

## MODERN STRATEGIES OF HISTORIC URBAN CONSERVATION. THE CASE OF THE OLD TOWN OF NAFPLION.

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### **Abstract**

*The paper analyses the modern strategies for the protection and promotion of the historical centres in terms of the management of uses, sustainable urban mobility, the network of public open spaces, but also the integration of tourist activity.*

*It focuses on the historical centre of Nafplion and it proposes strategies and measures for its conservation in terms of the Historic Urban conservation principles. The paper is structured in three parts. In the first part it analyses the urban elements of Nafplion historic centres. It analyses the plans that have diachronically been developed, the land uses and the existing mobility means. It also focuses on the historic fabric morphology and its changes during the last decades. The second part is proceeding to the evaluation of the area's conservation and the needs of the areas visitors and inhabitants as they are reflected in the answers to questionnaires. The third part includes the urban planning proposal, which is based on the theoretical practices of protecting and promoting the historical centres, as well as on good practices that have been applied in the historical centres of European countries, bringing positive results over the centuries.*

**Key words:** *Historic urban conservation, Nafplio, urban planning, sustainable mobility, urban morphology*

### **Introduction**

The interest in the development of historic city centres arose in the late 19th century to the early 20th century. Until that period, the authorities focused their attention on individual monuments such as temples, palaces, gardens and even statues, which functioned as transmitters of memory of a specific time period. At the same time, due to the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent movement of the population to the urban centers, housing problems arose, which were accompanied by poor sanitary conditions. The aim and vision of the engineers was to create large housing structures with open spaces which would be built after the demolition of a sizeable part of the historic centre. Thus, most historical centers were degraded. (Bandarin, Oers, 2012).

The recognition of the historical city as a part of the cultural heritage of a place, began timidly at the end of the 19th century. as a record and recognition of the values that govern it and then, at the end of the 20th century, the historical centers became for the first time an object of urban planning for architects and designers, setting as a key factor the social, cultural and economic development of the area. It is worth noting that the movement for the

institutionalization and protection of historical centers started in Europe and was then adopted by the rest of the world (Bandarin, Oers, 2012).

An important chapter in the way of managing the historical centers was the urban thinker Camillo Sitte, who, in the book *CityPlanning* (1889), examined the evolution of the historical urban fabric over time and how it affects and influences the development of the new city (Bandarin, Oers, 2012).

The usual problems that historic centers face are inextricably linked to the condition of the buildings they include. Already from the end of the 19th century, social stratifications were observed for the first time in European cities, which gradually led to the degradation of the use of the residence (Gennadiou, 2009).

Over time, with the various modifications that each historic center received, it resulted in the removal of permanent residents, but also of local and traditional trade. This movement had the result of losing a large part of the authenticity of a place, but also to degrade and alter the human-made environment, as their uses were replaced by others of the tertiary sector.

In recent years, due to the increase in tourism, but also the appearance of short-term leases, more and more property owners are proceeding with renovations and restorations of their properties in order to exploit them for tourism. Thus, most of the remaining permanent residents are forced to leave for other more affordable areas. This phenomenon is called gentrification and is found in recent years in more and more historical centers of European countries (Sarigiannis, 1999).

An important stage for the protection of historical centers is the control of permitted land uses, which, if not studied extensively, may alter the historical environment. For this reason, European states have enacted special legislative measures for the protection and preservation of the historic built environment (Parasiri, 2007).

Today, most historic centers present multi-layered problems stemming from poor management of sustainable urban mobility. The way of managing the traffic of vehicles, their parking space in the historical built environment, as well as the management of the means of public transport are an integral part of the daily life of the inhabitants. It is a social challenge which primarily requires the understanding, acceptance and participation of permanent residents (Syrigou, 2019).

In the continuation of this work, having studied the modern protection and conservation strategies of the historical centers, it is considered important to study and analyze examples for which they have applied practices that have managed to protect, but also to highlight the values that govern them.

Studying the development of historic centers over the centuries, but also evaluating the impact of urban planning on the historic urban fabric, it was decided to analyze and present 5 historical centers of Europe and have implemented strategies, which in the long term have brought about positive results. This choice was based on the criteria of the management of the uses, the protection of residential use, but also the inclusion of tourism within the historical area. At the same time, the regeneration and shaping of public spaces in a historical built environment was examined as well as the management of sustainable urban mobility.



*Picture 1: The historic center of Bologna*

The first example to be analyzed is the historic center of Bologna (picture 1), which was studied in terms of good practices for preserving the use of the residence in the historic center. During the 20th century, the successive policies of social restructuring that affected the historical center resulted in the decline of the fabric and, by extension, the degradation of living conditions and socioeconomic status of its inhabitants (Metaxakis, 2012). To deal with this problem, Leonardo Benevolo's study group proposed the protection of the historical fabric, by declaring it protected, the removal of incompatible uses from the area, as well as the pedestrianization of the most important streets of the historic center (Calavita, 1980).

In 1969, the authorities proceeded to establish a new plan, according to which the state gave financial incentives to owners who had real estate in the historic center to renovate it in exchange for maintaining low rents to their tenants for the next 15 to 20 years (Calavita, 1980).

The strategies followed by the historic center of Bologna in the late 60s succeeded in improving the living conditions of the permanent residents in the center and enhancing the use of the residence. The incentives provided enabled the owners to maintain and upgrade the property and thereby protect and revitalize the building stock of the entire historic center.

Then, the next historical center studied was that of Valletta, which was examined in terms of good practices for the integration of tourism activity in the area.

The historical center of Valletta (picture 2) is mentioned for the first time in history in the 16th century. The historic town was designed by the Order of St. John's Knights as a refuge for the care and treatment of wounded soldiers ( Ashworth , Tunbridge , 2016).

It is a hilly peninsula, which was located between two natural ports of the Mediterranean sea. From the very first years there was a need for fortification, and consequently the new city was shaped with strong ramparts and large moats, turning it into a city of significant strategic importance.



*Ricture 2: the historic center of Valleta*

In the years that followed, the historic center of Valletta, due to its strategic location as a naval base in the Mediterranean, lead to periods of prosperity and economic growth. During that period, important public buildings such as schools, hospitals, temples, opera, etc. were built. ( Lino , 2009).

At the end of World War II (1942) the city was bombed during an air raid, largely destroying important buildings, creating a large urban void which for several years was used as a parking lot (Lino , 2009).

In 1964, with the independence of Malta, the island followed development strategies prioritizing education, social welfare, health, external relations with the rest of Europe, but also the management of its cultural heritage ( Malcolm , 1999).

