

RTBL-Based Assessment of Environmental Quality Management in the Glodok Area, West Jakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract: The Glodok area is one of the oldest urban heritage areas in Jakarta, which has developed as a center of trade, settlement, and culture for the Chinese community since the colonial era. The high intensity of economic activity has caused pressure on the area's environmental quality, especially on the visual aspects of the area, spatial legibility, streetscape quality, and the comfort of public spaces. This study aims to evaluate the environmental quality of the Glodok area based on the Building and Environmental Planning (RTBL) approach. The study uses a descriptive-qualitative method with field observations and spatial analysis of sixteen observation zones in the study area. The assessment is based on RTBL environmental quality indicators which include the wayfinding system, streetscape quality, visual identity of the area, advertising control, integration of informal activities, and environmental lighting quality. The results show that the Glodok area has a strong urban heritage character through traditional trading activities, the typology of Chinatown shophouses, and a lively spatial atmosphere. However, the area still faces various environmental quality problems such as visual pollution, irregular signage, poor wayfinding quality, spatial conflicts due to informal activities, and minimal pedestrian lighting quality. This research shows that the RTBL approach has an important role in directing the arrangement of environmental quality in heritage areas in order to maintain local identity while improving the quality of urban space in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: RTBL, Environmental Quality Management, Urban Heritage, Glodok, Streetscape, Wayfinding

Footnote:

¹ This study aims to assess the Glodok area, West Jakarta, based on the Environmental Building Plan (RTBL) with a focus on environmental quality management aspects.
Or a more academic version:

¹ RTBL (Building and Environmental Planning) is a regional planning document that regulates various aspects, particularly environmental quality management. This study examines the level of compliance of the Glodok area in West Jakarta with these indicators. For the first page of the journal, the author's footnote can be written:

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Or if you follow the international journal format (Scopus):

¹ Kalisa Djenar Maeshayu, Master of Architecture Study Program, Trisakti University, Jakarta, Indonesia. Corresponding author: [kalisadjenarmaeshayu541@gmail.com]. This study analyzes the Glodok area, West Jakarta, based on the environmental quality management aspects of the Glodok area within the RTBL framework.

I. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Glodok heritage area is an urban heritage area with significant historical, social, and economic significance in the development of Jakarta. This area developed as a center of Chinese community activity since the colonial era and still maintains its primary character as a commercial and densely populated residential area. Glodok's spatial structure evolved organically through a combination of economic, cultural, and social activities, forming a strong Chinatown identity.

The intensive development of the area has led to high visual density and pressure on the quality of the urban environment. These problems are evident in the irregularity of the streetscape, overlapping commercial signage, poor pedestrian quality, chaotic air utilities, and a weak spatial orientation system. These conditions impact the quality of spatial experience and reduce the environmental comfort of the heritage area.

In the context of urban planning, environmental quality management is a crucial aspect because it directly relates to the visual quality of the area, spatial legibility, environmental safety, and the area's ability to maintain its local identity. Therefore, a Building and Environmental Planning (RTBL) approach is necessary as a tool for controlling the spatial and visual quality of the area to ensure the sustainable development of heritage areas.

1.2 Problem Statement

The Glodok area has experienced intensive, organic spatial development without adequate visual control. This has led to various environmental quality issues, such as visual pollution, poor streetscape quality, weak wayfinding systems, degradation of the area's visual identity, and spatial conflicts resulting from informal activities occupying pedestrian and public spaces.

On the other hand, Glodok is a heritage area with a very strong urban identity and still maintains its Chinatown character through traditional trading activities, old shophouse

typology, and distinctive spatial atmosphere. Therefore, an evaluation of the area's environmental quality is necessary based on RTBL parameters and the extent to which the area's environmental quality still supports the sustainability of Glodok's urban heritage identity.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study aims to identify and analyze the environmental quality of the Glodok area based on the RTBL approach with a focus on streetscape quality, wayfinding systems, visual identity of the area, advertising control, integration of informal activities, and environmental lighting quality. This study was conducted to understand how these environmental elements affect the visual order of the area, spatial legibility, environmental comfort, and the spatial quality of the heritage area which has dense commercial characteristics and complex urban activities.

