



Preserving and Rehabilitating the Historic Urban Landscape of Istanbul: A Case Study of the Büyükdere District

Özge İlk Saltık* 

Abstract

Büyükdere has been a settlement since the Byzantine period and was a popular summer destination for ambassadors and foreigners due to its natural beauty in the 18th and 19th centuries. Nevertheless, while the urban sprawl of Büyükdere continued during the Republican period, the settlement began to lose its cosmopolitan structure. The problematic legal processes of Bosphorus caused deterioration in the historical fabric of Büyükdere, even though it was declared a "historical urban site" in 1983.

As a unique part of Bosphorus' urban morphology, Büyükdere has not received enough attention, which can support the preservation of its urban fabric, from scholars and local authorities so far. Therefore, this study aims to fill the knowledge gap on Büyükdere by highlighting its preservation problems and thus, developing rehabilitation proposals for its historical urban fabric.

The settlement was documented via various analyses, and through them: legal, physical, and socio-economic preservation problems were determined at the building and urban scales. In 2023, 10,2% of the buildings were determined unoccupied, whilst 10% of the buildings were observed as structurally in bad condition. While 50,9% of the existing building stock was determined as new buildings, 6,4% of the buildings on the site were newly constructed on listed parcels. When the numbers of listed buildings were compared in 1978, 1983, 2004, and 2022, it was determined that 167 heritage buildings were lost during the last decades. The primary cause of this heritage loss has been identified as legal procedures, which significantly impact the site's preservation status. In parallel with these, due to the decrease in the local population, abandonment and neglect were observed to impact the deterioration level of remaining heritage buildings.

Consequently, new urban designs and interventions were proposed to revitalize the fabric and create a sustainable preservation environment.

Keywords:

Historical urban site, Preservation, Rehabilitation, Urban revitalization.

*Built Environment, Eindhoven
University of Technology, Eindhoven,
The Netherlands

Email: o.ilik.saltik@tue.nl

INTRODUCTION

The settlements on the shores of Bosphorus have a fragmented typology that consists of separated dwelling units called “villages”. The term “village” (*köy* in Turkish) has become an indicator of Bosphorus’ unique morphology by existing in the names of many Bosphorus districts (such as Ortaköy, Kadıköy, Arnavutköy, etc.). These separated historical urban cores of Bosphorus, expanded unevenly over time. However, despite having regional differences, these villages developed their own lifestyle that can be traced over architectural and natural assets, as well as daily life activities that can be spotted on the site (Kuban, 1976).

As a Bosphorus village, Büyükdere was defining a cosmopolitan structure through its demography and architecture, along with its unique natural assets during the 18th-19th centuries. However, even though it was declared as a historical urban site in 1983 according to the Turkish Law of Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets (no. 2863), the settlement had lost most of its natural and cultural heritage assets before the enactment of the related laws. Furthermore, while other Bosphorus villages drew the interest of scholars and local authorities more in terms of conservation, Büyükdere has not been studied mostly due to its remote location from the city’s urban focal points. Therefore, the respectable amount of its lost cultural, natural, and intangible heritage have been never documented in detail. Yet, the traces of some tangible and intangible heritage that are lost in time, in addition to the present ones, are still detectable.

In this context, this study aims to document and assess the heritage assets of Büyükdere to define their preservation problems, and thus, develop rehabilitation proposals both in the building and urban scales by utilizing a combination of data sources and analyses of the historical characteristics of the area. In order to achieve this, study zone was first selected based on factors such as the historical urban site boundaries, aerial photographs, old maps, and the preservation status of the built fabric. The tangible heritage structures were then analyzed in terms of occupation rates, number of stories, construction materials, and techniques to assess their current preservation status and associated challenges. These analyses were conducted at both the building and urban scales to provide a comprehensive yet detailed understanding of the site.

The findings from the physical analyses were interpreted alongside the socio-economic history and legal transformations (including laws and regulations) that have shaped the area to further explore the underlying causes of Büyükdere’s preservation challenges. Based on these insights, rehabilitation proposals were developed to safeguard Büyükdere’s urban heritage while promoting its distinctive local practices. These proposals focus on key focal points or designated recreation zones that integrate both the tangible and intangible heritage of the site.

HISTORY OF BÜYÜKDERE

The earliest reference to Büyükdere was made by Greek geographer Dionysios during the 2nd century BCE, where it was mentioned as *Bathykolpos*, meaning ‘deep bay’ (Dionysios, 2020). The first significant mention of Büyükdere as a settlement came in the 4th century CE by Deleon (1999), who described it as a small fishing village called *Vathys Kolpos* (Figure 1). The village was built around the stream called *Büyükdere*, which flows into the deepest bay (Büyükdere Bay) in Bosphorus. Büyükdere was renowned for its natural beauty, including meadows, plane trees, and spring waters (Eyice, 2021).

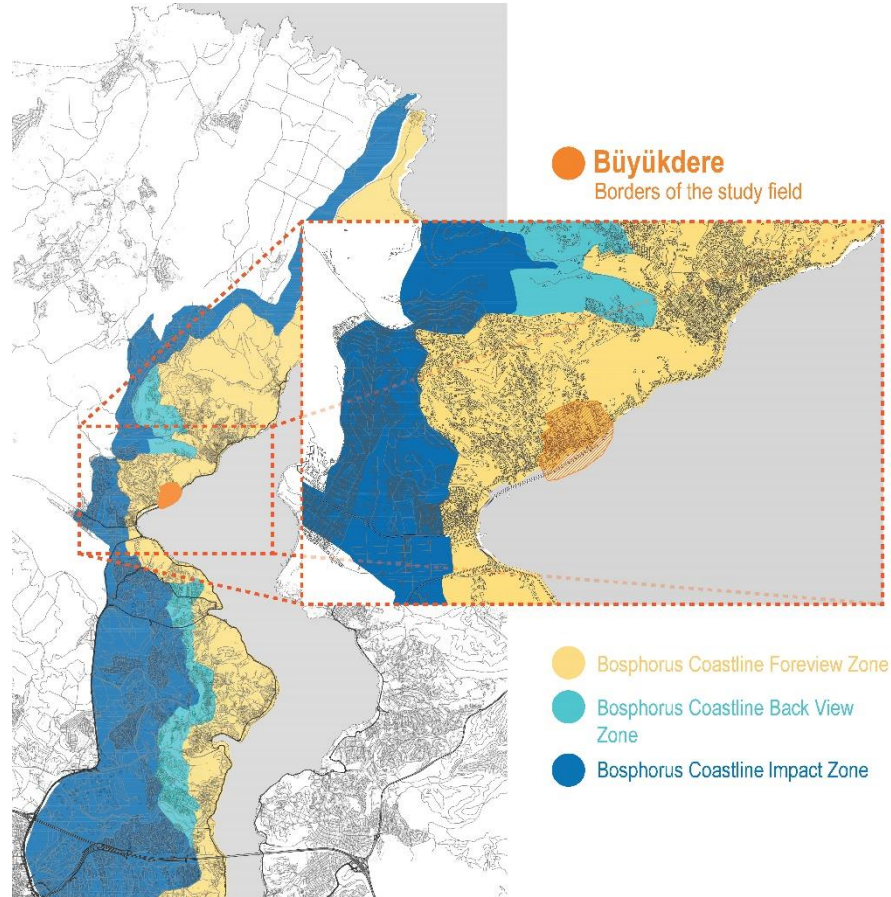


Figure 1. Location of the study area in Bosphorus Natural and Historical site (Ilık Saltık, 2023)

During the Ottoman Period, Büyükdere gained prominence as a preferred destination for the sultans in the 16th -17th centuries, offering them a picturesque retreat within a day's reach. It was regarded as a natural extension of the nearby Belgrad Forest (Aysu, 1994). As the sultans and their families began to show more interest in settling in Bosphorus rather than the historical peninsula during the 18th century, Büyükdere started to expand.

