- Chairman of the Tourist Development Council of Riyadh.
- Member of the Board of Trustees of the Arab Urban Development Institute, Ar-Riyadh.
- General Supervisor of the Coordination Council of the Philanthropic Societies of Riyadh.
- Member of the board, Saudi Umran Society.
- Chairman of the Urban Planning Department, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, King Saud University.



Prince Dr. Abdulaziz bin Mohammad bin Ayyaf Al Mogren

Orders of Merit and Awards:

- The Order of King Abdulaziz 1420H (2000).
- Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Award for the Most Distinct Arab Administrator 1424H (2004).
- Best Arab Mayor Award 1430H (2009).
- Excellence Awards (Middle East CEO Excellence Awards Institute) in Dubai 1432H (2011).

Awards granted to the Municipality of Riyadh under his Mayorship:

- Arab Cities Organization Award for the Greening of the City in 1423H (2003).
- The Ministry of Finance Award for launching the Sadad System of Electronic Payments, 1427H (2007).
- King Abdullah II Award for Creativity, for Ar-Riyadh: A Pedestrian-Friendly City, 1427H (2007).
- Award for Environmental Management in Arab Cities (shared with Abu Dhabi), 1429H (2008).
- Award of Outstanding Achievement in Geographical Information Systems (GIS), 1429H (2008).
- Global Award for Vital Societies in recognition of the Humanization of the City, 1430H (2009).
- Award of the Best Entertainment Projects in the Arab Region in recognition of the King Abdullah International Parks, 1430H (2009).
- Prince Sultan bin Salman Award for Urban Heritage in recognition of the Enhancement of the Human Dimension in Riyadh, 1431H (2010).
- Cityscape Institute Award for the Best Sustainable Development of the King Abdullah International Parks 1431H (2010).
- The completion of e-government transactions Award, Communications and Information Mobilization Authority (National Economic Promotion Branch) for the issuance of an immediate construction license in Riyadh, 1431H (2010).

This book

“Humanization” is a term which is relatively unknown. References to the “humanization of cities” generally raised inquiries regarding content and meaning. Years ago, this was the case, however now that accomplishments are coming to the fore the term has become more acceptable and appreciated.

At the beginning of the implementation of the “humanization” programs, some thought it will divert the Municipality away from its fundamental missions to other unfamiliar priorities, however much they were needed. By investing time and effort, the Municipality succeeded in achieving various positive accomplishments which added to the concept of municipal work, and impacted other areas in the Kingdom without sacrificing any of its core missions.

“The Human Being First,” was not a shining slogan, but a goal to upgrade the human being and the environment. Walking through a network of pedestrian paths spread all over the neighborhoods of Riyadh became possible. Cultural programs including theater, publications and activities became popular. Spreading happiness in feasts and events became a duty. Establishing municipal places for the youth and families became a positive development. Finally, attending to the historic heritage of the city, as well as the parks permeating it, became imperative.

This book reviews the program of “Humanization” in Riyadh, how it started and developed, and offers it as a model which will hopefully be replicated. This is important since the human dimension needs to be enhanced in our cities in the wake of their rapid urban development.

Some of the initiatives included in this book were reviewed in the film *Ansanat al Mudun* (Humanization of Cities), which won the Best Film Award for a Saudi city at the Saudi Film Festival in its fourth session, 1438H (2017).



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