An important stage for the historical and urban development of Valletta was its inclusion in UNESCO as a monument of world cultural heritage (1980). Its inclusion criteria concerned the preservation of its architectural wealth, traditions, but also its artistic works which were valued as of the highest importance ( Oglethorpe , 2006).

Since 1980, until today, a series of projects have been carried out that aim to highlight the cultural heritage, but also to develop and promote urban tourism. With the aim of the regeneration of the area, the tourist exploitation, but also the protection of the historical center, Valletta established a series of plans such as the Peacock garden – Cults plan (2011) and the Valletta Action Plan. (2011) which had a long-term implementation horizon. These plans could be judged positively, as they managed to preserve and protect the historical character of the city, by promoting modern management strategies of the tourist activity by setting limitations and criteria to its development (Borg, 2011).

In addition, to highlight the cultural heritage of Valletta, the promotion of traditional festivals, cultural events and activities in the historic center, was proposed by the Ministry of Tourism of Malta (2012) (Ebejer, 2019).

The way in which Valletta's cultural heritage is preserved and highlighted has resulted in its declaration as European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2018. This distinction has given new incentives to highlight the region's cultural wealth, providing new opportunities and funding from the European Union , for its revitalization and promotion (Ebejer, 2019).

Concluding the research on the management of tourism activity in the historical center of Valletta we can find that the practices that have been used have brought about positive results as they have succeeded in developing and making the most of the tourism activity of the city and by extension strengthening its economy, but always respecting the values that govern the historic center of Valletta. On the contrary, the new uses have affected the daily life of the permanent residents, a fact which has been noticed and in recent years plans have been continuously established, with the aim of a smoother integration of the tourist activity, but also the satisfaction of the permanent residents.

Then, the next historical center studied was that of Barcelona (picture 3), which was examined in terms of the regeneration and shaping of public spaces in a historical built environment.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the city of Barcelona presented a bad building situation with many urban gaps, which degraded the historical character of the city and needed immediate treatment (Lentzaki, 2018).

An important milestone in the urban development of the city was the Olympic Games held in 1992 (Donald, 1999).

The applied studies managed to restore the building condition of the city, improve the quality of life of the permanent residents, regulate traffic conditions and connect it with the open public spaces (Lentzaki, 2018).



*Picture 3: the historic center of Barcelona*

The strategy followed was that of urban acupuncture, based on which, small and medium-scale interventions were initially carried out in the road network, green spaces, cultural buildings, followed by larger-scale projects that took into account the entire built environment.

Regarding the management of sustainable urban mobility, the historic center of Vitoria-Gasteiz was chosen (picture 4), which promoted the use of alternative means of transport, expanding the pedestrian, bus and tram network, as well as taking measures to limit the use of car by limiting available parking spaces.



Picture 4: The historic center of Vitoria-Gasteiz

An important stage in the urban development of the city was the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (2010), according to which, taking into account the positive effects of pedestrianization that had been implemented in the previous century, it was decided to pedestrianize new arteries which were part of a wider plan and aimed at promoting pedestrian movement, and connection with the new city, but also with free public spaces (Blanca, 2020).

At the same time, in order to limit the use of the car, the authorities took drastic actions which involved the restriction of car traffic in several streets of the historic center and the reduction of the speed limit to 30 km/h. Also, unauthorized parking was prohibited on most of the streets of the historic web and it was decided to triple the parking fee in all organized spaces within the historic center (Blanca, 2020).

To achieve the above objective, the plan for sustainable urban mobility should encourage and strengthen all alternative means of transport. Thus, a series of actions were carried out which related to the reconfiguration of the existing Mass Transport routes, so that all areas of the city are served, and are also better connected to the historic center (Blanca, 2020).

The means of public transport available in the historic center of the city are buses and trams. Therefore, actions were taken related to the creation of new bus lanes on central streets of the city, the addition of new service routes which would be addressed to more areas and would have more regular routes with the ultimate aim of serving the daily movements of the permanent residents of the area (Aitor, 2019).

The last example to be analyzed is the historical center of Athens (picture 5), which was studied in terms of good practices for the protection and promotion of the historical built environment.



Picture 5: The historical center of Athens

Over time, the historical center of Athens, having been influenced by many social, economic and political situations, was pushed to draw up plans aimed at protecting the historical fabric of the city, improving sustainable urban mobility, but also managing and highlighting its cultural heritage.

It is worth noting that, unlike the rest of the historical centers of the Greek area, the historical center of Athens has prepared studies which could be characterized as a model for the protection of the historical built environment as well as the promotion of the cultural heritage. These are studies which over time have proven that they contributed to the protection of the fabric and managed to preserve the historical character of the city.

More specifically, the regeneration of the historic district of Plaka is one of the most successful interventions that have been carried out in Greece. In 1979, the research group led by the architect D. Ziva was asked to study and plan the regeneration of the historical district of Plaka (Metaxakis, 2012).

This study could be characterized as pioneering for its time, as it applied strategies for the protection and promotion of historical collections that are proposed today (21st century). Both the restrictions imposed and the interventions carried out were documented and fully compatible with the character and function of the historic built environment.

Having studied good practices of protection and promotion of historical space, this work specializes in the case of the historical center of Nafplio (Picture 6).

Nafplio is geographically located in eastern Peloponnese and is the capital of the prefecture of Argolis, of the Municipality of Nafplio and according to the 2011 census it has 14,203 permanent residents.