In addition, this study also aims to evaluate the environmental quality in sixteen observation zones to understand the variations in spatial and visual conditions of the area in more detail, while identifying the potential and problems of environmental quality management that affect the quality of the area's space. Through the results of this evaluation, this study aims to formulate environmental management directions that are contextual to the area's heritage character to support the creation of a more organized, comfortable, visually orderly environment, while still maintaining the historical identity of the Glodok Area.

1.4 Theoretical Study

1.4.1 Theory of Building and Environmental Quality Management

The Building and Environmental Planning Theory (RTBL) is a regional planning guideline used to control the physical and visual quality of urban environments to ensure more orderly, directed, and sustainable development. RTBL not only regulates the form and layout of buildings but also directs the relationships between regional elements such as streetscapes, pedestrian spaces, signage, utilities, public spaces, and circulation systems, creating a comfortable, distinctive, and easily recognizable urban environment.

In the context of urban environmental quality management, RTBL serves to maintain the visual integrity of the area so that spatial development does not create visual clutter or conflict within public spaces. By controlling building facades, advertising, environmental lighting, and the quality of road corridors, RTBL strives to create a more humane environment and support the spatial experience of city users. This approach is also related to efforts to create legibility in the area's space so that the urban environment has a clear and easily understood visual orientation.

In heritage areas, the implementation of RTBL becomes more important because environmental planning is not only oriented towards physical aspects, but also on protecting the area's identity. Heritage areas have visual and historical characters formed

through the development of social, cultural, and economic activities over a long period. Therefore, RTBL plays a role as an instrument to maintain the continuity of the area's character through visual quality control and environmental planning that remains contextual to local identity. In this study, RTBL is used as the basis for evaluating the environmental quality of the Glodok area with a focus on streetscape quality, wayfinding systems, the area's visual identity, signage and advertising control, informal activities, and environmental lighting quality.

1.4.2 Environmental Quality Management Theory

The theory of environmental quality is a concept related to the level of comfort, order, legibility, and visual quality of an urban area formed through the relationship between the physical elements of the environment and human activities within it. Environmental quality is not only assessed from the aesthetic condition of the area, but also from how urban space is able to provide a sense of comfort, safety, ease of understanding, and support the social and economic activities of the community in a sustainable manner. In urban design studies, environmental quality is influenced by various urban elements such as streetscapes, building facades, pedestrians, signage, open spaces, environmental lighting, and the area's circulation system. The integration between these elements will shape the visual image of the area and influence the spatial experience of city users. Urban environments that have good visual quality are generally characterized by the orderliness of area elements, clear spatial orientation, comfortable pedestrian quality, and a strong visual identity of the area.

In addition to visual aspects, environmental quality management is also related to an area's ability to maintain its local character and identity. In heritage areas, environmental quality is formed through the interaction between historic buildings, socio-economic activities, community culture, and the spatial atmosphere that has developed historically. Therefore, the environmental quality of heritage areas is not only seen from the physical condition of the buildings, but also from the continuity of the visual character and spatial experience created within the area. In this study, environmental quality management is understood as the result of an integration between streetscape quality, wayfinding systems, the area's visual identity, advertising and signage control, informal activities, and the quality of environmental lighting that influence the visual quality and spatial experience in the Glodok area.

II. Research Methods

This research uses a descriptive-qualitative approach, using field observation and spatial analysis of the area. This approach is used to understand the environmental quality conditions of the Glodok area more comprehensively based on RTBL parameters.

The study area is located in Taman Sari District, West Jakarta, Indonesia, with the research focus on the Glodok area as an urban heritage area and traditional trading

center. The research area is divided into sixteen observation zones to facilitate the identification of spatial conditions and variations in environmental quality in each sub-area. The research area map illustrates the delineation of the study area which is limited by a black dotted line as the observation area boundary. Meanwhile, the black line divides the area into sixteen observation zones numbered 1 to 16. This zoning approach was developed to facilitate systematic field observations and more detailed spatial analysis of the environmental quality conditions in the area.

