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A Cable Car to the Old City: The Position of the Israel Association of Architects and Urban Planners

The Israel Association of Architects vigorously objects to the plan to build a cable car to the Old City of Jerusalem, which would detract from its status as a world city, diminish its heritage value, and wound its residents and friends the world over.

Nowhere in the world is there a precedent for something like this, in which a historic city hands over part of what is recognized as a historical and heritage site for a development of the kind proposed.

The statutory process advancing the project is irregular, inappropriate, and incompatible with the spatial and historic importance of the place and its central status in the world.

The law does not permit a project to be classified as "tourist infrastructure" in a national park that is surrounded by green space.

The Planning and Building Law assigns great importance to a broad and professional public debate and transparent planning; and all the more so for a project like this that has international ramifications. Hence there is no place for an expedited process in the National Infrastructures Committee that sets aside the important stages of professional scrutiny, such as urban analysis, full preservation documentation, and an environmental impact statement.

An expedited procedure to build a cable car in this location displays contempt for the status of Jerusalem and its sites that are holy to the three religions.

Scenic and cultural values that have been preserved for hundreds of years would be irrevocably damaged by gross technical elements: a series of gigantic pillars, stations and auxiliary infrastructure, adjacent parking lots, and more. The cable car would run very low above residential neighborhoods and detract from the residents' quality of life and privacy.

A cable car, as a transportation solution to the large number of visitors to the Old City, clearly cannot be a serious response, and not even a partial one, for mass transport. Its efficiency is doubtful. As a tourist attraction, a cable car does not show respect for the culture, architecture, and history of the Old City.

The Israel Association of United Architects calls for a broad and serious public discussion of the Old City cable car plan, as required by the historic uniqueness of the site, and honoring the values that the Planning and Building Law is meant to protect.