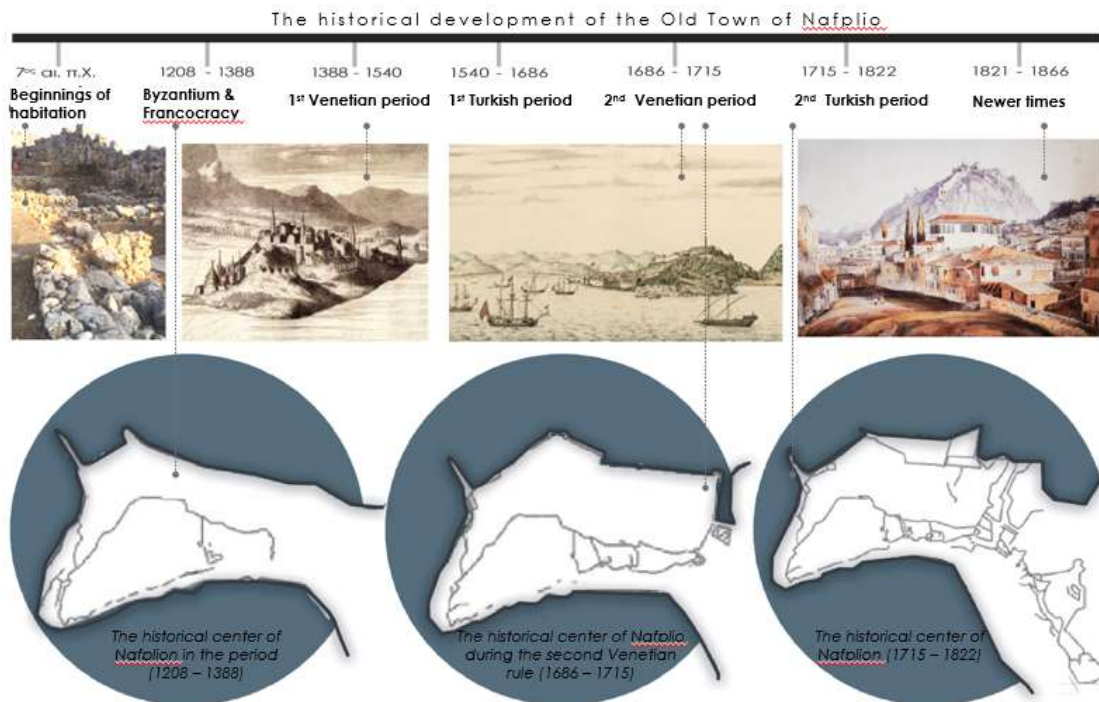
*Picture 6: The historical center of Nafplion*

The Old City of Nafplion or Nafplio is mentioned for the first time in history in prehistoric times, founded by Nafplion, son of the God Poseidon and Amymone.

It is worth noting that the morphology of the peninsula was quite different from that of today, as the sea extended to the edges of the hill and the fortified settlement occupied the highest point of the peninsula (Nikolopoulou, 2013).

During the 6th - 7th c. the city developed a special interest from the Byzantines, which was manifested by the fortification of Akronafplia, while there are testimonies that at that

time this fortress was inhabited. In the same time period, the expansion of the city outside the walls towards the western side took place (picture 7) (Nikolopoulou, 2013).



Picture 7: Chronological table of the historical center of Nafplion

Throughout the 1st Venetian rule, the city of Nafplio was constantly threatened and besieged by the Turks. Therefore, the authorities were asked to strengthen the fortification works, with the expansion of the Akronafplia fortification, the construction of the castle of Toros to the east, but also of Bourtzi, on the rocky islet opposite the entrance of the port (Derzekos, 2005).

During the rule of the Venetians, the need to expand the city arose due to the movement of the population. For this reason, it was decided to expand to the north where public and private buildings such as residences, shops, the hospital, and several aqueducts were built (Derzekos, 2005). This extension started from the hill and ended at today's Syntagma Square following the terrain's morphology. This city became known as the "lower city", which today is the historical center of Nafplion (Giuli, 2008).

In 1540, the city of Nafplio surrendered to Turks, who left their mark on the area. The interventions carried out concerned the construction of baths and fountains, as well as some public buildings with uses synonymous with eastern architecture (Labrynidis, 2001).

This period is characterized by economic prosperity as the city was an important financial and commercial port, and the seat of Mora Pasha (Derzekos, 2005).

At the end of the 17th century, the city returned to the hands of the Venetians, who proceeded to extensive repairs of the fortifications, but also of the damaged building stock (Derzekos, 2005).

After 1702, large fortress complexes began to be constructed, as well as public buildings, as well as renovated and reused buildings and temples of the First Venetian Rule (Derzekos, 2005).

The period of the Second Ottoman Rule (1715-1822) was characterized by urban withering, as most Greek families decided to leave the city and flee to the West and to the rest of Greece. On the contrary, the city of Nafplio was inhabited by many Turkish families, who in turn left their mark on the existing buildings (Nikolopoulou, 2013).

In 1822, after several days of siege, the Greeks, led by Staikos Staikopoulos, captured the city of Nafplion, and a few years later (1827) it was declared the capital of the Greek state (Giouli, 2008). This period was characterized by the massive construction of public buildings, which housed public services (Derzekos, 2005).

An important period for the history of Nafplion was the years of government of Ioannis Kapodistrias, (1828 – 1831). After a series of sieges, disasters, but also a poor health situation that prevailed due to the spread of epidemics, Kapodistrias was faced with a city of many needs (Piteros, 2019).

The first action of Ioannis Kapodistrias regarding urban planning regulations was to draft a law on the responsibilities of engineers. Through this movement we can evaluate the size of the project carried out from the stage of conception of the idea to its implementation, as well as the correlation with state policy. Given all of the above, we could characterize this process as the beginning of urban planning in the Greek area (Dorovini, 1985).

Afterwards, the Governor commissioned the architects St. Voulgaris and Th. Vallianos the preparation of the new urban plan. The first move of the researchers was to record and map the building inventory. Due to the aforementioned problems, the researchers decided to carry out the demolition of the Turkish additions to the facades of the buildings, as well as the removal of the uses where they had an impact on the sanitary condition of the city, such as the slaughterhouses (Giuli, 2008).

In the years that followed, several measures were implemented which had a negative effect on the historical fabric of the city. Between 1866 and 1873, the authorities, adopting the spirit of the time, carried out actions to demolish the city walls which concerned the area of the Three Admirals Square and today's L. Amalia and additionally two ramparts, with the aim of creating the I. Kapodistria Square (Derzekos , 2005).

The year 1962 proved to be a catalytic year for the historical center of Nafplio, as a part of the Old Town was declared a historical monument. It is worth noting that the boundaries of the proclaimed area were not clear and defined (Tassopoulou, 2017).

In the context of the urban reconstruction of the city of Nafplio, the authorities proceeded with the adoption of the General Urban Plan in the period 1983-85, with the aim of expanding the city plan, determining land uses and upgrading the urban landscape .

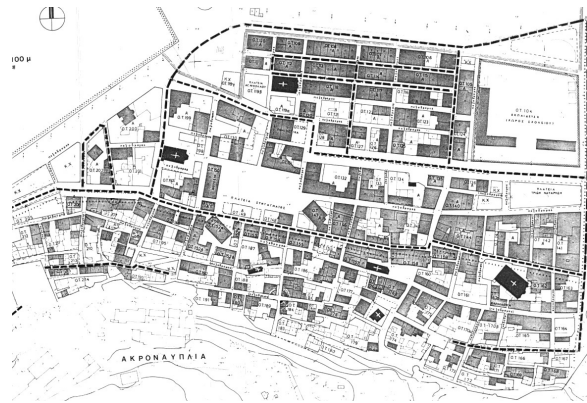
More specifically, this plan provided for the urban organization of settlements with a population greater than 11,000 inhabitants and the expansion of the city plan and the inclusion in it of densely built-up and built-up areas pre-existing in 1923 with a total area of 500 acres. Then, they divided the study area into distinct units that were given their respective urban sizes based on their population.

