PONDICHERY
Transforming cities through heritage preservation and places for people
INTACH Pondicherry
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Introduction

Today our cities face a multitude of challenges and some among them are preserving our architectural heritage and creating public places for people. This little book gives one an idea of what can be done from examples achieved in Pondicherry with support from people and most importantly the local Government. The projects have been carried out by INTACH Pondicherry and persons closely associated with it. For more information log on to: www.intachpondy.org

This book shows some examples of restoration of heritage buildings, architectural façade control of new structures in the heritage precincts as well as creation of public places for people. There are also digital simulations of buildings that need restoration. One can see that even seemingly ‘hopeless’ buildings can be restored and infused with life!

It is hoped that this publication will encourage similar work in our country.
Pondicherry
Pondicherry

Pondicherry, a former French Colony on the East Coast of India, is a heritage city with rich cultural diversity - one of the major reasons being the cross-cultural ‘Franco-Tamil’ influence on the town. The Boulevard Town of Pondicherry has inherited a significant architectural heritage that can be evidenced from its well-planned grid-patterned layout comprising two distinct heritage Precincts - French and Tamil that needs to be preserved.

Today Pondicherry is highly urbanized with an increase in urban population density during the last two decades, which has led to severe stress on the existing infrastructure facilities, urban amenities, deterioration of the environment and the quality of life. Such rapid urban transformation is gradually destroying the fragile architectural heritage of the Boulevard Town. The transformation includes

un-controlled building boom, property division, demolitions and alterations, urban skyline, street scape character, high vehicular traffic etc, all of which has affected the heritage character of the town negatively.

The loss of heritage buildings has reached an alarming state in the recent years. Of the 1800 buildings listed in 1995, barely 500 survive today – most have been lost in the Tamil Precinct.

A planned heritage-sensitive development is needed and should be supported by comprehensive control and monitoring measures to stop further deterioration of the heritage character of the Boulevard Town of Pondicherry.
Some of the following examples demonstrate that even highly dilapidated heritage structures can be restored, extended, modernized and adapted to contemporary uses like hotels, shops, museums, residences or whatever other uses one may have in mind. The basic principles of restoration are to use, as much as possible, traditional technology and materials that were employed in the original construction. Modern amenities like good bathrooms, kitchen and air conditioning can easily be incorporated in the design. The end result invariably, if done well, can please both owners and visitors.

Often we are asked how long a building can last after restoration – if given basic care and maintenance these buildings can last decades and centuries.
RESTORATIONS
17 Rue Romain Rolland
Year: 2000
Neemrana Hotels
UNESCO Asia Pacific Award, 10 rooms
Architect: Ajit and Ratna Koujalgis
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 900 sqm /Rs. 6 million)
Hotel De L’Orient
Year: 2004
UNESCO Award
Government of Pondicherry
Asia Urbs Programme
(20 facades / Rs.2 million)
Vysial Street Restoration
44 Vysial Street

Vysial Street Restoration
48 Vysial Street
12 Kalatheevaran Koil Street
Year: 2004
Asia Urbs Programme
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 915sqm / Rs. 0.5 million)
Societe Progressiste School
62 Rue Aurobindo
Year: 2007
Renuka Pratap
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 320sqm /Rs. 1.5 million)
INTACH Heritage Centre
Goubert Avenue, Beach Road
Year: 2008
Department of Tourism
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 260sqm /Rs. 0.8 million)
Le Cafe (old Port Office)
Le Cafe (old Port Office)
52 Rue Romain Rolland  
Year: 2010  
Jyoti Saikia  
7 room guest house  
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 820sqm / Rs.15 million)
Gratitude Guest House
58 Perumal Koil Street
Year: 2010
Annamalai & CGH Hotels, 10 rooms
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 1100sqm/Rs.15 million)
Maison Perumal
Maison Perumal
Maison Perumal
96 Perumal Koil Street
Year: 2011
Annamalai, 7 rooms
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 825qm /Rs.6 million)
Anantha Heritage Hotel
17 Vellala Street
Year: 2012
Govt. of Pondicherry
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 560qm /Rs.12 million)
V. Subbiah and Saraswathy Memorial Museum
V. Subbiah and Saraswathy Memorial Museum
15 Rue Bazaar Saint Laurent
Year: 2013
Sandeep Reddy
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 460sqm/Rs.12 million)
When it is not possible to restore a heritage building because there is no legal protection, the next best thing to do (what we call damage control) is to guide and design the façade so that it fits in better in the streetscape. This has been possible only because the Pondicherry Planning Authority seeks INTACH’s opinion regarding all buildings coming up in the historic town. The façade design is a product of close cooperation with the building owner and the design becomes part of the building permission.
FACADE CONTROL
FACADES CONTROL EXAMPLES
UPCOMING FACADES
Central Excise, 1999
28 Rue Labourdonnais, 2005
49 Rue Suffren, 2006
13 Rue Victor Simonel, 2006
2 Rue Surcouf, 2006
14 Rue Labourdonnais, 2010
Odian Salai Police Station, 2011
31 Rue Romain Rolland, 2012
There are a number of government owned heritage buildings that need to be renovated. The following examples of digital simulations show how such buildings can be brought back to their original condition.
RESTORATION PROPOSALS
HEAD POST OFFICE - EXISTING
All our cities in India are being reshaped in favour of motorized traffic and people have no proper and safe place to walk or congregate – unhassled by vehicles, noise and pollution. The following pictures show some examples. We hope that in future more urban areas are won back for people – where pedestrian has the priority, especially in commercial streets.
URBAN INTERVENTIONS
Year: 2007
Department of Tourism
Government of Pondicherry
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 41500sqm/Rs.33 million)
Bharathi Park
Bharathi Park
Year: 2010
Department of Tourism
Government of Pondicherry
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 1.5 km/Rs.60 million)
Beach Promenade
Beach Promenade
Year: 2010
Department of Tourism
Government of Pondicherry
(Restoration and extension area/cost: 4400 sqm/Rs.24 million)
Gandhi Tidal