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**CHALLENGES IN THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE BAKU AGGLOMERATION (GREAT BAKU)  
IN THE CURRENT STAGE**

**Abstract.** *The article discusses the economic development of Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan, from the 19th century to the present. It examines Baku's role as the economic centre of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus, focusing on the growth of the oil production and fishing industries. The article also outlines efforts made to address the developmental disparities between Baku and other regions of the country, as well as the steps taken to rebuild the economy after transitional periods and military conflicts.*

*Significant projects that have contributed to Baku's economic development are highlighted, including the construction of terminals, oil and gas pipelines, and the discovery of new oil fields. The article also explores the shift towards an export-oriented economy, the development of the non-oil sector, innovations, and advancements in the transportation industry. Additionally, it analyzes the GDP indicators and their distribution between Baku and other regions, while examining the key trends in the city's development.*

*In conclusion, the article emphasizes the necessity of formulating a new master plan for Baku due to its economic growth and ongoing construction activities.*

**Keywords:** *Great Baku, oil and gas industry, innovation activity, residential areas, planning, master plan.*

**Introduction**

Azerbaijan, which faced military aggression and a decline in oil production, encountered significant challenges in the development of its economy. However, the presence of substantial oil and gas reserves in the city of Baku played a crucial role in restoring and furthering the country's economic foundation.

One of the pivotal events was the signing of the "Contract of the Century" in 1994, followed by strategic investments in the oil and gas sector. These investments created extensive opportunities for the restoration and development of Baku's economic base. Numerous projects were undertaken within this framework, contributing to the economic growth of the country after gaining independence.

Among these achievements was the inauguration of the Sangachal Terminal in 1996. The terminal, covering a vast area, serves as a hub for receiving, processing, storing, and exporting oil and gas from the Caspian Sea's offshore fields. With its high productivity, the terminal can handle significant volumes of oil and gas daily.

As Baku experienced substantial economic growth, major construction work commenced in the city, necessitating the development of a new master plan.

The history of urban planning in Baku dates to the late 19th century. The rapid economic and demographic development of the city, driven by the oil boom, prompted the initiation of planning efforts [6]. In 1898, the first official professional planning document, known as the General Plan, was approved. It was developed by civil engineer N.A. Von der Nonne. The main objective of this plan was to integrate historical development with minimal urban planning requirements, while incorporating new residential areas [1]. The plan designated locations for rectangular residential neighborhoods, extensive green spaces, boulevards, and citywide squares, primarily in the northern direction from the fortress walls.

### **Materials and methods**

This article uses historical and economic approaches to study the development of the city of Baku. Historical facts and events related to oil production, the field industry, and the construction of infrastructure in the city are analyzed. The data of the State Committee on Statistics of the Republic of Azerbaijan and other official sources are used. The article also applies a comparative analysis of GDP indicators and their distribution between Baku and other regions of the country. In conclusion, a recommendation is made on the need to develop a new master plan for Baku based on an analysis of economic growth and construction work in the city.

### **Results and discussion**

Since the second half of the 19th century, due to rapid oil production and commercial industry development, the city of Baku has emerged as the economic center not only of the country but also of the Caucasus region. Starting from the 1970s, significant measures were taken to address the economic development imbalance between Baku and the country's regions. However, despite these efforts, the majority of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continued to be produced in Baku. After the country regained independence, industrial production experienced a sharp decline, primarily due to a drop in oil and gas production, which forms the foundation of the economy [12].

The military aggression against Azerbaijan, the decline in oil production, and the challenges faced during the country's transition period led to serious problems in economic development [13]. Once again, the significant presence of oil and gas reserves in Baku played a crucial role in the restoration of the devastated and deteriorated economy. The signing of the "Contract of the Century" in 1994 and subsequent strategic investments in the oil and gas sector created extensive opportunities for the restoration and further development of Baku's economic base. Notable achievements within these large-scale projects that contributed to the country's economic development after independence include:

- The commissioning of the Sangachal Terminal in 1996, which serves the acceptance, processing, storage, and export of oil and gas from the Caspian Sea's offshore fields. This terminal, spanning an area of over 550 hectares, has a daily pro-

cessing capacity of more than 1.2 million barrels of oil and 40.0 million cubic meters of gas, with a storage capacity of 3.2 million barrels of oil simultaneously.