During the 19th century, Büyükdere became a cosmopolitan settlement, attracting both Muslim and non-Muslim populations, including Levantines and foreign soldiers. The presence of ambassadors who chose to reside in Büyükdere during the summer further contributed to its popularity among foreigners (Kuban, 1996). Life in

Büyükdere during the summer was considered an extension of life in Pera, a vibrant neighbourhood of Istanbul (Gülenaz, 1998). As a result, numerous restaurants, taverns, hotels, markets, and various shops were established in Büyükdere, along with a ferry port, in the second half of the 19th century (Aysu, 1994).

Büyükdere also became a preferred summer residence for many individuals seeking to escape the frequent epidemics and fires that plagued the historical peninsula (Yağan, 2015). However, Büyükdere itself suffered significant damage from fires in the late 19th century. The 1898 fire destroyed more than 400 buildings, resulting in a transformation of the settlement's urban morphology (Figure 2). It is believed that the grid axes seen in Büyükdere today were planned after this fire, at the beginning of the 20th century (Figure 4) (Ercan, 2019).



Figure 2. Maps of The German Blue, Büyükdere, 1913-1914 (IBB Atatürk Library, 1926)

In the late 19th century, the cosmopolitan nature of Büyükdere began to decline, and this declination process was further accelerated with the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye. During the 1920s-1930s, Büyükdere remained a quiet place primarily visited by residents and was still regarded as a summer resort. However, significant changes occurred in the following decades with the construction of new land roads in the 1940s -1950s. These roads connected Büyükdere to other parts of Istanbul, leading to an increase in construction activities in and around the historic urban core (Aysu, 1994).

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), the population of Büyükdere continued to increase until 2007. To alleviate the growing traffic congestion, a new coastal road, locally known as the *kazıklı yol* ('causeway' in Turkish), was constructed in the late 1980s. This road, Demokrasi Şehitleri Street, created a barrier between the land and the sea, rendering the workshops of boat builders, seaside mansions, and restaurants obsolete (Aysu, 1994). As a result of economic fluctuations and urban development, the size of parcels decreased, meadows disappeared, and Büyükdere transformed into a densely populated residential area (Erkılınç, 1982).

Neither the declarations in 1975 and 1983 (which include and acknowledge Büyükdere as a natural and cultural site worth preservation) nor the laws were sufficient and effective enough to protect the historical core of Büyükdere (Salman and Kuban, 2006). Consequently, many civil architectural heritage buildings were replaced with new and incompatible structures between 1950-2025.

DEFINITION OF THE STUDY AREA AND ITS PRESENT PHYSICAL STATUS

To evaluate the historic fabric of Büyükdere, a specific study zone was selected. Figure 3 displays the borders of the historical urban site and the selected study zone. While determining the study area, various inputs were considered: including aerial photos, old maps, and the present preservation status of the fabric. Natural features such as hills and the coastline, as well as urban elements like streets, were considered to establish the boundaries. The study area encompasses Boylu Blind Alley in the northeast, Kalfa and Çavuşoğlu Streets in the north, Dede Korkut Street in the northwest, Ekserci and Cami Streets in the west, and Uzun Fıstık and a portion of Demokrasi Şehitleri Streets in the southwest).

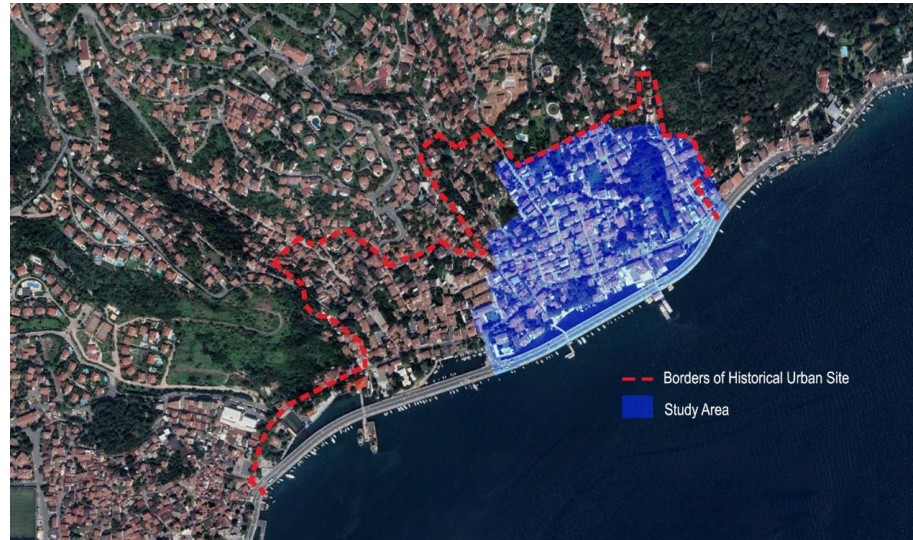


Figure 3. Borders of the study area within the historical urban site borders dated 1983 (Google Earth, 2023)

The selected study zone in Büyükdere comprises 53 lots, 529 parcels, and 499 structures. Within this zone, there are eight listed monumental heritage buildings, namely Kara Mehmet Kethüda (Büyükdere) Mosque, Hagia Paraskevi Greek Church, Surp Boğos Armenian Catholic Church, Italian Santa Maria Catholic Church, Topçu Police Station, Spanish Embassy's Summer Resort, Old Büyükdere Ferry Port, and Fuad Pasha Mansion. Additionally, numerous civil architectural heritage buildings from various periods can be spotted within the zone.

The historic fabric of Büyükdere exhibits a combination of partially organic and regular building blocks and streets. The oldest structure in the area dates to the 18th century, while the majority of the building stock originates from the late 19th century to the early 20th century.

Çayırbaşı Street, as the main axis of Büyükdere (even after the construction of the causeway), defines a unique urban formation in the study zone. This uniqueness comes from the two-sided nature of Çayırbaşı Street which refers to the orange building island in Figure 4. It is known that most of the Bosphorus villages' coastlines consist of a line of building blocks (purple blocks) and a road in front of them. Given the fact that these roads which are located between the building blocks and Bosphorus are usually the main axis, the ground floors of these first-row buildings are frequently used for commercial functions. Accumulation of commercial functions in one axis or zone is usually addressed as a bazaar or marketplace (or '*çarşı*' in Turkish). Therefore, in Büyükdere, both sides of Çayırbaşı Street can be and are used as '*çarşı*', which promotes local business opportunities and commercial activities.

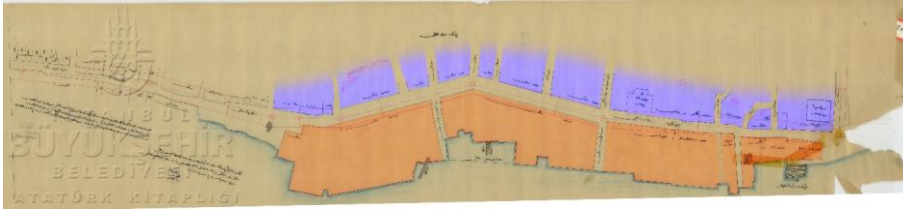


Figure 4. New route map for the coastal road (Çayırbaşı Street) due to the fire in 1898, dated 1913-1914 (IBB Atatürk Library, 1913)

In parallel with this unique formation, commercial buildings were observed to be concentrated on Çayırbaşı Street in the function analysis of the site. However, various other functions including residential, residential+commercial, accommodation, administrative+public, religious, education, and storage were also observed in the area. Moreover, the most prominent function was determined as residential, constituting 67.1% of the buildings. While commercial function was determined as 8% and residential+commercial as 10.5%, it is important to note that the ratio of vacant buildings in the area was determined as 9.6%, indicating a significant number of unoccupied structures. Many of these vacant structures are located on Çayırbaşı Street (Ilık Saltık, 2023). Moreover, in addition to vacant status, ruin-like half-demolished structures on this axis also address building scale problems that require various conservation actions.

