

Al Aqaba Charrette Booklet

July 23rd - 29th, 2011



Rebuilding Alliance



Prepared by Steve Coyle, Town-Green.com
and Donna Baranski-Walker, Rebuilding Alliance
with Daniel Dunigan



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Rebuilding Alliance 178 South Boulevard, San Mateo, CA 94402 U.S.A.
p: 1 (650) 325-4663 f: 1 (650) 325-4667 e: contact@RebuildingAlliance.org
www.RebuildingAlliance.org



The Villagers of Al Aqaba
are ready to
return home
to build their houses
on the land
they own.

These are views from the plot sites, near Al Aqaba's famous kindergarten and mosque, at the center of the village. Each landowner has carefully walled their plot. The village has installed cement cisterns to store water near each future home. Many families have built animal shelters, planted olive trees and are farming.



Across the valley, the Israeli Army maintains an active training area. Though it has complied with court order and no longer uses the village for live fire training, the Israeli Army has issued demolition orders against 97% of the Village.



Charrette Results: Affordable, Expandable Homes



Front exposure: 119 sq.m.

Each lot includes area for the family's olive orchard, garden, a cistern for water storage, and sanitary waste disposal. Some lots also include farmland.

Designed by Architect Hani Hassan, the first "Rebuilding to Remain" families chose 3 bedroom, 119 sq.m. homes to build on the land that they own in Al Aqaba (front and back shown here).



Back exposure: 119 sq.m.



Optional 2nd floor addition

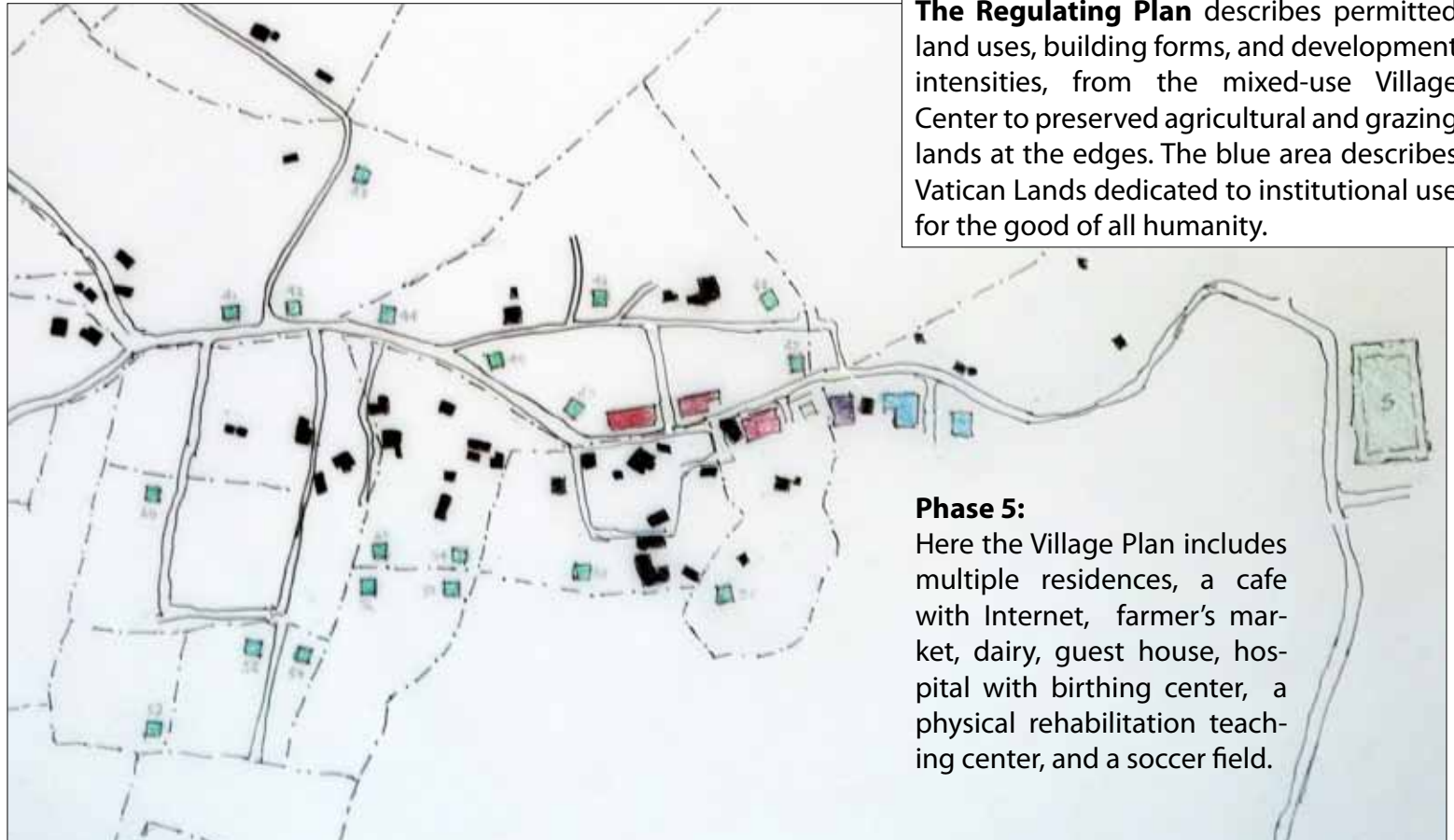
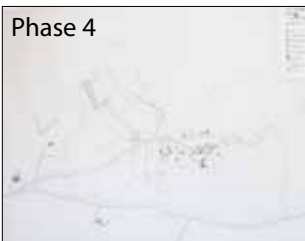
Families may add a second floor at their own expense, providing a full upstairs living unit with kitchen.

Charrette Results: Phased Village Plan



Phases 1-4:

The first phases of the Village Plan begin with three "Homes with Dignity" in Phase 1, then increase the number of homes and types of development, phase by phase, from residential to commercial/mixed-use, and institutional buildings.



The Regulating Plan describes permitted land uses, building forms, and development intensities, from the mixed-use Village Center to preserved agricultural and grazing lands at the edges. The blue area describes Vatican Lands dedicated to institutional use for the good of all humanity.

Phase 5:

Here the Village Plan includes multiple residences, a cafe with Internet, farmer's market, dairy, guest house, hospital with birthing center, a physical rehabilitation teaching center, and a soccer field.

Acknowledgments

Rebuilding Alliance, 178 South Boulevard, San Mateo, CA 94402 U.S.A.

The Charrette Project Teams

Village Team: Haj Sami Sadeq - Mayor, Head of Village Council
Sadeq Sbaih, Assistant, Chef Saleh Abdullah Moustafa

Organizing Team:

Donna Baranski-Walker - Founder & Executive Director, RebuildingAlliance.org
Dilan Roe - Program Manager
Sameh Abboushi, Ghassan Abdullah - Advisers
Ayat Omran and We'am Hamdan, Interpreters
Khalil Saadeh, Media Adviser

Charrette Fundraising Team: Rudy SanMiguel, Güler Özgenç, Maurice Jacobsen, Hannah Thompson, Carin Pacifico, Eloise Duvillier, Souzan Jaber, Martin Fong

Architectural Design Team: Steve Coyle - Charrette Leader, Co-founder of the National Charrette Institute (www.charretteinstitute.org),
Co-founder, Town-Green (www.town-green.com)

Hani Hassan - Lead Architect, Hani Hassan Architects, Ramallah
Saed Salahat, Saed Salahat Engineering Co., Tubas
Ribhi Sawafta - Structural Engineer

Film Team: Maurice Jacobsen - Producer/Director

Khalil Shriem - Production Coordinator, Kali Rubaii - Production Assistant

Diplomacy Team: Souzan Jaber - Rebuilding Alliance Board Member,
Eloise Duvillier, Rebuilding Alliance Intern

Social Media: Güler Özgenç

Crowd Source Mapping Team: Yannick Cornet, Léa Park

Web Design: Video Free America: Skip Sweeny, Roger Jones, Cody Meeks

Graphic Artist: Hatem Shaqfa

Community Art Charrette: Faten Toubassi, Hala AsSayed

Legal Counsel: Mohammed Rabie, esq.,

Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center (JLAC)

Human Rights NGOs and Agencies: BIMKOM: Planners for Planning Rights, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA oPt), Peace Now

Special Thanks: RIWAQ: Center for Architectural Conservation

Architecture Design

Homes with Dignity

provided pro bono by Hani Hassan Architects

Ramallah, Palestine

Engineering Specifications

Said Salahat Engineering

Ramallah, Palestine

YouTube Film Series

by Maurice Jacobsen, independent filmmaker

Al Aqaba Charrette, Chapter 1 Video July 24th, 2011

Al Aqaba Charrette, Chapter 2 Video July 25, 2011

Al Aqaba Charrette, Chapter 3 Video July 26, 2011

Al Aqaba Charrette, Chapter 4 Video July 27, 2011

Al Aqaba Charrette, Chapter 5 Video July 28, 2011

Al Aqaba Charrette, Chapter 6 Video August 18, 2011

by Hala AsSayed, provided pro bono

Al Aqaba Charrette, Chapter 7 Building Dreams (Arabic & English)

Graphic Design

Rebuilding to Remain Campaign

Hatem Shaqfa, Ramallah

Building Permit Application of the Al Aqaba Village Council

drafted by Attorney Rabie H Rabie

graphic design by Hatem Shaqfa

Table of Contents:

- Need and Charrette Results 2-4

- Acknowledgements 5

- Introduction. 7
 - The Goal 8
 - Long Term Benefit 8
 - Issues and Challenges 8
 - Project Objectives 9
 - Rebuilding Alliance and Al Aqaba Village .10

- The Charrette 12-27
 - Pre-Charrette Planning14
 - Day 1 Presentations16
 - Day 4 Presentations20
 - Day 6 and Day 7 Finales 23-25
 - Day 8 and 9 Closing26

- In Summary28

- Appendices:
 - A) Village Plans30
 - B) House Designs32
 - C) Community Art Charrette (Aug)34
 - D) Rebuilding to Remain Presentation. . .36



Introduction

“In order to do something big
— to think globally
and act globally —
one starts with something small
and one starts where it counts.”

