Six reasons to build in E-1

written by David M. Weinberg | 24.08.2025

Every Israeli prime minister since Yitzhak Rabin has planned and promised to build in E-1 for salient reasons: municipal and strategic imperatives that only have grown with time. The E-1 quadrant is critical for the future of Jerusalem and for Israel's long-term security.

To this we can today add that E-1 is a marker for diplomatic sanity; pushback against the arrogant Western attempt to ram runaway, perilous Palestinian statehood down Israel's throat.

Here are six reasons why it is right and imperative that Israel build 50,000 apartments in E-1 over the next decade.

1. Municipal: E-1 begins on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives and runs along the road towards Maaleh Adumim. It is the last significant piece of unsettled land in the Jerusalem envelope. It is the only place where tens of thousands of homes can be built to overcome Jerusalem's serious housing shortage.

Jerusalem already abuts Ramallah in the north and Bethlehem in the south. Environmental lobbies have stymied all plans for significant housing projects in the green mountains to the west of the city. So, the only direction to grow is eastwards, into E-1.

But the city has been held hostage to global politics. As a result, there has been no significant new building underway in the Jerusalem envelope for more than two decades.

No new neighborhoods have been established in the city since Prime Minister Netanyahu built Har Homa during his first term in the late nineties. Because of diplomatic pressures, the Israeli government has shrunk from critically needed expansions of peripheral, middle class neighborhoods like Ramot, Pisgat Zeev, Gilo, and Armon Hanetziv; and has deferred new neighborhood projects like Atarot and Givat HaMatos – all of which are over the stale "Green Line."

Even as such projects are slowly being freed up now, they will not amount to anything near the 6,000 new apartments a year that Jerusalem needs just meet

the demands of natural growth.

2. Zionist Mission: Hard-working, upwardly mobile young families with kids simply have no affordable housing options in Jerusalem. This demographic has been leaving the city, leaving Jerusalem with socio-economically poor populations; mainly Arab and Haredi residents. This has grim implications for the attachment of Israelis to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem must grow to remain a pluralistic and modern metropolitan. It must expand to remain a Zionist city. Growth is essential for the viability and livability of Jerusalem, and the proximate E-1 is the right solution.

Jerusalem mayors Nir Barkat and Moshe Lion have advanced hi-tech employment and cultural projects to make the city an exciting option for well-educated young Israelis. But without a gargantuan leap in affordable housing options – and again, that categorically means developing E-1 – their efforts may come to naught.

3. Military: Highway number 1, which runs from Tel Aviv up to Jerusalem and down to the Jordan Valley is the only west-east axis across the State of Israel with a Jewish population majority. It is the only safe route through which Israel can mobilize troops from the coast to the Jordan Valley in a case of military emergency. It is an essential and decisive military asset.

Israel needs to secure the road from the coast to the valley via an undivided Jerusalem, the E-1 corridor, and the city of Maaleh Adumim. Building in E-1, and expanding Maaleh Adumim eastwards too, are best ways to augment Israel's long-term hold across this tactical arc.

4. Strategic: A cardinal strategic lesson of the Oslo Agreement failure is that Israel can no longer rely on international agreements and diplomatic guarantees. Instead, its security posture must be based on defense provided by Israeli forces deployed in defensible spaces, and on this basis, it can perhaps reach diplomatic accords in the future.

E-1 leads to the Jordan Rift Valley, which is Israel's irreplaceable defensible eastern border. It is the buffer zone that protects Israel against invasion from the east and prevents the Judea and Samaria (West Bank) mountain region from becoming a full-blown terrorist enclave.

Alas, Iran is actively trying to destabilize Jordan and turn the Jordan River into Israel's hottest and most porous border; a front for a next Nukhba-style invasion of Israel, at least. Already now, Iranian weapons (and large quantities of drugs) flow into Judea and Samaria across this confrontation line, which is among the reasons that Israel is building a NIS 5.2 billion ($1.4 billion) 425-kilometer (265-mile) security barrier along the Jordan border from the Sea of Galilee all the way down to Eilat.

The plan also involves stationing a new, dedicated IDF brigade in the Jordan Valley and bolstering the Israeli presence there by establishing "national mission centers," including pre-military academies and national service frameworks.

Note this: Defensible borders need to be understood not only as markers that ensure Israel's security needs but as building blocks which guarantee that peace treaties will be sustainable. All this leads back to the importance of building in E-1.

5. Settlement Legitimacy: Building in E-1 will breathe new life into all 150 Israeli towns in Judea and Samaria and reemphasize the indivisibility of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The world needs to understand that settlements are not "obstacles to peace" and do not constitute "occupation" of foreign land; but rather are manifestations of Jewish return to ancestral lands. No Israeli should ever again be forced out of his home, anywhere in the Land of Israel. There can be no repeat of the Gush Katif expulsion tragedy.

6. Diplomatic Pushback: Many Israelis once entertained the possibility of a full-fledged, democratic, and demilitarized Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria living in peace alongside Israel – but no longer. The slaughter of the Second Palestinian Intifada disabused most Israelis of that notion, and Hamas's October 7 assault buried it even deeper. It is no longer believable or feasible, at least for the very long term.

And yet, paradoxically, some in the world have doubled down on their demands for full-out Palestinian statehood – now, now, now – in complete disregard for the deleterious plunge of Palestinian politics in annihilationist, jihadist, and antisemitic directions, and in utter disdain for Israel's nationalist and security perspectives. And condescendingly they are going to slap-down Israel at the UN

next month by defiantly swearing loyalty to faux Palestinian statehood.

Israel must rebuff such diplomatic outrage. Building in E-1, so anyway necessary for multiple reasons as detailed above, is appropriate pushback (and a modest move, at that). It tells the French, British, Canadians, Australians, and others that the longer they fail to advance realistic parameters for Palestinian accommodation with Israel, the less autonomy Palestinians might obtain.

Europeans argue that Israeli development of E-1 would bifurcate the contiguous land mass that they hope to attain for the Palestinian national movement, linking Ramallah and Bethlehem. Outrageously, the EU is even funding the establishment of unauthorized Palestinian and Bedouin settlements in E-1 (like Khan al-Ahmar) to create "facts on the ground" and prevent Israeli development in this zone.

But the accusation of "bifurcation" is a red herring, as is the insurmountable demand for territorial contiguity. It is quite clear that any Israeli-Palestinian arrangement in Judea and Samaria is going to involve blocs and bypasses, overpasses and underpasses, and detour roads – what has been called "transportation contiguity." Israel's plans to build in E-1 need not be regarded as a bar to an agreement with a serious Palestinian partner – if one ever emerges – E-1 is the least problem in this regard.

So instead of battering Israel, the West should be advancing realistic space sharing arrangements for Judea and Samaria. Again, there are multiple ways of fashioning freedom and prosperity in what will always be a complicated mesh of Israeli and Arab West Bank populations.

And it is time for the world to treat Palestinians as responsible adults, with no free pass regarding the type of autonomous self-rule they might establish. End payments to terrorists and NGOs that back terrorists, disarm Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist armies, end attempts to brand Israel a war criminal in international courts, force an end to the teaching of genocidal antisemitism in Palestinian schools and media, demand respect for human rights and religious freedoms. Bring about recognition of Israel by the Palestinians as the indigenous home of the Jewish People. Bake these demands into Mideast diplomacy of the future.

In the meantime, Israel assertively will develop E-1 to strengthen Jerusalem and secure the Jewish nation-state.

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