

Al Karama, Dubai

Al Karama is one of the older neighbourhoods in Dubai, located to the north of downtown. It is a predominantly low rise residential area with many buildings having retail units on the ground floor. It is one of the most populated areas in Dubai, with a diverse set of residents calling it home. The site is incredibly accessible, with a major metro station connecting the area directly to the city centre and airport.

While the area has large natural attractions and features nearby, such as the Dubai Creek, Zabeel Park, and Karama Park – many of the streets lack vegetation, places to rest or relax and are dominated by concrete structures and cars. Alongside this walking and cycling connections to these wider attractions are limited and lack thermal comfort.

The site chosen for this competition is situated around the metro station. To increase metro patronage, and therefore reduce emissions associated with private transportation, greater investment is needed in the area around the station. The streets and spaces connecting residents to the metro need to be regenerated to develop a safe, enjoyable and attractive environment.

For this competition, students should focus on the public realm, being streets, footpaths, and parking lots. They should consider ways to reallocate space, design and develop new spaces and facilities. Focus should be on creating a more attractive urban realm, increasing uptake of walking, cycling and public transport, increase resilience to the impact of climate change by improving thermal comfort, and create new spaces for people to meet relax and spend time.



Approx. site area:

20 hectares

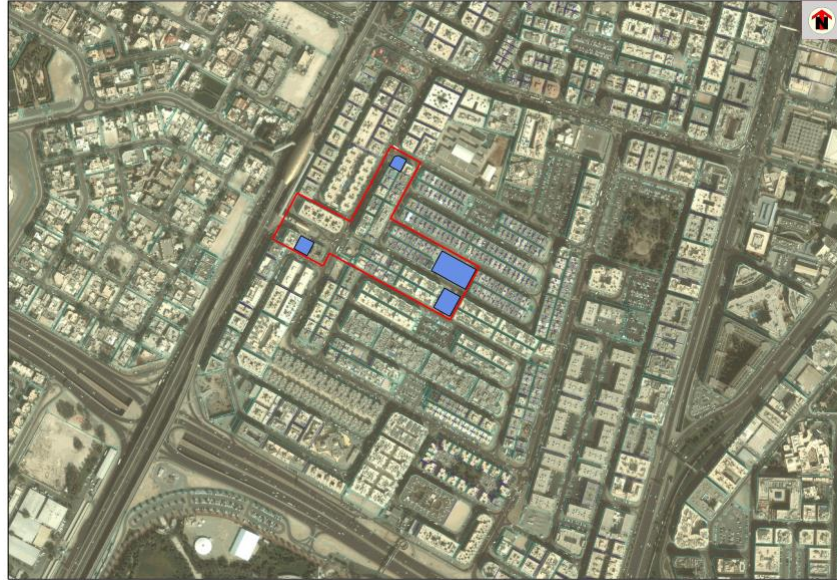
Demographics:

The Al Karama area has an overall population of approx. 76000. The identified site is part of this dense neighborhood

Priority areas & main City expectations:

The site shall focus on a walkable, resilient and engaging public realm set within a dense network of streets and built form. The intent is to create a thermally comfortable and walkable neighbourhood. Students may explore redesigning and reallocating street and parking to new green and public spaces.

Presentation of the site



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The area also provides many major services to residents in the area, and wider Dubai including schools, a private university, the Central Post Building, Central Laboratory, and Health Centres.

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For the purposes of this competition, the focus is on a small area close to the metro station. It is recognised that upgrades to this area could help increase public transport use, due to making connections to the metro safer, more enjoyable and attractive. Upgrades could also act as a catalyst for wider change across the neighbourhood over time.

A few key sites and streets have been identified for regeneration (shown in blue). These are owned by the city, and so there will be the ability to implement design solutions. Students should examine the wider area and redesign these spaces to help deliver on the priorities of the site, detailed below.





City climate priorities and specific environmental issues to address

Demonstrating action on climate change mitigation and adaptation are a key priority for this project. The city is currently developing a climate action plan, however some key issues to address are discussed below.

The climate of Dubai is extremely hot in the summer months but can cool down to 14 degrees in winter. Therefore the project must provide thermally comfortable environments for pedestrians through active and passive cooling systems. There should be a green and lush public realm with a range of plazas, open spaces and rest areas for pedestrians and there must be a neighborhood park of at least 8,000 m².

Biodiversity and public amenity should be considered with a range of play and active streets to entertain and amuse pedestrians. Sustainability is a difficult concept to attain in Dubai however we strongly recommend that the design looks at reducing the carbon footprint significantly. One key way to do this is focusing design on shifting residents away from private transport use and towards public transport, walking and cycling. The design of the streets can achieve this through creating a more attractive, pleasant and enjoyable environment for people to move through. Alongside this, students could look for opportunities to prove alternative energy generation processes through public sites. E.g. Solar panels on roofs and rotating wind generators.

Other expectations for the site's redevelopment

The overarching design for the site should focus on increasing connections for residents with the metro station, and creating a more pleasant, enjoyable and safe environment to move through. This could involve reallocating space, increasing vegetation, and developing pocket parks throughout the area. Attention should be given to providing infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. Connections between the metro station, and other key activities in the neighbourhood should also be considered. We recommend that movement studies be carried out to identify how the Al Karama area can be stitched together. Broader public transport such as buses, must also be a consideration and should connect people within 150m of their residences.

Architecture must reflect the principles of “Dubai- ness”. This means that design responses should be sensitive to the religious, cultural and heritage values of the UAE and shall represent the soul and heart of the people of Dubai. Some of the wider Al Karama area have begun to look at installing street art as a low cost and easy win solution to improving the urban environment. Students may want to consider how this could be brought through into this site area.

While the focus is on increasing sustainable transport. Today Dubai is still heavily car-orientated. If public parking plots are transformed for other purposes, the teams may need to consider what is the minimum and most innovative way to provide this.