– Oxford Professor Nabeel Hamdi

char•rette |shu-ret| *noun* an intensive multiple-day iterative design event in which designers, engineers, community members and others create a feasible plan to overcome significant constraints.

Introduction:

This Charrette Booklet presents the outcomes of an Architectural Design Charrette organized by Rebuilding Alliance from July 26th to July 29th, 2011 with the Palestinian West Bank Village of Al Aqaba, near Tubas in the Jordan Valley, Area C.

The Goal

Create a viable, peaceful future for the Village of Al Aqaba. The first step is to design, with direct community involvement, reproducible homes built with local labor and materials, through affordable \$15,000 mortgages matched by donated down payments. This process was chronicled daily and produced designs, drawings, construction strategies, a financing plan, and a detailed town plan with many options.

Long Term Benefit

Palestinians are entitled to their collective right to plan towns and issue building permits on the land they own — just like towns anywhere in the world. Al Aqaba's example provides a blueprint, a way to secure appropriate planning to meet the needs of the 70,000 Palestinians who live in the 62% of the West Bank that is administered solely by Israel, known as "Area C." Al Aqaba's housing development plan, created to world-class standards, will be a catalyst for community organizing, equal rights, and fair housing.



Al Aqaba's kindergarten, elementary school and the nearby Salahudin Al Ayyubi Mosque in the shape of a peace sign with a double minaret.

Issues and Challenges

Palestinian families are prohibited from building on their own land in "Area C." Since 1967 the Israeli Army demolished over 24,800 Palestinian homes, displaced more than 180,300 people, and built Israeli-only settlements on land that belongs to Palestinian families. Demolition orders now blanket the Jordan Valley: over 12,500 demolition orders have been issued by the Israeli Army against Palestinian homes, schools and shops because the Israeli Army refuses to issue building permits.

97% of the Village of Al Aqaba, a small West Bank Palestinian Village located in the Jordan Valley, is under demolition order for lack of unattainable building permits. The other 148 Palestinian villages in "Area C" face demolition orders too like this too.

To assure their future, Al Aqaba Village initiated a sustainable community development plan, working with Rebuilding Alliance to bring architects, engineers, families, the village council, and media together in July 2011 for an "architectural design

charrette”, . Families, ready to build homes on their land despite the risks, need good, affordable building design, village planning, mortgage financing, and solid advocacy to build a future.

“If you want to envision neighborliness, Al Aqaba is good. 17 countries, agencies have come, visited and liked what they saw enough to invest. We believe in peace. Share our dream, help us grow!”

- Haj Sami Sadeq, Head of Al Aqaba Village Council

Project Objectives

- Design an “Expandable Eco-friendly Prototype Home” for three models to twenty or more. The Design Team must sign-off that the home will be built for an affordable total cost made up of village investment, \$15,000 in mortgage financing, donated down payments and the family’s work to finish the home. While the first three homes will use the same design, future construction may include smaller “starter” homes for newly married couples. Families may, at their own expense, add 2nd stories.
- Work with an award-winning Palestinian architect and include the local community in the design process. Draw upon the professional engineering office that is trusted by the community, with experience in similar projects and a good reputation.
- Tell the story of the village through the charrette, blogging and posting films on the Internet.
- Develop a “Village Plan” describing the preferred growth patterns, in layers reflecting the competing contingencies of occupation, diplomacy, and financing.
- Build understanding and change policy to assure Al Aqaba Village its right to issue building permits in accordance with its town plan, as a model for the 149 Palestinian villages in Area C.



Al Aqaba Village aerial map showing demolition orders issued by the Israeli Army against homes, kindergarten, mosque, medical clinic and animal stables. The blue areas are zoned as “State Land.” This area is currently administered solely by the Israeli Army.

Rebuilding Alliance & Al Aqaba

Rebuilding Alliance is an American non-governmental organization dedicated to rebuilding war-torn communities and making them safe. Our vision is a just and enduring peace in Israel and Palestine, founded upon equal value, security and opportunity for all.

In 2003, Rebuilding Alliance received a small grant to build a school that would not be demolished. We selected Al Aqaba village, anticipating this would be our safest project because:

- This village was far from borders, no settlements were nearby at that time.
- Al Aqaba is deeply committed to peace despite their tragedy. From 1982-2002, the Israeli Army used Al Aqaba Village for live-fire training exercises, bursting into homes without provocation. 12 Villagers were killed, 36 wounded. Yet the villagers, led by Mayor



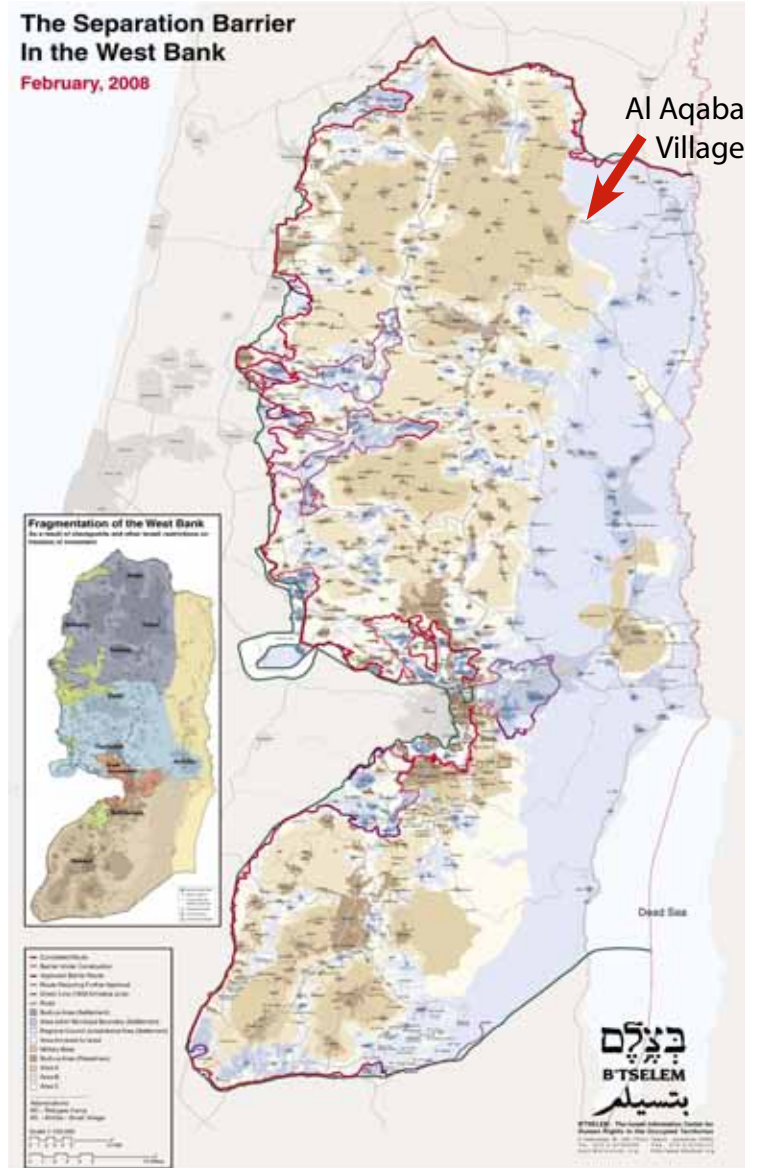
Rebuilding Alliance Founder Donna Baranski-Walker and Mayor Haj Sami Sadeq Sbah, long-term commitment

Haj Sami Sadeq, paraplegic and in a wheelchair from the age of 16, deeply believe in justice and peace.