It was observed that 47.1% of the buildings have at least one basement story. The number of basement stories was observed to reach up to four due to the hilly terrain of the Bosphorus. However, the most common building height in the area is Ground (G) + 2 Stories (S), accounting for 35.9% of the buildings. Buildings with heights exceeding G+3S are mostly newly constructed.

The rich fabric of Büyükdere is reflected in the diverse construction techniques and materials used in the buildings. 58.3% of the buildings were constructed with a reinforced concrete frame, combined with various facade materials such as timber cladding, cement plaster, rough cement plaster, mosaic tiles, vinyl siding, and stone cladding. Timber-frame buildings account for 16.9% of the structures, while masonry construction represents 13.6%. This indicates that over half of the

building stock in the historical core consists of newly built structures. Nevertheless, the ratio of compatible new structures to incompatible structures is almost 1 to 7 (Figure 16) which addresses a significant loss in tangible heritage (on building scale) and historic urban fabric (on urban scale).

Following these, out of the 499 structures in the area, 40.3% are listed as heritage buildings. However, it should be noted that 16 of these listed buildings were determined as reconstructions. Additionally, 6.4% of the listed buildings are newly constructed within listed parcels, and 50.9% are new buildings in non-listed parcels. Nonetheless, 2.4% of the buildings constructed with a reinforced concrete frame could potentially be considered for listing as modern heritage buildings.

While 27.7% of the buildings that were constructed after 1970 are considered new, the remaining buildings have different preservation conditions in terms of their building masses: 2.8% are in bad condition, 17.7% are in fair condition, and 51.8% are in good condition. Buildings in good condition generally retain their original volumes or have undergone simple and reversible changes, such as the enclosure of balconies. Buildings in fair condition may have undergone volumetric changes, such as additional stories. Buildings in bad condition can be stated as having unidentifiable original volumes.

When examining the preservation statuses of the facades in the study area, it was observed that 11.4% are in bad condition, 19.9% are in fair condition, and 41% are in good condition. Facades in good condition generally preserve their original appearance or have undergone simple and reversible changes, such as the addition of signboards or new claddings. Facades in fair condition may have experienced volumetric changes and alterations in the facade openings. Facades in bad condition are those where the original appearance is no longer recognizable.

One of the significant challenges faced by the existing building stock in Büyükdere is the addition of new stories to the buildings. This common practice gave path to the structural instability. Around 10% of the 499 structures in the study area have heavily damaged building elements and/or severe material problems, indicating a bad preservation condition. Unoccupied buildings and those with new or altered facade openings also contribute to the preservation problems in the area.

PRESERVATION PROBLEMS

Legal Problems

Conservation of historical fabrics usually contravenes the daily priorities of the public. Despite the existence of laws and conservation master plans, the lack of cultural motivation among the local population can lead to unlawful actions and opposition to conservation policies (Kuban, 2000). The laws established during the late Ottoman era, which were passed to the Republic, were not comprehensive enough to prevent the destruction of heritage structures effectively (Mumcu,

1969). Furthermore, complications arose due to the allocation of buildings with different functions to various institutions responsible for their conservation and preservation (Madran, 1996).

One of the major legal problems concerning the Bosphorus region emerged with the enactment of Law No. 775, also known as the *Gecekondur* Law, enacted on July 20, 1966. This law was a milestone for the zoning activities along Bosphorus, as it allowed and registered many unauthorized structures in and around the historical cores of Bosphorus villages (*Gecekondur Yasası*, 1996). Subsequently, further enactments of laws and the foundation of related institutions led to cumulative preservation problems. In Table 1, important events and laws were summarized chronically to frame the whole process. The major problems that can be determined from Table 1 are conflicting and inconsistent decisions along with the confusion of authority.

Preservation of the industrial complexes in the Bosphorus can be given as an example of conflicted decisions. While the existing industrial buildings in Bosphorus were stated to be preserved and only new constructions were forbidden in the Istanbul Industrial Land Use Plan (1966), they were decided to be removed gradually according to the Conservation Decisions on the Natural and Historical Sites of the Bosphorus (1975). However, with the report of the Land Use Preservation Plan of Bosphorus (1977), the existing industrial buildings were again decided to be preserved (Salman, 2004).

The confusion of authority, however, was used as an excuse to make unsuitable decisions in terms of preservation practices, for the sake of political interests.

It can be argued that due to administrative ambiguities and the political climate of the period, decisions conducive to preservation were not effectively implemented. As follows, from Table 1, Conservation Decisions on the Natural and Historical Sites of Bosphorus in 1975 declared the High Council of Immovable Antiquities and Monument (GEEAYK) as the sole authority responsible for decision-making concerning the Bosphorus. Nevertheless, the Land Use Preservation Plan of Bosphorus (1977) expanded the list of authorized institutions and included the Ministry of Zoning and Housing, and the Ministry of Culture, which were granted the power to make decisions alongside GEEAYK.

Consequently, although laws and decisions concerning the Bosphorus were theoretically intended to preserve its natural and cultural assets, they have ultimately led to the destruction of heritage assets in practice (Ilık Saltık, 2023).

Table 1. Legal Processes of Zoning and Conservation in Bosphorus (Ilık Saltık, 2023)

YEAR	INSTITUTION	STATEMENT
1960	Directorate of Zoning and Planning	In order to decentralize the city, 1/10.000 scaled master plan and 1/5000 scaled Regional Plan of the Bosphorus have been prepared.

1966	Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM)	Law no.775, titled <i>Gecekondu</i> Law, has been introduced.
1966	TBMM	"Istanbul Industrial Master Plan" (<i>İstanbul Sanayi Nazım Planı</i>) has been accepted.
1968	GEEAYK	GEEAYK (High Council of Immovable Antiquities and Monuments) decision dated 11.05.1968 and numbered 3967 has been introduced.
1970	GEEAYK	GEEAYK decision dated 11.09.1970 and numbered 5505 has been introduced.
1971	GEEAYK	GEEAYK decision dated 10.07.1971 and numbered 5948 has been introduced.
1972	GEEAYK	GEEAYK decision dated 19.07.1972 and numbered 6555 has been introduced.
1973	Ministry of Culture	Law no.1710 titled "Law of Antiquities" (<i>Eski Eserler Yasası</i>) (06.05.1973 / official gazette: 14527) has been introduced.
1974	GEEAYK	GEEAYK decision dated 13.09.1974 and numbered 7955 has been introduced.
1974	General Planning Bureau of Istanbul	1/5000 scaled "Seaside Mansions and Coast Line" plan (<i>Yahılar ve Sahil Şeridi</i>) has been introduced.
1974	GEEAYK	GEEAYK decision dated 14.12.1974 and numbered 8172, 1/5000 scaled "Regarding the Preservation of the Bosphorus Groves and Forests, Conservation Decisions on the Natural and Historical Sites of the Bosphorus" (<i>Boğaziçi Korularının ve Ormanlarının Korunmasına İlişkin Boğaziçi Doğal ve Tarihi Sit Alanı Koruma Kararları</i>) has been introduced.
1975	GEEAYK	GEEAYK decision dated 12.04.1975 and numbered 8036, 1/5000 scaled "Conservation Decisions on the Natural and Historical Sites of the Bosphorus" (<i>Boğaziçi Doğal ve Tarihi Sit Alanı Koruma Kararları</i>) has been introduced.
1975	Ministry of Culture	Bosphorus has officially been announced as "natural and historical site area"
1977	GEEAYK	GEEAYK decision dated 10.06.1977 and numbered 9868 and 9872 has been