Also, the free spaces and cultural spaces were defined and the main axes of pedestrian and bicycle paths were designed which connected the urban units with each other. New transport station facilities were also created in the port area which involved buses, trains, trucks and ships.



Picture 8: the General Urban Plan 1985

As a continuation of the General Urban Planning Plan of the city of Nafplion, a new urban planning study was drawn up (1985-87) with the aim of protecting and redeveloping the historic center (picture 9). For this reason, a series of urban planning regulations were proposed, which formed the beginnings of protection and promotion of the interventions that followed (Maistro, Gouliou, 2008).



Picture 9: Special urban planning study of the Old Town of Nafplio

With the aim of the comprehensive protection of the historic built environment, the scientific team of Eleni Maistro, a professor at the School of Architecture and Engineering, proceeded to create a specialized program (1995), which aimed to upgrade the public space by implementing point interventions in the urban fabric.

These interventions concerned the restoration of the facades of the traditional buildings and the inclusion of new buildings next to them (picture 10). Also, the restoration of important buildings of the historical center was proposed and then, special emphasis was placed on informing residents about the value of preserving the city's cultural heritage (Maistro, 2018).



Picture 10: Comprehensive program for the protection of the Old Town of Nafplio (1995)

An important pillar for the protection and promotion of the historic center of Nafplion was the study carried out by the Municipality of Nafplion in 2008 in collaboration with selected engineers who proposed urban planning proposals for upgrading the neighborhoods of the Old Town (picture 11).



Picture 11: Proposals for urban upgrading in the neighborhoods of the old town of Nafplion (2008)

Then, having recorded the problems of the historical center, the researchers proceeded with the proposals for revitalizing the city. Their first proposal concerned the creation of cultural routes that would connect historic buildings that would host cultural uses.

It is worth noting that their proposal for the historic center was intended to encourage pedestrian traffic to the waterfront and public parking areas. Also, there was care for the central road axes of the city for which pedestrian and bicycle zones and planted green zones were designed for the environmental upgrading of the city.

So taking into account the problems and threats faced by the historic center, the study team emphasized the necessity of decongesting the web from the passage and parking of the car inside it. Also, the definition of parking spaces for the permanent residents of the area, the

inclusion of the bicycle as a means of transportation in the historic center, as well as the strengthening of pedestrian traffic were deemed necessary.

In the last decade (2012-2023), due to the spread of the economic crisis, as well as the political changes that took place in the country, the renovations that took place in most of the historical centers of the cities could be characterized as negligible, but also fragmentary.

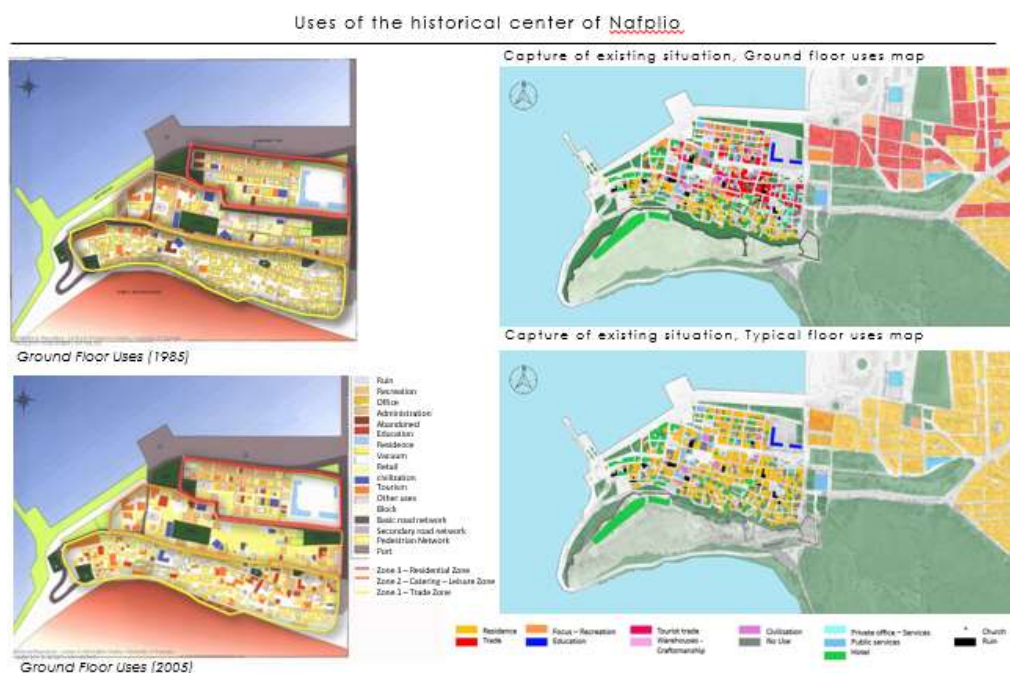
Today, the historical center of Nafplion, having passed periods of peak and prosperity, faces multiple problems that need to be addressed immediately. In order to identify these problems, but also to better understand the area, a sample survey was carried out with the help of questionnaires, which aimed to identify the needs, but also the threats facing the historical center.

Firstly, the questionnaires were structured into two different categories based on who they were addressed to. The first concerned the permanent residents and the second the visitors.

Then, the questionnaires were structured in sub-categories which related to the uses that have been developed in the historical center and the effect they have on the daily life of the permanent residents. Furthermore, the modes of movement were examined, as well as the role of public spaces within it. Additional questions were then asked about the tourism that the city receives throughout the year, with particular emphasis on the opinion of permanent residents, who are better able to point out the effects that may have been caused. Finally, the operation of the historical center during the period of the coronavirus quarantine was examined, as well as the effects of the pandemic after the lifting of restrictive measures. A total of 78 questionnaires were completed, of which 41 were answered by permanent residents and 37 by visitors.

The Old Town of Nafplio, over time, has been studied by many scientific disciplines, including urban planning, with the result that today, in the context of this work, information and data from different periods of time can be obtained and compared with today's state of the city (picture 12).

Studying the uses of the ground floor of the Old Town of Nafplion, it is found that there is a multitude of uses, which are developed in smaller nuclei with residential, commercial, leisure catering and tourism uses.



