

ICOMOS Heritage Alert Ataköy Housing Estate (Phases I-II), Istanbul, Türkiye

Background document

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ataköy Housing Estate Phases I-II represents one of the earliest examples of new-town housing estates and urban planning and architecture in Türkiye in the second half of the 20th century, which acquired international recognition as an iconic example of urban planning and architecture of the late 1950s and 1960s. It is significant as a mixed-use new-town type housing estate with touristic, recreational, commercial and socio-cultural infrastructure, offering an alternative life-style, and located on the then western development corridor of Istanbul. The housing estate consists of 90 buildings, characterized by a cohesive modernist design and planning approach, distributing various housing block types that share a similar architectural vocabulary in expansive parks for public use. Every detail, from technological, material and infrastructural features to spatial and artistic quality, reflects this ethos.

This significant 20th-century heritage site is under serious risk of irreversible loss, as evidenced by former demolitions of the touristic facilities on the Marmara shore in 2008-2009, of the Phase I commercial center in 2023, and in 2024, of one of the housing blocks (F Block). There are ongoing lawsuits and campaigns for its designation as an urban site according to national legislation and its sustainable preservation. A meeting was recently held with stakeholders such as local representatives, municipal officials, and ICOMOS-DOCOMOMO representatives in the local municipality regarding the current interventions. During the meeting, it was observed that the main threats stem from political concerns and profit-oriented urban transformation. Since this meeting in July 2024, F Block has already been demolished and other blocks are currently under threat of demolition. Demolitions of the single blocks constitute a major threat against the integrity of the site.

As stated in ICOMOS Madrid-New Delhi Document articles 5 and 6, the pressure for change is constant, but management of change must be sensitive to significance of the place. The desired outcomes are the designation of Ataköy Housing Estate Phases I-II as an urban conservation area (urban site) according to Turkish Act No. 2863 in order to ensure its future development and preservation are well managed; the development of appropriate preservation and future adaptation guidance based on international guidelines, favoring structural strengthening and restoration against current trends of demolition and rebuilding of individual housing blocks; and the formal recognition of the site as an integral part of the urban landscape in urban legislation and planning.



Photo 1: Ataköy Housing Estate Phases I-II (Yöney, 2006).
Photo courtesy of: Nilüfer Baturayoğlu Yöney.



Photo 2: Ataköy Housing Estate Phase II; general view with the primary school, 1967 (Muhteşem Giray, "Ataköy İkinci Mahalle İlkokulu", *Arkitekt* 1967-2/326: 58-61); open source.

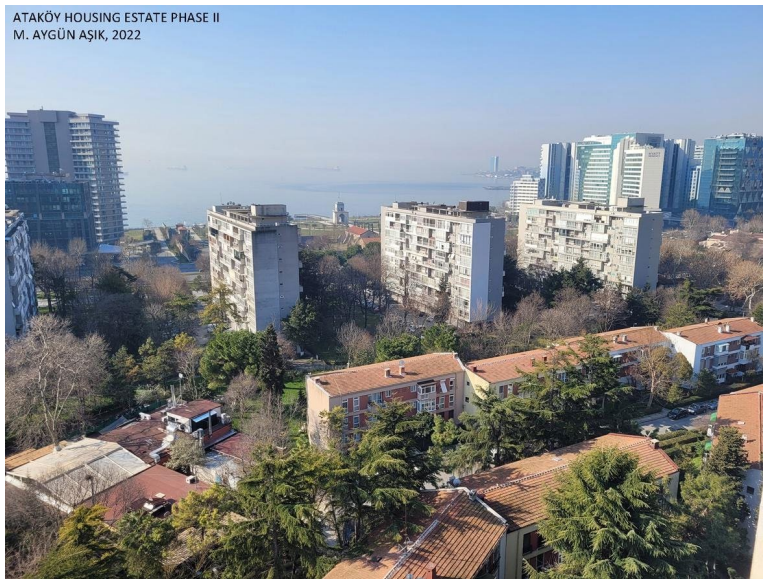


Photo 3: Ataköy Housing Estate Phase II: touristic facilities and residences built following the demolition of the original Ataköy touristic facilities in 2009, 2022 (photo M. Aygün Aşık, 2022) *Photo courtesy of: M. Aygün Aşık.*



Photo 4. Ataköy Housing Estate Phase I F Block, demolished in 2024. (photo Stefan Breitling, 2006 © docomomo_tr, docomomo_int) *Photo courtesy of docomomo_tr.*

1-0 Identity of Building/Artefact/Object/Place

1-1 Current name and original name.*
Ataköy Housing Estate Phases I-II

1-2 Location Town, Country, Street
Bakırköy, İstanbul, Türkiye

1-3 Classification/ Type of place
Residential / Housing Estate
20th century heritage site, new-town housing estate

1-4 Current Heritage Protection Status

None

Only the Ataköy Primary School designed with the estate (see 2-2) was listed on the national inventory in 2006 on the application of docomomo_tr.