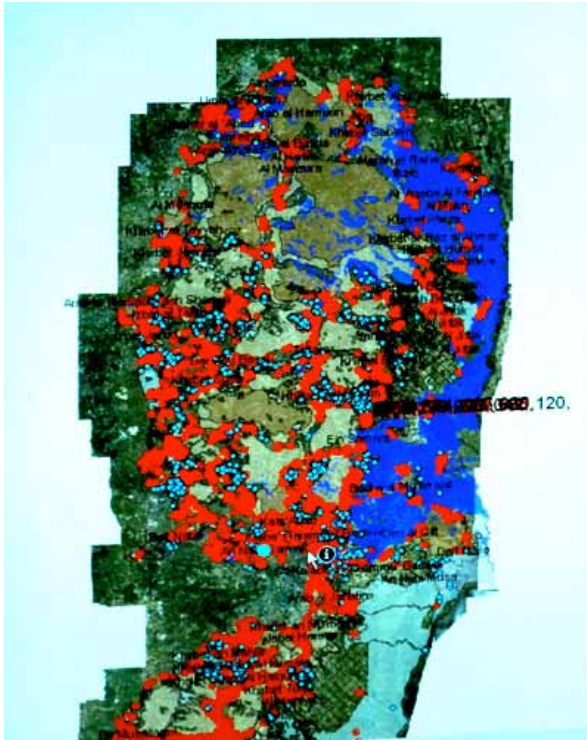
- In 2002, the Al Aqaba villagers won their case before the Israeli High Court. The Israeli Army complied and moved the Army training camp out of the village! Villagers were ready to move home and they asked Rebuilding Alliance to help them expand their kindergarten.

The Al Haq Kindergarten now serves 130 students from all the neighboring areas! The Japanese, Belgians, and Norwegians paid for the 2nd Floor! Rebuilding Alliance (RA) brought Mayor Haj Sami with Shmuel Groag of BIMKOM to speak to Congress, and visited churches, mosques, and synagogues in 6 states, raising funds to add a 3rd floor. Recently, RA added the Ibn Rush'd Library, helped complete housing for visiting teachers and brought the first two visiting English teachers to Al Aqaba. Some 17 other embassies, UN Agencies, and NGO's have invested in Al Aqaba because of that kindergarten!

As we were building the kindergarten, the whole village came under demolition order: the mosque, the medical clinic, nearly all the homes and the kindergarten. Rebuilding Alliance helped Al Aqaba hire a lawyer to petition the Israeli High Court. We developed a Contact Congress Campaign to engage the assistance of the U.S. Congress. We persevered.



Regional Map of Israel and the Palestinian West Bank with the Jordan River at right



What do 12,500 demolition orders look like? Red, like a cancer. This is Israeli Army data received by the Israeli Human Rights Group, BIMKOM: Planners for Planning Rights, showing the top of the “kidney bean” that forms the West Bank



What does one home demolition look like? Until Sep. 15th, 2011 this was a three family home, on the outskirts of Al Aqaba.



On April 7, 2011, the Israeli Army destroyed Al Aqaba’s Peace Road, the road that the school bus uses to bring Jordan Valley children to school. On May 15, 2011, Al Aqaba repaved Peace Road. On Sep. 15, 2011, the Israeli Army destroyed Peace Road. On Sep. 25th , Al Aqaba reopened Peace Road





View northwest, towards Al Aqaba Village's center situated at the crest of the hill, with the mosque's minaret at right.



A typical Al Aqaba Village house with concrete or stone walls. Many families own one or more cows, sheep, goats, or donkeys.



An unfinished Al Aqaba house and a shed for milk cows at left. Rebuilding Alliance will raise financing to complete the house.



View east on the east side of Al Aqaba Village center with the Vatican land area beyond. The limestone rocks, boulders, and outcropping are pervasive in the area.



Al Aqaba's kindergarten, built by Rebuilding Alliance, has become a mixed-use building. Ground floor: the kindergarten and Mayor's office, 1st Floor: the Ibn Rush'd Library, classrooms, and Herbal Infusion Factory; 2nd Floor: Rural Women's Association's Sewing Cooperative.



Gate entry to the Salahuddin Al Ayyubi Mosque, named after a 12th Century Muslim Sultan known for principles of chivalry.



The Charrette

growth, but asked that this be a private design process without villager input. He worried that if villagers were included in planning, they would be disappointed if the plans were delayed. Villagers would not understand that fund-raising takes time and some parcels of land would require special leases or purchase agreements (Vatican land and State Land) prior to construction. So Haj Sami worked with the Charrette team to create a layer by layer set of drawings to allow the town to weigh the competing forces of occupation and diplomacy before initiating the next stage of growth.



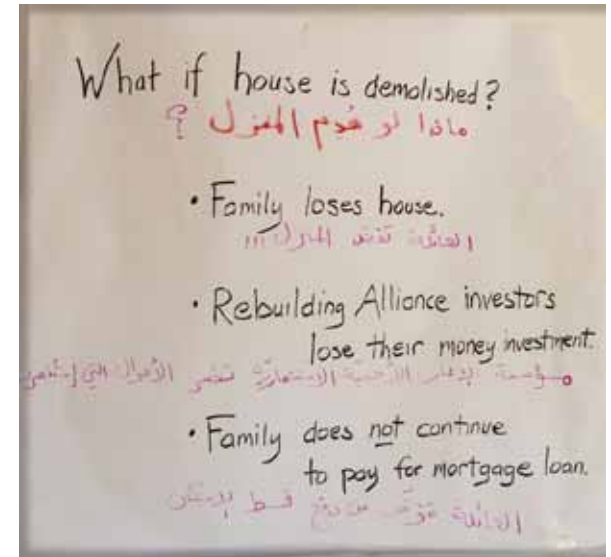
Steve and Donna welcomed the team and described the week ahead.

The intended result: to create a vision so compelling and valuable that others – the Palestinian people, neighboring Israelis, world governments and the Israeli Army - will respect and protect its legacy. A worthy goal, especially promising as the Village's kindergarten building, constructed by Rebuilding Alliance with help of Japan, Belgium and Norway, thrives, keeping world attention on the village despite demolition orders against 97% of the structures.

What follows is a day-by-day narrative of the Charrette which commenced on July 23rd with a meeting with the three families.



Mayor Haj Sami Sadeq welcomed us to Al Aqaba Village and outlined the challenges ahead.



Team and stakeholder guidelines, comments, issues, questions, and decisions were written on flip chart paper in English and Arabic.



Pre-Charrette meeting with Architect Hani and Engineers Saed and Ribhi to introduce the team members, describe the project goals and objectives, explain the charrette process, and review the technical requirements.

Day One (Saturday)

The birds seemed to hold morning and evening chirping contests, sitting on the electrical wire outside the large classroom, 2nd floor of the kindergarten building, reinvented as our charrette studio. In what was a very full day, we made project overview posters in English and Arabic, then met with the three families who expressed gratitude for the opportunity to own a simple house. They had good requests: privacy at the entry for the women of the house who do not wear a veil or hijab among family members but choose to be covered before guests, an open kitchen, and an internal staircase to reach the roof (and someday, the add-on 2nd floor). Accompanied by Mayor Haj Sami Sadeq in his wheelchair, the families and the team visited the three building sites where we piled stones at possible corners of their future homes.

Later that afternoon, we met with the Al Aqaba Town Council and Mayor to describe the *Rebuilding to Remain* program and learn the Village Council's priorities for selection of the next families who



Steve, on Charrette Day 1, explaining the charrette process to the families, assisted by translators Ayat and We'am from Ramallah.

will receive new homes. This would be the village council's first meeting with an outside agency. It was not an easy meeting. One fellow wondered why his house would not be one of the first. Others asked why the envisioned *Rebuilding to Remain* program focused only on new homes. Couldn't Rebuilding Alliance raise financing for families who have already started building their homes but don't have enough money to finish? These important questions required further consideration.



Architect Hani Hassan describing possible options

That evening, Donna and Güler met with Al Aqaba Village Council members one by one for in-depth discussions. In addition, Haj Sami urged us to meet with the Al Aqaba Rural Women's Association Board as they advise him regarding major decisions affecting the village.

As the Mayor instructed, the Architecture Team just kept focused on designing the first three homes. Regarding the overall Village plan, the Mayor sought a village plan with boundaries extending to include all the land to which the village holds title,



Three families join the Charrette to develop the designs that will become their future homes

plus nearby land owned by the Vatican, and land designated as State Land. This area greatly exceeds the narrow slice filed in the official 3rd town plan by the Village's attorneys at the Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center (JLAC). The Israeli Army's Civil Administration rejected the first two town plans the village submitted, requiring a smaller footprint in each subsequent submission. They said that the population of the village is too small to deserve the land area they own — ignoring the 700 villager-landowners who are ready to move home. JLAC's third plan is intended to save the maximum number of existing homes from demolition, and is the smallest yet. The JLAC legal team expects this too will be rejected.

We began work on Haj Sami's village plan as soon as we had a good base map. This was not a simple or easy task since it required coordination with an engineering firm in Ramallah, and our local civil/structural engineers in Tubas, Eng. Ribhi Sawafta and Eng. Saed Salahat. We finally drew the base maps for the Village Plan by hand, tracing over several different and incomplete versions.



Reviewing the future building sites with Mayor Haj Sami.

Daily Life During the Charrette

Charrette food was generally good, with fresh yogurt, cheese, eggs, vegetables and homemade hummus for breakfast, but lots of soda and doughy pastries. However, we labored in the middle of a militarily restricted area that requires water replenishment by tanker truck delivered to each home by the Government of Japan, despite nearby underground aquifers because the village is prohibited from drilling wells.