		introduced.
1977	GEEAYK	GEEAYK decision dated 12.11.1977 and numbered 10170 has been introduced.
1977	Ministry of Culture	1/5000 scaled Report of the Master Preservation Plan of the Bosphorus (<i>Boğaziçi Nazım Koruma Planı Raporu</i>) has been introduced.
1977	Ministry of Culture	The Report of the Master Development Plan (<i>Nazım İmar Planı Raporu</i>) has been introduced.
1978	GEEAYK	GEEAYK decision dated 25.03.1978 and numbered 10290 has been introduced.
1978	Ministry of Culture	Revisions have been made in 1977 dated "Master Development Plan"
1979	Ministry of Culture	Revisions have been made in 1977 dated "Master Development Plan"
1980	GEEAYK	New regulations have been requested by GEEAYK for the 1978-1979 revisions that have been made on the "Master Development Plan".
1982	Ministry of Culture	The regulations that were requested in 1980 by GEEAYK have been introduced.
1983	Council of Ministers	Restrictions dated 29.01.1983 have been announced for the "Master Development Plan" of the Bosphorus.
1983	TBMM	GEEAYK has been dismantled with the decision 21.06.1983 dated and 2863 numbered "Law on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets". High Councils of Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets (KTVKYK), under the governance of the Ministry of Culture, have been founded.
1983	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality / General Planning Bureau of Istanbul / Provincial Bank	1/5000 scaled "Master Plan" (<i>Nazım Planı</i>) and 1/1000 scaled "Conservation Plan" (<i>Koruma Geliştirme Planı</i>) which were requested by the Council of Ministers, have been prepared.
1983	TBMM	"The Bosphorus Law" (<i>Boğaziçi Kanunu</i>) dated 22.11.1983 and numbered 2960 has been introduced.
1985	Ministry of Culture	The Bosphorus has been accepted as a part of the Istanbul Metropolitan zone.
1994	TBMM	In accordance with Law No.2863, reconstructions of the buildings that have completed their physical lifespan

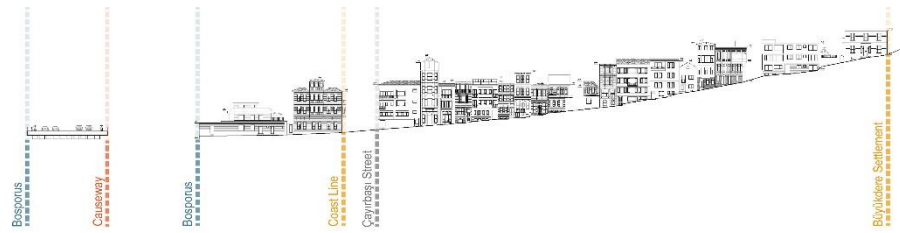
		have been allowed in the Bosphorus.
1999	KTVKYK	KTVKYK resolution dated 05.11.1999 and numbered 665 has been introduced.
2009	KTVKYK	KTVKYK resolution dated 23.09.2009 and numbered 751 has been introduced.
2010	KTVKYK	KTVKYK resolution dated 19.01.2010 and numbered 762 has been introduced.
2010	KTVKYK	KTVKYK resolution dated 14.09.2010 and numbered 773 has been introduced.
2010	KTVKYK	KTVKYK resolution dated 25.02.2016 and numbered 536 has been introduced.
2017	KTVKYK	KTVKYK resolution dated 18.10.2017 and numbered 837 has been introduced.

Physical Problems

The authentic urban morphology of the Bosphorus consisted of distinct settlement units or villages, which were situated at a walking distance of approximately an hour from each other. These villages were characterized by linear building blocks, primarily represented by seaside mansions. They were often connected through water transportation. Land roads were often built behind the first row of seaside mansions, which cut the direct connection between the main buildings and their annexes most of the time (Figure 5).

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Figure 5. Causeway's location in Büyükdere, about the coastline (Ilk Saltık, 2023)



However, with the rapid urbanization movement that occurred in the second half of the 20th century, Bosphorus villages underwent significant changes. New construction zones filled the gap between the villages and led to the demolition of many coastal heritage buildings. The construction of the coastal road further transformed the coastline, turning it into a central refuge between two land roads (Demokrasi Şehitleri and Çayırbaşı Streets). To visualize the lost coastal heritage of Büyükdere, a superimposed map was created using a base map from 2022 and a map drawn by Sedat Hakkı Eldem (Figure 6). This map

serves as a visual representation of the changes that have occurred over time, highlighting the loss of coastal heritage due to urbanization as well as the transformation of Çayırbaşı Street and its distinctive two-sided commercial çarşı units, following their decline in significance due to the construction of the causeway.

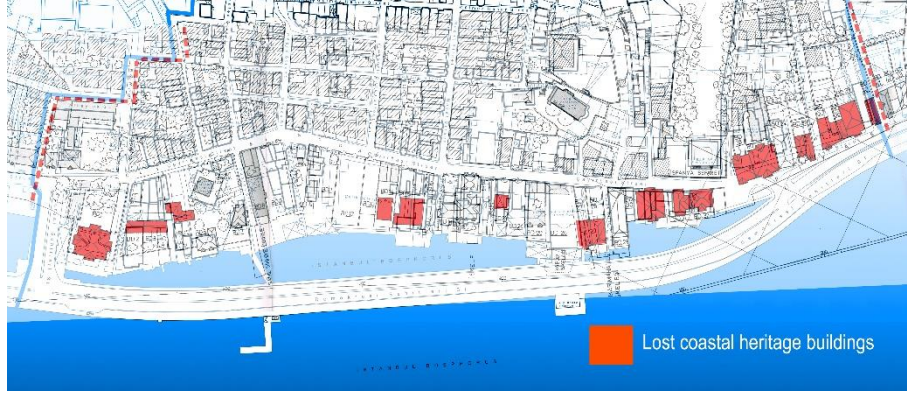


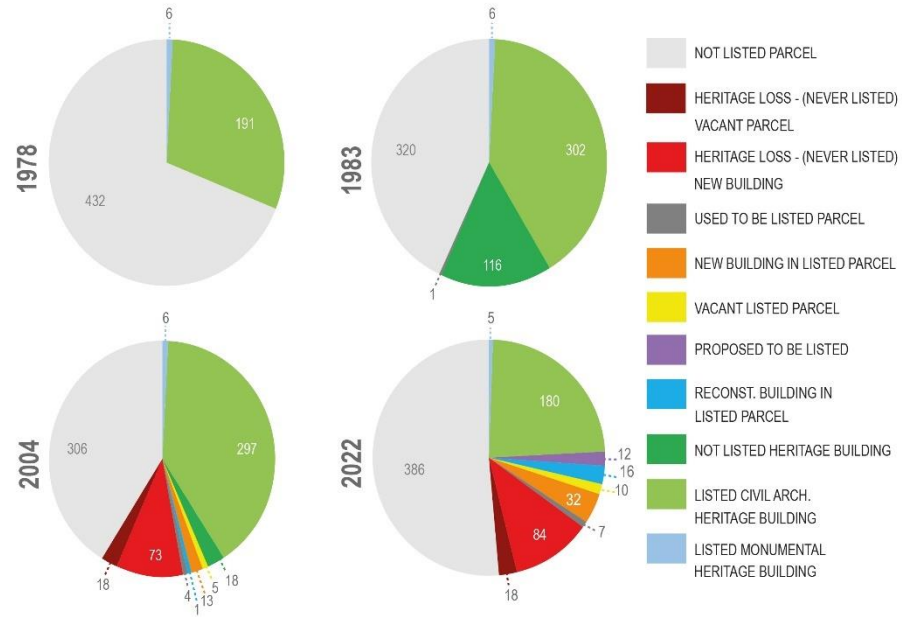
Figure 6. Lost coastal heritage buildings (seaside mansions) of Büyükdere (Eldem, 1993 & İlk Saltık, 2023)

According to Kuban (1976), the physical problems of Bosphorus settlements can be summarized into four main subjects: changing characteristics of transportation, expansion in building volumes, increasing density in settlements, and deterioration in green areas. These problems continue to be effective in 2025, and they have had a significant impact on the historical fabric of Büyükdere. Nevertheless, some additions to these problems can be made both for the case of Büyükdere and for the Bosphorus villages in general.

