

**Roll of Heritage Cells in Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)  
For Revival of Heritage Cities in India**

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## Roll of Heritage Cells in Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) For Revival of Heritage Cities in India

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Quality of the built environment of a place depends largely on its architectural and visual features. It is often stated that one can judge our society by the degree to which it allows to deteriorate its quality. Therefore, it is utmost necessary to preserve them for posterity.

Most Indian cities with a long history have at their core areas of strong architectural and urban character. These areas have been places of life, vitality, wealth, power, enlightenment and culture. However these inner city areas have become marginalized in the process of urban growth. This neglect has led to decay, depressed economic conditions and dilapidation leading to migration of the population to newer areas

Old buildings and older areas of the city should be looked upon as assets rather than as liabilities because they represent the history of communities, embodying their tradition, heritage and culture through architecture and the urban form.

Experiences from all over the world has proved that revival and preservation of heritage and modern development, if planned properly can fulfill the aspirations of the people, besides bringing economic prosperity and sustainability.

However it is often noticed that in spite of having rich and diverse heritage resources, well established public administrative set up and strong community network the historic urban settlements in most of our cities are undergoing rapid decline due to pressures of urbanization and various other factors such as:

1. Lack of proper policy
2. Lack of appropriate legal frame work
3. Lack of awareness and appreciation towards heritage properties  
(General public- Administrators- political)
4. Lack of resources (Financial- Technical- skill)

It is a fact that so far only few thousands monuments of National importance are eligible for the protection under the ASI (Govt. of India) and another few thousands under the state governments, ensuring their preservation and care, while thousands of historic structures and heritage areas are lying uncared.

The situation called for the finding alternative ways and means to develop mechanisms for the revival and revitalization not only the built environment but also the cultural traditions and intangible aspects of our old cities.

It is against this background and after undertaking a number of surveys, studies and initiatives and learning experience the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) in collaboration with CRUTA foundation, an N.G.O. has established the first Heritage Cell with in a ULB in the year 1996, which has now become a National Model for Heritage revival.

Before we examine the Ahmedabad case let us look at few examples where similar initiatives involving different partners were undertaken later by the other cities in the country.

**Four different models emerged in various cities to understand the initiatives by involving one or multiple partnership arrangement towards heritage revival are discussed below.**

**Model 1:-** Rajasthan Government Public-Private peoples' participation scheme for conservation and development of cities having Heritage and Tourism importance.

A unique urban public-private peoples' participation scheme was launched by the govt. of Rajasthan for conservation and development of cities/towns having Heritage and Tourist importance in the year 2004. The scheme proposed to cover the following cities/towns of Rajasthan.

1. Ajmer, 2. Alwar, 3. Bharatpur, 4. Bikaner, 5. Banswara, 6. Bundi, 7. Chhabra, 8. Chittorgarh, 9. Deeg, 10. Dungarpur, 11. Jaisalmer, 12. Jodhpur, 13. Jhalawar, 14. Kota, 15. Pushkar, 16. Sawai Madhopur, 17. Udaipur, 18. Sikar, 19. Chomu, 20. Mandawa, 21. Nawalgarh, 22. Jhunjhunu, 23. Fatehpur

Under this scheme it was decided to establish a Heritage Cell in above said municipalities for which a district level committee will be formed under the chairmanship of the Dist. Collector with the following aims and objectives.

- Making history of the region enjoyable and relevant. Educating the public on the need for protection and conservation of important sites.
- Developing sustainable programmes based on the history and tradition of the region for the benefit of the local community without compromising the conservation needs of the site. A step towards developing comprehensive master plans for heritage sites.
- Identification and development of Heritage Zones in smaller towns.
- The protection and conservation of the state's natural and built heritage.
- To develop the tourism industry so as to make it instrumental in the state's economic growth.
- To create awareness through publicity and educational programmes.
- To involve the community in tourism development and heritage management.
- Creates a sense of belonging and pride about heritage in the local population.
- Helps the local business and, most importantly. Craftsman to sell their good without middleman.
- Highlighting areas of tourist and heritage importance. It was decided to take up 23 cities for heritage conservation.

Towards conservation of Heritage properties in the above stated cities following decisions were taken under this scheme.

