



THE IMPACT OF AL-YARMOUK UNIVERSITY ON THE COMMERCIAL USES TYPES (RETAIL ACTIVITIES) OF SHAFEEQ IRSHEDAT STREET (UNIVERSITY STREET IN IRBID CITY- JORDAN)

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ABSTRACT

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The distribution of commercial land uses in the city has a highly importance, also the type of these commercial uses, how, where and why they concentrated in a specific areas with various patterns is an important subject. This study aims to analyze the ground floor commercial uses types and retail activities which take place in Shafeeq Irshedat street, one of the most popular streets in Irbid city called also the University Street , regarding to the existence of Al-Yarmouk University on the east side of the street, and to show if there is a relationship and an impact of Al-Yarmouk University on these retail types , in another word if there is a concentration of activities which relate and serve especially the student's needs. The findings of the study showed that there are various retail types, with highly percentage of 17% for uses related to student's services including (educational centers, cultural centers, language centers, bookshops, 24-hour copying and printing services etc...), however other uses like computer shops, restaurants and cafes were serving also mainly the students category. It was concluded that Al-Yarmouk University impacts the retail activity in University Street causing student's related activities in common to be found in the street with 59%. Therefore, many recommendations were mentioned at the end of the research.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes in the existing literature of internal structure of Irbid city, with special concentration on The Impact of Al-Yarmouk University Retail activities of Shafeeq Irshedat Street. This study uses new estimation methodology depending on Comprehensive surveying to the Retail types in this street,(17% related to student's services).

1. INTRODUCTION

Irbid City is the second largest city in located about 70 km north of Amman (Gharaybeh, 1995). Shafeeq Irshedat Street is one of the most important streets in Irbid city, which is classified as an Arterial (main) street, and considered to be a major traffic artery of the city Originates from the old town taking the radial and grid pattern, crossing the city from the north to the south.

In 1976 Irbid became home to one of the most elite centers of learning in the Middle East which is Yarmouk University, was established at the eastern part of Shafeeq Irshedat Street, and has developed steadily into one of the largest educational institutions in Jordan. Before that period there was a few scattered buildings around the University area and considered far from the urban center of Irbid city (Gharaybeh, 1995).

The built environment of university district has shown a big development after the establishment of Yarmouk University, especially at the beginning of 80's and 90's of the previous century, and this was as a response to the new urban needs, because of the new changes in social, economic, cultural, and demographic aspects of users life (Dararkah, 2004).

During the period from 1990 to 2002, a lot of commercial buildings and markets spread on main streets especially expanded in Shafeeq Irshedat Street, and many other streets of Irbid city converted into commercial uses.

Multi-story buildings (residential buildings), began to be established in many districts of Irbid city, especially in the university district which is relatively considered new according to the establishment of Yarmouk University. By the time, the part of Shafeeq Irshedat Street which lies at the west of the Al-Yarmouk, Started to be known by people as the University Street.

In the late 19's, when the Internet service started to be popular in Jordan, there were a few internet cafés appeared in the university street, and since the service started to attract people, mainly university students for their education and communication, the number of internet cafés increased dramatically. As a result, the University Street entered the Guinness Book of Records after the agglutination of more than 150 Internet cafes across the street, which is no longer than one kilometer long.

According to the previous background of the existing situation, research hypothesis includes that, there is a relationship between commercial stores activity or (retail types) in Shafeeq Irshedat street (University Street) and the existence of Al Yarmouk University, since the university is considered to be very important attractive node for students, the research aims to investigate and study the commercial or retail types and if they are related to serve mainly the students.

2. STUDY METHODOLOGY

In order to test the research hypothesis, different research strategies and tactics were included; based on the site visit and making a field survey for the location of the University street, the conducted field survey included recording the retail shops types and activities, also taking panoramic photographs of both sides for the street, in addition to the field observations, and collecting information, views and opinions of street users and store owners.

