

Socio-Economic and Policy Impacts of Heritage Conservation: A Case of Deewanji ni Haveli, Ahmedabad

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Abstract

The objective of the paper is to examine and understand the social, economic, and policy impacts arising out of architectural conservation projects. This objective is achieved by drawing on the experiences of the socio-economic impacts created by the restoration of Deewanji ni Haveli situated within the walled city of Ahmedabad. It is usually perceived that heritage conservation has an impact only on the building or monument, but in numerous cases, it also has critical socio-economic and political significance impacts. Many a landmark projects tend to influence the local, regional, and in some cases, national development processes. But, these aspects of the initiatives are less explored in a country like India, which is still trying to comprehend the paradigm of heritage conservation and its long-term management. The restoration and revitalisation of Deewanji ni Haveli, one of the finest examples of domestic architecture within the World Heritage City of Ahmedabad, led to other heritage restoration works in the vicinity. Apart from the achievements in heritage conservation, the larger focus was on the fundamental objective, to encourage more people to join this great initiative towards revival of the Ahmedabad's heritage for future generations.

1. Introduction

Ahmedabad's pioneering efforts for revitalizing the heritage of old city for over 2 decades are noteworthy, and the efforts started in the 90s by setting up a Heritage Cell, the first in any municipality in India. As a result, the heritage cell began listing the built heritage within the historic core with the purpose of identification, and developing suitable heritage conservation rules and regulations. The municipal corporation developed partnerships with various organizations and foreign governments to tap into their resources for the heritage move-

ment within the Ahmedabad city, for example - restoration drive of many heritage buildings in the walled city in collaboration with French Government, ongoing collaboration with the city of Valladolid in Spain, the landmark project of "Bhadra Fort Plaza development", actively supporting various ongoing community-based projects and so on. All these efforts by the authorities and the community have led to successful nomination of Ahmedabad as India's first UNESCO World Heritage City in 2017.

Deewanji ni Haveli, situated in the heart of

the historic precinct of Ahmedabad, is one of the landmark buildings epitomizing the glory of built heritage in the UNESCO World Heritage City. Restored in 2016, was the first landmark restoration project undertaken as a private initiative. The Haveli was revitalized and embellished by City Heritage Centre; an NGO instigated by the owners to cover the restoration work of Deewanji ni Haveli and other similar works with an intention of giving back to the city and give the old city restored to its former glory to its citizens. Apart from the achievements in the built heritage conservation, at Deewanji ni Haveli, the larger focus was on the fundamental objective, to encourage more people to join this great initiative involving the recovery of the historic centre of Ahmedabad for future generations.

The project also laid a specific focus on empowering local craftspeople working with diminishing building craft skills by providing them with employment opportunities during the restoration process, along with encouraging new generations to get involved with the craft practices. Moreover, the project had a long-term social and policy impact, along with helping the local community to showcase their own heritage. The project helped raise a lot of awareness about the proper systems and innovations about built heritage conservation and has received a lot of local or national recognition by the authorities or other institutions/organisations. The restoration of Deewanji ni Haveli also had a lasting impact on the conservation practice and policy locally.

2. Potential Impacts of Built Heritage Conservation

The recent ideas of local development and urban heritage management usually focus on the benefits of multidimensional approach with a specific impetus on the socio-economic aspects (Pike Hutter). This scenario creates an interesting environment where built heritage and its conservation can be associated with these areas, and can help create a positive impact in the development of the local area (Grefe S. Cerisola).

The primary impact created is in the economic sector by introducing direct and indirect livelihood earning opportunities. These can be through various levels of involvement like the artisans getting employed in the restoration work, to the larger tourism sector getting enhanced due to larger num-

ber of restored properties in a historic town. Another major effect of heritage conservation is the maintaining the cultural identity of the local community, while enhancing the heritage quality of the historic area. Although, not all the projects may have the answer to local community's needs. These factors help change the attitude of the local community towards their own heritage, help improve value awareness, and support the quickly diminishing build crafts and traditional knowledge system (Hampton S. Cerisola and Panzera Panzera Murzyn-Kupisz). Saving and restoring the historic properties, especially the domestic architecture, is key to safeguarding the local community identities, generating a sense of pride, and developing social capital. This is a very important point of consideration because, if the local community is not aware of the values associated with the local heritage, they may shy away from being associated with the restoration project, and the majority of the economic benefits to the externally based entities. This will leave the local community relying on minor jobs created by the aftermath of the restored property (Limonov, Nesena, and Semenov Vaughan Backman and Nilsson).