Team meeting at breakfast, part of our al fresco dining experience during the charrette.

Fortunately, the charrette occurred during a relatively quiet time in the village, though not in the region as a whole where, according to UN reports, the Israeli Army demolished a record number of Palestinian homes. On April 7, 2011, Al Aqaba, which seemed so peaceful, had two homes and the east segment of Peace Road destroyed by the Israeli Army. The Army returned again on Sep. 15, 2011 to destroy the Peace Road again, blocking the school bus' way to school. A brief film with a family just after the demolition may be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoHsdlsvmh8&feature=related>.

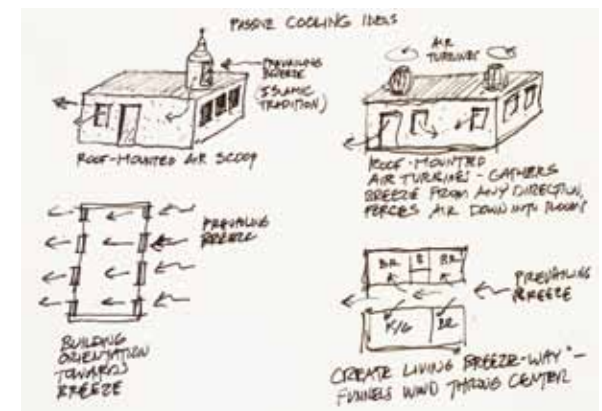


Program manager Dilan, walking to our workspace from our apartment, housing constructed for visiting teachers.

Fortunately, during the charrette, the Israeli Army training camp just across the valley from the Kindergarten was usually quiet. Except for an occasional tarantula or scorpion sighting, or drinking too much coffee and sweetened beverages, our home was comfortable and safe. The climate could be compared to a Palm Desert, very hot and dry, but with a formidable afternoon, evening, and night-time wind.

With a collegial international team, and our gracious local hosts and professionals from Ramallah, everyone appeared focused on the design of the first three homes and a Village Plan through an iterative charrette process.

By evening of the first day, the winds subsided slightly, but sufficient to remind us to include "wind catchers" on the home designs, cost permitting, an ancient desert tradition of roof mounted "reverse-chimneys" that funnel cooler air throughout the building.



The strong afternoon and evening desert wind from the west offers several opportunities for passive building cooling.

Day Two (Sunday)

Overcast start to the day – the sun boiled the humidity away by 10 AM. Another lengthy day – we generally began working by 8 AM or earlier, breakfasted at 10, lunched at 3, and dined around 10 PM so bedtime arrived midnight or later. We met with the local engineers, whose office in Tubas is about 5km to the west, about the house structural systems, expected costs, and expansion options. Our proposed iterative design process - testing house ideas in daily design-review-redesign cycles - was challenged because our architect worked two hours away in Ramallah. What's more, our difficulty in securing base maps limited progress on the Village Plan for the first three days. Facing a situation of a remote location with infrequent Internet, restricted access to technical support for Palestinians, and a general lack of adequate planning documents we take for granted in the West, we adapted and adjusted. Even the video crew was forced to rely on a small, third camera after two equipment failures.

Continually, we confronted significant political and logistics questions: Some wondered about the wisdom of village planning when all homes but two, the mosque, a clinic, an elementary school, a library and the kindergarten are under demolition orders. The Mayor and villagers were certain that under these conditions the **ONLY** way the Village will exist is for it to assert its rights by planning and building. They instead worried that our Charrette will raise expectations of future construction amongst the villagers, that, without a commitment of funding, could lead to disappointment.

In response to those who said, "why plan", we replied, because you may prevail, and every

village requires good planning – where, when, how, and what to build – to grow in resilience, health, and prosperity. Donna found the village planning process particularly moving. She had not expected that, though villagers all spoke of returning someday, demolition orders had robbed them of a collective vision and specific plan for their town's future. Our layer-by-layer contingency plans offered a way to share an exciting future with one another and the world. This offers a possible path



Steve, Dilan, and Eloise developing a base sheet for the Village Plan.

to end the man-made disaster of demolition orders. We pushed ahead with full support despite the obstacles, as no other option existed.

We met with the mayor to clarify a number of technical, financial, and political issues. Regarding transparency in establishing criteria and a decision-making process for the subsequent selection of families that receive house construction funding assistance, Mayor Haj Sami asked us to meet the formidable Al Aqaba Rural Women's Association Board, whom Donna has worked with for years. Haj Sami trusts them as key advisers, so they helped

define the criteria for selection of the next homes:

1. They expressed a deep trust in Haj Sami's wisdom to select families based on input from the community, his own knowledge of the needs of each family, and his thoughts about location as it affects likelihood of demolition. They noted they both provide input before the decision and feedback afterwards. It works.



Donna and team met with the Board of the Rural Women's Association.



Donna has worked with the Rural Women's Association since 2003. They endorsed the Mayor's selection of next families for houses.



Rebuilding Alliance team members Kali (left) and Güler assist the moms during the meeting with the Rural Women's Association.

2. In the first set of 20 homes planned in the Rebuilding to Remain program, families must own their own land in Al Aqaba with clear title;
3. From 1982-2002, the Israeli Army used the village of Al Aqaba for live-fire training exercises, pressing many families to seek refuge in other towns. These displaced families are now the first invited to build new homes in Al Aqaba. Note: at least one family member must have been born in Al Aqaba to qualify.
4. Young married couples are invited to build starter homes in Al Aqaba.
5. If Al Aqaba receives permission to build on State Land, families who are very poor who live in and near Al Aqaba without owning their land will be invited to build new homes here.
6. The *Rebuilding to Remain* program will also raise funds and make loans to help villagers finish homes already in construction.

And so the Al Aqaba Rural Women's Association described a clear, trusted and transparent process for selection of next families that works for this village — just what Donna needed to assure potential donors of transparency in the selection process.

Day Three (Monday)

The entire charrette team spent the first part of the day critiquing the preliminary house designs (naturally, everyone fancies themselves an architectural critic) suggesting revisions in preparation for the families review on Tuesday. The design team gathered the available base maps (a fuzzy aerial and a CAD file from an early plan from 2004), and prepared for contingencies (e.g., finding a recent aerial) that did not manifest.

Donna, on a trip to the bank, introduced part of the team to the manager of the Bank of Palestine in Tubas. The banker, a Catholic who lives in a nearby Christian village, told us more about the large parcel of land just next to Al Aqaba's kindergarten, owned by the Vatican. He described an aerial map of all the Vatican land in the area, located in a church-house in Tayaseer, the town nearest Al Aqaba. He suggested that we write a letter to the local papal authority, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The local Vatican Land manager subsequently visited us, and helped delineate the land boundaries on the east side of the village while explaining the history of this 1930's land purchase.

Leaving the bank, we spent a long but productive afternoon at the engineer's office in Tubas, reconciling the differences in the digital maps. That required both language translation and printing in a scale we could use in conjunction with our trace paper sheets because of our need for hand drawing. Securing the right scale, size, and area while bridging the Arabic and English proved arduous, but successful.

We hand-drew base maps that allowed us to commence the Village Plan on Tuesday. The area

encompassed proved sufficient to allow the siting of additional homes and a school and businesses, while preserving adequate agricultural land, from three major parcels: Government Land (currently controlled by Israel); Private Land (Palestinian owned, some outside the center of the village); and Vatican Land which could likely be available for future construction "for the good of all people." Of course, all planning was speculative because of the "eminent domain" power of the State, with the potential for demolition at any time.



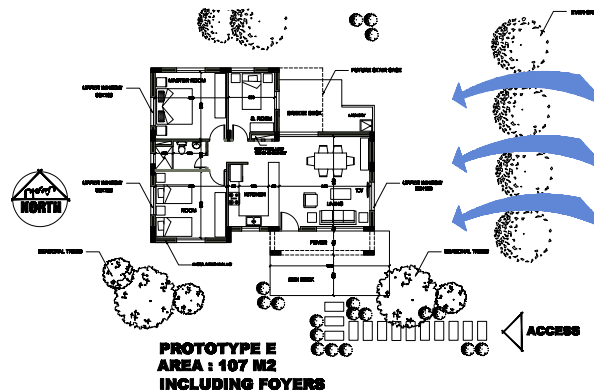
The local Vatican representative describing the land owned by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Our video and media crews visited with local families; the several women on the team met with the local Women's Association in the morning, followed by a draft of the proposed decision-making process relative to home ownership. Rebuilding Alliance will use the results of the charrette to raise the funds for the first three homes.

Day Four (Tuesday)

At our morning team meeting, we addressed five categories requiring intervention or assistance:

1. House Construction Financing: Funding for building the first three houses, and then subsequent homes, consisting of Rebuilding Alliance's mortgage loan (repayable), and down payment (gift) which is now to be matched by Al Aqaba's self-created credit union. Three cheers to the village for funding their own mortgage guarantee after the IMF, World Bank, and the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation declined to guarantee Palestinian mortgages in the 149 Palestinian villages in Area C when Israel refuses to issue them building permits. In addition to raising funds for the new homes, Rebuilding Alliance decided to raise mortgage loan funding for three unfinished homes, unoccupied for lack of funds to finish.
2. House design: The first round of house designs struggled to meet the budget* (a significant



Example of the first round of house designs, showing the breeze capture on the west side of the building.

challenge), but appeared to respond to family size and space needs, provide reasonable environmental performance, can be expanded up or out, and appeared compatible with this Palestinian Village's preferred building materials.