- The commissioning of the Chirag-1 offshore platform in 1997, capable of daily oil production of 17.3 thousand tons and 3.1 million cubic meters of gas, along with underwater pipelines connecting the platform to the Sangachal Terminal and the Oil Stones compressor station.

- The restoration and commissioning of the 1,330 km Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline in 1997, with a capacity of 105 thousand barrels of oil per day.

- The commissioning of the 1,833 km Baku-Supsa oil pipeline in 1999, with an annual capacity of 5 million tons of oil.

- The discovery of the Shahdeniz gas condensate field in 1999, one of the richest in the world.

- The commissioning of the Baku-Tbilisi-Jeyhan main export oil pipeline in 2006, spanning 1,768 km and capable of delivering 50 million tons of oil per year to global markets.

- The commissioning of the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline in 2006, stretching 980 km, with a daily capacity of 55 million cubic meters of gas from the Shahdeniz field to Georgia and Turkey.

The development of the oil and gas industry also provided a significant boost to other sectors, resulting in a nearly 12-fold increase in GDP volume during the period 2000-2014. Azerbaijan ranked among the world's leading positions in terms of average annual GDP growth rate from 2005 to 2007. In the 2008 World Bank "Doing Business Report," Azerbaijan was recognized as the most reformed country globally.

The development of the oil and gas industry also provided a significant boost to other sectors, resulting in an approximately 12-fold increase in GDP volume during the period 2000-2014. Azerbaijan held a leading position in the world in terms of average annual GDP growth rate from 2005 to 2007. In the 2008 World Bank "Doing Business Report," Azerbaijan was recognized as the most reformed country globally.

Thanks to the implemented reforms, the country's GDP increased from 4.7 billion manat in 2000 to 59.0 billion manat in 2014. Concurrently, GDP per capita rose from 585 manat to 6,148 manat. With the significant increase in the country's income, large-scale projects were launched in various sectors of the economy, particularly in transportation, which provided additional and significant benefits to the republic's economy. These projects include the reconstruction and construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, highways in the TRASEKA transport corridor, the construction of the Baku International Maritime Trade Port, and highways in the North-South international transport corridor, among others.

The Development Concept "Azerbaijan 2020: A Look to the Future," approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on December 29, 2012, emphasizes the importance of accelerating the diversification of the economy, independent of oil revenues, in the coming years. The main goal is to maintain high rates of development in the non-oil sector and expand its export opportunities. This Development Concept is based on an export-oriented economic model, aiming to increase exports of goods and services by strengthening competitiveness and improving the country's economic structure. Alongside the accelerated development of the non-oil

industry, the promotion and expansion of innovative activities will create favorable conditions for building a knowledge-based economy.

In the context of globalization, the qualitative expansion of innovation activities in a new dimension leads to an acceleration in the pace of change in management processes, the rapid dissemination of innovative advancements, and their implementation across all industries on a global scale. This will result in an increasing number of countries adopting innovative industry achievements, advanced technical standards, and the latest management methods. In such circumstances, Azerbaijan's main objective is to avoid falling behind in its development compared to the rapid economic progress of advanced countries worldwide.

According to data from the State Committee on Statistics of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2015, the country's GDP amounted to 54.352 billion manat, with the city of Baku accounting for over 75.2% or 40.930 billion manat. Furthermore, the GDP per capita in Baku (18,569 manat) is more than three times higher than the average nationwide indicator (5,600 manat).

Although there was a decline in GDP production in the most recent year, the overall volume increased by 2.9 times from 18.8 billion manat in 2006 to 54.4 billion manat in 2015. In Baku, during the same period, GDP increased by 2.8 times from 14.5 billion manat to 40.9 billion manat. The highest GDP was recorded in 2014.

Due to the significant economic development of Baku, extensive construction work commenced in the city, necessitating the development of a new master plan for Baku.