The last, and a critical impact, is the contribution to the formulation or refinement of the local cultural policies. From the perspective of the urban local governance and policy makers, heritage-based policies does not only refer to the policies framed for ideal restoration and safekeeping of heritage, but also includes various programmes and initiatives towards the usage of the heritage property and supporting the local community in bringing their historic homes to their original glory (Throsby). Putting focus on a particular type of built heritage while developing policies is also not an ideal case (Camagni). This may lead to marginalisation of heritage properties, which are although less in number but definitely contribute to the local cultural milieu for a country like India. Thus, creating a need of detailed understanding of the local heritage, along with garnering public and private support for conserving certain aspects of cultural heritage within a place. Such focus on exploring other opportunities for built heritage management through vehicles like PPPs can be very beneficial in the areas of heritage tourism.

There is a parallel focus on the impacts created by

restoration projects in the domain of urban planning and development. These impacts can be both quantitative and qualitative, economic, social or ecological, and include long-term orientation and vision in developing heritage policies, along with involving the local stakeholders in decision-making to achieve these goals. Moreover, there is also focus on exploration of possible non-governmental partners and community leaders for reviving the heritage, develop the capacity of a historic area for tourism services, and develop a synchronisation between different heritage revitalisation activities (Camagni, Capello, and Nijkamp Cerisola and Silvia Miller and S).

3. About Deewanji ni Haveli

3.1. The History

Deewanji ni Haveli is an architectural icon, intrinsic to the 600-year-old city of Ahmedabad. It holds in its place the magic of a deceased way of life that ought to be engraved into its memoirs for its people and the world. Deewanji Ni Haveli literally meaning house of the Deewan, a minister in the court of the King. The property was a residence to Deewan Shyamaldas Shankardas Kantharia and his family and according to his descendants, the Deewan initiated the construction of the Haveli himself. The 7th generation of the family is still living in the city, who have records of all the lineage and family tree. According to legend, the Deewan was fatally wounded in battle but returned to the Haveli in his armour to announce the defeat and breathed his last in the courtyard of the haveli around which the building is constructed. In the subsequent years, the haveli was inhabited by his descendants, and amongst the generations that followed, there were people who held positions of authority with tenures as Governor in the Mughal Empire and Deewan of Kutch & Bhuj. The Haveli saw its extension under Motilal Lalbhai Deewan, who renewed and extended it to the state we currently see. In the later years, the Haveli was also home to Ratnamanirao Jote, one of the brightest literary stars of Ahmedabad. He has written a number of books highlighting the history of Ahmedabad and Gujarat, with "Gujarat nu Patnagar Amdavad" still considered one of the best written about the pre-independence Ahmedabad.

Since the haveli was the residence of an important

minister, the building and its architecture should be one that reciprocates the stature of the inhabitants. And how it does! It is one of the finest examples of wooden architecture at Ahmedabad with the most exquisite craftsmanship to show for. The haveli sits on a plinth that is six feet above the street level, with one of the most stunning wood-carved façades to show for. Based on its illustrious history and character, Deewanji ni Haveli has been conferred the highest heritage building grade, Grade IIA, in the recent listing exercise released in 2016. According to the definitions given by Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, Grade IIA are the "buildings of regional or local importance possessing special architectural or aesthetic merit or cultural or historical significance through of a lower scale than Heritage Grade I. They are landmarks, which contribute to the image and identity of the region, in this case, the city of Ahmedabad". The listed traditional wooden Haveli with origins traced back to Ahmedabad's Mughal Era is a significant example of the traditional haveli typology. The Haveli is part of a larger traditional neighbourhood, locally known as Pols, which are characteristic of the old city of Ahmedabad and have resulted in a unique profile of the historic precinct.

The haveli has 4 floors exquisitely crafted to highlight the architectural splendour that existed in the heart of Ahmedabad that could be accessed through north and east entry. Its spaces - through the carvings, articulations, elements, and structure - depict the fables from the bygone era and have various cultural & religious iconography. The building has seen various different uses, the primary being the residence of the Deewan and his family. By the late 1800s, the Deewan family moved out of the old city and later in the 1900s sold this property to the Nanavati family. The Nanavati family rented this to 6 tenants who occupied it for various uses, of which the largest space was with a girl's high school.

