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was completely bare of vegetation. So one of the first measures undertaken in the new Diplomatic Quarter was to fence out animals. After the first rains it was like a miracle to see the mass of annual and perennial plants which sprang up.

The Diplomatic Quarter, which will ultimately house some 35,000 residents, is a self-contained district of Riyadh, at the centre of which embassies are grouped on a linear axis, surrounded by five residential neighbourhoods. Each of these neighbourhoods has a local park of between two and four-and-a-half hectares, and is linked to the other districts and central facilities by a system of green spaces. Around the edge of the Quarter are a total of 18 gardens in a transition zone to an area of improved desert, which forms an enclosing belt.

A number of principles of Saudi culture provided an important starting point for the development of the design philosophy.

These can be summarised as follows:

- Small scale size, to ameliorate the desert climate;
- Shade; unity with the desert (therefore location of the gardens on the edge of the development);
- Separation between protected open spaces and the open desert using walls;
- No Western furniture (sitting is on carpets on the ground);
- Consideration of social behaviour;
- Provision of contrast to the interminable sun;
- Use after sunset;
- No metal play equipment (overheating);
- Use of vegetation with low water requirements;
- Response both to the formality of Islamic garden design and to the freedom of the desert landscape; and
- The use of naturally occurring rock as a design feature.



LEFT: FORMAL SHADED WALKWAYS LEAD THROUGH THE PARK OF THE DIPLOMATIC QUARTER.
MIDDLE: PLANTING OF NATIVE SPECIES ALONG THE ROADSIDE AROUND THE SITE IMPROVES THE DESERT LANDSCAPING.
RIGHT: FORMAL GARDEN AREAS SURROUND TUWAIQ PALACE.

The main types of green and open space developed were:

- *Roadside planting* of date palms on main streets and smaller trees on residential roads;
- *Residential courts* in the form of cul-de-sacs for parking but also with play areas, pergolas, and tree planting;
- *Green links* and *formal parks* and *gardens* based on three themes: the Islamic garden, the oasis, and the play area for all age groups;
- *Non-formal parks* and *gardens*, based on free forms and also containing play areas;
- The *improved desert*, with its use of native species, forming a buffer around the Diplomatic Quarter of between 80 and 100 metres wide from the motorways as well as from the *Wadi Hanifah* and contrasting with the designed parks and gardens.

The landscaping of the Diplomatic Quarter relates to the built-up part to its surroundings and is of two kinds: intensive and extensive.

The intensive landscape is irrigated and heavily planted. In it, a green network of paths and walkways relates public gardens, ranging from parks to small play areas, to each other. The intensive gardens provide a range of social and recreational opportunities, which are used in different ways by the various communities of the Diplomatic Quarter on Fridays and holidays.