

Explained: Real Estate Development Zones

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According to the [Real Estate Development and Investment Law No. 15 of 2008](#), so-called “real estate development zones” include properties both within and outside zoning plans. The properties needed to set up a real estate development zone are secured either from state property, from the properties of the local administrative unit, the private properties of development companies or from the properties of private individuals.

The [Real Estate Development and Investment Commission](#)

The real estate development zones are chosen by the [Real Estate Development and Investment Commission](#) (REDIC), through a study that it conducts in coordination with the relevant administrative units. The REDIC is an administrative body; it enjoys its own legal status as well as financial and administrative independence. It is linked to the Minister of Public Works and Housing, and headquartered in Damascus, with branches in various governorates.

Law No. 15 of 2008 assigned administration of REDIC to a board of directors chaired by the Minister of Public Works and Housing, with the aim of preparing policies and general plans for real estate development and investment and following up on their implementation. The board of directors also submits proposals for new real estate development zones to the prime minister after conducting a survey with the relevant administrative unit.

Expropriation

Properties located within the area slated for real estate development that belong to individuals are expropriated for the benefit of the local administrative unit. This expropriation file is submitted to the REDIC board of directors, which in turn submits it, as well as a draft of the decree, to the Ministry of Local Administration. It then sends the file to the Prime Minister’s Office, to issue an expropriation decree.

After issuing the decree, the local administrative unit must take the necessary steps to estimate the payment for the expropriation. The expropriated real estate is then registered in the name of the local administrative unit, by decree from the prime minister.

Real estate development zones

The instructions for implementing Law No. 15 of 2008, issued by the Prime Minister's Office through Decree No. 5410 of 2009, divide Syria’s governorates into real estate development zones as follows:

- The first region includes Damascus, Aleppo, and Damascus Countryside governorates. Real estate development zones here must not be smaller than 25 hectares.
- The second region is divided into two categories: the first includes Homs and Hama, where real estate development zones must not be smaller than 20 hectares; the second includes Lattakia and Tartous, where real estate development zones must not be smaller than 15 hectares.
- The third region is also divided into two categories: the first includes Daraa, Idlib, Quneitra and Suweida, where real estate development zones must not be smaller than 15 hectares; the second includes Deir-ez-Zor, Hassakeh and Raqqa, where real estate development zones may be set up regardless of their total area.

As for informal housing areas, they can be established as real estate development zones regardless

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of total area, which can be done through a memorandum justifying the move, and with the approval of the Prime Minister's Office.

The total number of [real estate development zones in Syria reached 23 in 2018](#), with a total area of 4,228 hectares. Works have not begun in any of these zones, but they are eventually expected to host around 176,000 total housing units, able to accommodate around one million people. The 23 zones are distributed as follows: eight in Damascus Countryside, eight in Aleppo, four in Homs, and one each in Hama, Deir-ez-Zor and Suweida.

Real estate developers

According to Law No. 15 for 2008, projects to invest in real estate development zones must be carried out by licensed real estate developers who are registered with the REDIC. The law aims to hire private companies (real estate developers), which carry out construction of infrastructure and services within the development project, as well as secure alternative housing for impacted residents.

There are currently an estimated 57 companies licensed by REDIC, although this number constantly changes as new companies receive a licence and others lose it. In October 2019, for instance, there were [63 listed companies](#). Within the public sector, the [General Housing Establishment](#) (GHE), the [Military Housing Establishment](#) (MHE) and the [Military Construction Establishment](#) (MCE) are real estate development companies.

According to pro-regime news sites, the director of the REDIC said in October 2020 that amendments would soon be issued to Law No. 15 of 2008, including facilities to encourage real estate development companies and preserve the rights of those who have subscribed to real estate development projects.

In the government's view, the need to amend Law No. 15 stems from justifications related to giving priority to the real estate developers in dealing with informally built housing areas, and granting them extra facilities and benefits, such as sales off plan property and lower rates to ensure proper implementation.

Law No. 23 for 2015

According to the [Planning and Urban Development Law No. 23 of 2015](#), zoning plans are issued independently of the existence of implementing bodies (real estate developers), whether public or private. Their issuance is not tied to a specific time limit for their completion. The administrative bodies are not required to have a certain level of ownership within the zoning plans. They are also not required to have a minimum amount of land area.

The commercial area in [Adra Industrial City](#)



Source: REDIC website

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