2-0 Statement of Significance and History

2-1 Statement of Significance

The Ataköy Housing Estate Phases I-II represents one of the earliest examples of new-town housing estates and urban planning and architecture in Türkiye in the second half of the 20th century, which acquired international recognition as an iconic example of urban planning and architecture of the late 1950s and 1960s. It is significant as a mixed-use new-town type housing estate with touristic, recreational, commercial and socio-cultural infrastructure, offering an alternative life-style, and located on the then western development corridor of Istanbul (*ICOMOS Madrid-New Delhi Document - Article 1.5*). The housing estate consists of 90 buildings, characterized by a cohesive modernist design and planning approach, distributing various housing block types that share a similar architectural vocabulary in expansive parks for public use. Every detail, from technological, material and infrastructural features to spatial and artistic quality, reflects this ethos.

There are similar housing estates of the same period under protection, such as the Lijnbaan in Rotterdam, Interbau in Berlin, etc. Levent Phase IV, also contemporary in design and execution, and located on the then northern development corridor of Istanbul, was designated an urban conservation area in 2008, whereas several applications to the authorities for Ataköy have been so far unsuccessful (*ICOMOS Madrid-New Delhi Document - Article 1.8*). The Ataköy Estate, Phases I-XI, in its entirety, is a laboratory, in which the 20th century housing history of Türkiye could be traced, from the 1950s to the 1990s. Ataköy Estate, Phases I-XI, in its entirety, serves as a living laboratory for tracing the history of 20th century housing in Türkiye from the 1950s to the 1990s.

Many international documents, including the more recent Frankfurt Declaration as well as the Valletta Principles, the Madrid – New Delhi Document, Eindhoven-Seoul Statement, the Cadiz Document and the 20th Century Historic Thematic Framework define the significance of housing, housing estates and similar urban and architectural projects. Especially Articles 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.7, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 of the Madrid – New Delhi Document could be mentioned. Recognizing the significance of Ataköy, the 1st DOCOMOMO International Workshop was held here in 2006 and it is acknowledged as a notable academic event in the field of modern architectural heritage conservation.

This significant 20th-century heritage site is under serious risk of irreversible loss, as evidenced by former demolitions of the touristic facilities on the Marmara shore in 2008-2009, of the Phase I commercial center in 2023, and in 2024, of one of the housing blocks (F Block). There are ongoing lawsuits and campaigns for its designation as an urban site according to national legislation and its sustainable preservation.

2-2 History of place

Ataköy Housing Estate Phases I-II is a new-town morphology satellite settlement located on the western development corridor of Istanbul along the Marmara shore. Türkiye Emlak Kredi Bank's project reflects the changes in building development and housing policies of Turkey in the last 70 years through Phases I-XI. The estate is located on the 375 ha Ottoman gunpowder production area, Baruthane, acquired by the bank in 1955. Following an international competition without a winner, the bank decided to formulate a design based on a synthesis of the preferred projects and founded the Baruthane Project Office for this purpose (see 2-4), which remained active between 1957-1964. The beach facility was completed first and opened in 1957. Phases I and II has 2-13 storey-high 90 blocks, 1514 apartments in 16 types, 2+1 - 7+1 rooms and 93-248m². Criticized for its socio-economic aspects in the 1960s, the project is distinguished with its reinterpretation of post-war modern

tendencies, total design and planning approach, and spatial quality. The Elementary School, designed by Muhteşem Giray in 1957-62, reflects similar tendencies.