In contrast to the increase in building volumes and settlement density, Büyükdere embodies many vacant buildings, lots, as well as ruin-like demolished heritage structures. While these structures threaten the physical safety of the site, they also address heritage buildings that require extensive conservation or comprehensive restoration programs. Therefore, in addition to urban rehabilitation, a need for individual buildings' rehabilitation in different scopes also exists in the area. In favour of settlement density, however, annex-like unqualified structures in open spaces such as parks, gardens, or urban public zones define a physical problem that leads to the misperception of the historic fabric. Moreover, urban furniture in Büyükdere, as in other Bosphorus villages, is observed to be not compatible with the historic fabric. Variations of the same type of furniture (such as benches) can even be seen within the same park or street.

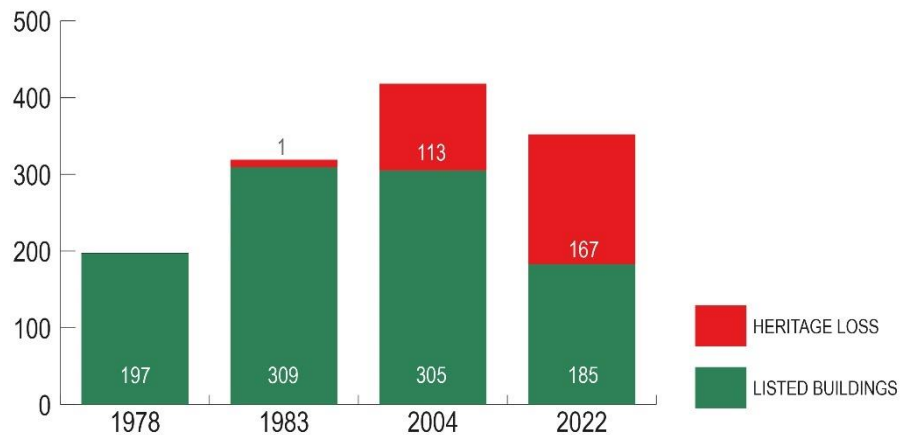
To assess the physical changes and deterioration in the historical fabric, the building stocks from different periods (1978, 1983, 2004, and 2022) were compared (Figure 7). 1983 is considered a critical threshold due to the enactment of new legal regulations, including Law No. 2863 and No. 2960 (Table 1).

Figure 7. Pie charts of physical preservation statuses of Büyükdere (Ilık Saltık, 2023)



In 1978, there were 197 listed buildings in Büyükdere. With the enactment of the new laws, the number of listed buildings increased to 309. An additional 116 buildings that had heritage qualifications yet were not listed were identified from historical documents (Salman, 2004). With this addition, the total number of heritage potential rises to 424. However, by 2004, the number of listed buildings decreased to 305, and the number of non-listed heritage buildings decreased to 18. A total of 113 heritage buildings were determined to be lost between 1983-2004. In 2022, the number of heritage losses further increased to 167, resulting in a decrease in the number of listed buildings to 185 (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Numbers and ratios of listed buildings and heritage losses by year (Ilık Saltık, 2023)



In terms of parcels, out of the total 629 parcels in the study site, there were 197 listed parcels in 1978. This number increased to 309 in 1983 and 323 in 2004. However, by 2022, the number of listed parcels decreased dramatically to 243 (Figure 9).

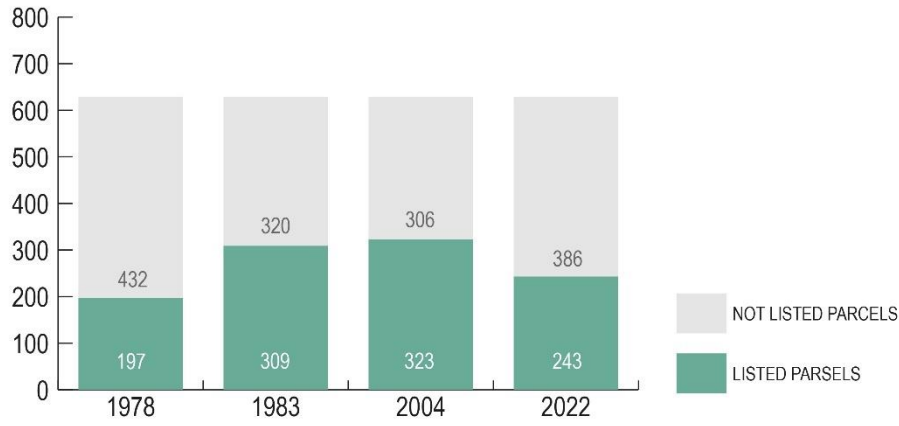


Figure 9. Numbers and ratios of listed and not listed parcels by year (İlk Saltık, 2023)

These findings indicate that neither the laws and regulations nor the cultural values associated with preservation have been sufficient to effectively protect and preserve the existing fabric of Büyükdere. The loss of heritage buildings and the decrease in the number of listed parcels reflect the challenges and shortcomings in preserving the historical fabric of the area.

Socio-Economic Problems

During the first half of the 19th century, Büyükdere was a relatively small town. However, it always had a commercial zone with various functions, unlike many other villages along Bosphorus.

Table 2 provides records of the *bostancıbaşı*s from the first half of the 19th century, allowing us to compare the past with the present and determine the variety of functions and preservation status of economic activities along the coastline.

Table 2. Different functions by year on the coastline (İlk Saltık, 2023)

	1815	1822-1823	2023
Religious	1	1	1
Fountain	1	1	1
Bakery	1	1	1
Butcher	1	1	2
Dock	2	3	0
Coffee House	1	1	0
Market	0	0	3
Food & Beverage	0	0	13
Accommodation	0	0	4
Bank	0	0	1
Association	0	0	1
Office	0	0	4
Dry Cleaning	0	0	1
Hairdresser	0	0	3
Stationer	0	0	1
Jewelry	0	0	1

Telco	0	0	1
TOTAL	7	8	38

In the second half of the 19th century, Büyükdere became known for its cosmopolitan population. This diverse population led to the development of different commercial functions, making Büyükdere a vibrant place with restaurants, taverns, casinos, and beaches. The local people even created a term, '*piyasa yapmak*' or '*piyasaya çıkmak*', which referred to evening walks on the coastline between Büyükdere and Sarıyer as a socializing event. This evening walk route is known as Piyasa Street at present.

Even after losing its cosmopolitan character, Büyükdere maintained its functions until the 1990s. However, with the construction of the coastal road, the seaside restaurants, casinos, and taverns in Büyükdere lost their appeal and gradually closed (Aysu, 1994). The relocation of public enterprises, such as the courthouse of Sarıyer Municipality, also contributed to these closures. These decisions had an impact on the population, which has been decreasing since 2007. It is worth noting that many vacant lots in Büyükdere are located around the old municipality facilities and public enterprises on the shores of Büyükdere (İlk Saltık, 2003).

REHABILITATION PROPOSALS FOR BÜYÜKDERE

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Interventions on The Urban Scale

To revitalize the urban fabric of Büyükdere, three primary urban interventions were proposed: (1) traffic re-regulation, (2) redesigning urban focal points, and (3) reimagining urban furniture (Figure 10).

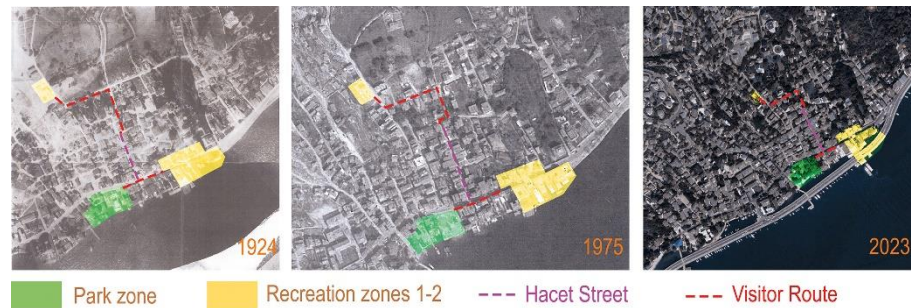


Figure 10. Selected recreation zones in Büyükdere over time (Salman, 2004; Google Earth, 2023)

While the ideal solution for traffic re-regulation would involve the deconstruction of the coastal road, this approach necessitates a comprehensive master transportation plan encompassing all the villages along Bosphorus. Therefore, a more integrated approach was adopted: instead of demolishing the coastal road, it was regarded as an extension of Piyasa Street, incorporating its cultural significance. To offer visitors an optimal Büyükdere experience and stimulate local job opportunities, a designated visitor route was proposed, with Hacet Street being pedestrianized as part of this route (Figure 10).