The division of observation zones allows the study to identify variations in streetscape quality, spatial orientation, visual conditions of the area, informal activities, and the quality of public space in each area more specifically. This approach also helps understand the relationship between the spatial function of the area and the resulting environmental quality. Environmental quality assessment is conducted based on RTBL indicators, which include streetscape quality, wayfinding systems, visual identity of the area, advertising and signage control, integration of informal activities, and environmental lighting quality. Analysis is conducted through visual observation, documentation of the existing condition of the area, and spatial interpretation of the environmental character in each observation zone.

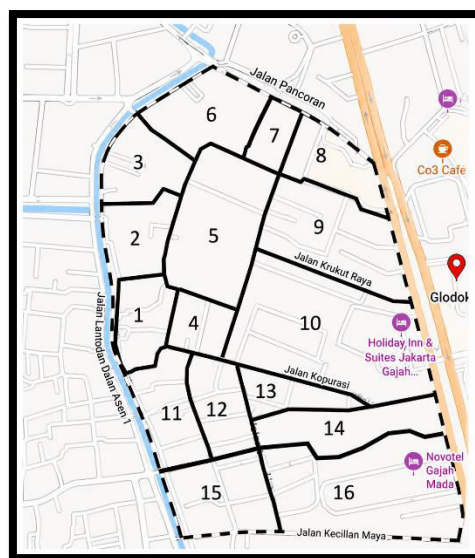


Figure 1. Mapping of research locations in the Glodok area, Jakarta

Source: Google Maps, 2026

The research area is located in the Glodok area, Taman Sari District, West Jakarta, known as one of the oldest Chinatowns in Jakarta. As an area that has developed through a long process of urban growth, Glodok has a complex environmental character with a combination of trade, services, residential, educational, religious, and socio-cultural activities that occur simultaneously. This development creates a dense urban environment with diverse visual characteristics in each part of the area. To facilitate the field observation process, the research area is divided into sixteen observation zones. This division is done to identify variations in environmental quality conditions in each part of the area based on different visual characteristics, spatial activities, and physical

conditions of the environment. The zoning approach is used because the environmental conditions of Glodok are not homogeneous, but rather show quite significant differences in character between residential areas, commercial areas, and public service areas.

Zones 1 and 2 exhibit the characteristics of an old urban residential environment still dominated by local social activities. The physical condition of the area is characterized by high building density, an organically developed network of neighborhood alleys, and limited open space that can be used as public space. Similar characteristics are also found in Zone 15, located in another part of the study area. In all three zones, the visual quality of the environment is greatly influenced by the presence of air utilities that cross the neighborhood's road corridors, thus creating an image of a dense and visually unorganized area.

Zones 3, 5, and 13 exhibit transitional characteristics, showcasing a mix of residential and economic activities. In these areas, buildings are beginning to transform into shops, family businesses, and small-scale trade activities. These changes create a more dynamic environment than a purely residential area. However, the diversity of spatial functions also creates variations in the appearance of buildings and visual elements in the area, which develop unevenly, creating a diverse streetscape along each street corridor.

A stronger commercial character is evident in Zones 4, 6, 8, and 9. These areas are part of Glodok's main economic activity corridor, characterized by rows of shophouses, trade centers, markets, and various other commercial activities. Some parts of the area still retain the visual character of Chinatown through the presence of old shophouses and traditional business signs that have become the area's identity. However, the high intensity of economic activity has also led to the emergence of various overlapping visual elements, such as business signs, billboards, and air utilities that dominate the streetscape. In some locations, the corridor is even very dense visually due to the high concentration of trade and market activity.