Picture 12: Uses of the historical center of Nafplio

Studying the maps showing the typical uses of the ground floor as they developed in 1985 and 2005, we can observe that the historic center accommodated residential uses in the southern part of the area and catering, leisure and tourism uses in the northern and eastern parts where the newer part was of the city with larger buildings and streets, as well as shorter distances from the seafront and open public spaces. By studying the uses of the ground floor we can easily recognize the expansion of tourist activity throughout the entire area of the historic center. Few buildings are inhabited throughout the year, as today, due to the boom in short-term rentals, more and more residents are trying to take advantage of their property by listing it on some popular online platform.

Today, the historic center of Nafplion has a strong tourist activity with hotel, catering-leisure and commercial uses on the ground floors and hotel and residential uses on the upper floors.

The phenomenon of building exploitation of the historical wealth of the fabric was not only found in the historical center of Nafplion. On the contrary, as studied in the previous sections, at the turn of the 20th century, tourist activity flourished in all cities of particular historical and architectural interest and property owners began to convert their properties into rental apartments with the ultimate goal of maximizing their economic exploitation.

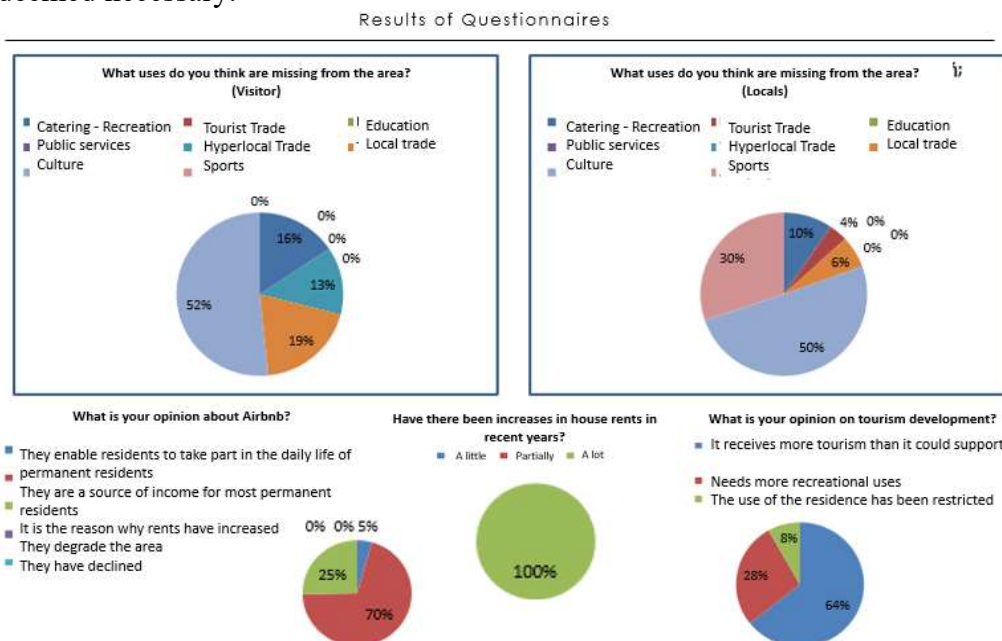
This move resulted in the dissatisfaction of the permanent residents of the historic center, as a new activity was developing rapidly, and thus, more and more residents decided to leave.

Today, modern management strategies aim to facilitate the daily life of permanent residents by taking measures that will enhance the use of the residence and prevent them from leaving it.

According to the questionnaire survey, most permanent residents recognize that short-term rentals have significantly affected the structure and operation of the historic center, resulting in a considerable increase in rental costs (picture 13).

On the contrary, since the majority of permanent residents interviewed have real estate, which they have listed on an online platform or are indirectly engaged in tourism, they perceive this activity as an important source of income (picture13).

In the context of the management of sustainable urban mobility, the analysis and study of the existing traffic networks, both in the historical center and in the wider area of Nafplio, is deemed necessary.

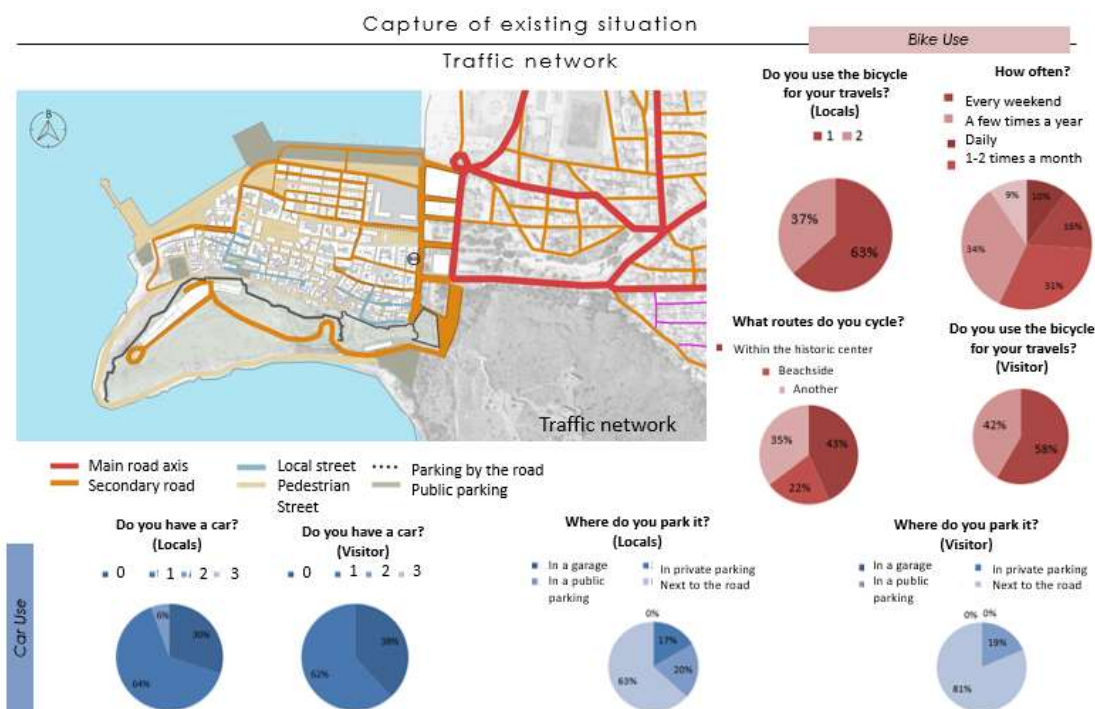


Picture 13: Results of Questionnaires

Finally, according to the permanent residents, the uses missing from the area are mainly those of culture and sports, followed by the uses of catering - recreation, local trade and health - welfare. On the contrary, the visitors considered that the area needs more uses of culture, catering - recreation, and commerce of all types. Also, according to the permanent residents, the educational units are sufficient for the students who live in the historic center.