- Total 23 cities of historical, heritage and tourist importance have been selected for heritage conservation initiatives.
- A circular to this effect has been issued for selected urban local bodies of Rajasthan to create a budget head for heritage component in the 2004-2005 budget of the local body.

- There will be a formulation of a heritage cell in all the selected 23 cities. One engineer from the local body and one town planner from the Town Planning Dept. will be deputed to look after the works of the Heritage Cell.
- Listing of important monuments and buildings. Places of historic importance would be taken up in consultation with INTACH.
- Under the chairmanship of District Collector, district level meetings of various departments like, Department of Archeology, Town Planning, Tourism, Local Bodies, etc. will be organized for better coordination and proper development of the town and less duplication of the work in Heritage Sector.
- Help from Non-government Organizations working in the Heritage sector will also be availed.
- Conservation regulation will be framed and provision in the model law will be formulated.
- The Local Self Dept. shall be the nodal agency for the Heritage conservation projects.

**Model 2:-** Delhi Development Authority (DDA) / Mumbai Municipal Corporation (MMC) model.

In both the above cases, the DDA as well as MMC looks after the Heritage Cell created with in these ULBs under their direct control in the year.....( The aims and objectives being almost as the same in other models and hence not been repeated here after)

**Model 3:-** Delhi Municipal Corporation (MCD) / Cochin Municipal Corporation (CMC)

The above stated municipal corporations have created Heritage Cell with in these ULBs and then registered it as societies for better functional efficiency and autonomy.

**Model 4:-** Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) / Pondicherry Municipality

Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) set up its Heritage Cell, the first of its kind in India in collaboration with an N.G.O. - CRUTA (Foundation for Conservation and Research of Urban Traditional Architecture) in 1996.

Pondicherry Municipality also in the same manner established a Heritage Cell in partnership with INTACH (Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage) Having briefly discussed four different models of Heritage Cells emerged in some of the important cities of India, Let us examine the Ahmedabad Heritage initiatives, which falls under Model- 4, in detail.

## **Ahmedabad Heritage Initiatives:**

### **Introduction:**

*Citizens get accustomed with their environment and gradually become less aware of it The City becomes a habit. Herein lies the need to make the citizens aware of the importance of their built environment and to help them develop a harmonious and contemporary relationship with it. In a sense, urban renewal does not just rebuilding the city; it rebuilds people's relationship with the city. Educational and awareness programmes therefore are the most significant tool to achieve continued relationship with the past.*

### **Back ground:**

Ahmedabad, a city with more than 600 years of continues history and culture was founded by Sultan Ahmedshah-I on the ancient sites of Ashaval and Karnavati in the year 1411 (AD). The city was taken over by the Mughals in 1574 followed by Marathas, and later administered by the British from 1818, until 1947.

Ahmedabad is well known for its highly ornate historic mosques and tombs built in sand stone and artistic Hindu and Jaina temples. The city which was known as "Manchester of the east" has acquired its new found fame due to its association with India's freedom movement and Mahatma Gandhi. Ahmedabad now with an urban population of over 50 lakhs, is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest city of India and is poised to acquire Mega City status.

The historic city wall of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (A.D.), 10 kms in circuit with 12 gates, enclosed an area of 5.40 square kilometers, which is now hebetated by a population of over 4 lakhs. The walled city is also the main business centre of Ahmedabad.

Ahmedabad's built heritage is not limited to historic monuments. The carved wooden domestic architecture in the *poles* of the old city is in no way artistically inferior to the historic stone mosques or temples. The traditional houses of the rich in the poles, called *Havelis* display fabulous wood work and sculpture (Pole is a traditional micro neighbourhood with cluster of residential buildings protected by a gate, generally occupied by people belonging to a particular caste, religion or profession). There are nearly 600 poles in the walled city.

### **Past Initiatives:**

Inspite of having some steps taken as early as in 1885 by merchants and traders of Ahmedabad for raising funds "City Wall Restoration Fund", to be managed by a committee consisting of government officials and citizens for restoring the city wall, there were no sustained effort to preserve City's heritage.