The history of planning work in the city of Baku dates to the late 19th century, driven by the city's rapid economic and demographic development during the oil boom. The first official professional planning document, known as the master plan, was developed by civil engineer N.A. Von der Nonne and approved by the Baku City Council in 1898 [11]. The main objective of this plan was to combine historical development with minimal urban planning requirements, incorporating new residential areas and determining the locations of rectangular residential neighborhoods, spacious green areas, boulevards, and citywide squares north of the fortress walls. The development of the urban suburb known as Forstadt was carried out according to Von der Nonne's project. Subsequently, from 1911 to 1918, architect M.G. Gajinsky made corrections to Von der Nonne's master plan based on new realities, guiding further territorial and planning development of the city.

Another significant planning document was the master plan of the city of Baku, developed under the leadership of A.P. Ivanitsky from 1924 to 1927 [2]. This plan involved a detailed study and analysis of natural and climatic conditions, housing and communal infrastructure, transport, and other specific factors. It determined the main directions for the city's future development, as well as the industrial profiles for designated industrial areas. An exemplary planning document reflecting the characteristics of a planned economy and directive leadership was the master plan developed by L.A. Ilin, the chief architect of Leningrad and Baku, from 1934 to 1937. The main concept of the general plan was the eastward expansion of the city beyond the historically established industrial zone. The most suitable waterfront area was allocated for

the city's administrative and business center, along with a recreational zone in the form of a seaside boulevard.

The master plan for the development of the city of Baku from 1985 to 2005, developed by the Bakgiprogor Design Institute and approved in 1987, was the last urban planning document created before the Republic of Azerbaijan gained its state independence. The core idea of the master plan was the rational placement of productive forces, the establishment of an optimal settlement system, and the development of a network of settlements in Absheron, ultimately transforming it into an urban agglomeration. Special attention was given to creating a unified transport and engineering system, environmental protection, improving the microclimate, and enhancing sanitary conditions in the area [6].

However, the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the transition from a planned to a free market economy, as well as political and economic challenges during the transition period, prevented the implementation of most of the main concepts of the city's development [9]. The rapid demographic growth of several cities and towns within the agglomeration, such as Khyrdalan, Bina, Lokbatan, among others, led to a population increase that significantly exceeded the demographic thresholds established by the master plan.

However, in contrast to this, the level of infrastructure support, housing stock, intracity transport, road network, engineering, landscaping, environmental conditions, cultural and household facilities, and other types of infrastructure turned out to be significantly lower than the proposed project. In many cases, the functional purpose of city territories and settlements has changed, violating the planning structure and leading to random development of these areas [10]. The dedicated corridors intended for main streets were repurposed for other uses, rendering them inaccessible.

After a long hiatus in planning activities, the BSPI (Baku State Construction) developed the Great Baku Regional Development Plan (GBRDP), which later became the primary source document for this project. The GBRDP encompasses an area of 282,332.5 hectares within the administrative boundaries of Baku, Sumgait, and a portion of the Absheron region [4]. The project adopted 2011 as the base year and projected until 2030. The Great Baku Regional Development Plan encompasses 67 administrative-territorial units, including 76 settlements. Residential land covers 21% of the region, industrial land covers 18%, including fields belonging to the State Oil Company (SOCAR), and natural landscapes occupy 55% of the territory [5]

Great Baku concentrates the main part of Azerbaijan's socio-economic potential, with approximately 2.6 million people residing there, accounting for one-third of the country's population. The plan aims to sustain high population growth rates, projecting a population of 3.85 million people by 2030.

The GBRDP (Great Baku Regional Development Plan) envisions the creation of a regional center with diversified economic connections, a highly skilled labor force, and a modern and high standard of living. Its mission is to achieve balanced development through optimal and effective functional zoning of the territory of Baku and its surrounding areas, while concurrently planning Greater Baku as a potential metropolis and the center of the agglomeration. The strategy focuses on facilitating

the transition to balanced territorial development through predominant multi-center development of the region [4].

According to the Great Baku Regional Development Plan, cluster resettlement systems are formed based on similar functions and features of socio-economic development, creating five planning areas for the future.