3. LOCATION

Shafeeq Irshedat street is located on the west side of Al-Yarmouk University, Originates from the north at (Boor Saeed) circle, which is the intersection point of king Hussein street with Palestine street, and directed to the south until Aydun area. (figure1 a,b,c)

According to the act of dividing the city into districts by the municipality of greater Irbid, Shafeeq Irshedat Street is lying in two districts, the west part of the street attached Al-Nuzha districts, while the east part is attached Al-Rabiya district (Dararkah, 2004).

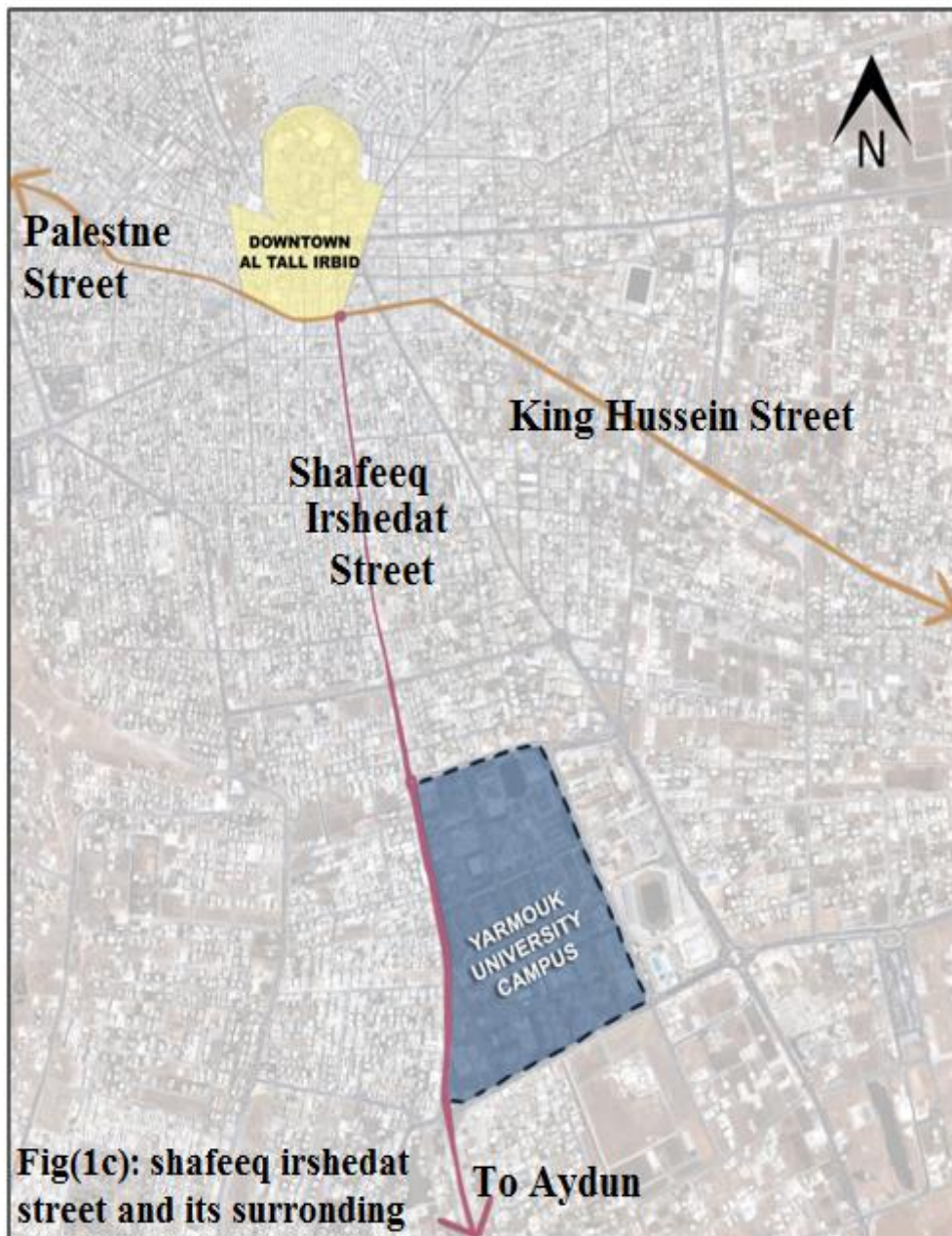
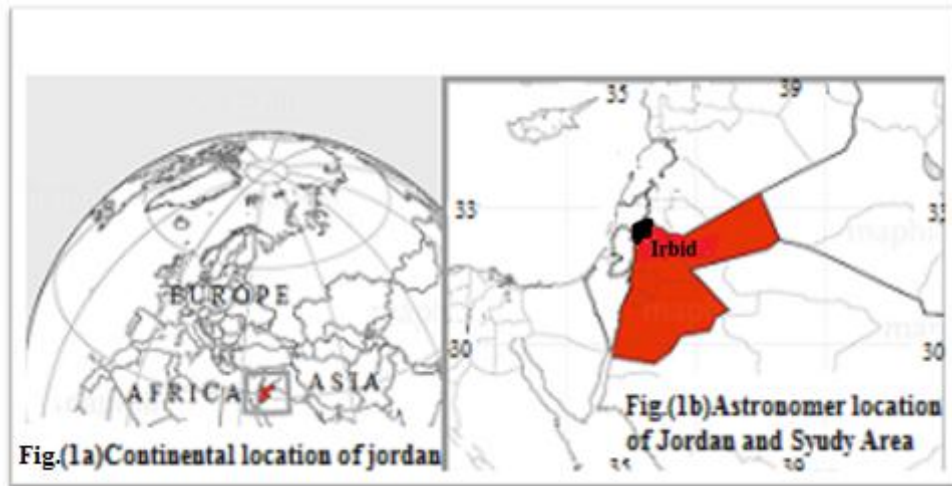