### **Factors affecting urban Decay:**

The rapid industrialization, unplanned development and expansion saw the decay and degeneration of the historic built heritage of the city. The historic fortification has been pulled down to facilitate access, the monuments are encroached upon, the Havelies and traditional houses in the poles were neglected. People started migrating to newer areas of the city seeking

modern settings and facilities, resulting neglect of their old dwellings back in the old city. Basically all this happened due to lack of proper awareness, sense of belonging about the value of the past creations. In some cases the old buildings were neglected for want of financial resources, while absence of technical support or proper craft persons were the reasons for neglect.

### **Early Educational Initiatives:**

Heritage educational programme, like any other similar programmes can be successful only when the community comes forward to support and initiate related activities. This is possible when the local people to whom the very heritage belongs understands its values, takes pride and establish a sense of belonging.

Social and cultural festivals were used to generate awareness and mobilize communities. Meetings, audio, visual shows, exhibitions, street plays, annual celebrations, cultural walks books and publications are all of effective means of cultural education, and these means have been engaged for the revival of city's heritage from the beginning.

### **Involving children**

One of the well known ways to make any programme successful and sustainable is to involve young people particularly school children. “ **Catch them young** ” approach will be more rewarding, as they grow up and become responsible citizens, not only they will carry on the cultural heritage initiatives, on their own, but also pass on the same tradition to the generation next and then the process continue automatically. This process can be termed as **shaping of attitudes**.

Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Nehru Foundation for Development, Ahmedabad conceived a programme called ‘Cultural Trails’, School Children were taken to the monuments in the walled city to understand history and cultural heritage of the city. The first was titled Ahmedshahi, Trail - A Walk through Islamic monuments and the second was Haveli Trail – A walk through old residential areas in poles. The programme evoked lots of interest amongst school children and number of schools had participated in it.

### **The Role of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation:**

Concerned with the rapid decline of cultural heritage resources, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation with the help of Ford Foundation, New Delhi undertook a study in 1985 to initiate policies for the better preservation of heritage of Ahmedabad.

Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) invited The Conservation and Research of Urban Traditional Architecture (CRUTA) Foundation, Calcutta for helping it to take measures to arrest decay and preserve the city's heritage in 1996.

The AMC with the expert assistance from CRUTA had set up a Heritage Cell within the Municipal Corporation in 1996 with the following aims and objectives:

1. Create awareness among citizens and develop a comprehensive plan for the conservation of the Walled City of Ahmedabad.
2. Enable communities to take pride in traditional built form, get involved in the process of its revival.

Its objectives are to:

- Create awareness regarding heritage resources.
- Promote the traditional built forms.
- Support participatory action programme.
- Coordinate efforts of different disciplines, stake holders and authorities.
- Undertake tasks related to the promotion of traditional built forms, mobilizing finance and resources that would not otherwise available to the area.
- Interface with concerned citizens public and private sectors.

**Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation is the first local self-government body in India which has taken the initiative to devise the Heritage Programme and implement a comprehensive plan for the conservation and revitalization of the old city.**

The idea behind establishing the Heritage Cell within the Municipal Corporation was to educate and create heritage awareness not only within the municipal system, but also amongst the local communities at large.

The Heritage Cell, AMC took up the role of Catalyst, educator, facilitator and co-ordinator in carrying out heritage programmes including strategic intervention with interested N.G.Os, professional and voluntary agencies.

The heritage cell at AMC succeeded in introducing a bye-law in the General Development Control Regulations prohibiting listed heritage property from being pulled down without prior permission. This eventually saved many structures in and around the walled city.

Community participation was recognized as a major method to convey the entire idea at a much larger scale and ensure popular support. A series of activities were organized to elicit community participation and ensure that people take pride in their surroundings and are involved in conservation efforts. Meetings were held in the walled city 'Khadia' area to discuss strategies for conservation and development of the area bringing together various citizens' platforms.

Following this, citizen's groups and the municipal authority jointly organized the first public programme, 'Preservation of the Past and Glimpses of History' at Desai-ni-Pol in Khadia on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1996. The residents of Desai-ni-Pol (its rebellious past during British rule gave it a place in history), released a booklet to mark heritage day, listing the historical homes and personalities who lived in the area as also a chronicle of important events.