Three urban focal points were defined in Büyükdere: the zone between the Spanish Embassy's Summer Mansion and the Old Büyükdere Ferry Port (recreation zone-1), Çelik Gülersoy Park (recreation zone-2), and the Old Topçu Police Station (recreation zone-3). While Çelik Gülersoy Park is already utilized as a recreational space, the other two zones predominantly consist of abandoned heritage buildings and vacant parcels, offering the potential for revitalization and repurposing.

Recreation zone-1 encompasses several lots, including 603, 599, 608, and partially 593 and 592 (Figure 11). Despite its present vacant status, this zone holds significant heritage buildings, such as the Old Büyükdere Ferry Port¹ in lot 593, parcel 9. The building in lot 603 parcels 1-8, which served as a courthouse before its relocation (*Sarıyer Posta*, 2021), stands out due to its relatively monumental architectural style. The buildings within lots 593, 597, and 599 are either completely or partially abandoned, resulting in their deteriorated structural condition.

¹ During the review process of this paper, Old Büyükdere Ferry Port is re-functioned as a café of a well-known Turkish brand. Since it is referred to as Istanbul's new culture & living attraction point (Espressolabtr, 2023), it supports the decisions that are discussed for Recreation Zone-1.)

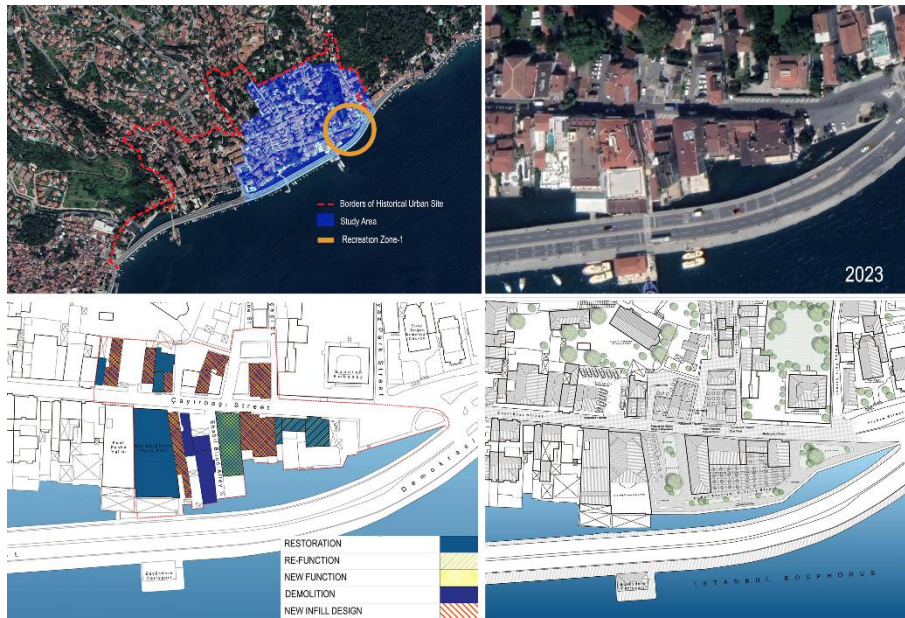


Figure 11. Interventions and Proposals for Recreation Zone-1 (Ilık Saltık, 2023)

To rehabilitate and revitalize the area, these factors were carefully considered. The proposed interventions for the zone are summarized in Figure 10. Buildings marked with a dark blue colour are recommended for demolition due to their deteriorated structural condition. Although these buildings are not listed, their parcels have been identified as listed properties. Initially, the ideal approach would have been to reconstruct the old heritage buildings. However, as the Directorate of Regional Council of Conservation of Cultural Assets in Istanbul (No. 3) declined to provide information about these parcels, new infill designs were proposed instead. These designs predominantly encompass commercial functions, such as cafes, pubs, and restaurants. Additionally, any remaining buildings that were proposed for restoration were suggested

to be repurposed as commercial units if they were not already being used for such purposes. The old courthouse building was suggested to function as a cultural centre (Figure 12).

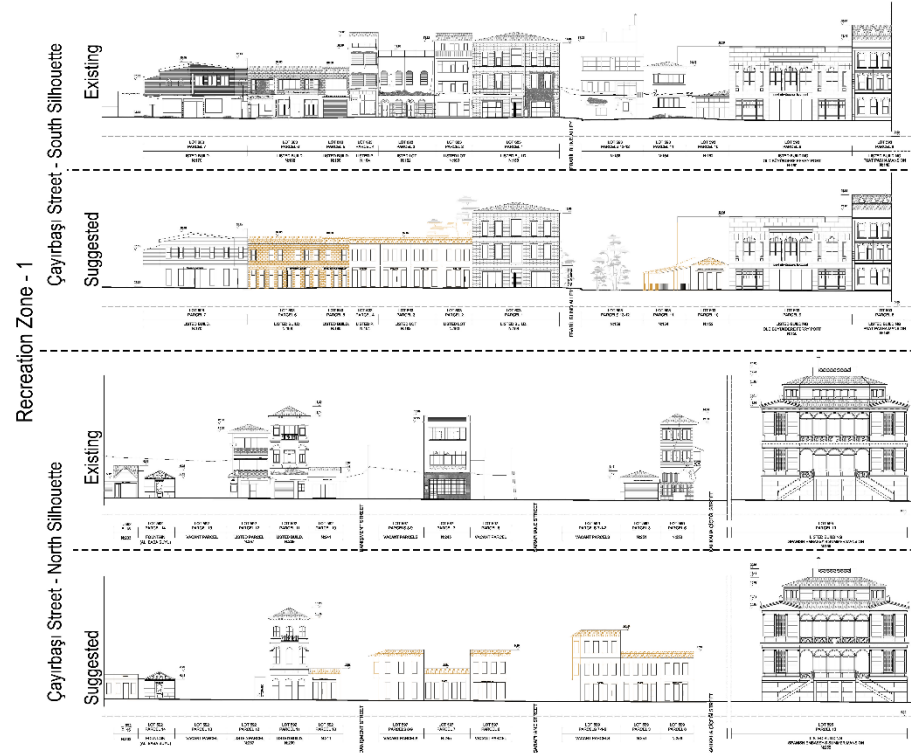


Figure 12. Silhouettes of Recreation Zone-1 (yellow; new infill design suggestions) (Ilık Saltık, 2023)

The proposed redesign focuses on Çelik Gülersoy Park and its immediate surroundings, encompassing lots 568, 581, 582, and 583 (Figure 13). Currently, the park is occupied by annex-like commercial units and features randomly placed urban furniture. The visual appeal of the park is significantly diminished from both land and sea perspectives. Furthermore, the presence of ruins surrounded by barriers in lot 583 obstructs the view of the park and the adjacent Merdiven Blind Alley (Figure 14). Additionally, the absence of clearly defined pedestrian routes and the disorganized arrangement of tables and chairs around the commercial units contribute to the park's unattractiveness to visitors.

