



## WAYS TO FORM THE STRUCTURE OF MODERN NEIGHBORHOODS ON THE BASIS OF TRADITIONAL URBAN PLANNING

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### Abstract

Throughout history, the architectural structure of neighborhoods has undergone significant transformations. This article offers a concise scholarly reflection on these changes, their underlying causes and contributing factors, the progression and refinement of neighborhood design over time, the impact of functional requirements on spatial structure, as well as the planning of administrative governance in response to changes in population size and territorial scope. In addition, the article presents recommendations and potential solutions for addressing the identified issues.

**Keywords:** Neighborhood, district, district, traditional neighborhood, administrative neighborhood, residential area, urban planning.

### Introduction

Since the emergence of humanity, various forms of statehood and social governance have developed throughout history, among which one of the most ancient is the mahalla. The mahalla—if one may say so—is a unique form of self-governance characteristic of Uzbekistan. Historical experience shows that mahallas are not artificially imposed governance structures, but rather rooted in centuries-old traditions of daily life and interpersonal relations that align with the spiritual values of the Uzbek people.

The centuries-old experience passed down from generation to generation has contributed to the emergence of specific principles for shaping residential areas and their elements. These principles have evolved in response to socio-economic and other transformations, giving rise to distinct yet fundamentally similar settlement structures in each unique context. They represent the most general laws governing the formation of residential area layouts. In shaping these structures, people have consistently adhered to the principle of “functional appropriateness.” Any deviation from this principle has led to difficulties, inconveniences, and unnecessary expenses. Over time, the principles underpinning the layout of residential settlements have gradually taken on clear forms within the process of historical development. Mahallas





and guzars (local community centers) are among such traditional urban planning elements.

It is well known that mahallas emerged due to the unique lifestyle of the Uzbek people, the need for communication among residents of the same area, the collective organization of weddings and other ceremonies, and the necessity for mutual assistance and cooperation. The size and population of mahallas have been shaped by various urban planning conditions and influencing factors.

The formation of mahallas has followed a set of interrelated and consistent patterns. One of the main principles is that the unique social functions which unite people living in the same area naturally impose limits on the number of residents. Historical evidence suggests that for a mahalla to function effectively, its population should ideally range from 1,500 to 2,500 individuals. When the population exceeds 2,500, there emerges a need to establish a second, smaller mahalla within the same area.

On the other hand, when the territorial area of a mahalla surpasses a certain threshold, the formation of an additional, smaller mahalla also becomes necessary. This is because communication among residents primarily occurs on foot. If the area becomes too large, pedestrian interaction becomes inconvenient and difficult. Research shows that these two factors—population size and land area—have historically ensured that mahallas do not exceed specific optimal limits.

In various residential districts across the country, three main types of mahallas have historically developed:

- I. Traditional mahallas located in districts consisting of historically formed low-rise private housing that are in need of renovation;
- II. Mahallas formed in districts consisting of modern, systematically planned low-rise private residential buildings;
- III. Mahallas formed in microdistricts consisting of modern high-rise apartment buildings.

The specific features of these types of mahallas are reflected in their spatial structures. Traditional mahallas have evolved historically and exhibit distinctive layouts and functions. Urban planning conditions also play a significant role in the formation of mahallas. Typically, mahallas on the outskirts of cities cover large areas—sometimes up to 15 to 20 hectares—due to the large size of household plots and lower population density in these zones. As one moves toward the city center, mahalla areas become smaller while population density increases. In the central parts of cities, mahallas generally occupy only 1 to 2 hectares.

In districts of Uzbek cities that consist of newly planned low-rise private houses, mahallas have formed in accordance with the same structural and demographic



principles. Similarly, in microdistricts composed of modern high-rise buildings, the residents of 2 to 3 apartment blocks often self-organize into mahallas consisting of 1,500 to 2,500 individuals.

