

District Committee Publishes Decisions on Givat Hamatos and Har Homa Plans

1 message

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Today the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee published its decisions regarding the plans for new settlements/neighborhoods in Givat Hamatos and Har Homa West. On the one hand the committee noted that the Har Homa plans were “appropriate and worthy of being advanced”, on the other hand the committee decided to ask for many modifications and additional surveys to be made and did not advance any of the plans.

In the above map you can find Har Homa West and Givat Hamatos. Har Homa West is the area marked in red adjacent to Har Homa. To its north and also marked in red is Givat Hamatos.

The map also shows (marked in red):

- A [new plan for 9,000 housing units in Atarot](#) which was revealed a few weeks ago
- [Two plans for a total of 3,400 housing units in the E1 area](#) which were deposited on February 27th.

The map can also be [viewed here](#).

As reported previously, following a press announcement by prime minister Netanyahu, on February 27th the District Committee discussed a masterplan for Givat Hamatos, a masterplan for Har Homa E (Har Homa West) and a detailed outline plan for 30 dunams in the area of Har Homa West. The details and significance of those plans can be found in Ir Amim's alerts ([Har Homa plans](#), [Givat Hamatos plan](#)).

The committee's decisions were published today and are as follows:

Har Homa E masterplan (Har Homa West TPS 15399) – Since (unlike detailed outline plans) the approval of masterplans does not require depositing for objections there was a risk that the discussion at the committee would end with a decision to approve the plan. Instead while the committee noted that the plan “stipulates appropriate principles” it decided that for the advancement of the plan it requires a number of changes as well as conducting additional surveys.

The changes are mainly to do with the desired scope of construction both residential and public buildings. In some plots of land the committee asked to reduce the scope of construction and in others to increase it. The required surveys are for environmental impact and road capacity. These are thorough surveys that in the least take months to conduct. Furthermore they require coordination with officials of the planning committee without which the surveys can not advance.

Har Homa detailed outline plan (TPS 285411) – This is a detailed outline plan for 500 housing units on 30 dunams of the northwestern edge of Har Homa West. Masterplans do not enable the issuing of building permits. Therefore in addition to the masterplan of the whole area of Har Homa West (TPS 15399 discussed above) there is a need for detailed outline plans for portions of the area in order for construction to be advanced. The committee discussed the plan and could have decided to approve it for deposit. But here too while stating that the plan fits the general planning policy the committee decided that modifications and additional surveys are needed.

Specifically the committee required that a comprehensive environmental survey be conducted due to the flora and fauna in the area. An assessment by the Antiquities Authority is needed as well. Conducting these surveys requires both time and coordination with state officials.

Givat Hamatos master plan (no plan number was issued yet) – This masterplan too could have received final approval at the committee. Instead the committee decided “to continue and examine the plan the district planning office”. The decision is made up of just this one sentence and unlike the other two plans does not contain any assessment or elaboration regarding the plan. It is important to clarify that this new masterplan does not annul or freeze the already approved plan for Givat Hamatos A. Based on Givat Hamatos A the Israel Land Authority published on February 24th a tender for 1,077 housing units (see below for elaboration).

The Meaning of the Decisions

There is a big gap between Netanyahu's far reaching declarations regarding "the advancement of thousands of housing units in Har Homa and Givat Hamatos" and the actual result of the discussions at the committee. It is unclear whether this gap is a result of real planning considerations that have to be resolved or is it a sign that despite Netanyahu's dramatic announcements the Israeli government nevertheless needs to restrain itself. Ir Amim will try to inquire into the issue.

In any case the advancement of the three plans in one of the most sensitive areas of East Jerusalem after years during which the Israeli government refrained from advancing them is a cause for great concern. If constructed, these new settlements will essentially connect the existing Gilo and Har Homa neighborhoods/settlements and create a contiguous Israeli built-up area along the southern perimeter of East Jerusalem. This will serve to detach Bethlehem and the south of the West Bank from East Jerusalem while isolating the Palestinian neighborhood of Beit Safafa. Constituting a long term strategy of Israeli governments, construction of large settlements is employed as a means to fracture the Palestinian space and unilaterally determine the boundaries of Jerusalem to prevent the future establishment of a Palestinian capital in the city.

The fact that the discussion of all three plans ended without a decision to advance any of them is not the norm. But in a few months, the surveys and modifications requested by the committee may be completed and the plans will be discussed again and this time be advanced.

It is important to remember that the Israel Land Authority has also published (on February 24th) [a tender for 1,077 housing units in Givat Hamatos A \(on the area of TPS 14295\)](#). The tender has not yet opened for bidding and this is currently scheduled to happen on May 3rd. This tender is not contingent upon developments of the Givat Hamatos masterplan described above and can open for bids regardless of whether or not the plan is approved. If the tender does open for bids in May leading to future construction this will be a most negative development with a new settlement in one of the most sensitive places in East Jerusalem.

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