### **Heritage Walk:**

In order to propagate and popularize the city's heritage the AMC in association with the CRUTA Foundation launched a heritage walk through the historic core of the old city in 1997. The first

such walk ever was started by the CRUTA Foundation in Calcutta in the year 1988. Now the Ahmedabad Model of Cultural Heritage Walk has become a national model and many cities like Jodhpur, Udaipur, Jaipur, Amritsar, Pondicherry, Cochin and Delhi etc. are replicating it.

The objective behind launching the walk was to initiate public awareness and interest in conservation activities by show-casing the cream of city's built heritage and facilitate people's participation. The process also involved training programme for guides, physical restoration of the walk area and publicity. The walk attracts thousands of native and foreign visitors.

### **Freedom Walk:**

On 14 August 1997, a freedom walk, *Krantidarshan Padyatra* was organized around several houses connected with the history of Indian freedom struggle. Twenty-eight important houses were identified and the citizens under the leadership of elected and government officials visited them. The birthday of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was celebrated on 23 January 1998 at Bengal Home in Dhobi-ni-Pol, established in 1905 as a centre where revolutionaries from Bengal trained local people during the freedom struggle.

### **Kavi Sammelan:**

A kavi *sammelan* (poets' meet) was organized on Kavi Dalpatram's death anniversary on 25 March 1998 in the Pol where he used to live. Organizations like the Gujarat Sahitya Parishad also worked to make it a success. The enthusiastic response to the kavi sammelan resulted in a unique memorial at the site of his house, designed with the help of the AMC in collaboration with the Swami Narayan temple, Kalupur. The memorial serves as a site where plays, recitations and other features linked with Dalpatram are enthusiastically performed. Similarly a memorial of poet-seer Akha Bhagat has been installed in front of his residence in Khadia with the financial assistance received from a business house. The upgraded Chowk (square) with the memorial has now become an attraction to the residents.

### **Street Signage Programme:**

A street signage programme was launched where street plaques bearing the name of the area and municipal symbols were displayed at the entrance of each Pol, providing recognition and identity.

### **Revival of Panch System:**

A project to revive old *punch system* (local self-governance) in the walled city with the help of public participation was started in collaboration with the Ahmedabad Community Foundation (ACF). The project aims at recognizing the panch, the key persons for information dissemination, as formal representatives and thus helps improve living conditions in the **Pol**, thus ensuring continuity of local self governing system.

### **Organizing Street Plays:**

Street plays with participation of the local community and eminent personalities from the area were organized, bringing people together on a common platform to understand the issues related to tangible and intangible heritage in the city.

Various efforts were also under taken to conserve the architectural heritage in the walled city area through inter-departmental and public-private partnerships to carry out actual restoration projects, which can serve as examples for people who want to restore their old properties and structures.

The AMC in association with Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) began a beautification process focusing on the fort wall and city gates. While the ASI concentrates on physical restoration, the AMC handles landscape and lighting around the gates. The AMC with the assistance of the state government of Gujarat through the Archaeological Department provides a 50% grant for façade restoration for selected buildings. This programme includes citizen groups and NGOs. The Kanubhai Dayabhai Mehta Chetna Pravrutti Kendra serves as a training centre in an old restored building in the walled city. Till now, 72 Conservation, Restoration Projects of small and medium scale involving Monuments, Heritage structures, Residential & Institutional Buildings have been completed and many others are in progress.

### **International Collaborations:**

#### **AMC-French Govt. Collaboration:**

International agencies should be involved to share the experiences of various agencies working in this field. This will give a wider perspective and awareness of the methods and approaches. On 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2000, the AMC signed a MOU with the French Government for a scientific study of the Walled City. This was initially for one year and was later extended. A French team along with AMC staff worked jointly to achieve these goals. MOU was signed between Government of France, AMC and Housing Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) for the implementation of the programme for historic city conservation in Ahmedabad on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2001. On 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2003, an agreement between Government of France and Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation was signed for the establishment of the Ahmedabad Heritage Centre. Financial Agreement was signed for Historic City Conservation in Ahmedabad between Government of France and HUDCO for providing subsidy in building repair loan on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

The AMC-France collaboration has produced very valuable document titled Recommendations for the Conservation and Revitalization of the Walled City of Ahmedabad. Another significant activity conducted under this collaboration is identification and tentative listing of more than 15000 heritage properties in the old city, out of which 500 are of exceptional value.