Then, in terms of car traffic networks, the main road axis mainly serves the new city and is connected to the historic center at its limits. Then, this movement is transferred to the secondary road axes, which smooth out and discharge the aforementioned.

As for the area within the walls, the traffic networks mainly consist of secondary roads and local roads as a whole. In addition, the Old Town is not served by Mass Transportation, while there is a station for intercity and city buses on the main road (picture 14).



Picture 14: Traffic network

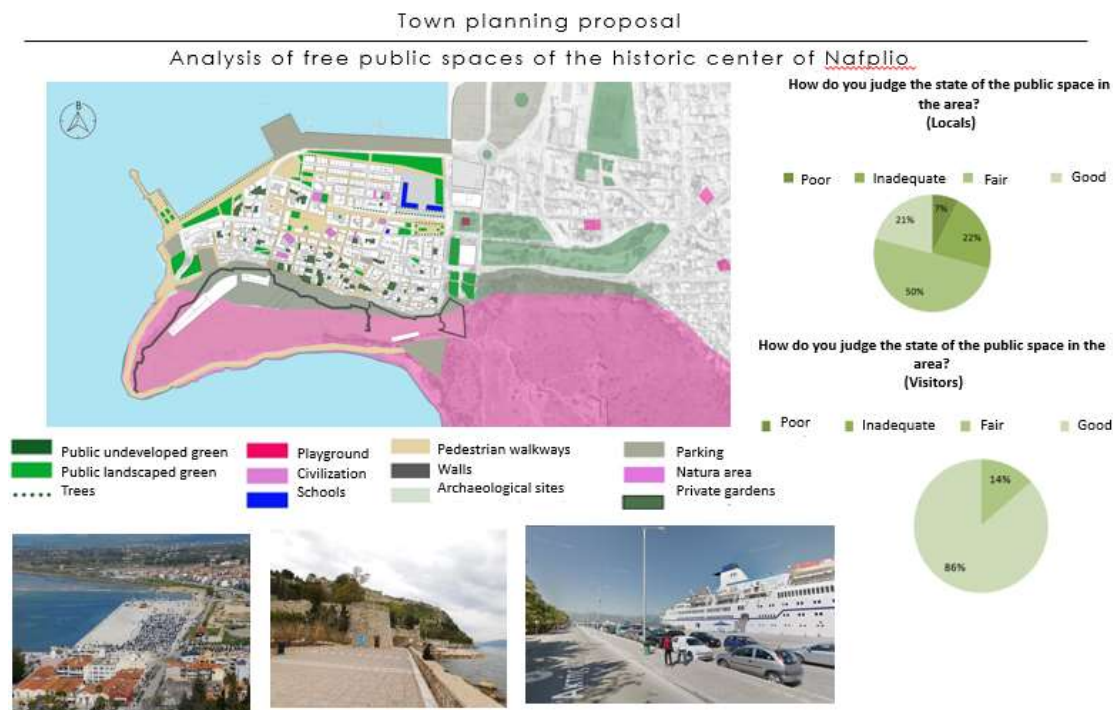
According to the questionnaire survey, most residents own one or no car and park it mainly on the road or in a public parking lot. As for the visitors, the questionnaires also showed similar results.

Regarding the use of the bicycle, although it is a popular means of transportation for both permanent residents and visitors, there is no bicycle path in the historic center, but also in the new town.

Next, regarding free public spaces, it is worth noting that the historic center of Nafplio has managed to keep all free spaces unchanged over time. According to the survey of the questionnaires, the largest percentage judges the condition of public spaces as moderate and good, as they consider that there are possibilities that need to be exploited. At the same time, most visitors judge the condition of the public spaces as good, as the public spaces of the historic center allow the resident to explore and wander through its picturesque alleyways.

A determining factor for the protection and preservation of the historic center were the morphological restrictions set for the reconstruction of new buildings within the historic built environment. In addition, the opinion of the Council of Architecture was deemed necessary before the approval of the building permits. This approval was and still is mandatory for all buildings, but also for all light structures that were to be built (picture 15).

Today, all new buildings in the historic center respect and follow the laws that have been



Picrue 15: Town planning proposal, Analysis of free public spaces of the historic center of Nafplion

established and in general have managed to fully integrate into the urban environment. The new buildings have the same or lower height than the existing ones, have common morphological characteristics and the color tones are close to those of the existing buildings. While it is remarkable that, with a second glance, one can recognize the old buildings from the new ones.

The historical center of Nafplion was shaped, developed, and flourished, influenced by the standards of each period. The increase in population, as well as the inclusion of new needs in the historical built environment shaped the current image, form, and functioning of the space. Like most historical centers, Nafplio is currently facing problems that need to be addressed immediately.

In order to protect and highlight a historical built environment, it is deemed necessary to apply the modern strategies for the protection and promotion of the historical area, as they have been established, always respecting all the values that govern it. At the same time, the complete recording and analysis of the problems faced by the Old Town, as well as the participation of the residents in the decision-making process, are undeniably important stages for the development and evolution of the historical center.

**The zones around the historic center**

An important measure to protect against possible negative effects that historical centers face today is to take preventive measures, which will prevent the threat from penetrating and affecting the structure and functioning of the historical space.

Moving forward with the urban planning proposal for the regeneration of the historic center, the first goal for the area was to define buffer zones in the areas bordering the historic center, with the ultimate goal of a smoother connection between the new city and the historic area. Thus, studying the area and taking into account its geographical and morphological characteristics, it is recommended to divide the perimeter of the historical center into 3 distinct zones (picture 16).

Initially, the first zone concerns the area of the sea front of the new city, which until today is unused and functions as a parking area, including the stadium area. In this zone, it is proposed to increase pedestrian traffic, but also to promote sports activities.



*Picture 16: Buffer zones*

Then, the second zone includes building blocks that gather a variety of uses such as hyperlocal commerce and hotels. These uses are connected to the historical center and serve it, therefore, in this zone it is recommended to maintain tourist activities and strengthen the use of residence and commerce.

Finally, the third zone consists of the hill of Akronafplia, the fortress of Palamidi, but also the park of Kolokotronis which is outside the boundaries of the historical center. Therefore, respecting the morphology of the area as well as the characteristics that govern it, it is proposed to ban construction throughout the area, but also to protect and preserve its natural wealth.

