

SPATIAL IDENTITY AS A STRATEGIC DESIGN TOOL THE CASE OF BAB TOUMA SQUARE IN DAMASCUS, SYRIA

The concept of spatial identity has become a very important category in the academic research field and development discussions all over the world, especially that it is being seen as an adaptation tool to globalization effects. The focus nowadays is on finding methods to invest this concept in different contexts and to address the spatial changes resulted of its dynamic nature, and how to control those changes strategically.

The dynamic nature of spatial identity should be considered in design strategies especially when drastic transformative changes occur due to crisis situations like natural disasters or wars, which is the case under discussion in this thesis project.

This thesis discusses the case of Bab Touma square in the city of Damascus, Syria, which experienced several years of a crisis situation. It argues that in cases where public open spaces experience drastic changes, the development of these spaces should be based on the principle of "spatial identity reformation", otherwise, there is a threat of losing identity and social attachment to those spaces and thus having barriers of development in the future.

The aim of this thesis is to identify all constituent elements of spatial identity in order to utilize this concept as a strategic design tool, and to emphasize the role of social consciousness as an essential actor in the process. It aims to change the confusing perception of Bab Touma square after the crisis and recreate a new image that would contribute to the overall recovering of the city.

The thesis starts with an analytical study of spatial identity to define its components and all the aspects and issues related to this concept, then the discussion continues with a critical study of some local and international examples to have a further practical understanding of the application of this concept, followed by the analysis of the case study, which was conducted using the spatial identity components as guidelines, and emphasizing the necessity of detecting and considering the changes before and after the crisis to control the negative ones and further invest in the positive ones. Finally, after synthesis, the thesis adopts a participatory design approach to establish an image of the space that would be compatible with the social perception and consciousness toward the square and would fulfill the community's future aspirations for the square.

The thesis will provide a reference study for the concept of spatial identity, a new strategic identity "vision" for Bab Touma square and its objectives, a master plan of the design proposal, a vegetation plan and an urban furniture kit.

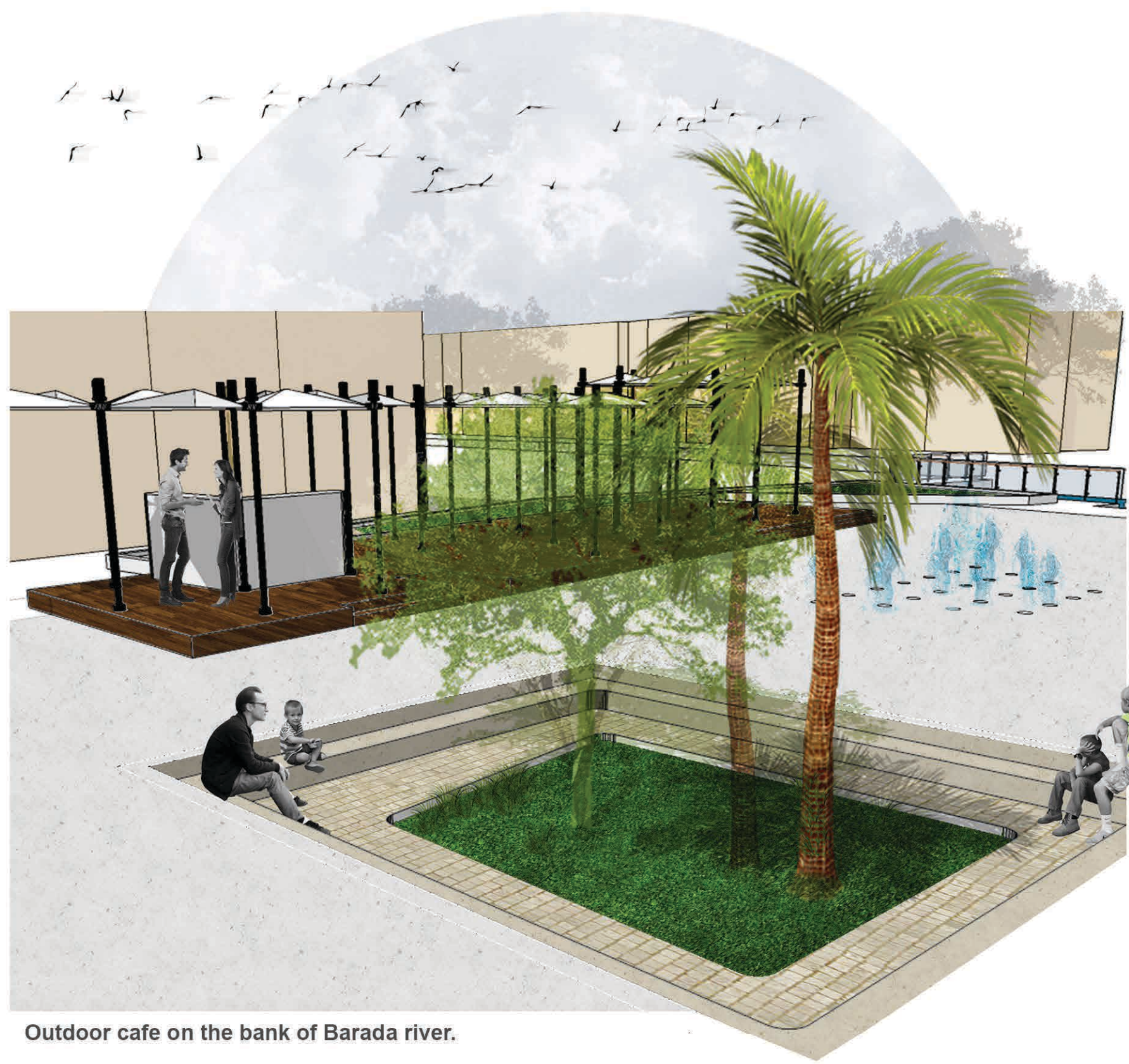
The VISION:

Bab Touma Square, THE OASIS OF DAMASCUS

A HERITAGE square for ALL with new possibilities for a CONTEMPORARY urban life.

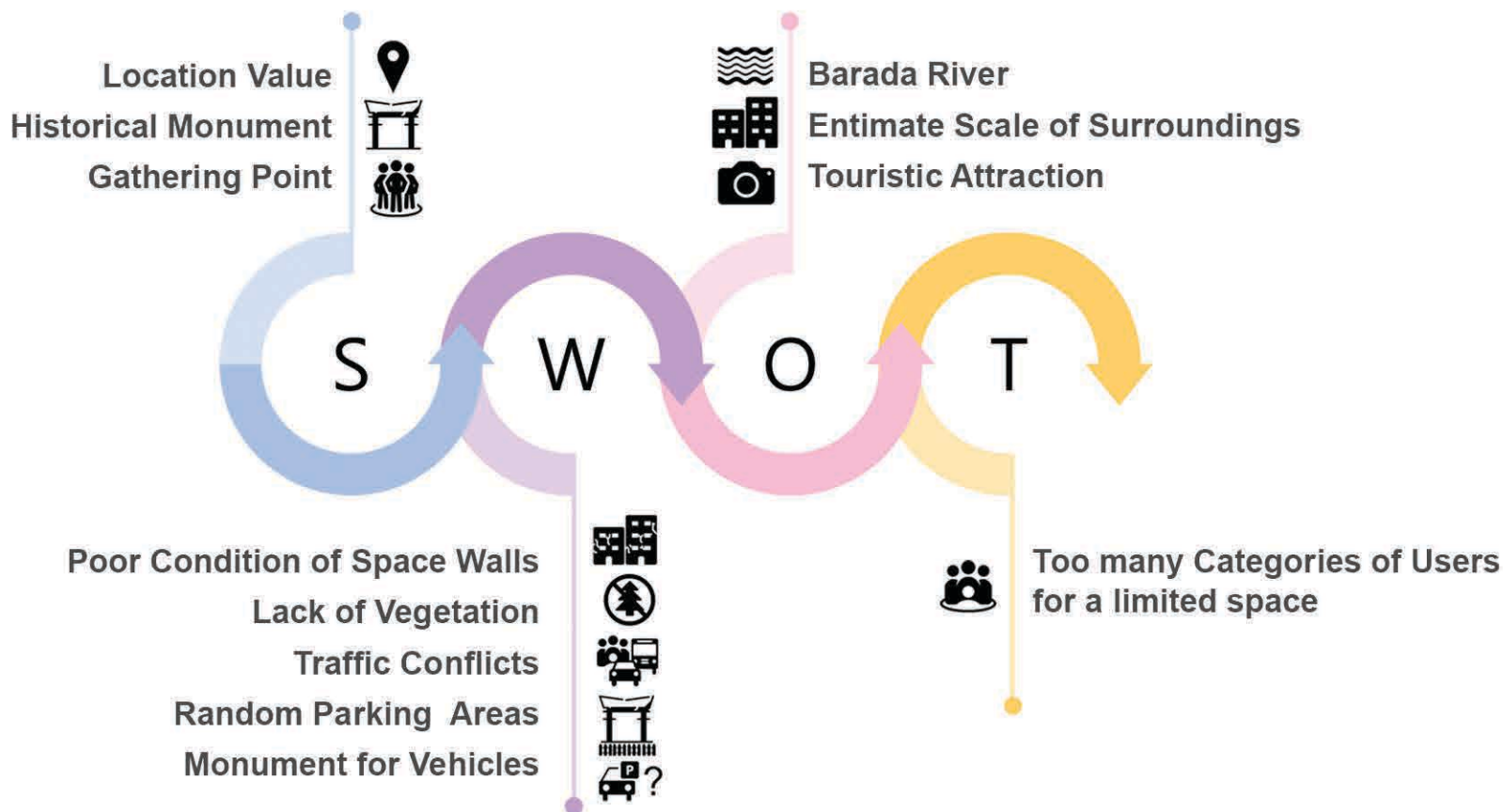


Sitting areas with cultural references (Traditional pavement, solitary fruit tree by the fountain, an old courtyard borders)



Outdoor cafe on the bank of Barada river.

SWOT ANALYSIS



FUNCTIONS

- Multifunctional area | Gate Platform
- Sitting areas
- Amphitheatre | Sunk-in sitting area
- Leveled sitting area by the river
- outdoor cafes
- Information point for tourists
- Parking
- Public toilets point