3.2. The Current Adaptation

Eventually, all tenants also abandoned this property due to the derelict condition. The property was acquired by the current owners with the tenants from the Nanavati family. The Haveli has now been adapted to function as a cultural and resource centre that "helps the community in preserving, sustaining, and promoting their architectural and cultural heritage". The revitalization of the haveli ensured that

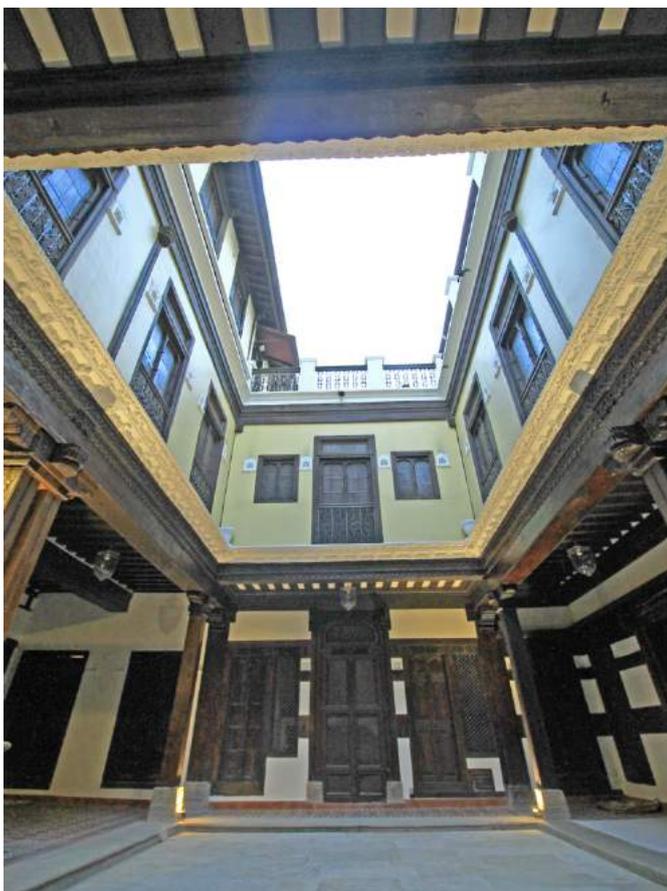


FIGURE 1. Interior View of the Haveli

space is available to host and encourage various cultural activities as a part of its routine. All the activities in the restored property were envisaged with the intention of reviving the walled city of Ahmedabad by unleashing the economic potential of heritage to help the heritage city flourish. The haveli currently has two primary activities – 1. A community-based resource centre, and 2. Providing opportunities to experience the heritage of the haveli and Ahmedabad at large.

The Haveli has specific spaces to facilitate various activities like workshops, seminars, and exhibitions looking to promote the cultural heritage management of built and urban heritage. The Haveli has rooms that can be adapted for symposia on heritage preservation, conservation, and management-themed exhibitions. Since its revival, the Haveli has been host to initiatives related to different facets of heritage management at Ahmedabad. Activities like workshops on local crafts, public exhibitions on issues impacting the heritage at Ahmedabad, and lectures exploring existing and emerging links between inhabitants, their activities, and the

spaces of the walled city of Ahmedabad to name a few have been held at the haveli. The other major use as mentioned above is providing the community and visitors a chance to experience the cultural heritage at Ahmedabad in various ways.