2-3 Date of project/ Date of construction/ Finishing of work

1957-1964
date of project 1957-1958
project revisions 1958-1962
date of construction 1958-1964
date of completion 1962-1964

2-4 Architect/Designers

Baruthane Project Office, director Ertuğrul Menteşe, consultant Luigi Piccinato
This office operated under Türkiye Emlak Kredi Bank, the investor of the project, and was founded to plan and design this neighborhood. The architects and engineers involved with the project were Tuğrul Akçura, Ümit Asutay, Firuzan Baytop, Erdoğan Biricik, Ercüment Bigat, Durak Çorbacioğlu, Şadi Dinççağ, Erhan Eran, Nejat Erem, Ergün Ersöz, Yusuf Erşahin, Muhteşem Giray, Mehmet İnan, Şevket Koç, Eyüp Kömürçüoğlu, Bedri Kökten, Ahmet Pekelmen, Alexandr Simohin, Hamdi Şensoy, Yümnü Tayfun and Lütfi Topçubaşı.

2-5 Architect/Designers still living? Residence, country of birth, contact details

none

2-6 Original and current use of building/place

Housing estate, still in use;
touristic facilities (beach, 1957-1985; four motel complexes, 1958-2008; camping, 1957-2000s), all demolished;
commercial areas, Phase II still in use, Phase I, demolished in 2023;
primary school, designated in 2006, restored in 2010-11, still in use.

2-7 Changes, additions

for demolished parts see 2-6

additions:

- to the east side of the former Phase I commercial centre, 2005-2008, a hotel and business centre;
- replacing the touristic facilities, 2008-2015, high-rise housing and hotels, ending the relationship of the estate with the sea;
- older planned additions, Galleria Shopping Mall, Sheraton Hotel and Ataköy Marina, replacing the beach facilities, 1986-1988, architect Hayati Tabanlıoğlu for T. Emlak Kredi Bank;
- threats against the integrity of the estate
- new hotel building next to the commercial center of Phase I, 2005
- commercial center of Phase I demolished, 2023
- F Block demolished, 2024
- new building to be constructed in left-over plot 14, sold from the Treasury
- other blocks to be demolished in 2025

Since the 1999 Marmara earthquake, and especially following the 2023 Kahramanmaraş and Hatay earthquakes, disaster risk has become a pretext for profit-oriented urban transformation and regeneration, some of which have already resulted in partial losses and additions to the context.

2-8 Current condition and use

Good (see 2-6, 2-7 for alterations)
individual alterations to the blocks but mostly reversible, except for the demolition of Block F; planning and preservation, legal action and designation required to inhibit further damage

2-9 Original design intent and use

Originally designed and used for housing purposes. (see 2-2, 2-6)

3-0 Description (history and technology)

3-1 Physical description

The project is distinguished with its reinterpretation of post-war modern tendencies, total design and planning approach and spatial quality. All open spaces were public and interconnected. Phase I (1957-62; 662 units, 52 buildings, 3-13 storeys) and Phase II (1959-64; 852 units, 38 buildings, 2-12 storeys) offered flats in 13 types (93-248 m²). Commercial functions were separated as zones, and the flat roofs with pergolas provided social common spaces; two primary schools and recreational beach facilities. The zones around the blocks are for pedestrian circulation only with vehicular access to parking lots from the circulating main streets.

Ataköy Phases I and II was an attempt at creating a new suburb on the outskirts of Istanbul. Buildings of different sizes but of similar architectural vocabulary were set apart in large parks, with modernist planning and design characteristics reflected in every detail, including sanitary, environmental, commercial, educational and recreational infrastructure. Free plans, well-lit rooms, large windows, architecturally designed comfort systems, buildings raised on pilotis, flat roofs with exposed shafts, elevator towers and concrete pergolas, and cubist façade arrangements introducing bold colors among pastel tones followed modernist architectural models. Climatic control was given precedence, with all the living quarters oriented towards the south, buildings placed so that none cast shadow on each other and natural ventilation enhanced both inside and outside.

3-2 Construction system used

Construction system was reinforced concrete with pile and/or spread (raft) foundations; a concrete batching and mixing plant was used for the first time in Türkiye. These characteristics could be considered as innovative technology under the ICOMOS Madrid – New Delhi Document Article 1.4, the Cadiz Document, the 20C Historic Thematic Framework and the Eindhoven-Seoul Statement.