Fig-1. Location Map of Study Area
(Source: Researchers from <http://www.maphill.com/jordan/location-maps/blank-map> Google maps edited by the researchers)

4. THE STUDY AREA

4.1. Selected Location

The Selected zone of the study is the part of Shafeeq Irshadat Street which lies from Al-Iskan traffic light to Al Naseem circle, approximately 1.4 km in length, and the street width ranges from 20 to 30 meters. (figure2)

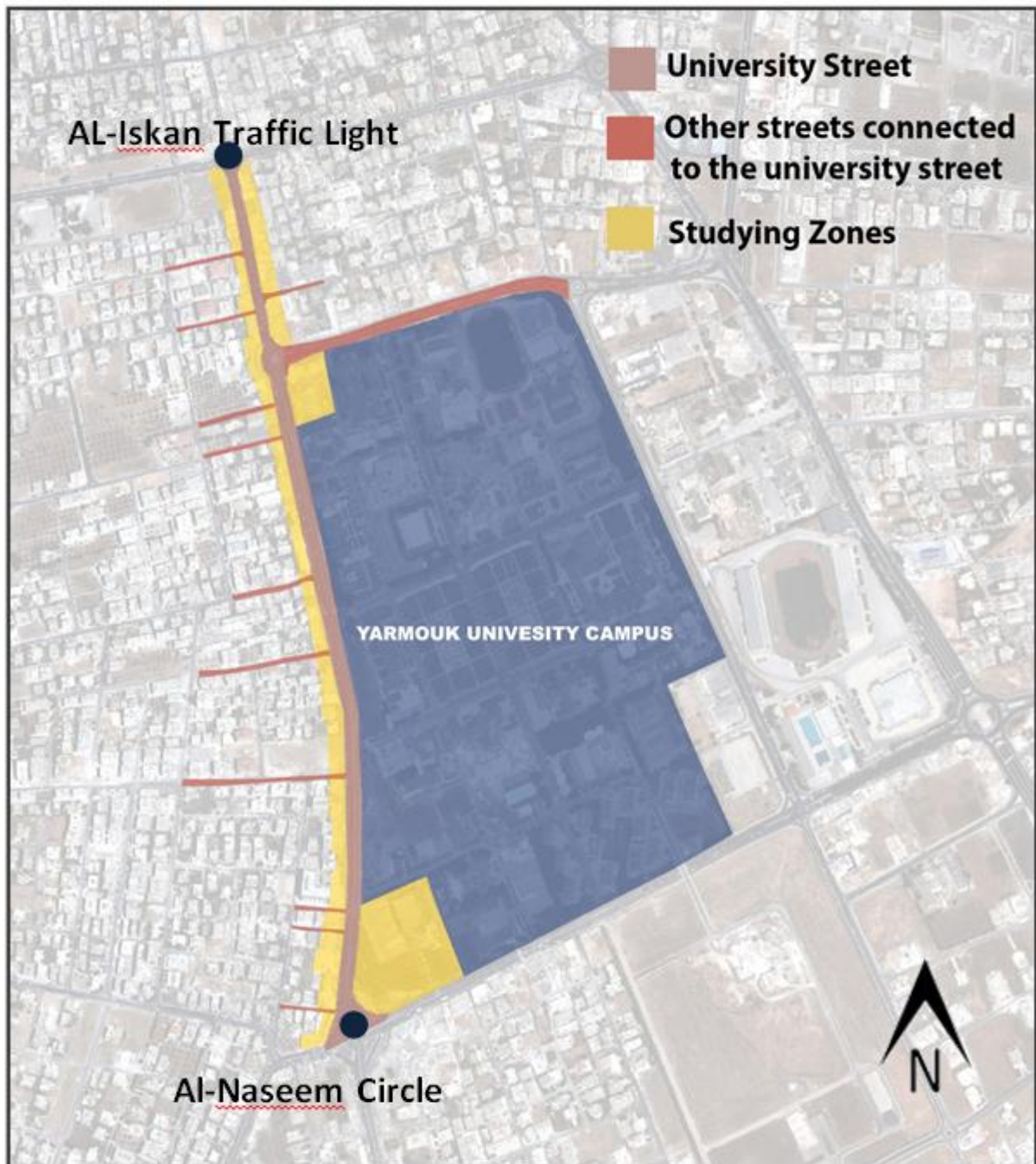


Fig-2. The selected zone of shafeeq Irshadat Street -the university street- from Al-Iskan traffic light to Al-Naseem Circle. (Source: Google maps edited by the researchers).

4.2. Land Use

A land use map for the selected study zone was conducted (figure3).

According to the municipal land use map the commercial properties organized a long the university street making a continuous strip; also the building regulations for land plots are assigned the building regulations for land plots.