FIGURE 2. Workshop on Historic Precincts at the Haveli

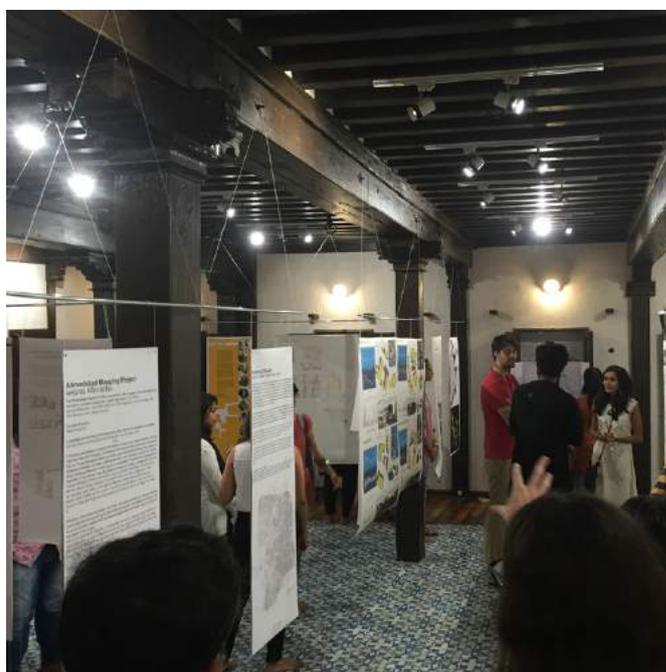


FIGURE 3. Exhibition on Urban Heritage at the Haveli

The Haveli has 3 beautifully designed BnB rooms and a café that allows the visitors to soak in the

ambiance of historic Ahmedabad. The Haveli also offers artists a residency program focused on leveraging the power of contemporary art practices for ideation and entrepreneurship on heritage preservation, conservation, and management. Field expert residencies for conservators, archeologists, historians, and subject matter experts are also available. The place also offers artist studio facilities for Painting, Woodworking, and Clay Modelling & Paper Mache studio. The artist can also use the place to exhibit their works within the Haveli rooms.

The primary intentions while deciding the appropriate reuse of the property were to make the property self-sustaining and use the building as a platform to give back to the cultural heritage of Ahmedabad & the community at large without compromising the historic ambiance and structure. The owners were also of the opinion that the best solution would be to have a sustainable and compatible use of the property, instead of rendering it obsolete or turning it into a museum. Thus, to respect the architectural integrity, the team decided to select the usage based on the spaces available, instead of altering the fabric to fit new usage.

4. The Social-Economic Impacts

4.1. Engendering Socio-Economic Benefits

The restoration of Deewanji ni Haveli is one of the good examples that prove that just creating technical achievements is not sufficient for sustainable management of our cultural heritage. There has to be specific impetus laid on the needs and aspirations of the community living in the vicinity too. The social component of the project was worked out bearing the longer impacts in mind to help the local community too.

Right from the inception of the project, the local community supported the work. This was a result of regular interactions of the owner with them explaining what are the benefits of conserving our heritage and what are benefits, cultural, social, and economic, that will arise from the project. A lot of senior craftspeople involved in the project helped train the younger generation in the trade, which helped the upcoming artisans to not only gain better skills but also understand the cultural aspects of the local heritage.

At the start of the project, many elders from the neighbouring community were involved to under-

stand the past glory of the building and understand the cultural & historic significance of the building. The site of the restored building helped revive their old memories of the area and communities, helping them reconnect with the site as the façade was exactly restored to its original state without harming the surrounding context. For the younger generation, the project has helped them discover their own cultural identity by



FIGURE 4. Heritage Guide Training Program for Local Community at the Haveli

exposing them to the history and tradition of the old precinct through various community heritage walks, guide training initiatives, and public exhibitions.

Restoration of the haveli was one of the most important acts of trying to invigorate the community with pride based on the cultural revival in the precinct, which happens to fall within the most architecturally rich zone of the historic precinct. Various activities surrounding the community at the haveli have renewed the interest in the building. Apart from the tangible significance, the property also enhances the local culture and life of people at Ahmedabad by promoting numerous activities for the guest at the haveli, and even the residents of the city. Residents have been identified who are roped in to be part of these activities like walks to local markets, learn to cook Gujarati delicacy with local community women, rickshaw tours of the old city, local culinary walks, etc. These activities have created

livelihood opportunities for the local community at various levels, autorickshaw riders, local caterers, tourist guides, etc.

4.2. Capacity-building and Community Strengthening

The restoration of Deewanji ni Haveli has contributed to the well-being and improving the living condition of the local community. Apart from just restoring the heritage property, the project created various intangible benefits like creating livelihood opportunities during and after the restoration, restored the local pride by restoring a landmark building on the street, and created ripple effect about the socio-economic benefits of restoring the heritage houses across the walled city of Ahmedabad. The owners of Deewanji ni Haveli placed an emphasis on trying to revive the traditional build crafts based livelihood, along with bringing new techniques of building conservation to be juxtaposed with the traditional knowledge systems. Local master craftspeople were identified to work on the project, and were also encouraged to act as mentors to ensure that the next generation of artisans are ready for the future restoration projects at Old Ahmedabad.