The grouping of residential areas within planning areas facilitates analysis, forecasting, and strategy development based on macro-territories. This systematizes administrative actions and priorities in the territory of Great Baku.

The main fundamental measures recommended in the plan aim not only to address shortcomings in the city's development but also to create favorable conditions for its transformation into a systematically developing metropolis. The plan includes the establishment of a system of hierarchical centers, a suburban ring road, the formation of a buffer zone to reduce pressure on the central part of the city, and the creation of two development sub-centers as alternatives to the Central Business District. These sub-centers will cover the core of Baku, decentralizing the central part of the city.

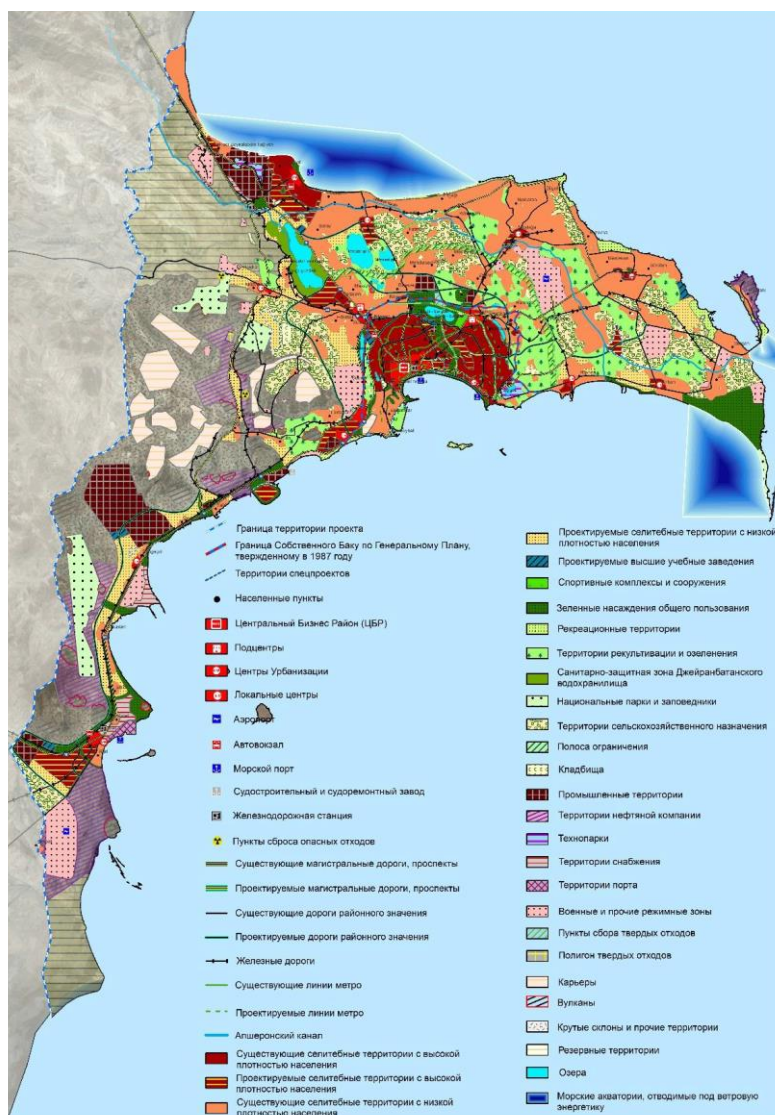


Figure 1 – Great Baku Regional Development Plan.  
Main drawing [author's material]

Additionally, the plan outlines the development of Sumgait and Alyat as urbanization centers, as well as the formation of 26 local centers. Sumgait will continue to serve as an industrial hub, maintaining its traditional function. Furthermore, the plan proposes the establishment of a new industrial pole in Alyat. The construction of the Baku International Trade Port in Alyat will provide a significant boost to the development of the area, leading to the establishment of new higher education institutions and the creation of rail public transport routes. Taking inspiration from advanced countries, it is recommended to build a rail public transport system in the direction of the Heydar Aliyev International Airport [8].