3. *House Budget: The engineers prepared initial cost estimates for each design. Only one very small house design (two bedrooms, 97 sq.m) could be built at the affordable \$20,000 cost ceiling. However, the families need three bedrooms — which means that costs will exceed \$30,000, presenting a significant dilemma.
4. Village Plan: Our assessment of the past village planning effort completed by a firm in Ramallah represented what appeared as a conventional approach to town-making – new and wider roads, some with 25% slope, and other features that appear more western in design, in our opinion. Our planning will present more detail and reconsider the road grade.
5. Governance: The Team and the Village completed the criteria and methodology for decision-making around new home financing with affirmation of the Mayor's ability to lead this process with input and feedback from both bodies. Donna, Haj Sami, and Güler took the lead in this process resolving very real concerns through discussions both private and public.

Village Plan Development

We spent the day drafting the Village Plan base maps, a rather exhaustive process of identifying private property lines between two maps of slightly different scales and alignments, missing lines, and extra lines that could be Israeli control points,



The Village Plans were developed as a series of tracings over the base map that described sequential growth over time.

checking that the property lines were reasonably consistent between existing maps. The existing base maps plus the existing aerial, almost unreadable at a design scale, required that we draw new base maps by hand, one for each proposed phase of growth.

Upon completion, we began to plan for new buildings and access, though we were unable to scan nor print beyond letter size. Occasionally, we ran outside to check the lines on paper against the reality in front of us. Despite being the only trained planner, Steve was competently assisted by Dilan Roe, the charrette logistical organizer and civil engineer with Rebuilding Alliance, Eloise DuVillier, a member of the RA Diplomatic Team, and Souzan Jaber, a Ramallah native who lives in the US and worked in the retail industry for years. Together, we circumscribed the various parcel boundaries and identified potential home sites, and located a proposed new cafe and farmers market after walking 50 meters to the site from our studio. We then simply drew the proposed buildings on the plan – an advantage of working "on site"!

Beyond the immediate Village, a slice of so-called “Government land” could provide home sites for property-less families, subject to negotiations through the mayor and Prime Minister. The Design Team met again with the local Vatican representative who confirmed boundary lines for their significant holdings. He explained that properties held by the Holy Land could be available for public use (e.g., schools, hospitals) in the future.

Presenting First-Draft House Designs

Tuesday evening, the three families joined us to see first draft home designs in a marathon pinup/ design review with the architect, engineers, mayor, and RA Team. Architect Hani Hassan presented his work to an overall enthusiastic review. Everyone was impressed by his use of color!

Then attention turned to size and lay-out. It became clear the families need 3 bedrooms and at least 115 sq. meters of space which, as costed-out by Engineer Ribhi Sawafta, will cost over \$30,000 to build — more than the modest budget.



Architect Hani with translator We'am presented the first round of house designs to the families, while Maurice recorded.

This presented a serious dilemma. Producing an affordable house that meets the needs of a growing family is especially challenging using cement and steel construction under fixed-limit financing. The



Architect Hani with a family member explaining the designs, and answering questions.

underlying \$15,000 mortgage financing to be provided by Rebuilding Alliance is not enough but it is 1) the most the families can afford, and (2) the most that investors are willing to lose if homes are demolished. (Note: the families are not required to repay the remainder of their \$15,000 loan in the event of demolition.)

With no easy solution the formal presentation came to an end but most everyone stayed on, meeting in small groups, with newcomers from the Village credit union board joining the discussions. Possible solutions that included making smaller homes, using cheaper materials, or raising more money by the Village and/or Rebuilding Alliance.

That’s when the evening came to resemble a multi-ring circus – children running around, multiple discussions in small groups, many in two languages,

with multiple drawings and notes on the charrette wall — all conducted intensely yet in a most cordial and collaborative spirit.

Case in point: Following one difficult discourse on financing the houses, we took a short break. One of the engineers put down a sheet of flip chart paper in the corner, and, facing Mecca to the East, commenced his prayer. He rejoined the meeting, apparently relaxed and renewed, and demonstrated a new use for flip charts, healthier than a smoke break, a better remedy than what had been fruitless discussion. The evening represented another rationale for the charrette – to provide every opportunity to resolve intractable issues as quickly, with as much cross-pollination and collaboration as possible.



Mayor Haj Sami discussed the house budgets with the architect, engineers, and member of the Town Council, while in the background, Rebuilding Alliance Board Member, Souzan Jaber, listened to the women of the three families to hear their needs regarding lay-out and space



Steve drawing the Village Plan circulation with suggestions from Haj Sami, Souzan and translator We'am.

Steve completed a road circulation plan for the Village, figuring out the elevation contours for road alignments; he categorized good agricultural land that should be preserved, and marginal, rocky areas that should be used as building sites. He designed a sequence of physical environments from the most rural to the village center. Under the direction of the mayor, the Village Planning team drew new housing on existing and proposed lots.



Donna and Haj Sami worked on the financing options, determined to solve the funding gap to build families homes that both meet their needs and are affordable.



Day Five (Wednesday)

Steve worked on the Village Plan while his assistants traveled on supporting missions: Souzan to Ramallah to investigate the potential for Palestinian housing funds from the Prime Minister to help close a funding gap in home construction, and to explore a collaboration that could help fund many more houses in Al Aqaba; and Dilan, who visited with the Catholic pastor of a church in nearby village of Tayaseer, where a aerial wall map might indicate the lands owned by the Vatican, administered by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, so we could double-check our property line assumptions following our meeting with the local Vatican representative on Monday.

Concurrently, Architect Hani Hassan submitted final house designs to the engineers for estimating. He began with a base unit design (too small for our three families) but a perfect starter home for newly married couples. This starter home is single story, two bedroom, single bath, combined living and kitchen room, totalling about 95 square meters and buildable for \$20,000. For a total of just over \$30,000, this base unit would expand to 119 sq. meters and include a 3rd bedroom and an internal stairwell to the roof. Downstream, at the family's

own expense, the family can add a second floor unit with full kitchen to house their son's future family.

How would we fund the designs they need? Donna and Mayor Haj Sami struggled with house financing, which demanded creativity and perseverance.

The squadrons of small birds that emerged early each morning and quieted late evening seemed the happiest of all the local creatures, singing melodies undaunted by the hot temperatures, afternoon wind or the children's own high-decibel sounds of play; the goats and sheep were apparently too busy grazing to make much noise. The wind howled all night but without it the village would bake. Wind turbines and solar could produce most of their power needs, since both abound at complementary times of the day. The call to prayers sounded behind us at the village mosque just north of Studio, signaling prayer for most and, for others, that dinner was a couple of hours away.



Dilan, Haj Sami, Steve and Hani reviewed the house designs and their relationship to the Village Plan.

Day Six (Thursday)

Thursday morning marked the finale evening presentation of house designs. Charrette preparation began a week ago Thursday. Now we would present affordable home designs or bust!

Morihei Usehiba, the founder of the martial art Aikido said: *“It is necessary to develop a strategy that utilizes all the physical conditions and elements that are directly at hand. The best strategy relies upon an unlimited set of responses.”* Here, we designed an affordable home that would grow in love and value, spreading-out the risk of demolition through crowd-source fund-raising and matching grants while working to reduce that risk through advocacy.

We still needed some financial magic to meet our budget. That magic was cast by the ever-resourceful Mayor Haj Sami and Donna who together conceived the an approach for funding a \$33,300 house without overburdening the family with debt or overstretching Rebuilding Alliance’s risk.

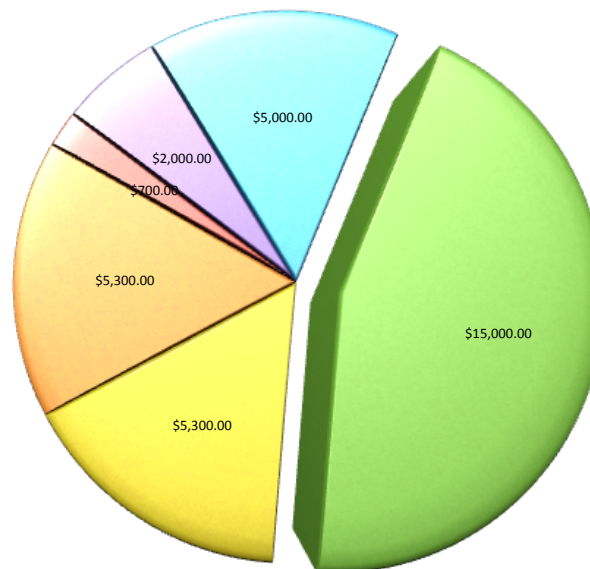
The families require 3 bedroom, 119 square meter homes, expandable someday to include a 2nd floor



Architect Hani discusses house designs and costs with Engineers Saed (left) and Ribhi (center) in preparing the final plans.

for their son’s future family — but the construction cost of \$33,300 exceeds their ability to repay a mortgage loan, if one could even be found. Rebuilding Alliance will raise donations to provide a \$5,000 down payment grant, a \$15,000 mortgage loan, and \$4,000 to coordinate worldwide outreach to affirm the village’s right to issue building permits. Al Aqaba’s families will help with construction. The villagers even formed a Al Aqaba Cooperative Assembly for Housing Displaced (ACAHD) to guarantee mortgage loan repayment at \$100/

Finance Model to Build \$33,300 Home



- RA Donation: \$5K
- RA Revolving Loan Mortgage Fund: \$15K
- Al Aqaba Village Fund: \$5.3K
- Proposed PA Land Guard Fund: \$5.3K
- Al Aqaba Village Fund Digs Foundation: \$700
- Families to Finish: \$2000



The families take their seats for the Charrette’s house design presentation.

month and they raised a fund to match worldwide contributions. Mayor Haj Sami volunteered to personally negotiate with suppliers and contractors to achieve the best prices. By the end of September, the Palestinian Prime Minister’s Land Guard Fund confirmed grants to Al Aqaba to close the gap and help build these *Homes with Dignity!*

Finance Model for 119 sq.m.