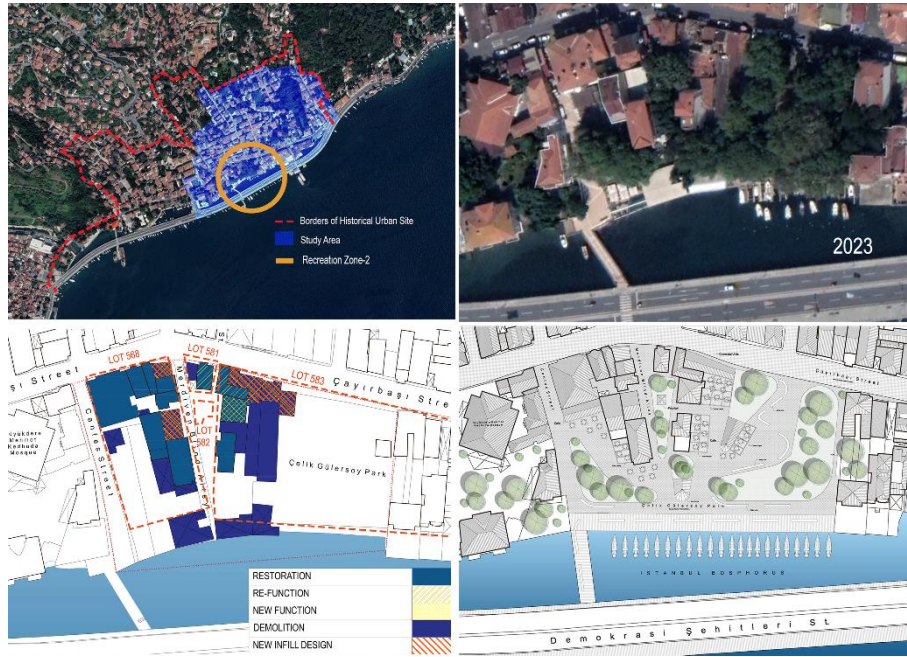


Figure 13. Interventions and Proposals for Çelik Gülersoy Park, Recreation Zone-2 (Ilık Saltık, 2023)

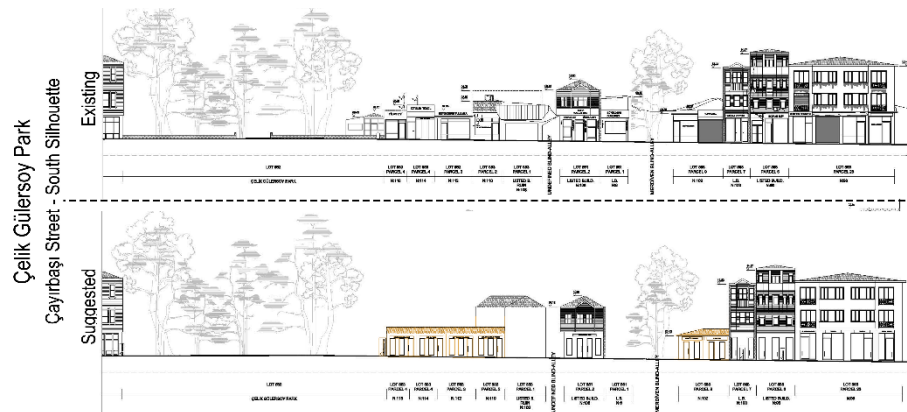


Figure 14. Silhouettes of Çelik Gülersoy Park (yellow; new infill design suggestions) (Ilık Saltık, 2023)

To address these challenges, demolishing the annex-like commercial units occupying the park and focusing on restoring and conserving the structures that contribute to the historical fabric of the area are suggested. Furthermore, the vacant heritage buildings were proposed to be re-functioned. New pedestrian axes are planned, considering the existing trees and their locations.

Büyükdere Bay has long been renowned for its safe waters and docking opportunities within the Bosphorus. However, with the construction of the coastal road, larger vessels are no longer able to dock at the shores of Büyükdere. Nonetheless, smaller boats can still utilize this area. To reinforce the connection between land and sea and support water transportation, a new small-scale dock was proposed along the shores of Çelik Gülersoy Park (Figure 13).

Semi-open timber pergolas and better-oriented commercial units were proposed to replace the present structures. The restoration of existing heritage buildings is a vital part of the proposed plan. These heritage buildings were suggested to be restored and repurposed as commercial units such as cafes, preserving their authenticity while enhancing their functionality.

By implementing these proposed interventions, Büyükdere can foster a stronger relationship between its coastal and inland areas, revitalize its historical assets, and provide enhanced amenities and attractions for both locals and visitors.

The third focal point of the urban intervention is the Topçu Police Station located in lot 563 parcel 10, along with its immediate surroundings. Despite its status as a monumental heritage building, the Topçu Police Station has suffered extensive damage over the years due to its abandonment. The building also developed a negative reputation among the local community, primarily because it has become a gathering place for drug addicts (*Sözcü Gazetesi*, 2021). Given the historical significance of the building and its potential for restoration, it is crucial to address its current state and rehabilitate it in a way that serves the community.

Extensive research conducted during the literature review revealed that there is only one institution, the *Institut du Bosphore* focused on Bosphorus studies at present, and no Turkish institution specifically dedicated to the studies of the Bosphorus and its historic villages.

To address this gap and provide a dedicated space for researchers interested in Bosphorus and its surroundings, Topçu Police Station was proposed to be re-functioned as a Bosphorus Studies Research Centre (Figure 15).

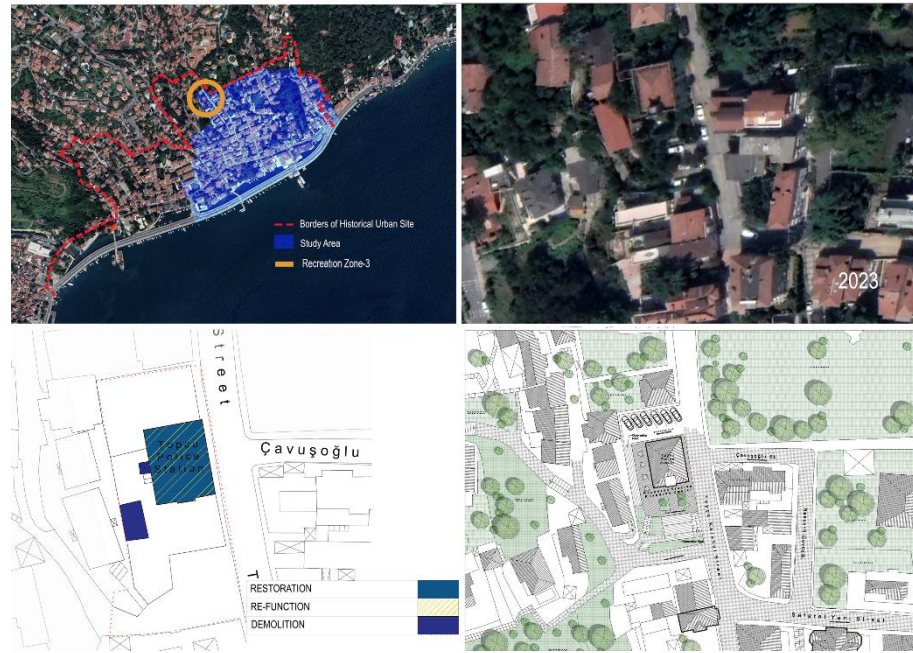


Figure 15. Interventions and Proposals for Recreation Zone-3 (Ilık Saltık, 2023)

To establish connectivity between all the focal points and enhance visitor engagement, a designated visitor route was proposed. This route aims to attract visitors to the site while also encouraging residents to value and preserve their properties. Several streets were selected considering their preservation status and strategic locations such as Çayırbaşı Street, Hacet Street, Sefaret Yanı Street, and Topçu Karakol Street.