**The uses within the study area**

Having completed the analysis of the uses of the Old Town of Nafplio, it was found that over the years the city has developed a multitude of uses, which are included in smaller cores.

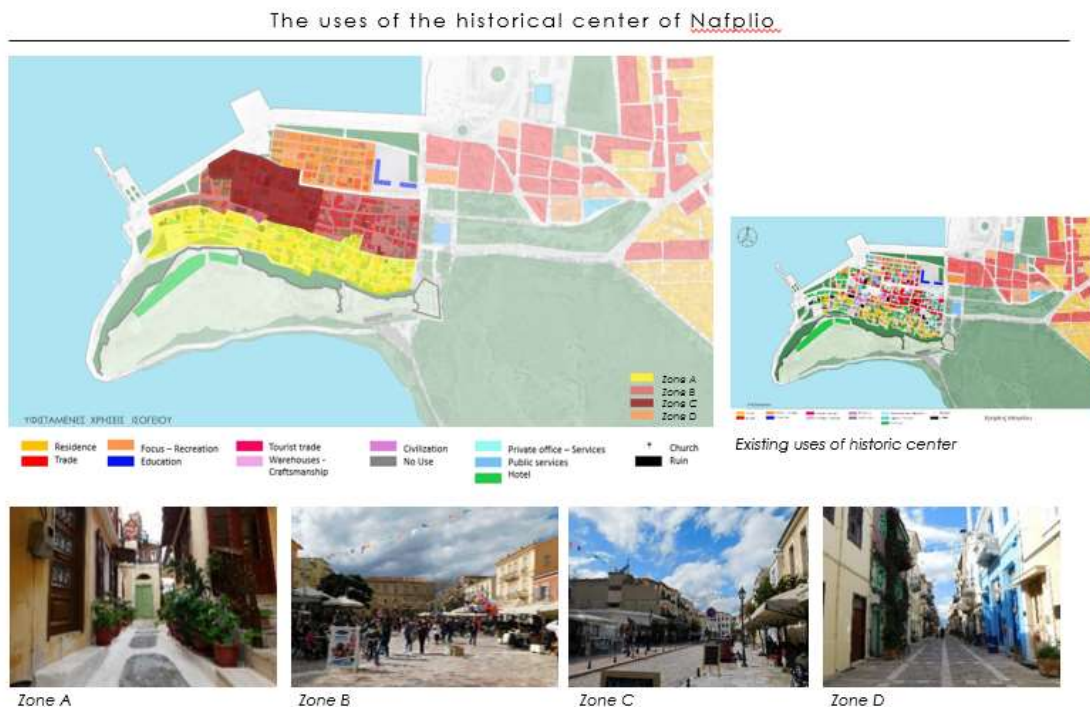
The uses developed within the historic center are considered sufficient for the needs of the permanent residents, while according to the sample survey carried out, the need to include

new cultural and sports uses was highlighted. These uses according to the permanent residents will attract more urban tourism throughout the year and turn the historical center of Nafplio into a popular cultural tourism destination.

On the contrary, the visitors who were in the historical center of Nafplio during the collection of the questionnaires judged the existing uses to be sufficient, as there were plenty of options and possibilities that they could make use of during their stay. Thus, in the question "What uses do you think are missing from the area?" they answered that if they could add any, it would be culture, catering - leisure and local and hyper-local trade.

One of the biggest issues facing most historical centers in the European area, and by extension the historical center of Nafplion, is that of the inclusion of tourist activity within it. The aim of the planning is to protect the use of the residence and to protect the Old Town from gentrification.

Taking into account the modern strategies followed for the protection of the historical centers, but also the point of view of the permanent residents, it is proposed to divide the historical center into (picture 17).



Picture 17: The uses of the historic center of Nafplio

Initially, regarding the southern zone A, which is the oldest residential area of the historic center and currently hosts mainly residential uses, it is proposed to protect and promote it. The purpose of the design is to protect the built environment by limiting the number of beds to 10, where these hotels should meet the specifications of boutique hotels. At the same time, in this zone it is proposed to create a primary education unit, which currently does not exist in the area.

Then, zone B, constitutes the second urban development phase of the historical center and today hosts trade uses (local and tourist), hotels, offices and personal services, traditional workshops, as well as many monuments with cultural uses. The purpose of the design is to preserve and protect the traditional uses that govern the historic center, to maintain the use of the residence on the floors and to limit the tourist activity to the 16 beds by meeting the specifications of boutique hotels.

At the same time, zone C follows the form and characteristics of the previous one, with the difference that around the perimeter of the public spaces that are developed in the area, there are catering and recreation areas, which have a positive effect on the social life of the city without burdening everyday life of permanent residents.

Finally, in zone D, which borders the coastal front, more extroverted activities are developed with a strong presence of the tertiary sector. It is considered desirable to preserve the existing morphology and promote boutique hotels with the ultimate aim of protecting the character of the area, but also the structure and operation of the historic center. Thus, the limitation of 24 beds in this zone is set.

### Sustainable Urban Mobility

One of the main challenges facing the historical centers of the European area and by extension Nafplio today is the management of sustainable urban mobility. Due to the change in living conditions, as well as the environmental pollution which causes direct consequences in the area, it is considered necessary to promote alternative means of transport with a sustainable character. The aim of the modern protection strategies of the historical centers is to strengthen the sustainable character of the city, with the inclusion of alternative means of transport.

Therefore, taking into account all the needs, but also the threats that the historical center faces today in terms of sustainable urban mobility management, it is proposed to implement sustainable strategies that aim to limit the use of the car for visitors, to promote alternative means of transport, as well as the strengthening of pedestrian movement, through the connection of free public spaces (Picture 18).

More specifically, it is proposed to maintain the existing car traffic network, as it functions satisfactorily and serves the needs of the city without burdening the natural environment. At the same time, it is proposed to limit the parking of visitors' cars in the historic center and to renovate and revitalize the beach front. Furthermore, it is deemed necessary to designate parking spaces within the site exclusively for permanent residents.

The traffic networks of the historic center of Nafplio.



Picture 18: The traffic networks of the historic center of Nafplio

It is also proposed to create two types of cycle paths, where the first type concerns the cycle path, which is developed in a separate lane and is located on the beach front, but also parallel to the main road axis in order to facilitate movement and increase its speed. On the

contrary, the second type coexists with the pedestrian network and essentially allows the movement of the bicycle, throughout the existing network (figure 19).