- RA: raise donations for down payments (gift) \$5000
- RA revolving mortgage loan \$15,000
- Al Aqaba Village Housing Fund \$5,300
- Proposed: PA match to ACAHD fund \$5,300
- Al Aqaba Village Housing Fund to dig foundations \$700
- Families to assist in finishing \$2000

Construction Cost: \$33,300

Note: Unlike a loan from a bank, Rebuilding Alliance’s Crowdsource Financing forgives the remaining mortgage loan if the home is demolished.

Charrette Leader Steve Coyle welcomed everyone to the Architecture Team's closing presentation. Architect Hani Hassan presented his final house designs to families, a virtual home run! Rebuilding



Each of three families sign the preferred house design.

Alliance Founder Donna presented the finance model. Engineer Salahat confirmed the cost estimates. The moment had come: each of the three families signed the plans of the 3 bedroom, 119sq. m. house that would meet their needs!

Speaking on behalf of the families, Mr. Othman Sbaih thanked the team who came together in the Architectural Design Charrette. In closing Donna



Three bedroom 119 sq. meter affordable house designs approved by each of the families, with the ability to add a 2nd floor!

Baranski-Walker and Mayor Haj Sami Sadeq spoke of the long road that brought Al Aqaba Village and Rebuilding Alliance to this hopeful moment. Mayor Haj Sami reminded us of his visit to the U.S. Congress and hoped everyone in the world would recognize and support his village of Al Aqaba because they seek peace.

The group, sans many of the internationals, would reconvene on September 6th to present final blueprints and engineering specifications. We all look forward to a successful fund-raising program so that the village can break ground on three homes soon, with 17 more to follow!

The villagers, from child to elder, demonstrated a continuous warm, engaging and authentic presence at each and every encounter. Similar to people everywhere, they want the best for their families, their Village, their country and the region. We hope that our political representatives will see these plans made real.



Three signatures for the 3 Bedroom, 119 sq. m., expandable design.

Day Seven (Friday)

Only one step remained to complete the Charrette: the final presentation of the Village Plan to the mayor and remaining team.

Working with Mayor Haj Sami and Donna, Steve, Dilan, Souzan, and Eloise had created four different Village Plan expansion phases, each hand drawn and colored as land use maps. We configured the zones as a geographical cross-section of habitats across the Village based on key elements, from degree of slope



Dilan, Eloise, and Steve complete the Village Plans for presentation to the Mayor and team (top), and (below) with Souzan, the colored Regulating Plan that describes the land uses and intensities.



Steve explains and the team critiques the proposed regulating plan for the village with Ayat translating and Yannick recording.

and agricultural soil conditions to proximity to the Village Center.

The proposed Village Center includes the existing buildings: the mosque, a health clinic that will soon include a birthing center to be funded by Rotary Clubs, the kindergarten with the Rural Women's Association's Sewing Cooperative and new Herbal Infusion Factory, the school, and the teacher's guesthouse. Our plan proposes an Internet cafe, farmer's market, a dairy and cheese factory, and combined living/working buildings lining the main street, Peace Road. Just next to the Kindergarten on the large parcel of property belonging to the Vatican, the Village will apply for public uses including a high school, a soccer field, and a physical rehabilitation teaching center. At the mayor's suggestion, we added a guesthouse.

The mayor, sensitive to the irony of planning with neither funding to realize those plans, nor control over land under military occupation, appreciated the value of the plan. He seeks affirmation of the Village's right to issue building permits and control its own land, similar to any other democratically governed town in the world.



Steve describes the proposed Village Plans that show phased development from the first three new homes to a build out of several dozen plus business and institutional buildings.

As our team members began to leave for points far and wide, a sadness emerged. In one poignant moment, Kali, part of the Rebuilding Alliance team who lived for a month in the village as Al Aqaba's first visiting English teacher, said her good-byes to return to her Ph.D. degree program at the University of California, Santa Cruz. When she pulled away, Mayor Haj Sami wheeled around. He will miss her.

In that fading Friday light, Steve joined Mayor Haj Sami as he sat by himself. The mayor explained his frustrations through forty years of working for peace despite every obstacle and broken promise. He genuinely does not understand why the American public supports and sends money for settlement building, particularly because each illegal settlement is built on land they do not own. Most of us didn't travel here because of the politics but left with a much clearer perspective of what it means to live in the West Bank as a Palestinian. All the best planning in the world will disappear in the face of bulldozers, tanks, and demolition orders unless the dreams conveyed in pencil on paper inspire policy change and tolerance.

Day Eight (Saturday)

The charrette was successful. The system worked as it almost always has, despite the challenges along the way, through proper direction, clarity of purpose, and commitment to the process and outcomes. Steve has always maintained that anyone should be able to charrette by candlelight if necessary and, while Al Aqaba maintained electric power and water, at times that's all it seemed we had, in the mid-summer heat of the Jordan Valley.

Following our presentations, most of us intended to depart for Ramallah either Friday or Saturday, packing up with both relief (reliable internet, laundry, longer shower, etc.) and a good deal of sorrow for leaving the wonderful people, from the children who assembled each morning in a day camp on the playground outside our Studio and reinvented happiness in different forms everyday, to their parents and other supporters. We would especially miss the Mayor, who expressed joy and gratitude for our rather simple and not altogether smooth efforts. The intense and good-natured curiosity and enthusiasm for our work, especially planning and design, from villagers seven to seventy, was gratifying and pretty cool.



The team reviews the outcomes of the charrette with Haj Sami.

So, we packed up and said our farewells. However, this end truly seeded the flowering of the next phase. Developing the construction documents, finding and securing financing, and then building



Visionary Mayor Haj Sami Sadeq and the vocabulary of construction.

the first three homes will represent both hope and existential milestones for the village. This village is not alone. Each of the 149 Palestinian villages in the 62% of the West Bank controlled solely by Israel face similar challenges as they too are encumbered by



From left, We'am, Souzan, Donna, Haj Sami, Güler, and Eloise.

demolition orders. The Israeli Human Rights Group, BIMKOM: Planners for Planning Rights, recently received the Israeli Army's data showing over 12,500 demolition orders pending against Palestinian homes, schools, and shops in Area C.



Looking up Peace Road towards the Village Center, and the mosque with its double minarets in the shape of a peace sign.



Ramallah: mosques, churches, cellphone towers, and water tanks

Day Nine (Sunday)

Besides the beautiful old buildings, much of the construction in Ramallah appears recent, mostly concrete and stone veneers, multi-story office buildings more Los Angeles than traditional Palestine. Sequestered in the historic Danish House, the remaining team conducted a charrette debrief Sunday afternoon, an excellent way to wrap up the process, identify what worked and what didn't so to improve future charrettes. On the positive side, the Al Aqaba Charrette produced remarkable house designs, a financing strategy to raise funds to build, at minimum, the first three, and a Village Plan to guide Al Aqaba's hoped-for growth. We met big challenges by listening hard to one another and patiently expecting that with creativity, flexibility, and good work, an answer would present itself. Most times it did.

On the other hand, the design team was unable to explore a house design that could be constructed employing local materials such as the abundant, native limestone rock and compactable soils; nor

alternative building techniques such as straw-bale or rammed earth construction. We believe that homeowners will be more comfortable with such low carbon-footprint technologies when they see them used successfully in public buildings such as Al Aqaba's future Internet Café. The Rebuilding Alliance / Al Aqaba partnership will certainly welcome new grants for such construction prototypes! With Sameh Abboushi, a highly respected, retired architect who practiced, taught, and lives in Ramallah, Hani Hassan, and others, we will continue to seek assistance in bringing traditional architecture



Showing our results at the Abboushi home in Ramallah.

and alternative construction methods to the West Bank generally, and to the small village of Al Aqaba specifically.