#### **AMC-Dutch Govt. Collaboration:**

Dutch had a small presence in Ahmedabad in earlier days in connection with trade & commerce. A Dutch factory and graveyard still reminds their past presence in the city. Restoration and an interpretation booklet exploring the related history in under way.

The Dutch cemetery, on the east side of the Kankaria Lake is a historic site. On the cemetery are four types of tombs: domed tombs, pyramids, 'walled' tombs and plain gravestones. The tombs were badly damaged by the earthquake of 2001. The Archaeological Department with the support of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation restored them to original shape.

### **World Monument Fund listing:**

Walled City of Ahmedabad was included in the list of endangered heritage sites by the World Monument Fund during the year 1998-1999. This was used to intensify the conservation activities in Walled City and generate international attention.

The 300-year-old Dwarkadheesh Temple in Boua ni Pol, partially destroyed in the earthquake of 2001 received the attention of the World Monument Watch to be listed in its most endangered 100 sites in the World in the year 2002. And the World Monument Fund has awarded a sum of \$32000 for the renovation of Dwarkadheesh Temple through the World Monument Fund Robert Wilson Challenge Fund for restoration of the temple, the first phase of which has now been completed.

### **HUDCO-AMC Collaboration:**

Housing finance and building repair loan segment could play an important role. On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2000, HUDCO board has approved the heritage exploration with investment in the septennial of a Heritage sector. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, on the occasion of World Heritage day a MOU was signed between AMC and HUDCO for detailing the financial implication in this sector.

### **Involving of elected representatives:**

This is an important factor for the success of any such activities as they have direct contact with the citizens and can influence them. Their involvement must be assured at all stages. In Ahmedabad, this was ensured by constantly appraising them and inviting them for various heritage, cultural functions.

### **Auto Rickshaw tour:**

Auto Rickshaw drivers are being trained as guides and given identity cards, taking people for a guided tour to the important pockets. Signage and description about these places and buildings were made. Maps and Photographs of the places to be displayed in the Rickshaws. Use of pollution free vehicles can promote environmental friendliness also. This initiative turned out to be successful with the combined actions of AMC, Tourism Department and Auto Rickshaw Association.

### **Chabutara (Bird Feeder) Restoration:**

Chabutaras are one of the major elements in the walled city of Ahmedabad and they are under destruction due to various reasons. They are being identified, restored and used properly. An

initiative has already been taken by Jain Trust, citizen groups and AMC to comprehend the situation.

### **Swatchatha Katha (cleanliness campaign using a traditional art form):**

‘Katha’s is a traditional story telling art in the city. Such art forms can be used to send the messages of cleanliness, conservation etc. to the common people. Local groups are required identified and trained to present these are forms. This is under consideration of Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB), AMC and citizen groups.

### **Walled City News Paper:**

The work for a newspaper exclusively discussing the issues in walled city is underway. Heritage related issues will be focused for generating awareness and public opinion. Citizen groups plan to promote this programme.

### **Heritage Products:**

‘Pothe’ (traditional account book), miniature models of heritage artifacts, prints, table mats, coasters, calendars and cushion covers depicting the artifact etc. being planned. Private agencies can take initiative in this activity.

### **Children’s books on stories about the city:**

Books depicting the history of the city are being published in simple language thus creating the awareness among children. The first book showing the character of Manek Baba, a saint character connected to Ahmedabad Foundation is under preparation for primary schools.

### **Coin museum:**

A museum showcasing coins, old mint and the history of Ahmedabad Coinage is planned in Tanksal-ni-pol where the old mint was situated.

### **Inner city map:**

A detailed map of Ahmedabad is already published by SETU publishers. A Special tourist edition highlighting the walled city area is being produced with AMC subsidy. AMC is planning to publish a detailed map of Walled City of Ahmedabad marking all heritage monuments and places.