The entire project involved traditional craftsmen skilled in various building trades who were scouted from across the city, and were selected based on their level of expertise in areas like carpentry, lime work, masonry, ornamental stuccowork, traditional floor laying, stone carving, etc. Many artisans working on the project were master craftspeople, and were involved to maintain the architectural and aesthetic essence of the Haveli. Each of these crafts was thoroughly researched upon to obtain the traditional technique that would be employed to achieve the best quality and integrity. The team of artisans included a group of highly skilled master craftsman along with fresh artisans who got trained under the tutelage of senior artisans for the future jobs at Ahmedabad. Over the course of the project, various young restoration-based entrepreneurs were trained in the intricacies of building restoration, and have since been working on various restoration projects across Old Ahmedabad.

Since Deewanji ni Haveli has been portrayed as a heritage property that is a shared heritage, it has created benefits like reinvigorating the local pride towards built and cultural heritage. The building



FIGURE 5. Involvement of local artisans in the restoration

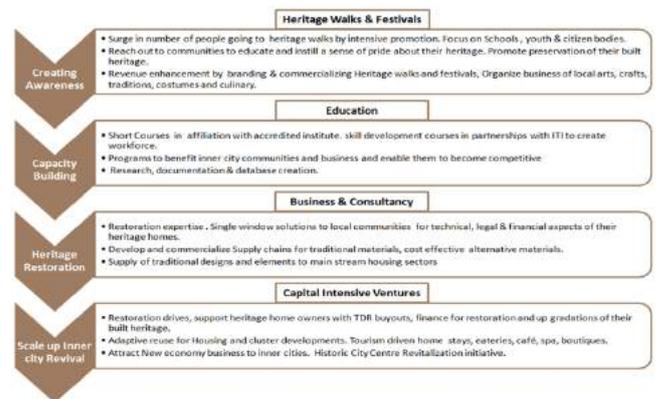


FIGURE 6. City Heritage Centre's Heritage Value Chain

allows a lot of students, especially from architecture and design background, to come and study the restored haveli and the process of its restoration. The building acts as the initiation and culmination point for various heritage walks within the old city of Ahmedabad, thus allowing the visitors and residents of Ahmedabad to see the glorious past of their city. The building has rooms that can be adapted for symposia and exhibitions on heritage conservation and management involving the local community. During these public events, the doors are open to everyone to come and learn about the cultural heritage.

The sharing of this pride doesn't end with the community members and visitors, but also got extended to the local Heritage Department and the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC). Based on the impacts created by the Haveli, the Her-

itage Department at AMC signed an MoU with the property owners to strengthen the restoration drive within the walled city of Ahmedabad. This combined effort has helped strengthen the trust amongst various stakeholders, and has become a benchmark for co-operation in the restoration projects at Ahmedabad as well as in the country.

4.3. Promotion of Conservation Movements

Another impact created by the restoration of Deewanji ni Haveli is the creation of tremendous public awareness of built heritage conservation amongst the local property owners and visitors to ensure a long term sustainability of the property as well as the heritage movement at Ahmedabad in large. The Haveli also houses the City Heritage Centre, an NGO, which is a 'Single Window Solution' developed with the intention of providing the local residents with restoration knowledge, as well as generating awareness and providing assistance in legal and financial matters associated with built heritage restoration. CHC's other initiatives are awareness creation; provide education and training for capacity building. The centre is an apolitical institution that is focused on the advocacy and promotion of heritage conservation, preservation through community participation and engagement in Ahmedabad through systematic exposure to sensitising various citizen groups about the heritage at Ahmedabad.

The restoration project has achieved a ripple effect by encouraging other restoration initiatives in the neighbouring areas. Few of the major restoration projects being the Mangaldas ni Haveli – II, Dodia Haveli and a Haveli restored for AMC.

The Haveli has specific spaces to facilitate various activities like workshops, seminars, and exhibitions. The Haveli has rooms that can be adapted for symposia on heritage preservation, conservation, and management-themed exhibitions. Since its revival, the Haveli has been host to initiatives related to different facets of heritage management at Ahmedabad. Activities like workshops on local crafts, public exhibitions on issues impacting the heritage at Ahmedabad, and lectures exploring existing and emerging links between inhabitants, their activities, and the spaces of the walled city of Ahmedabad to name a few have been held at the Haveli. The other major use as mentioned above is providing the community and visitors a chance to experience the cul-

tural heritage at Ahmedabad in various ways.