3-3 Physical context/setting

The 375 ha site, formerly an empty area on the city periphery, reserved for the production of gunpowder during the Ottoman period, was sold from the State Treasury to the Türkiye Emlak Kredi Bank in 1955. The gunpowder production facilities and Byzantine(?) cisterns still exist as listed property and reuse projects at the site. The development of the site began in 1957 with the project for Phases I-II, which is the oldest housing area under threat. The development continued through the 20th century with Phases III-IV, V, IX-X, VII-VIII, XI and Olympic sports facilities. Phase VI was constructed following the closing of the bank in 2001, in the early 2000s, as a separate project not following the principles of the development of other phases. The whole estate is also a laboratory showing the development of housing production in Turkey through the second half of the 20th century. The physical context is public green spaces around housing areas with socio-cultural and commercial facilities. The density of the estates is very different from the surrounding residential and commercial areas, which have been developed according to the municipal norms and regulations.

The site was partially marshland/lagoon with two river basins at the center and west. These became landscape/recreational areas. The south border is on the Marmara shore, where initially beach facilities, motels and camping areas were designed and operated.

The east side of the estate joins the former rural settlement of Makriköy/Bakirköy, and further on the west there are two other former rural/seasonal settlements of Ayastefanos/Yeşilköy and Florya. By the 20th century Bakirköy and Yeşilköy became urban settlements; by the mid century the airport in Yeşilköy developed and became an important urban node; the railway connecting Florya/Yeşilköy to the Sirkeci Station at the centre of the Historic Peninsula already passed through the housing estate, was electrified and became a public urban transport line; new wide main roads were built along the coast, reaching Eminönü (passing on the sea-side of the city walls along the Marmara shore) and along an interior

axis, connecting Topkapı to Edirne and Europe (the so-called London motorway). These bound the housing estate site on the south and north respectively.

3-4 Social and cultural context and value

The demographic characteristics of the owners changed between different phases of the estate. Phases I-II were criticized in terms of not being social housing during their design and construction process. The apartments were almost unnecessarily large and fitted with elements and finished with claddings luxurious for that period, and costs and prices were high in spite of the credit and mortgage-based sales plan as almost all construction materials had to be imported. The prospective owners were mostly members of the upper middle class, thus creating a utopian social structure without any class difference.

The owners/residents were and still are mostly bureaucrats and public officials with higher education and economic standards. Today, a significant portion of the residents are original property owners or their legal heirs, such as their children. Therefore, the collective memory continues. The population is aware of the planning, architectural, environmental and economic value of the estate and active for its protection and preservation. There are two residents' associations that we are currently working with as well as experts' associations that are supporting the cause.

3-5 Materials/fabric/form/function

The functions have not changed; housing is still the dominant use with its socio-cultural and commercial facilities. Phases I-II reflect a post-war modernism approach inline with European examples; a low-density new-town project with different block and apartment types. The materials are simple but high-tech for their period, including glass tiles on the façades imported from Italy, defining the different building types. (see 2.2, 3.1).

3-6 Aesthetic value

The integration of different building and apartment typologies as well as the planning approach make this estate (Phases I-II) one of the significant housing projects of the post-war decades. The use of a modern language in all levels and scales of design is a unifying aesthetic characteristic. There are glass mosaic panels and designs on apartment blocks, that represent mid-century modern artistic collaborations.

4 Local, Regional, International significance citations about the place

1st DOCOMOMO International Workshop, 2006

E. Omay Polat, N. Baturayoğlu Yöney, "Workshops as a Tool for Education in Modern Heritage Conservation: 1st International docomomo Workshop in Ataköy, İstanbul, 2006", *TÜBA-KED (Kültür Envanteri Dergisi)*, no: 25, "Kültürel Miras: Bilgi Aktarımı ve Eğitim" Özel Sayısı, S. Coşkun, N. Piplani, A. G. Bilgin Altınöz (eds), Ankara, 2022: 117-132. ISSN 1304-2440 e-ISSN 2667-5013; DOI: 10.22520/tubaked2022.25.004

DOCOMOMO MoMove virtual exhibition: <https://exhibition.docomomo.com>

Publications

N. Baturayoğlu Yöney, Y. Salman, H. İ. Alatlı, "Tehdit Altındaki Modern Konut Mirası: Ataköy I-II. Kısımlar (1957-1964)", *Serbest Mimar* 54, Türkiye Serbest Mimarlar Derneği Ankara Şubesi, 2024: 44-47.