Zones 7, 11, and 14 are characterized by the presence of educational facilities, places of worship, sports facilities, and other public services. Activities in these zones originate not only from local residents but also from outside the area. Therefore, the movement of people and vehicles tends to be more dynamic than in residential areas. The environmental character of these zones demonstrates the dominance of elements supporting public activities, such as information boards, facility signs, and various forms of environmental information that evolve according to the needs of area users.

Meanwhile, Zones 10, 12, and 16 exhibit a relatively more open environment due to their direct connection to the area's main road corridor. Trade, services, culinary activities, and goods distribution activities are developing quite intensively, creating an image of a more economically active area. Some areas exhibit a more modern visual character compared to Glodok's inner areas, although various visual elements are still found to have developed individually without a uniform arrangement pattern.

The sixteen observation zones exhibit diverse environmental characteristics and reflect the complexity of the Glodok area as an organically developing urban area. Differences

in spatial function, activity levels, and physical environmental conditions within each zone illustrate the diverse character of the area being studied. This division of observation zones is expected to facilitate a more systematic field observation process, allowing for a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the environmental quality conditions in each area.

The zoning map is used as a reference in conducting field observations by dividing the Glodok area into sixteen observation zones based on physical characteristics, spatial functions, activity patterns, and spatial connectivity of the area. This division is done to accommodate the diversity of environmental conditions found within the research area so that the data collection process can be carried out in a more systematic and directed manner. In addition to facilitating the identification of observation locations, the zoning map also serves as a basis for applying environmental quality management parameters based on the Building and Environmental Planning (RTBL) approach, so that each zone can be observed and analyzed according to its environmental characteristics.

III. Results and Discussion

Observations show that the environmental quality of the Glodok area has a highly dynamic urban character, with significant variations in visual and spatial conditions between observation zones. These differences are influenced by the intensity of commercial activity, the area's spatial function, building density, and the organic development of the space.