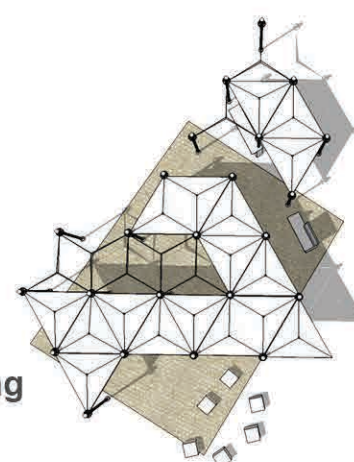
SECTION



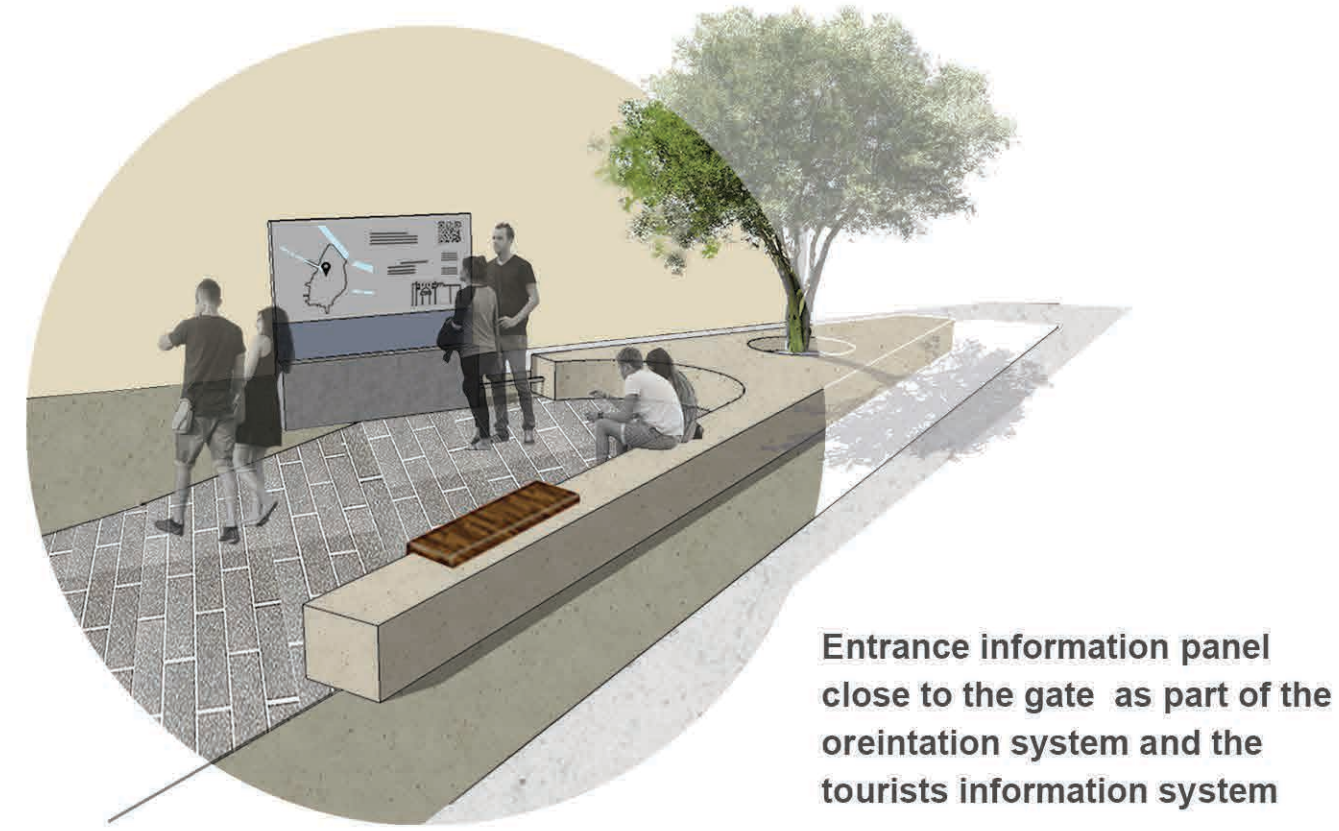
VISUALIZATION

TOURISTS INFORMATION POINT