N. Baturayoğlu Yöney, E. Omay Polat, Y. Salman, "Modern Konut Mirasının Korunmasında Uzun Soluklu Bir Mücadele: Ataköy I-II. Kısımlar (1957-1964)", *Tehdit Altındaki Kültürel Miras, Mimarlık* 438, TMMOB Mimarlar Odası, Ankara, 2025, *yayına hazırlanıyor / in publication*.

docomomo_Turkey, "Selection from the docomomo_tr Registers", *Modern Heritage: Selections from Docomomo Registers*, L. Noelle, H. Torrent (eds), docomomo_international, 2025, *yayına hazırlanıyor / in publication*.

There have also been numerous oral presentations and meetings with stakeholders.

4-1 Letters of support for Heritage Alert action, newspaper articles, etc.

DOCOMOMO International, letters of support dated 2022 and 2024

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V0zxiC8Tqr3dZWfE_H1KMkzgpddu883C/view?usp=sharing

Heritage Alert, Iconic Houses, <https://www.iconichouses.org/icons-at-risk/atakoy-housing-estate-phases-i-ii>

Heritage Alert, DOCOMOMO International, <https://docomomo.com/heritage-in-danger-atakoy-phases-i-ii/>

Heritage Alert, DOCOMOMO Turkey, <http://docomomo-tr.org/etkinlikler/duyurular/international-campaign-for-atakoy-atakoy-icin-uluslararası-kampanya>

Online petition, Change.org, https://www.change.org/p/atak%C3%B6y-i-ii-kisimler-modern-mimarlik-mi%CC%87marlik-mi%CC%87rasi-olarak-korunmalidir?recruiter=1340488267&recruited_by_id=bc9ee2c0-2306-11ef-acac-cb1a443a534c&utm_source=share_petition&utm_campaign=share_for_starters_page&utm_medium=copylink

4-2 Publications that describe the work/place, bibliography, etc.

see Attachment 2: Chronological Architectural Bibliography for Ataköy Phases I-II,

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1I7bh5_DuQijowEP_AlZzy4Btokfpd0aA/view

N. Baturayoğlu Yöney, G. Manioğlu, "A Late Modern Housing Utopia of the 1960s: Ataköy (Phases I and II)", *Conservation of the 20th Century Architectural and Industrial Heritage, ICOMOS International Symposium, Istanbul May 18-19, 2002*, D. Mazlum, Z. Ahunbay, Y. Kahya (eds), Yapı Yayın, İstanbul, 2006, s. 125-128.

U. Tanyeli, Y. Salman, N. Baturayoğlu Yöney ve E. Omay Polat, *Architectural Guide to Istanbul: vol. 4, Modern and Contemporary*, TMMOB Mimarlar Odası İstanbul Büyükşehir Şubesi, İstanbul, 2006, s. 131-133, harita/map no 42.

N. Baturayoğlu Yöney, "Modern Bir Planlama Deneyimi: Ataköy, İstanbul", *Mimar.ist*, TMMOB Mimarlar Odası İstanbul Büyükşehir Şubesi, No: 61, özel sayı, Zafer Akay (yay.haz.), İstanbul, 2018: 58-68. (<http://www.mimarist.org/mimar-ist-sayi-61-kis-2018/>; DAAI)

E. Omay Polat, N. Baturayoğlu Yöney, "Workshops as a Tool for Education in Modern Heritage Conservation: 1st International docomomo Workshop in Ataköy, İstanbul, 2006", *TÜBA-KED (Kültür Envanteri Dergisi)*, no: 25, "Kültürel Miras: Bilgi Aktarımı ve Eğitim" Özel Sayısı, S. Coşkun, N. Piplani, A. G. Bilgin Altınöz (eds), Ankara, 2022: 117-132. ISSN 1304-2440 e-ISSN 2667-5013; DOI: 10.22520/tubaked2022.25.004

N. Baturayoğlu Yöney, E. Omay Polat, "İstanbul'un Modern Konut Yerleşimlerine İki Örnek: Levent IV. Kısım (1954-1957) ve Ataköy I-II. Kısımlar (1957-1964)", *İPA İstanbul Dergisi*, sayı 11, İstanbul Planlama Ajansı, İstanbul, 2024: 26-33.

N. Baturayoğlu Yöney, Y. Salman, H. İ. Alatlı, "Tehdit Altındaki Modern Konut Mirası: Ataköy I-II. Kısımlar (1957-1964)", *Serbest Mimar* 54, Türkiye Serbest Mimarlar Derneği Ankara Şubesi, 2024: 44-47.