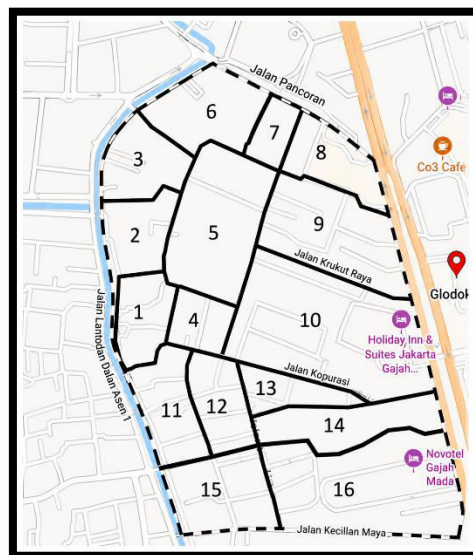


Figure 2. Research location, Glodok area, Jakarta source: Google 2026

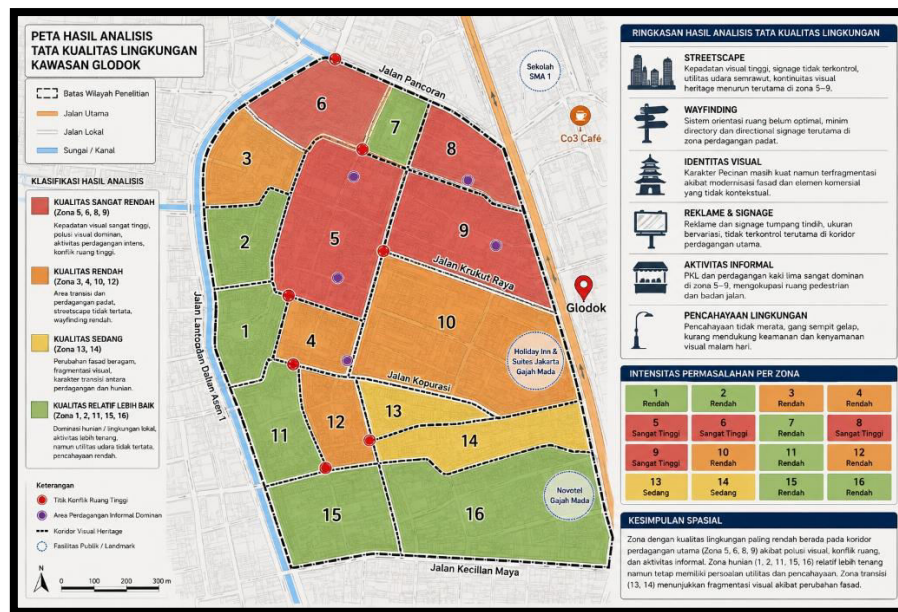


Figure 3. Map of environmental quality analysis results, Glodok area, Jakarta
source: author 2026

Zones 5, 6, 8, and 9 are areas with the highest commercial intensity, exhibiting a very dominant visual density. The corridors in these zones are filled with commercial signage, billboards, air utilities, and informal trading activities that have expanded to include pedestrian space. This creates a lively atmosphere but also makes the area's streetscape disorganized and difficult to visually read.

In zones 5 and 6, commercial building facades have developed a highly heterogeneous appearance due to partial changes in building function without clear visual control of the area. Many buildings have undergone facade modifications using modern materials, rolling doors, and large signage, thus deteriorating the visual continuity of the heritage corridor. Furthermore, the dominance of low-hanging overhead utilities and electrical cables further reinforces the area's dense and chaotic visual impression.

Zones 8 and 9 exhibit similar conditions, with higher visual pressure due to the intensity of mixed-use activities and e-commerce. Informal activities have grown so intensively that they occupy a significant portion of pedestrian and road space. Spatial conflicts between pedestrians, vehicles, and informal commerce are a major issue in these areas.

Meanwhile, zones 1, 2, 11, 12, and 15 are characterized by relatively quieter environments, dominated by residential uses and local activities. However, environmental quality in these zones still faces challenges such as unorganized air utilities, minimal pedestrian lighting, and poor wayfinding due to the lack of a clear area marking system.

Zones 13 and 14 represent a transitional period between commercial and residential areas. These areas exhibit a wide variety of building facade changes due to the gradual development of spatial functions. Many buildings have undergone partial renovations without considering the visual continuity of the area, resulting in fragmented streetscapes and a decline in the visual heritage character of the area.

Overall, the observation results show that the visual quality of the Glodok area is greatly influenced by the development of economic activities that are taking place intensively and are not fully controlled through visual regulations of the area.

3.1 Tabulation of Environmental Quality Conditions in the Observation Zone

Table 1. Tabulation of Environmental Quality Management for Observation Zones

Observation Zone	Character of Environmental Quality Management
1-2	Dominance of housing with unorganized air utilities
3-4	Transition area with streetscape starting to be influenced by trading activities
5-6	Very high visual density and dominant visual pollution
7-9	Intensive mixed-use activities and pedestrian conflicts
10-12	Dense streetscape with low wayfinding quality
13-14	Fragmentation and visual heterogeneity of buildings
15-16	The character of the area is more open but the visual identity is starting to weaken.

Based on field observations across sixteen research zones, the environmental quality of the Glodok area exhibits significant variations in visual and spatial conditions. Zones 5 to 9 are areas with the highest commercial intensity, thus possessing the highest visual density compared to other zones. These areas exhibit a concentration of commercial signage, billboards, air utilities, and informal activities that have expanded to occupy pedestrian and road space. These conditions create a dense and visually disorganized streetscape.

Meanwhile, zones 1, 2, 11, and 12 tend to have a quieter character due to the dominance of residential functions and local community activities. However, these areas still face issues of unorganized air utilities and low environmental lighting quality, especially in the narrow alley networks and dense residential corridors. In zones 13 to 16, visual changes are visible in the area due to partial renovations of building facades without considering the continuity of the area's heritage character. Overall, the results of observations indicate that the organic development of space is a major factor influencing the visual quality and environmental layout of the Glodok area.