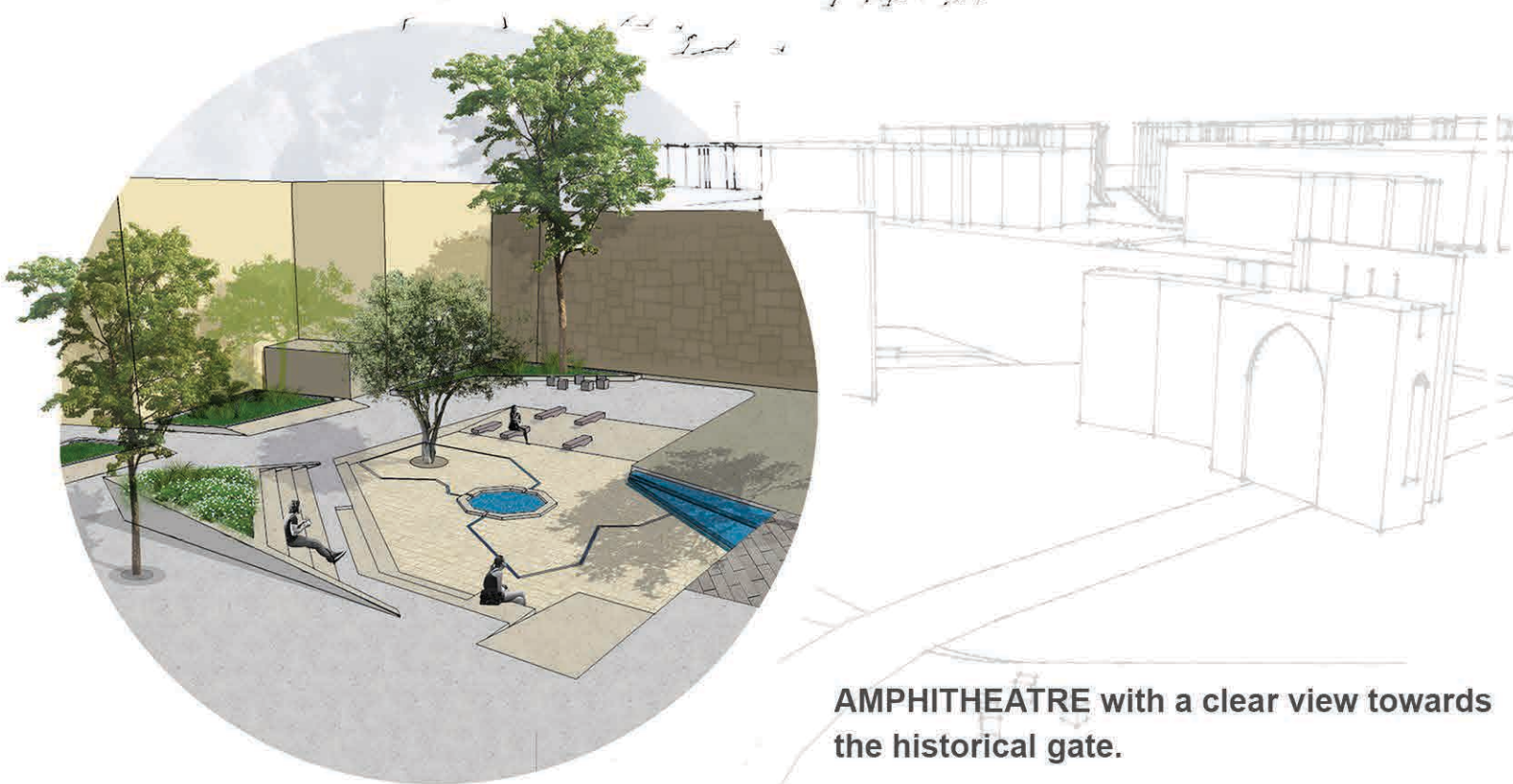
Transperant panels with historical illustrations can overlap the current environment when standing at the assigned spot.