Çayırbaşı Street, with its historical significance and well-preserved character, offers an ideal starting point. It sets the tone for the experience, showcasing the authentic charm of Büyükdere. Hacet Street, with its fairly preserved heritage buildings, provides an opportunity for visitors to explore and appreciate the cultural heritage of the region. Sefaret Yanı Street, located near the proposed Bosphorus Studies Research Centre, serves as a connection between the academic and cultural aspects of the visitor route. Topçu Karakol Street, which includes the Topçu Police Station, defines an arrival point in the visitor route. The repurposed police station as the Bosphorus Studies Research Centre adds depth and significance to the visitor experience with its observation terrace.

By strategically selecting these streets for the visitor route, it is anticipated that visitors will be able to immerse themselves in the cultural and historical fabric of Büyükdere, fostering a deeper connection between the local community, visitors, and the preservation of the area's properties.

As the final urban intervention, re-designing (re-imagining) urban furniture is proposed to enhance the overall aesthetic and functional quality of Büyükdere. It is recognized that various national and international competitions have been organized to promote the development of well-designed local urban elements, such as the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's competition of *Istanbul Senin – Kent Mobilyaları ve Oyun-Rekreasyon Ürünleri Tasarımı Yarışması* in 2020 (Arkitera, 2020).

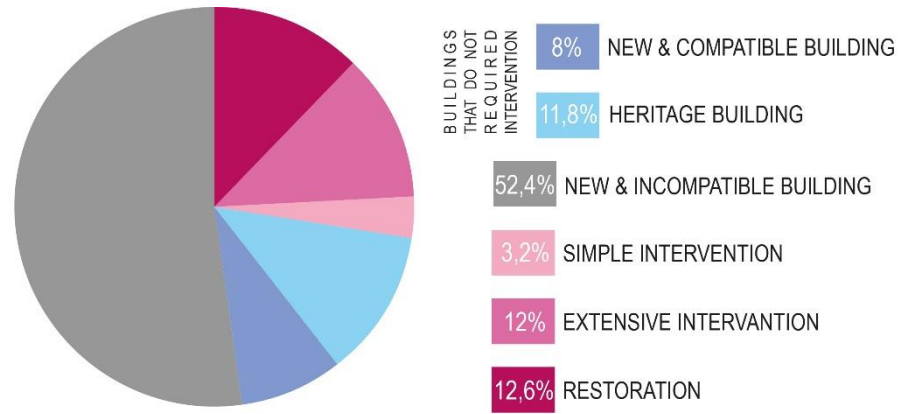
When designing urban furniture, it is essential to consider the context and location of the design. By considering the unique characteristics and specificities of Büyükdere, the aim is to create furniture that harmoniously blends with the surroundings. Instead of relying solely on pre-designed furniture, it was proposed to encourage adaptable solutions and local competition.

By promoting local design competitions and encouraging innovative and adaptable solutions, Büyükdere can benefit from unique and contextually appropriate urban furniture that enhances the overall visual appeal and functionality of the area.

Interventions on the Building Scale

Approximately 20% of the buildings were identified as “do not require any interventions” due to their preservation status (11,8%) or compatible features (8%) (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Pie chart of the rehabilitation interventions on the building scale (Ilık Saltık, 2023)



A significant number of buildings, 261 out of the total 499, were identified as newly built and incompatible, with a ratio of 52.4% (Figure 16). These buildings exhibited architectural features, such as materials, structure, volume, facade, and height, that did not align with the historical urban fabric. As an ideal solution, it was proposed that these newly built incompatible buildings should be demolished upon the completion of their lifespan. Heritage structures with high reliability information, such as the Cultural Heritage Protection Regional Board archives and written sources, must be rebuilt in parcels registered as cultural assets/ However, due to the lack of information, facade rehabilitations were suggested as an alternative approach to making them more compatible with the historical fabric.

The heritage buildings that require interventions were categorized into three main groups: simple intervention, extensive intervention, and restoration. Simple interventions refer to practices that do not require significant changes in building elements, such as basic maintenance practices (surface cleaning, etc.) and/or the removal of additions (air conditioning units, signboards, etc.). A total of 16 buildings, accounting for 3.2%, were identified as requiring simple interventions. Extensive interventions involve changes in building elements, facade coverings, alterations in perforations, removal of additional stories and annexes, and small-scale structural interventions. 60 heritage buildings, corresponding to a ratio of 12%, were determined to require extensive interventions. Restoration refers to comprehensive structural interventions, changes, and renovations in building elements, completion of volumes or surfaces, etc. 63 buildings (12.6%) were identified as requiring restoration. Among these heavily damaged buildings, four were partially collapsed (in lot 583 parcels 16-24, lot 560 parcel 3, lot 605 parcel 137), and two were inclined toward other buildings or streets (in lot 560 parcel 21 and lot 563 parcel 22).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analyses, it can be inferred that additional stories pose a significant conservation challenge in Büyükdere. Even buildings from recent decades feature these extra stories, leading to severe structural problems, facade deterioration, and disruption of the urban fabric's

visual balance. The examination of legal status reveals that less than half of the buildings in the study area are listed. In 2022, 185 buildings were listed; however, it was discovered that, according to data collected for the years 1978, 1983, and 2004, 167 heritage structures were demolished during the process of formulating and implementing an effective conservation policy, along with regionally focused, detailed master plans that are still lacking in the Bosphorus region. Despite the implementation of regional master plans and conservation laws, it can be argued that they were not adequately planned and executed. Consequently, many cultural and natural assets in Büyükdere have been lost. This loss has been accompanied by a process of abandonment, driven by socio-economic factors within Büyükdere.

Within the scope of this study, some interventions were proposed to revitalize and rehabilitate Büyükdere's historical urban fabric. These interventions can be summarized into two main scales: urban and building. Urban-scale interventions were examined under three main categories: (1) traffic re-regulation, (2) redesigning urban focal points, and (3) reimagining urban furniture.

- (1) By adopting an integrated approach, the proposed interventions seek to improve traffic flow, enhance water transportation, and create a more compatible transportation system in the Büyükdere region. Better traffic regulation is thought to be helpful in terms of gaining more attraction to the region to create a sustainable preservation environment for Büyükdere.
- (2) The proposed intervention aims to preserve the urban fabric by creating attractive public spaces and visitor routes. Revitalization of the area is thought to be helpful in terms of drawing the interest of scholars and local authorities to encourage further studies that would include the Büyükdere region. Additionally, the rehabilitated environment with more employment opportunities is thought to solve the socio-economic problems, and thus, encourage locals to preserve their properties.
- (3) By promoting local design competitions and adaptable solutions, the proposed interventions seek to create aesthetically pleasing and functional urban furniture that reflects the local identity, enhances the visual appeal of the area, and improves the overall urban experience for residents and visitors. And thus, local events such as competitions are thought to be helpful in terms of increasing awareness among the locals and recognition of Büyükdere.

The building-scale interventions focus on the preservation and rehabilitation of the buildings in Büyükdere. The proposed interventions aim to preserve heritage buildings, ensure structural stability, and maintain the historical fabric of the area.

Overall, the proposed interventions in Büyükdere aim to preserve and rehabilitate the urban fabric, which has been neglected so far. It is

important the note that these interventions are not just focused on the present conditions but they also suggest sustainable improvements by increasing awareness, encouraging local authorities and visitors, and promoting further studies of scholars by following the recommendations of various international texts (ICOMOS, 1987, 1994, 1999, 2011; UNESCO, 1976). To address and affect the legal regulation to be more effective and efficient, the interest of the scholars, locals, and visitors is thought to be crucial. Ultimately, these interventions not only aim to restore Büyükdere's historic fabric but also ensure its sustainable preservation, fostering a thriving and resilient community for future generations.

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Resume

Özge ILIK SALTİK is trained as an interior architect at İstanbul Technical University and completed the M.Sc. degree in Architectural Restoration Program (M.Sc.) at Yıldız Technical University in 2023. During her graduate studies (2020-2023), she also worked as a research and teaching assistant within the Interior Architecture and Environmental Design Department at İstanbul Kültür University, Türkiye. She started her Ph.D. study on the heritage-climate change nexus within the Department of the Built Environment at Eindhoven University of Technology in March 2024.