Considering the needs of the historic city, it is proposed to include a new bus (mini-bus type), which will start from the interurban bus station and then have stops at a distance of 250-300m, connecting the Old Town with the new one. Particularly important is the fact that these stops are located at points of interest, such as landmarks and public spaces and will serve the daily movements of citizens.

The aim of this measure is to reduce car traffic within the historic center and promote alternative means of transport.

### Network of public spaces

The network of free public spaces of the historic center of Nafplio, it could be initially mentioned that all open public spaces have been preserved unchanged over the centuries. The architecture of the buildings, the widths of the streets, but also the public spaces of the historical fabric refer to architectural and urban planning standards of the 18th century (image 20).



Picture19: Town planning proposal

According to the questionnaire survey, the majority of permanent residents considered the state of public spaces good and moderate, arguing that the historical center has potential, which needs to be exploited. At the same time, the visitors had the same opinion, as this network is connected to monuments, points of interest, and landmarks.

Therefore, taking into account all the needs but also the threats facing the historical center, as well as the modern strategies for the promotion of public spaces, the redesign of the beach front is proposed, as well as the creation of free spaces such as pocket parks and playgrounds in unused free spaces.

Initially, for the beach front of the Old Town, it was deemed necessary to improve the existing situation, in order to serve daily needs, but also to connect it with the rest of the city. Nevertheless, it is proposed to limit and demarcate car traffic, in a double lane with a width of

3.50 m each and the creation of a separate bicycle lane with a width of 2.00 m. The redevelopment of the rest of the public space will be carried out with green elements, but also paved surfaces, which will harmonize with the eastern part of the web.

Then, having extensively studied the area, as well as the buildings that have been designated as monuments, it was deemed important to include three cultural routes, which will connect points of interest and give the walker the opportunity to explore and discover the monuments and attractions of the historical site. The ultimate purpose of these routes is to highlight and promote the historical character of the Old Town, but also to promote urban tourism.

The networks of public open spaces of the historical center of **Nafplio**



### Construction rules

According to the town planning regulations that apply today for the historical center of Nafplio (Government Gazette 38 D/26-1-1989), the area has been divided into two categories. These sectors follow the typology of building blocks, where in the first zone (Sector A) the two newest urban planning phases come together, while the second (Zone B) constitutes the southern part of the fabric with the most anarchic building blocks.

Given that the above urban planning sizes refer to a historical built environment with quite dense construction, after studying and analyzing them, it could be said that these sizes fully respect the historical character of the area.

In the context of this work, it is proposed to divide the historical center into 3 zones following the historical and urban development of the Old Town.

Initially, in zone A, which includes the southern part of the historic center, it is proposed to preserve the existing urban planning sizes as previously studied, the statutory ones respect and follow the existing urban planning sizes and protect the future development of the historic center.

Then, in zone B which includes the second urban planning phase of the historic center and it is proposed to maintain the existing urban planning dimensions that apply today.

Finally, zone C, taking into account the fact that it consists of compact building blocks, which cover up to 100% of the plot, where the existing institutionalized urban planning sizes, suggest a long-term reduction in their density, as a lower percentage of coverage has been set

and construction. This proposal will result in the future alteration of the structure and density of the later period. For this reason, a small increase in the building factor is proposed, in relation to the institutionalized urban planning sizes with the ultimate aim of protecting and preserving the structure of the historic center over the centuries (picture 21).

Proposed urban sizes of the historic center



Location of building block A in the historic center

	Existing	ΦΕΚ 38 Δ/26-1-89	Existing
Coverage Rate	82%	80%	80%
Structure factor	2.46	1,2	1,2
Number of Floors	3	2	2
Maximum Permitted Height	12,00 m (including pitched roof)	8,50 m (including pitched roof)	8,50 m (including pitched roof)

Location of building block B in the historic center

	Existing	ΦΕΚ 38 Δ/26-1-89	Existing
Coverage Rate	78%	90%	90%
Structure factor	3,12	2,1	2,1
Number of Floors	3	3	3
Maximum Permitted Height	12,00 m (including pitched roof)	11,50 m (including pitched roof)	11,50 m (including pitched roof)

Location of building block C in the historic center

	Existing	ΦΕΚ 38 Δ/26-1-89	Existing
Coverage Rate	100%	90%	90%
Structure factor	3	2,1	3
Number of Floors	2	3	3
Maximum Permitted Height	9,00 m (including pitched roof)	11,50 m (including pitched roof)	11,50 m (including pitched roof)

## Conclusions

The historic center of Nafplio experienced periods of prosperity which left their mark on the area. Nafplion, playing a key role from the very beginnings of the Greek state, managed to preserve its historical, architectural and cultural characteristics unchanged over time, applying studies that were prepared from the initial stages of its newest development. The aim of this work was to highlight the historical built environment, but also to promote urban resilience.

For this purpose, the historical and urban development of the Old Town was analyzed, successful European practices of managing historic centers were studied, at the same time placing special emphasis on the importance of participatory planning, through the contribution of permanent residents as well as visitors, aiming to promote respect and trust in matters concerning the protection of the web and the inclusion of new needs, which will not burden it and will not present long-term negative effects.

Regarding the existing uses of the historic center, it could be said that in Nafplio, as in most Old Towns, it has implemented a seasonality, where commercial and tourist activities prevail over residence. With this proposal, the strengthening of the use of the residence and the limitation of tourist activity was promoted, with the ultimate goal of preventing the phenomenon of gentrification.

One of the most important problems facing the historic center today, as it emerged from the analysis of the questionnaires, is that of managing sustainable urban mobility. Unlike other cities, Nafplion has already succeeded in restricting motor vehicle traffic to designated streets and pedestrianizing most of its historic streets. The aim of this proposal is to universally reduce the need to use the car through the promotion of intermodal travel in the study area, thus aiming to improve the daily life and living conditions of residents and visitors.

Additionally, in the context of the achievement of sustainable development and the promotion of cultural heritage, the protection and preservation of public spaces is proposed, drawing up plans and studies, which treat the Old Town as a historical urban landscape. For this purpose, the regeneration of the beach front was proposed, as well as specific

interventions in the public space, with the aim of increasing the percentage of green space, upgrading and highlighting the public space and revitalizing the historic center.

With regard to the urban planning dimensions of the area, having extensively studied the typological analysis of the area, in combination with its historical and urban development, it was proposed to maintain the existing sizes and partially modify them in order to more smoothly integrate the new buildings into the historical built environment, while preserving the morphology and character of the historic center.

Finally, in order to achieve all of the above, it is essential to find the appropriate financial tools which, by offering the necessary resources in the different phases, will manage to upgrade and highlight the historical character of the Old Town of Nafplion.

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