OPEN SPACE DESIGN PLAN



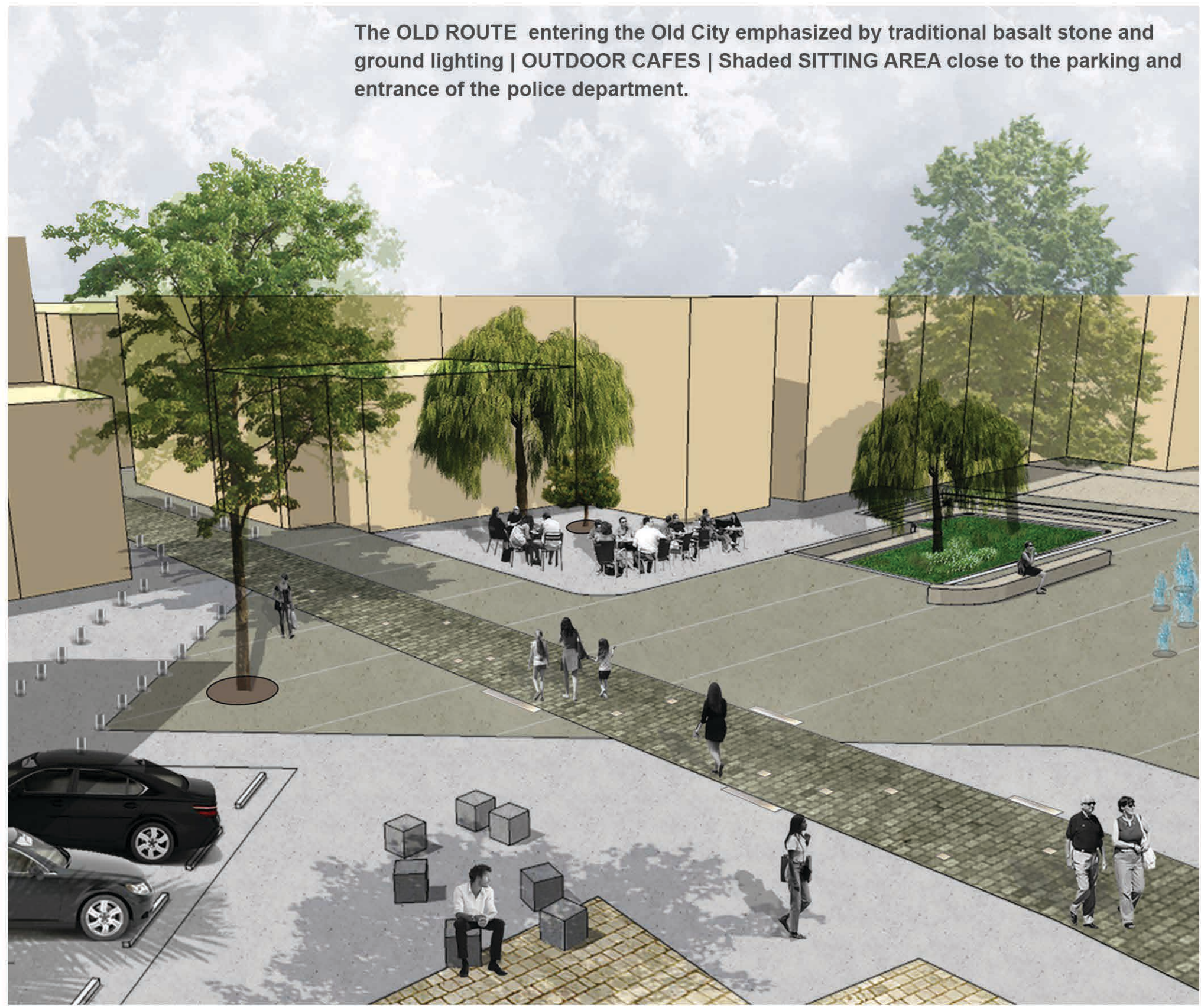
Entrance information panel close to the gate as part of the oreintation system and the tourists information system



AMPHITHEATRE with a clear view towards the historical gate.



The treatment of Barada river bank at the northern edge of the square: Leveled area for more interaction with water | Replacing the concrete base of the river with a more permeable material to restore the natural state of the river bank and help improving biodiversity.



The OLD ROUTE entering the Old City emphasized by traditional basalt stone and ground lighting | OUTDOOR CAFES | Shaded SITTING AREA close to the parking and entrance of the police department.