3.2 Statistical Analysis of Environmental Quality

Based on observations, the quality of the Glodok area's streetscape is strongly influenced by trade activities and spatial development that have occurred organically over decades. The area's streetscape is formed through a combination of old shophouse facades, commercial signage, aerial utilities, commercial billboards, and informal activities that develop intensively on the main road corridors and neighborhood alleys. This visual

character creates a very distinctive urban atmosphere and is an important part of the identity of the Glodok Chinatown area. However, the uncontrolled development of visual elements has resulted in the emergence of visual pollution that is quite dominant in various main corridors of the area. Overlapping signage, irregular billboard sizes, overhead utility cables, and additional elements on building facades have caused the visual readability of the area to decrease.

In addition to the streetscape, the area's wayfinding system also shows suboptimal conditions. The area's organically developed spatial structure makes spatial orientation complex and difficult to understand, especially for non-local users. The lack of directory signage and directional signage means many areas lack a clear visual orientation system. This condition indicates that the area lacks an integrated wayfinding system capable of effectively supporting the area's spatial legibility. Glodok's visual heritage identity is actually still quite strong through the presence of old shophouse typologies, traditional trading activities, and the distinctive atmosphere of Chinatown. However, this identity is starting to come under pressure from the modernization of building facades and the development of modern commercial elements that are not contextual to the area's character. The use of modern façade materials, large signage, and the addition of utilitarian elements are starting to diminish the visual continuity of the area's heritage corridor.

Informal activities are another element that significantly impacts the environmental quality of the area. The presence of street vendors and hawkers creates an active social space and is a key part of Glodok's urban identity. However, under existing conditions, these activities thrive without clear spatial planning, reducing pedestrian access and creating conflicts over public space. Furthermore, the quality of environmental lighting in several corridors in the area remains relatively low, particularly in narrow alleys and densely populated residential areas. These conditions make the space feel dark, cramped, and unsafe at night. The lack of street lighting and the visual density of air utilities reinforce the impression of a dense and enclosed space.

Table 2. RTBL Assessment of Environmental Quality Management in the Glodok Area

Assessment Aspects	Assessment Indicators	Existing Conditions	Score	Category
Streetscape	Regularity of visual elements of road corridors	The road corridor is filled with signage, air utilities, and irregular visual elements, creating high visual density.	2	Not good
Wayfinding	Clarity of orientation system and area markers	The directional signage and area directory systems have not been integrated so that	2	Not good

		the readability of the space is still low.		
Visual Identity of the Area	Consistency of visual heritage character	The identity of Chinatown is still quite strong through the typology of shophouses and traditional trading activities, but is starting to become fragmented due to modern facade renovations.	3	Pretty good
Advertising and Signage	Commercial visual media control	Advertising and signage developed without visual control resulting in overlapping commercial elements.	2	Not good
Informal Activities	Integration of street vendors with pedestrians and public spaces	Informal activities are growing intensively and occupying most of the pedestrian space.	2	Not good
Environmental Lighting	Quality of public space lighting at night	Pedestrian lighting is not evenly distributed, especially in alley corridors and densely populated residential areas.	2	Not good

The assessment description uses a score range of 1–5, where a score of 1 indicates a “Poor” condition, a score of 2 “Poor,” a score of 3 “Quite Good,” a score of 4 “Good,” and a score of 5 “Very Good.” Based on the evaluation results, the environmental quality of the Glodok Area obtained an average score of 2.17, indicating that the environmental quality of the area is generally still in the “Poor” category.

The RTBL assessment results indicate that the environmental quality of the Glodok area is generally still in the "Poor" category with an average score of 2.17. This value indicates that most environmental quality parameters have not been optimally met and still require more integrated area planning. The streetscape aspect received a low score due to the high visual density resulting from the dominance of signage, advertisements, air utilities, and additional elements of building facades that developed without clear visual control. This condition causes the area's corridors to appear chaotic and reduces the quality of the visual experience for space users. The wayfinding aspect also showed low quality because the area does not have an integrated spatial orientation system. The lack of directional signage and area directories results in low legibility of the space, especially

for non-local users and tourists. This condition is reinforced by the area's organically developed structure with a complex and difficult-to-understand alley network.