Al Aqaba's Architectural Design Charrette demonstrated that this Palestinian West Bank Area C community and similar West Bank communities require local planning sufficient to guide their growth into resilient and healthy places. Appropriate, affordable village-center design along with local materials and methods of construction can engage the community and employ local labor. Planning sustainable and resilient communities should transcend politics; and reaffirm the value of community participation and tolerance. To this end, Rebuilding Alliance intends to continue to help design, finance, and build homes and supporting structures enlisting the assistance of everyone, including Israelis, Palestinians, and the International Community to diminish the risk of demolition and press for each village's right to issue building permits.



Charrette Leader Steve Coyle, Architect, whose narrative forms much of this booklet.

In Summary

Our Design Charrette laid the basis to achieve six remarkable outcomes:

1. **Homes with Dignity Designs:** A set of construction-ready designs, blueprints and specifications approved by the families for colorful 3-bedroom, 119 sq.m. affordable houses that allow families to “build up” to a 2nd floor, growing in love and value over time;
2. **Al Aqaba Village Plan:** A detailed urban plan like no other. Given the Israel Army’s refusal to acknowledge the right of Palestinian villages to plan and build on the land they own, each decision to construct a new set of homes, public buildings (high school, soccer field, rehabilitation hospital) and commercial growth (internet café, farmer’s market, cheese factory) is contingent on the changing winds of Occupation and Diplomacy at that time;
3. **Transparency in Selection of Next Families:** a clear criteria for selection of the next families who will build their ‘Homes with Dignity’, endorsed by Mayor Haj Sami Sadeq, the Al Aqaba Village Council and the council of the Al Aqaba Rural Women’s Association;
4. **Finance and Crowdsourcing Fund-raising Model:** A finance and crowdsourcing fund-raising model that both (a) spreads-out the risk of demolition among all the families in the village, international grass roots donors, and grant makers, and (b) engages the world community in advocacy to remove risk of demolition. This finance model includes donated down-payments, affordable mortgage financing, family participation in construction, and village fund investment. Of note: Al Aqaba Village has created its own housing fund, the Al Aqaba Cooperative Assembly for Housing Displaced (ACAHD), to collect and guarantee mortgage-loan repayments in all cases but for demolition. Rebuilding Alliance seeks grants and donations into the Revolving Mortgage Loan Fund with risk stated up-front: if the home is demolished, the homeowner is no longer responsible for repaying their mortgage and the Rebuilding Alliance Revolving Mortgage Loan Fund takes the loss.
5. **Crowdsourcing Mapping for Advocacy and Policy Change:** To assure policy change one must convey the problem, the solution, and the growing number of people who care about this issue. Ushahidi mapping, developed in Kenya, can be used (1) to map the dire news: 12,500 demolition orders outstanding against Palestinian homes, schools and shops — plus the demolitions being carried out; (2) to show the determination of villagers who continue to rebuild and (3) all who contact their elected officials to make this stop. The Rebuilding Alliance team has developed a prototype.
6. **Building Permits to be Issued by the Al Aqaba Village Council:** One of the most important outcomes of our Charrette was the drafting of a building permit application on behalf of the Al Aqaba Village Council. This will be the first time that a Palestinian village in Area C, that 62% of the West Bank administered solely by Israel, is issuing building permits.



Mayor Haj Sami Sadeq proudly displays the first ever Palestinian building permit application in Area C of the West Bank. Why not?

Al Aqaba should have the right to issue building permits on land to which it holds title in conformance with its Town Plan just like any other town in a democracy. If not, why not?

According to Palestinian laws and regulations, a village, town or municipality is empowered to grant building permits if it meets both of the following conditions:

- (A) Completion of a master land use plan showing and describing all land owned by all landowners (private, state, WAFQ or Vatican) within the boundaries of the municipality including agricultural land;
- (B) Employment by the municipality of an engineer who will certify compliance with building codes.

Al Aqaba has now filed three Outline Town Plans with the Israeli Civil Authorities. In addition, a detailed Town Plan was completed during Al Aqaba's Architectural Design Charrette. The village is planning to hire an engineer to supervise construction of the Homes with Dignity.


The Oslo Accords temporarily ceded administration of Area C to the sole jurisdiction of the Israeli Government and that status was scheduled to end in 1999. Soon, Al Aqaba's Village Council will assert its right to issue building permits as the village breaks ground on three Homes with Dignity in October, 2011. They ask the world to stand with them as they take brave steps to rebuild and remain on the land they own. May Al Aqaba's building permits prevail.



One of the three families, awaiting their turn to sign their approval of the house design.



As the Governor of Tubas gave his welcoming address, a little boy just outside pressed his nose to the window.



Al Aqaba Village Council
Building Permit

Block: _____ Plot: _____ Permit Number: _____

Issue date: / /

Organizational capacity of the signed person:

Name of owner and his partners: _____

Name of engineering office: _____

Description of suggested building: _____

The commercial name of the project: _____

Decision of local committee: _____

Condition	Use	Quantity	Unit	Price	Total

Total: _____

Note: this permit expires after one year from date of issue. The owner should renew it immediately if additional building work is anticipated.

 Head of Village Council
 Al Aqaba Village

 Head of Local Committee of
 Buildings and organization

The Al Aqaba Village Council's Building Permit Application

Appendix A: Al Aqaba Village Plan Phases 1 - 5



The first four phases of the Village Plan



An early aerial of the village was the only version available during the Village Plan's development



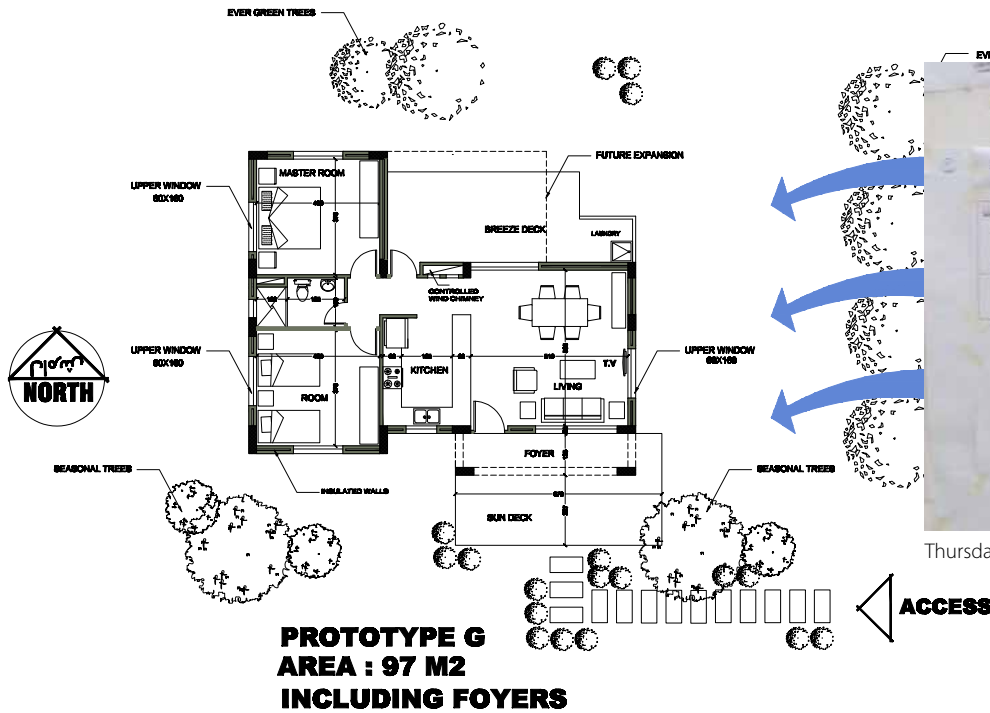
The five phases of the Village Plan range from Phase 1, with the first three houses, to multiple residences, an internet cafe, a farmer's market, a dairy, a guest house, hospital and birthing center, and physical rehabilitation teaching center shown in Phase 5.

Al Aqaba Regulating Plan



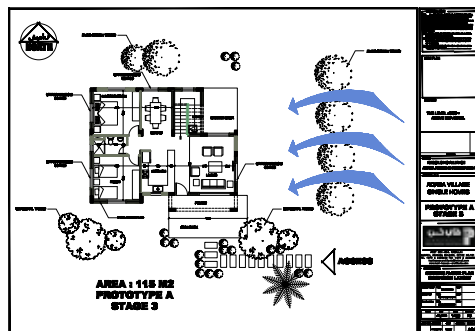
The Regulating Plan describes specific areas of land use, building form, and development intensity, ranging from the highest intensity, mixed use Village Center, to the surrounding houses in the Village General, to the Village Edge, with homes on large sites proximate to preserved agricultural and grazing lands. The blue area describes Vatican Lands dedicated to institutional and other public uses.

