"When the Aga Khan Trust for Culture started its Historic Cities Support Programme, there was no agency that was committed to these goals. Academic knowledge about how to restore and revive historic cities in the Islamic world and bring support to their populations was lacking, because this work had not been done earlier and was unknown to development agencies, teaching centres, and universities.

"The Aga Khan Trust for Culture has accordingly sought to identify three “themes of concern” that correspond to the challenges we face. First, there must be an effort to protect, restore and skilfully reuse the heritage of the past. Second, we must address the pressing needs for social development and community buildings in a Muslim world all too beset by poverty. Third, it is essential to identify contemporary architectural expressions of quality, the best efforts at capturing the opportunities of the present and defining our dreams for tomorrow....

"It is within the confines of the new Azhar Park that the third theme of concern of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture has been acted upon. This thirty-one hectare expanse of trees, fountains and buildings was little more than dust just a few years ago. Calling on the talents of both Egyptian and foreign architects and landscape designers, Azhar Park combines a respect for Islamic tradition with a much needed breath of fresh air. From the hills and walkways of the park, not only the Ayyubid wall is visible, but also the Citadel, the Sultan Hasan Mosque and much more of Cairo’s new and old skyline as well. Indeed, it is in order to reestablish the skyline as much as possible to its original appearance, and to retain restored mosques to the local population, that the Trust has restored the minarets of the Umm al-Sultan Shaaban and the Khayrbek complexes."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2004 Preface to the book ‘Cairo, Revitalising a Historic Metropolis’ (Aiglemont)

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