In terms of the area's visual identity, Glodok scored relatively better than other aspects. This demonstrates that the area still maintains its urban heritage Chinatown character through the presence of old shophouses, distinctive Chinese signage, and traditional trading activities that create a distinctive spatial atmosphere. However, the area's visual identity is beginning to come under pressure due to modern facade renovations that are out of context with the area's heritage character.

The advertising and signage aspect received a low score due to the lack of control over commercial visual media. Many billboards are installed in varying sizes and shapes, creating visual overlap in the area's main corridors. Meanwhile, informal activities also contribute to environmental degradation, as street vendors expand and use pedestrian space and roads.

In terms of environmental lighting, the visual quality of the area at night is still suboptimal, particularly in alleys and corridors in densely populated areas. Poor lighting conditions cause some spaces to feel cramped, dark, and unsafe, impacting the user experience.

3.3 Summary of Environmental Quality Management Results Against RTBL

Research shows that the Glodok area possesses a strong environmental quality character as an urban heritage area, characterized by traditional trading activities, a vibrant Chinatown streetscape, and a vibrant spatial atmosphere. However, the area's environmental quality still faces various pressures due to organic and uncontrolled spatial development.

The area's main problems include high levels of visual pollution, a weak wayfinding system, irregular signage and advertising, conflicts over pedestrian space due to informal activities, and poor lighting quality. These conditions degrade the spatial experience and readability of the area.

The RTBL approach plays a crucial role in guiding the development of heritage areas through visual quality control and improving public spaces. Area planning should focus on developing a streetscape based on the character of Chinatown, arranging signage and utilities, strengthening heritage wayfinding systems, and improving pedestrian and environmental lighting.

With this approach, the Glodok area is not only able to maintain its historical identity and local character, but also develop as a more comfortable, legible, and sustainable urban heritage area amidst the pressures of modern city development.



Figure 4. Summary of RTBL Assessment Results for the Glodok area of Jakarta

Source: Author 2026

3.4 Discussion

Results The results of the study indicate that the environmental quality of heritage areas is not only influenced by the physical condition of buildings, but also by the visual integration of the area and the quality of the spatial experience of city users. In the Glodok area, the development of very intensive economic activities has caused the environmental quality of the area to develop dynamically but lack visual control. The RTBL approach is important because it not only regulates the physical order of the area, but also directs the formation of the quality of the spatial experience and the visual identity of the area. In the context of Glodok, streetscape arrangement, signage control, utility arrangement, and improving pedestrian quality are important elements in maintaining the quality of the area's urban heritage. However, the arrangement of heritage areas cannot be carried out with a total modernization approach because the area's organic character and informal activities are actually an important part of Glodok's identity. Therefore, an adaptive urban heritage approach is more relevant because it allows the area to continue to develop economically while maintaining the visual and social character that has been formed historically.

IV. Conclusion

The assessment shows that the Glodok area has a very strong environmental quality management character as an urban heritage area through traditional trading activities, a Chinatown streetscape, and a lively spatial atmosphere. However, the area's environmental quality still faces various pressures due to the development of space that occurs organically and is not fully controlled. The main problems in the area are seen in high visual pollution, weak wayfinding systems, irregular signage and advertising, conflicts over pedestrian space due to informal activities, and low quality environmental lighting. These conditions cause the quality of the spatial experience and the area's readability to decline. The RTBL approach plays a crucial role in directing the arrangement of heritage areas through visual quality control and improving the quality of public spaces. Area planning needs to be directed at developing a streetscape based on the character of Chinatown, arranging signage and area utilities, strengthening the heritage wayfinding system, and improving the quality of pedestrians and environmental lighting. With this approach, the Glodok area will not only be able to maintain its historical identity and local character, but also develop as a more comfortable, legible, and sustainable urban heritage area amidst the pressures of modern city development.

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