The plan emphasizes the development of agricultural production, the creation of national parks and environmental areas to form an ecological framework, the transformation of water basins into regional parks, the reclamation and restoration of contaminated areas, the reconstruction of residential zones into commercial areas, the promotion of tourism, the allocation of land for new educational institutions, and the formulation of integrated management strategies. These are some of the measures included in the proposals of the Great Baku Regional Development Plan (GBRDP) (Figure 1).

The Great Baku Regional Development Plan is recommended to be used as the foundational document for the development of master and detailed plans in subsequent stages.

The primary objective of this project is to establish a unified spatial concept for the territory, develop the main directions for land use, zone the areas based on their functional purposes, and identify relationships between zones. It aims to enable effective planning through accurate and optimal territorial organization. To achieve these objectives, the project defines the following main goals:

- Formation of a comprehensive system for organizing the territory, considering its optimal utilization and sustainable development.
- Identification of planning areas with enhanced control systems.
- Establishment of functional relationships between planning areas, including integration of the transport system and land use modes, in accordance with the main design proposals.
- Creation of Planning Areas capable of meeting local needs.
- Development of specific measures to reduce and gradually eliminate disparities in the development levels of local settlement systems within the project territory.
- Proposal of measures for creating a healthy and safe environment for living, working, and recreation of the population, including meeting the requirements for social infrastructure facilities and the appropriate territorial location of these facilities according to regulations.
- Mitigation of environmental damage caused by anthropogenic activities and ensuring environmental protection and safety.

By fulfilling these objectives, the Great Baku Regional Development Plan aims to foster sustainable and balanced development in the region, considering both the functional requirements and environmental considerations.

One of the primary objectives of any planning document is to ensure the sustainable development of territories. Therefore, special attention should be given to environmental, economic, and social factors that are integral to planning projects. To achieve these goals during the plan development process, priority was given to analyzing the suitability of the territory for future development. Through a comprehensive analysis of natural and anthropogenic factors, the study area was classified into the following five groups based on their level of suitability for development:

1. High suitability level.
2. Medium and high suitability level.
3. Average suitability level.
4. Low and medium suitability level.
5. Low suitability level.

Territories with a high level of suitability are considered most favorable for development, while territories with a low level of suitability are deemed unfavorable. The study revealed that territories with a high level of suitability accounted for 31.0% of the project area. Territories with a high and medium suitability level followed, representing 27% and 22% respectively. While these results provide a general understanding of the suitability of the entire project area for future development, it is advisable to conduct more detailed territorial analyses in subsequent planning stages.

The master plan presents the following vision, strategy, and planning actions:

**Vision:** The development of Baku territory, prioritizing the protection of the environment and cultural heritage while applying the principles of sustainability, functionality, rationality, integration, and durability. The transformation of the territory into a globally competitive information society with an enhanced standard of living.

**Strategy:** Integrated and balanced development of Baku and adjacent territories by establishing a structured hierarchy based on a multi-center spatial model. This strategy includes internal decentralization, improving the territorial organization of sectoral and functional activities, and implementing optimal and effective measures for structural planning, resettlement, reconstruction, regeneration, and improvements in centers, industries, and settlements.

The planning actions proposed by the master plan include:

1. Planning economic, social, and environmental aspects of development to meet the principles of sustainability.
2. Planning centers, industrial areas, and residential areas while considering the principles of functionality.
3. Zoning of territories and determining the functional purpose of land, along with providing transportation links in accordance with the principle of rationality.
4. Planning territories, functions, and connections to adhere to the principle of integration.
5. Implementing technical and organizational improvements, planning monitoring and evaluation activities, and ensuring compliance with the principle of longevity.



By adhering to these vision, strategy, and planning actions, the master plan aims to guide the development of the territory towards sustainability, functionality, and long-term success.

The master plan comprehensively analyzed the factors that shape the city to establish an urban environment that meets modern requirements and made appropriate strategic decisions (Figure 2).