Al Aqaba Additional Prototype House Designs

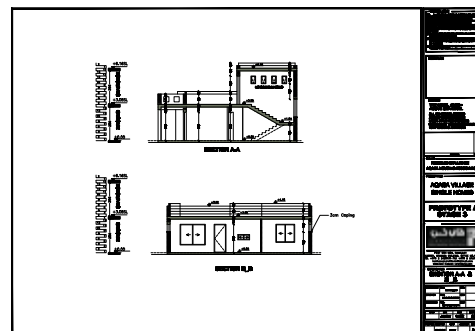


Thursday evening charrette pin-ups of the final house designs with construction costs and renderings

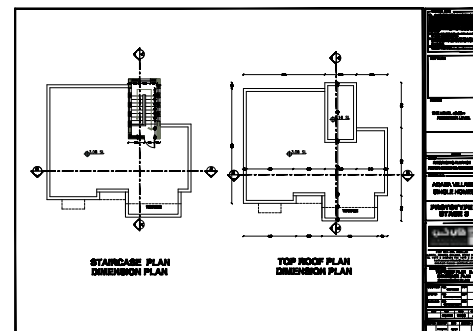
The 97 square meter house design, which provides space for a new family or married couple, was estimated at \$25,500. While still above the \$20,000 target, further cost reductions could approach that original construction cost threshold.



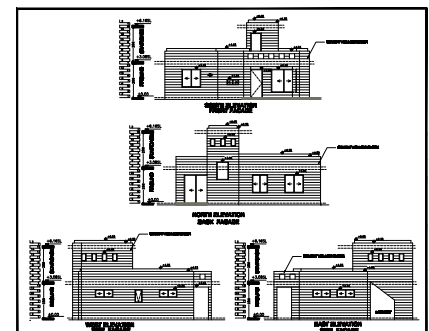
Early Prototype A, 115 square meters



Prototype A Section showing 2nd floor



Prototype A Stairwell Plan



Prototype A Building Elevations

Appendix C: Returning to Al Aqaba for the Community Art Charrette, August 9-10, 2011

Dreams are bigger than just three families. Faten Toubassi, a Palestinian artist, is currently community art instructor with Mabelarts and Jumblies Theatre in Toronto Canada. We invited Faten and her daughter Hala, an aspiring filmmaker, to Al Aqaba!



Artist Faten Toubassi asking children, then adults, to draw what they most love about their home.



The women of Al Aqaba joined the Charrette late at night, after they finished cooking the village-wide Iftar, the evening Ramadan meal.

Press Release

JORDAN VALLEY VILLAGE OF AL AQABA DARES TO ENVISION BETTER FUTURE: Young and Old Defy Pending Demolitions with Pastels and Cardboard

AL AQABA VILLAGE, West Bank-Area C, Palestinian Territories (August 9, 2011) The hopes of an entire village merged with the inspiration of art today as young and old participated in a “Community Art Charrette,” a 2-day workshop to hold on to what they love most about their peaceful village and to dream of what a good future will be. Palestinian-Canadian community art instructor Faten Toubasi led 20 villagers age 8 to senior as they rolled up their sleeves and used oil pastels to draw those places that mean the most to them. On Wednesday, they constructed a neighborhood with cardboard and colored paper using an approach pioneered by the Toronto community-based art center, MabelleArts.

“It means a lot to me to help the Al Aqaba community give shape to their dreams and give them a way to have a say in their future,” said artist Faten Toubasi. Ms. Toubasi’s work with MABELLEart’s workshops have helped a diverse, at-risk community come together to restore and care for their park, community garden and even rebuild their fantastic mud oven when it was vandalized. “In Toronto, we hold workshops that help residents from all the world build their community, recognizing that they are still struggling with ‘being back there’ while doing their



The boys took readily to construction — including a young man whose home was recently destroyed for lack of an unattainable building permit.

best to hold on and to bring what they most love to their new home.”

Al Aqaba’s artistic endeavor, with its colorful, imaginative rendering of home and community, defies the stark reality of demolition orders issued

by the Israeli Army against 97% of this Jordan Valley village. The event takes place after a weeklong Architectural Design Charrette in which engineers, architects, village members, and village council gathered together to design 3 affordable, expandable homes. Their challenge, together with sponsor/developer NGO Rebuilding Alliance, is to finance construction in support of villagers' decision to return to their land and take out loans to

build new homes. Rebuilding Alliance will soon be conducting a donation and investment campaign that will simultaneously engage international support to strengthen the legitimacy of the village's existence.

"Sometimes even people here forget about those places, small places, that have been totally ignored by the world," said Hala Sayed, a young filmmaker who will be creating the Youtube video about Al Aqaba's Community Art Charrette. "I hope to show the world the feeling of warmth, hope, and unity that arises in gatherings such as these."

Al Aqaba is not the only Palestinian village facing demolition orders. 148 other villages are also at risk. According to the Israeli Human Rights Group, BIMKOM: Planners for Planning Rights the Israeli Army has issued over 12,500 demolition orders to Palestinian structures in Area C, that 62% of the West Bank controlled solely by Israel. Unlike a tornado, demolition orders can and should be lifted.



Adults and Children -- we had a great time!



Student artist with her butterfly.



Very exciting to watch the village take shape as Artist Faten Toubassi assists a young art student.



"I want a big home, near school, where the bus goes by!"



Al Aqaba's village with the Dove of Peace overhead — dreams to be made real.

Appendix D:



Press Release

DEFYING DEMOLITION ORDERS, PALESTINIAN VILLAGE TO BUILD 'HOMES WITH DIGNITY'

Three Returning Families Apply for First Palestinian-Issued Building Permits in Area C

AL AQABA VILLAGE, West Bank-Area C, Palestinian Territories (Sept. 6, 2011) The Palestinian Village of Al Aqaba (near Tubas) and the American Non-Governmental Organization, Rebuilding Alliance, are today launching their "Homes with Dignity Program" to help displaced families return to Al Aqaba Village and build new homes. The Israeli Army has issued demolition orders against 97% of this Jordan Valley village including its mosque, medical clinic, kindergarten and nearly all homes. Villagers are determined to build homes to assert their right to remain on the land they own. Final drawings and engineering specs will be presented to the Al Aqaba Village Council in application for Al Aqaba's building permits, the first building permits to be issued by a Palestinian village in Area C.

Festivities begin at noon in Al Aqaba with a welcome by Marwan Toubassi, Governor of Tubas and overviews by Haj Sami Sadeq, Head of the Al Aqaba Village Council and Souzan Jaber, Board Member of Rebuilding Alliance. Donna Baranski, founder of the Rebuilding Alliance will describe the Homes with Dignity design process. Award-winning Architect Hani Hassan and Tubas Engineer Saed Salahat will present final drawings and engineering specs for affordable, expandable Homes with Dignity to the Al



Governor Tubassi, Mayor Haj Sami, Board Member Souzan, Exec. Director Donna, Architect Hani, and Attorney Rabie



Rebuilding Alliance Board Member Souzan Jaber presents the 1st Al Aqaba Building Permit Application to Mayor Haj Sami.

Aqaba Village Council. Land and mortgage Attorney Mohammad Rabie will describe typical building permit requirements. Mr. Tareq Imair, representing the Palestinian Authorities Minister of Local Municipalities Dr. Khalid Qawasm, will describe the planning and engineering requirements that Palestinian village councils must meet in order to qualify for issuing building permits. Mr. Othman Sbaih will speak, representing the first three families selected to begin construction of the first homes in the Homes with Dignity program. Haj Sami Sadeq will accept building permit applications from each of the three families for consideration by Al Aqaba Village Council.

Participants are invited to share dinner, prepared by the villagers. Festivities conclude with a walking tour to the site of the future Homes with Dignity, near the Al Haq Kindergarten and within view of the nearby Israeli Army Training Camp.

Al Aqaba is one of 149 Palestinian Villages at risk of demolition because the Israeli Army has stopped

issuing building permits to nearly all Palestinian applicants. Israeli Army data recently received by the Israeli Human Rights Group BIMKOM under petition, shows over 12,500 Palestinian homes, schools, and shops are slated for demolition in the 62% of the West Bank administered solely by Israel. Despite demolition orders, 130 children attend Al Aqaba's kindergarten and 17 countries and agencies have sponsored projects in Al Aqaba since Rebuilding Alliance built that kindergarten.

However, without unattainable building permits, no bank will provide financing for homes. To overcome this constraint, Al Aqaba Village created a cooperative credit program to guarantee mortgage repayment. Rebuilding Alliance created a Revolving Mortgage Loan Fund to provide mortgage financing to Al Aqaba, inviting donors and investors at all levels thus spreading-out the financial risk of demolition to provide families with affordable homes that grow in love and value.



Engineer Ribhi describing the engineering specs he presented.



Architect Hani Hassan on the evening news!



View from on of the three family plots where a home will be built!



Walking to the three locations, soon to be three homes.



Souzan, Donna, Hani — a proud moment with 1st building permit.



Gathering at the site of the future homes!



Attorney Mohamad Rabie explaining normal building permits.



The Al Haq Kindergarten in Al Aqaba Village (near Tubas), Jordan Valley, West Bank, Palestine, serves 130 students from the entire neighboring area. Many are the children of displaced villagers who long to return home to the land they own. This kindergarten, built by hundreds of donors through Rebuilding Alliance, with second floor added with the help of the Governments of Japan, Belgium, and Norway, is the focal point for the local and international advocacy that keeps Al Aqaba standing despite Israeli Army demolition orders against 97% of this village. Please contact your elected representatives today to urge them to say, "I Care About Peace, Care About Al Aqaba!"