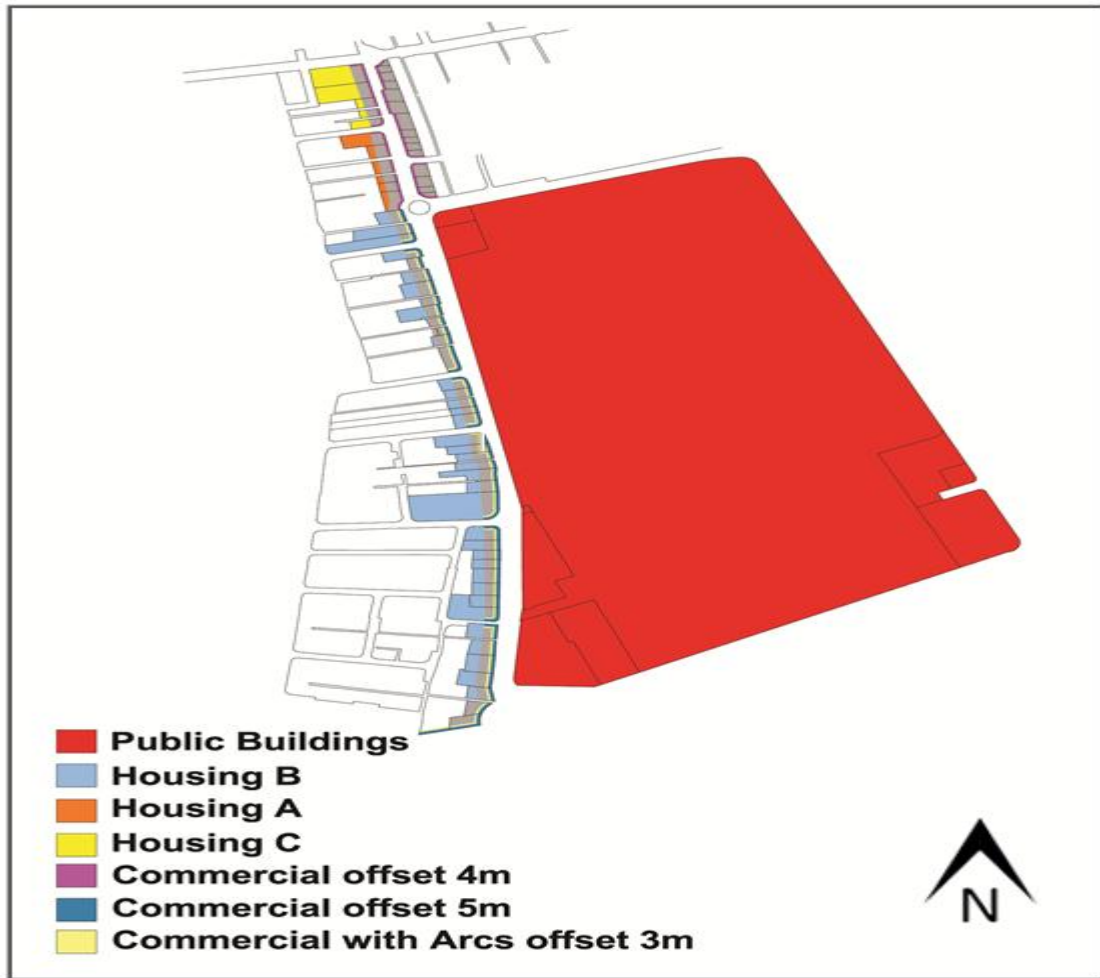


Fig-3. Map shows the municipal land uses in the study area

(Source: Greater Irbid Municipality)

5. ANALYSIS

The types of commercial stores taking place in the ground floor on the university street were recorded and calculated after the field survey in addition to the information of profession licenses conducted from the municipality. Since there were a lot of student related services observed in the university street and they were distributed mainly on the upper floors of the buildings, the number of those uses also assigned to the calculations.

Table-1. Shows the number of commercial stores and there uses

Commercial Use Type/Use	Number
Computer/electronics/Internet	24
Mobile phone shops	28
Students Services	40
Jewelry and Cosmetics shops	12
Hairdresser, barber	15
Restaurants and sweets	35
Coffee shops	25
Super markets	11
Commercial complex /mall	3
Optics	10
Banks and Money Exchange	9
Sports entertainment centers	9
Medical services /pharmacies	18

(Source: The researchers from the field study).

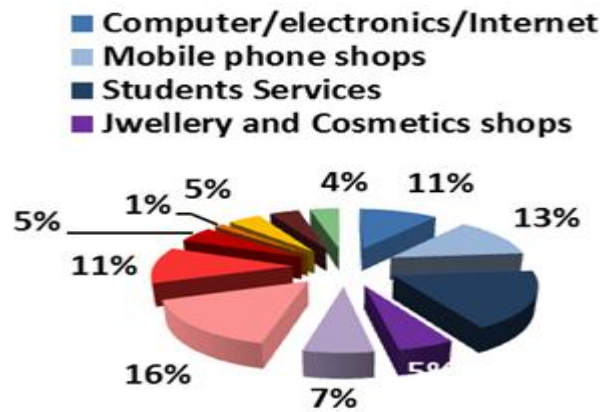


Fig-4. The number of commercial stores and there uses (Source: The researchers from table 1)

6. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

From the conducted calculations, the uses which are directly related to the students' services have 17% percentage which is the highest between other uses.

These uses include (educational centers, cultural centers, language centers, bookshops, 24-hour copying and printing services etc...)