The main project proposals within the boundaries of Baku are as follows:

- Creation of an ecological corridor in the form of a green strip connecting Lake Byuk-Shor and the Caspian Sea.
- Expansion of the National Primorsky Park by 70-100 meters into the sea, extending its length from Shykhov beach to the village of Zykhh.
- Formation of the City Protection Zone to preserve the historical monuments of the central part and maintain the historical appearance of the city.
- Development of the village of Bibi-Heybat as a modern zone.
- Creation of an Educational, Scientific, and Technological Park in Zykhh village.
- Establishment of a well-planned Industrial Zone in the northern part of Lake Byuk-Shor, as well as Small and Medium Industrial Zones and logistics centers in the villages of Balakhany and Lokbatan. Additionally, carrying out reconstruction work in residential areas that do not meet housing standards, and the development of new housing estates, among other measures, to enhance the living environment of the population.
- These proposals aim to enhance the city's infrastructure, preserve its natural and historical heritage, and improve the quality of life for its residents.

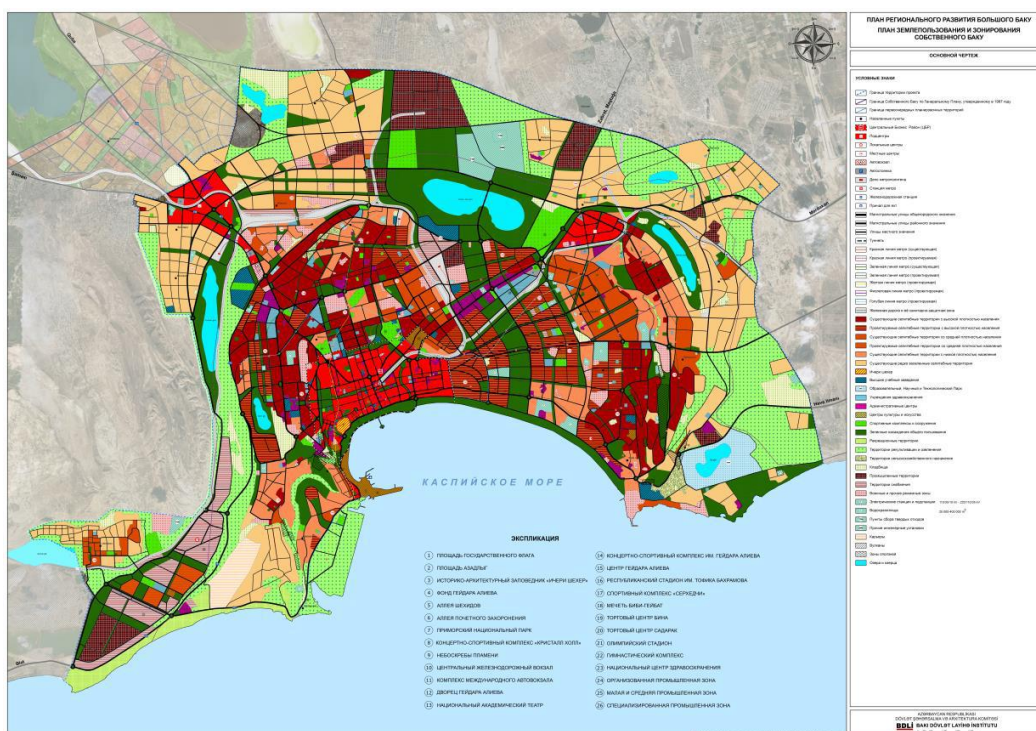


Figure 2 – Land Use and Zoning Plan of Baku. Main Drawing [author’s material]

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the city of Baku has emerged as an economic center not only for Azerbaijan but also for the entire Caucasus region, primarily due to the rapid development of oil production and industry in the second half of the 19th century. However, over time, imbalances in economic development between Baku and other regions of the country have become apparent.

Despite efforts to address this imbalance, the majority of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is still generated in Baku. Nonetheless, through reforms and strategic investments, particularly following the signing of the "Contract of the Century" in 1994, the city has managed to rebuild and strengthen its economic foundation.

To expedite economic diversification and reduce dependence on oil revenues, Azerbaijan introduced the Development Concept "Azerbaijan 2020: A Look to the Future." This initiative aims to foster the growth of the non-oil sector, enhance competitiveness, improve the economic structure, foster innovation, and build a knowledge-based economy. Consequently, Baku continues to play a crucial role in Azerbaijan's economic progress, while the country endeavors to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable economy based on diverse industries and innovations.