### **Water Conservation:**

There are a number of underground water tanks known as ‘Tanka’ in many of the old city houses and this can be reused for rainwater harvesting and water conservation. Cleaning up of surface drains, tanks and wells is to be taken up on war footing. This will be a relief for the acute water shortage in the area. AMC and citizen groups have already started the identification process and a base report with water quality analysis was prepared and more than 15 ‘Tankas’ were restored and rain water collection process re-initiated.

**Solid waste management:**

Regular removal of solid waste from the streets and the neighborhoods is essential. Kamdar community, Cycle-Rikshaw-walas and others are to be mobilized to be involved in these activities. Waste trolleys that can be easily handled need to be designed and provided.

**Training administrators:**

Heritage should be introduced in the administrative training courses as a specialization to promote efficient heritage management. Sardar Patel Institute for Public Administration, Ahmedabad had asked AMC to conduct Lectures and demonstration programmes on different aspects of cultural heritage conservation and management. The AMC is collaborating in this activity.

**Notification of Heritage Regulations:**

For protection and preservation of any heritage, either cultural or natural, legal frame work is the foremost necessity. It is with the constant effort of the Heritage Department, AMC, a set of heritage regulations for Ahmedabad has been framed and finally notified Under Urban Development and Urban Housing Department, Government of Gujarat gazette in September, 2007. A Heritage Committee as provided in the gazette notification is being formed to carry out the heritage initiatives more effectively.

**Ahmedabad Heritage Festival:**

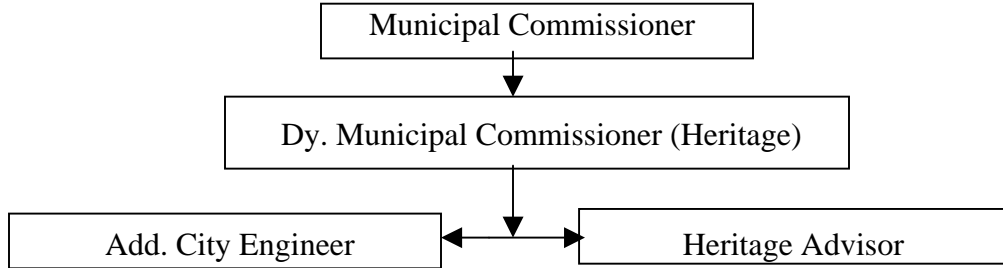
In order to ensure community participation to raise the level of awareness and sense of belonging about the heritage, festivals like World Heritage Day and World Heritage Week are being celebrated every year by organizing cultural events, photo exhibitions, painting and essay competitions, lecture series etc.

**Walled City Disaster Risk Management Plan:**

Built Heritage properties are very often subjected to damage and extinction. It is there of paramount importance that disaster management plan should be an essential component for the overall heritage management plan, not only for safeguarding cultural properties, but also for the safety of the human lives. Recently the AMC is collaborating with the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), Govt. of India to study the vulnerability assessment for formulating Risk Management Plan for the historic walled city of Ahmedabad.

## Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC)

### Present Structure of Heritage Cell



- |                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| (1) Dy. City Engineer   | Project Co-Ordinator       |
| (2) Asst. City Engineer | Coordinator- Heritage Walk |
| (3) Heritage Consultant | Assistant                  |
| (4) Asst. Manager       | Draughtsman                |
| (5) Junior Legal Asst.  | Volunteers                 |
| (6) Draughtsman         | Other NGOs                 |
| (7) Sr. Clerk           | Peon                       |
| (8) Peon                |                            |

#### Note:

1. Sr.No.3, 6, 7&8 are exclusively posted at Heritage cell, while others from the AMC side share additional responsibilities of the Heritage Cell.
2. Heritage Advisor and the staff shown directly below him are from the part of CRUTA Foundation (N.G.O.)

#### Conclusion:

Apart from creating increased public awareness through a variety of educational programmes about the heritage and ensuring their participation in preservation, revival efforts the Heritage Cell, Ahmedabad has been undertaking a number of conservation, restoration projects comprising various kinds of heritage structures such as Wooden Havelis, Pol Houses, City Gates, Bird Feeders, Fortification Wall, Temple complexes and up gradation of ambiance of monuments etc.

The citizens, Authorities, Medias, NGO's and Everybody is supporting the cause of heritage revival in Ahmedabad and the future of the past looks brighter than ever before.