Regarding to the internet cafes, the observation revealed that a large percentage of Internet café shops, changed their commercial activity into other uses or closed , and the remaining exact number is only 7 cafes after it was breaking the Guinness records , the reason behind this change according to the interviews which were made with store owners, is that the Internet service is affordable to all people nowadays , and nearly every house has an internet service , this made the profit earned from this sector is much lower that its costs, so many shops were closed, converted to other uses , or started to sell hardware and computers that support the internet service.

Restaurants and coffee shops in the university street also founded with a high percentage counting 16%, after the interview which was held with restaurant and coffee shop owners, it was concluded that students shapes the main costumers for these shops , because there proximity to the university campus also students which accommodate in the university district purchase from them.

The majorities of the existing coffee shops is very quiet and have a suitable environment for studying. This type of coffee shops started to appear recently and widely desired by students category, thus if these uses could be considered also within the uses which are related for student services , the final summarized or generalized chart is shown in figure 5.

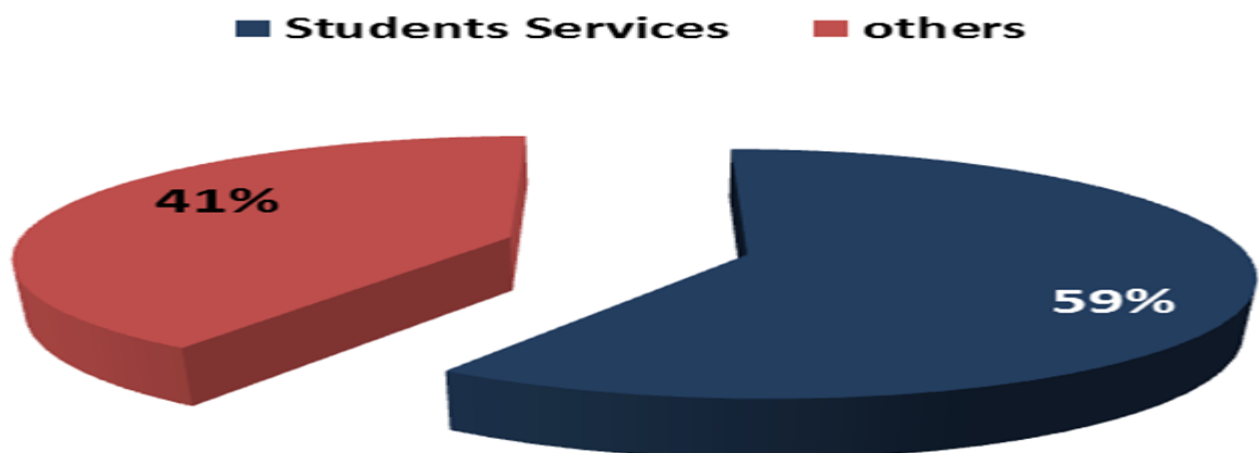


Fig-5. The ratio of students services.

(Source: The researchers from the field study)

7. MIXED USE

It has been noticed after the field survey, that the studied land plots on the university street which were categorized as residential plots and having a commercial strip in the front according to the municipality land use map, in actuality they are completely occupied by commercial uses in the ground floor, in addition that all those buildings are incompatible with the setbacks regulations as assigned from the municipality (figure6).



Fig-6. Map shows the actual ground floor land uses in the study area
(Source: the researchers)

On the same land plots, the upper floors of the buildings which are more than one floor in height, contain other uses, so it could be called “mixed use” development, which refers to “buildings or structures that include a mixture of land uses, having a mixture of residential, business and retail uses on one land plot” ([Useful Community Development, 2014](#)) thus it involves different activities during the day.

For example; the majority of the commercial shops (retail stores) located in the ground floor, while there is also buildings more than one floor overlooking the Street, the second and above floors of them used for offices, business, cultural centers, in general the height of these building’s ranges from 2-4 floors, there is also many buildings contain residential and accommodation services for students in the second floor and above, and those types could reach 7-8 floor height(figures7,8,9)..