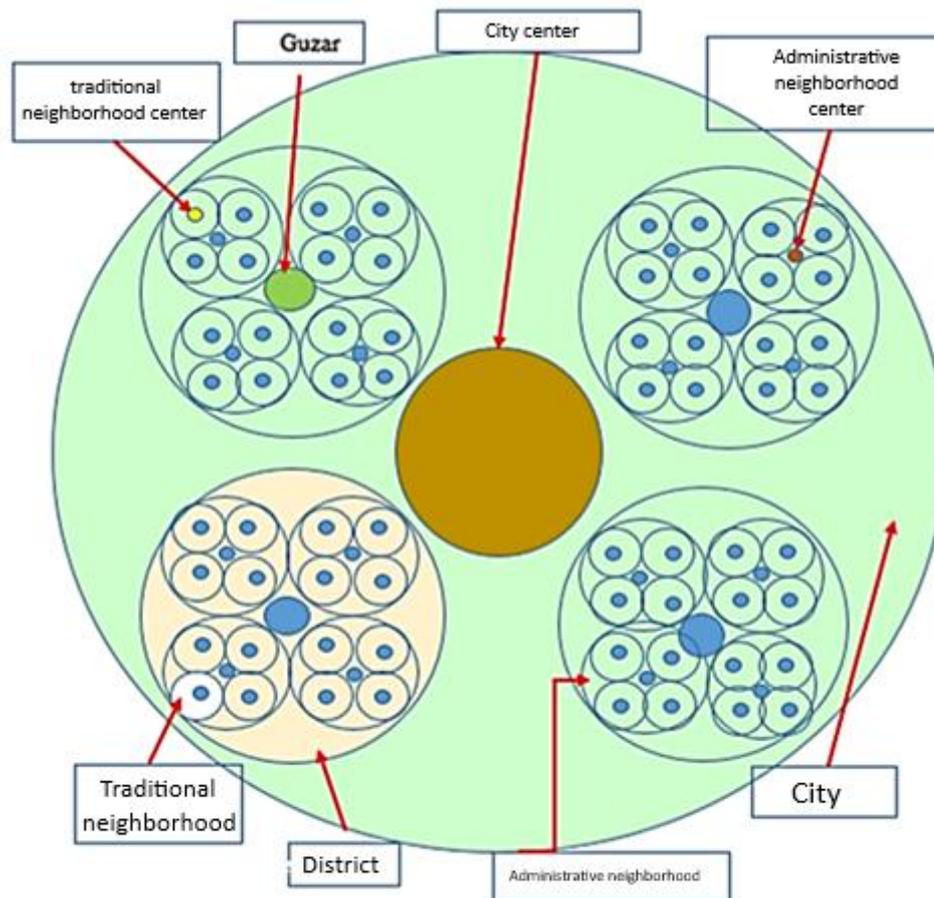
All of this illustrates that the traditional organization of community life around the mahalla remains essential for the population's everyday life even in the present day. After the adoption of the Law "On Citizens' Self-Government" in the Republic of Uzbekistan, additional responsibilities have been assigned to mahallas, thereby increasing their role in society. In order to effectively implement these new functions, several (two or more) traditional mahallas are being merged to form larger mahallas with populations of 6,000 or more. This expanded form of mahalla can be referred to as an "administrative mahalla."

The incorporation of several traditional mahallas into a single administrative mahalla does not imply their disappearance. Traditional mahallas continue to retain and perform their original functions as before. However, administrative mahallas are functionally more complex than traditional ones.

For administrative mahallas to operate effectively, their population should not fall below a certain threshold (approximately 6,000 people), nor exceed a certain upper limit (for example, 10,000 people). Thus, specific normative population parameters are also applicable in this context.

In urban areas with historically developed low-rise private housing, as well as in planned districts composed of modern low-rise private houses, it is possible for two or more traditional mahallas to be grouped into a single administrative mahalla.

In contrast, a microdistrict consisting of modern multi-story apartment buildings with a population of 6,000 to 10,000 people and clearly defined territorial boundaries may itself constitute a single administrative mahalla.



Urban structure based on traditional urban planning principles

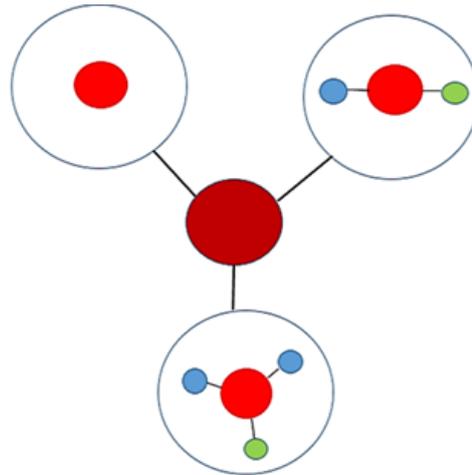
In all urban planning contexts, traditional mahallas within an administrative mahalla retain their primary centers and informal boundaries, continuing to fulfill their functional roles. This reflects a necessity rooted in the traditional way of life of the Uzbek people. In addition to the centers of the constituent traditional mahallas, the administrative mahalla also has its own central administrative hub.

Thus, the administrative mahallas that have emerged in recent years in our cities represent more complex structures compared to traditional mahallas, in terms of their organization, population size, territorial coverage, and functional responsibilities.

In the context of urban planning in Uzbekistan, the administrative mahalla can be considered the second-level structural unit in the formation of urban residential districts, following the traditional mahalla.



Given the attention paid by our state to neighborhood institutions, one of the important and urgent issues that must be addressed in this regard is to further enrich and clarify the functions of the administrative neighborhood based on the requirements of the time, determine the composition of administrative centers, develop laws and regulations for their placement in various urban planning situations, and create a favorable architectural environment for the administrative neighborhood, which will help them function effectively.



a neighborhood center with a population of 6,000-10,000 people

### Symbols:

-  Primary neighborhood center
-  Administrative-social center of the administrative neighborhood
-  Guzar
-  Possible neighborhoods to join

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