The history of urban planning in Baku reflects the rapid development the city experienced during the oil boom in the late 19th century. Since its inception, professional planning documents, such as the master plan, have been developed to connect historical development with new areas and create an optimal urban planning system. Beginning with the first official master plan by N.A. Von der Nonne, subsequent plans led by A.P. Ivanitsky and L.A. Ilyin, such as the master plan, focused on specific aspects like directional development, establishment of industrial zones, environmental protection, and improvement of living conditions for residents [3].

After a hiatus in planning activities, the Great Baku Regional Development Plan (GBRDP), formulated by the BSPI, emerged as a pivotal source document for the current project. This plan aims to sustain high population growth rates and encompasses the development of the region, including the administrative boundaries of Baku and Sumgait cities, as well as parts of the Absheron region.

As the primary hub of Azerbaijan's socioeconomic potential, Baku plays an essential role in the country's overall development.

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## ПРОБЛЕМЫ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ И РАЗВИТИЯ БАКИНСКОЙ АГЛОМЕРАЦИИ (БОЛЬШОГО БАКУ) НА СОВРЕМЕННОМ ЭТАПЕ

**Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается экономическое развитие города Баку в период с XIX века до настоящего времени. Исследуется роль Баку как экономического центра Азербайджана и Кавказа в связи с развитием нефтедобычи и промышленной промышленности. Описываются шаги, предпринятые с целью устранения дисбаланса развития между Баку и регионами страны, а также восстановления экономики после переходного периода и военной агрессии. Особое внимание уделяется значимым проектам, способствовавшим развитию экономической базы Баку, таким как строительство терминалов, нефтепроводов и газопроводов, открытие новых месторождений и другие. Также рассматривается переход к экспортной модели экономики и развитие не нефтяного сектора, инновационной деятельности и транспортного сектора. Анализируются показатели ВВП и его распределение

*между Баку и остальными регионами страны, а также основные тенденции в развитии города. В заключение указывается необходимость разработки нового генерального плана Баку в связи с его экономическим ростом и строительными работами.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Большой Баку, нефтегазовая промышленность, инновационная деятельность, селитебные районы, планировочный, генплан.*

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## **ҚАЗІРГІ КЕЗЕҢДЕ БАКУ АГЛОМЕРАЦИЯСЫНЫҢ (ҮЛКЕН БАКУ) ҚАЛЫПТАСУ МЕН ДАМУ МӘСЕЛЕЛЕРІ**

**Аңдатпа.** *Мақалада 19 ғасырдан қазіргі уақытқа дейінгі кезеңдегі Баку қаласының экономикалық дамуы қарастырылады. Әзірбайжан мен Кавказдың экономикалық орталығы ретінде Бакудің рөлі мұнай өндіру мен балық өнеркәсібінің дамуымен байланысты зерттеледі. Баку мен ел аймақтары арасындағы дамудың теңгерімсіздігін жою, сонымен қатар өтпелі кезеңнен және әскери агрессиядан кейінгі экономиканы қалпына келтіру үшін жасалған қадамдар сипатталған. Терминалдар, мұнай және газ құбырларын салу, жаңа кен орындарын ашу және т.б. сияқты Бакудің экономикалық негізін дамытуға ықпал еткен елеулі жобаларға ерекше назар аударылады. Сондай-ақ экономиканың экспорттық моделіне көшу және шикізаттық емес секторды, инновациялық қызмет пен көлік секторын дамыту қарастырылған. ЖІӨ көрсеткіштері және оның Баку қаласы мен елдің басқа аймақтары арасында таралуы, сонымен қатар қала дамуының негізгі тенденциялары талданған. Қорытындылай келе, Бакудің экономикалық өсуі мен құрылыс жұмыстарына байланысты оның жаңа бас жоспарын әзірлеу қажеттігі көрсетілген.*

**Түйін сөздер:** *Үлкен Баку, мұнай-газ өнеркәсібі, инновациялық қызмет, тұрғын аудандар, жоспарлау, бас жоспар.*