Fig-7. Panoramic photograph for University Street

(Source: Researchers)

High rise mixed use buildings; the ground floor used as retail stores, while the upper floors used as hotels and for accommodation facilities.



Fig-8. Panoramic photograph for University Street

(Source: Researchers)

2-4 floors buildings; the ground floor used as retail stores, the upper floors used as offices, students services centers.



Fig-9. Map shows zoning for existing uses in the area.

(Source: the researchers)

It is important to mention the pros and cons of the mixed use development as observed in Shafeeq Irshadat Street:

7.1. The Pros of Mixed Use Development

(Dararkah (2004) quotes Davis, 1986) when he says that “From an economic point of view it could be generalized that the urban spaces and the retail stores are utilized by users during the day”, and by accommodated students (residents) during the night ,also the mixed use development saves time and transportation cost because the proximity of residential (accommodation) facilities and it’s relation to the commercial functions. From a behavioral point of view, the mixed use development attracts people and users from different layers of the society all the time, which promotes and enhances the value of social interaction, also enhances the walk ability along the street sides, and this was very obvious in University Street.

7.2. The Cons of Mixed Use Development

There are also some downsides could be summarized as:

In his work from 1985, Habbi says“ the mixed use development may generate traffic problems which increase the rate of accidents and on street parking, noise and pollution” (as cited in Dararkah (2004)) and in the case of shafeeq irshedat street as being observed, it suffers from traffic conflicts and jam especially during the peak hours, because it is considered as mentioned before an arterial and main distributor street included in many transportation lines in addition to the attractive mixed uses of commercial and other functions take place at street fronts.

8. SOME CHARACTERISTICS COULD BE ASSIGNED TO THE UNIVERSITY STREET

8.1. Vitality

A continuous flow of students generated into the street while they are entering and leaving the university campus. Also, the existence of attractive facilities and services distributed along the both sides of the street, attracted students of the university itself and other universities in the region making the area a large point for meeting and socializing. The street also attracts people in general because its proximity to nearby governmental, public buildings, and the main mosque.

it is important to say that the vitality of university street is not obvious only during the daylight hours, it is also obvious at night, the existence of commercial activities makes the street so active and it's liveliness and social interaction continues, this is what distinguished the University street from other streets in the city and gave it a unique character, since there is no streets perform the same activities as the university street has.

8.2. Unity

University district in general, and particularly University Street has shown and increased adaptation and conformity between its urban fabric and cultural, social, and economic structure, whereas a lot of buildings changed its uses from residential to other functional uses , to accommodate the changes and developments which happened to the infrastructure of the area.

8.3. Accessibility &Continuity

Shafeeq Irshedat Street has a direct transportation access, people and students can easily access to the university, jobs, services and daily activities. The sub streets continued with the same activities as the main street (Shafeeq Irshedat Street).

8.4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research discussion leads and confirms the hypothesis that the existence of Al-Yarmouk University affects the commercial uses types on Shafeeq Irshedat Street by the generation and concentration of uses which are student oriented or serves mainly the daily needs of student's category, and if we could imagine the street without the university, it would be an ordinary street like others in the city, lacking for unique characteristics. However, this study developed a number of recommendations that can be considered as a key guideline to be adopted for future improvements, these recommendations include:

1. To create more fitness and harmony among the facades and advertisements of the commercial and other uses of University Street, it is recommended to unify the shape and order of the scattered billboards.
2. Improving the overall design quality of the street will increase the walk ability and liveliness in the street, thus it is recommended to improve the pavements on both sides, and creating also additional outdoor setting spaces.
3. Furthermore precise researches could be done involving and taking into account the floor area aspect of all the uses around the university, including also the residential or (students' accommodations).

4. There is an underpass way, connecting the west gate of the university with the other side of the street, although it is considered to be a safe way to cross for students, but it needs further more development.
5. Transformation the street from commercial street to become socio-cultural street , that including make the street as on lane street , the other lane will be paved to increase the pedestrian area , and to make a real connection between the library at the university with cultural activities in the proposed areas (book shops , social cafes, artistic academies etc..

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