5. Influence on Heritage Conservation and Policy

Numerous global experts and organisations have but impetus on understanding the impacts created by the built heritage conservation on the refining local policy systems, creating social momentum and reinforcing technical know-how by setting benchmarks in restoration. Many a countries have been continuously working to orient the conservation initiatives to address various levels – from the local community to creating a comprehensive national heritage policy. Deewanji ni Haveli, and its restoration, has had an strong influence on both conservation practice and policy.

The project helped redefine a lot of conservation practices in the city of Ahmedabad, like developing a conservation plan and adhering to it instead of running haywire. A lot of technical achievements like the unloading of the original floor and replacing it with a lighter floor was a big lesson for other similar projects. The conservation practice employed for the project was so successful that the team got assigned another restoration assignment on the same street by the Heritage Dept. at Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, along with other private works. The heritage dept. also did an MoU with the haveli-based centre for partnering various heritage-related initiatives.

On the policy front, the success story of BnB made the local authorities understand the benefits of such initiatives and they formalized the policy of BnBs within the historic core of Ahmedabad. Based on the understanding of the number of funds needed for restoring a heritage property to an acceptable and authentic level, the owners also played an important part in the team that conceptualized the Tradeable Development Rights (TDR) policy for the listed heritage properties.

The restoration has increased the awareness towards heritage restoration, with many owners showing interest towards leasing or renovating their properties. The immediate impacts of the restoration were seen within the year, where the successful opening of the haveli acted as a watershed moment and inspired two other properties in the close vicinity to be taken up for restoration.

This has created an oasis, turning the area into a

cultural destination for commercial activities. Moreover, the enthusiastic coverage of the project and outcome by local and national media, along with various talks given by the owners explaining the restoration at premium design, management, and heritage platforms, show that the correct intention behind such a project can make it socio-economically viable that the original vision of the project had as a target.

6. Conclusion

The restoration of Deewanji ni Haveli and the lessons learned from it have resulted in a lot of non-governmental initiatives working towards bringing about socio-economic-political change associated with the built heritage conservation. Today, this historic agglomeration, and its heritage legacy, are at a turning point and trying to regain the old glory that it deserves. Although the efforts are at a nascent stage compared to the other parts of the world, the works are working towards a unifying vision supported by necessary planning and policies that combine with the concern for cities' existing cultural and natural assets. The restoration of the haveli has demonstrated that a privately owned dilapidated heritage property can be revitalized into a successful economic venture with a sustainable future. This project is the reason for the change in perception for many who took the heritage buildings as liability, but now see them as profitable business opportunities. The project has successfully tried to link all the aspects of heritage management – cultural heritage, local community and crafts, the economics of uniqueness, social pride, policy creation, and maintaining the integrity of the building. But these efforts are not sufficient, and the historic city cores in India are losing their heritage and cultural identity rapidly then the new development in city periphery. We ought to create environment of stake and partnerships with community for elevation of entire cluster, which will transform the areas to attract more visitors and investments, opening the possibility of scale. Investments in inner cities are also an important need to translate into heritage restorations. There has to be a collaboration of enterprises, government bodies, NGO's and communities for driving prosperity & jobs to local residents. These are the few steps needed to be undertaken to create profit to all and multi-dimensional socio eco-

nomic change.

1. Heritage Restoration: Undertake restoration of heritage buildings with the intention of reviving the old glory and charm of historic Ahmedabad, along with putting the built heritage to a sustainable reuse for future sustenance.

2. Generate Repair Funds: Identify investments in form of CSR funds, micro-finance and other national & international funding agencies for building restorations, minor & emergency repairs and bathroom & kitchen up gradations.

3. Infrastructure Development: Develop proposals on BOT (build operate transfer) models of projects for infrastructure such as parking, public utilities, micro transports to support heritage led regeneration.

4. Sustain Heritage Ecosystem: Fund small enterprises and individuals doing activity needed to sustain the heritage led regeneration such as small tours, eateries, cafe, spa, cab's boutiques.

5. Create Competitive Communities: Funding existing business and communities in local network to become competitive and benefit from the new growth.

6. Supporting Inner City Enterprise: Make bold moves to make better historic city cores through Investments and Enterprise to revitalize the inner city cores and communities.

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