



School of Planning of Architecture, Vijayawada

(An institution of National Importance under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India)
Survey No.4/4, ITI Road, Vijayawada-520008, Andhra Pradesh, India.

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

STUDIO PROGRAM AND DESIGN BRIEF			
<i>Course</i>	<i>Architectural Conservation Studio-II</i>	<i>Internal Assessment</i>	250
<i>Class</i>	<i>M.Arch (AC) 1st Year 2nd Semester</i>	<i>External Assessment</i>	250
<i>Contact Hours</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>Total Marks</i>	500
<i>Attendance</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>Passing Marks</i>	50%
<i>Faculty In-charge</i>	<i>Ar. Sanjay Bhandari (Studio Coordinator), VF</i>		

Urban Conservation & Regeneration Plan for the Historic core of Ancient City -Varanasi

Introduction and Project Brief: Varanasi, also known as Kashi or Banaras, is a city of immense historical and cultural significance in India, with roots tracing back to at least 1200 BCE. As one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities, Varanasi is a symbol of spirituality, learning, and cultural heritage. The city is revered for its connection to Lord Shiva, the Ganges River, and its status as one of the holiest of the seven sacred cities. Varanasi has been a hub of art, music, literature, and education for centuries, renowned for its classical music, traditional dance, silk weaving, and rich architectural heritage. The city boasts numerous temples, including the iconic Kashi Vishwanath Temple and the Sankat Mochan Hanuman Temple. The stepped Ghats along the riverbanks, such as the Dashashwamedh Ghat and Manikarnika Ghat, represent a unique architectural interface between land and water, integral to religious rituals and ceremonies. Despite its historical significance, Varanasi faces escalating urbanization pressures, including encroachments, unplanned development, and informal settlements. The influx of people, driven by population growth and tourism, strains the historic core and urban infrastructure. The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor development project has stirred conservation debates, raising concerns about its impact on heritage, cultural fabric, and the alteration of Varanasi's historical landscape.

The project aims to address the delicate balance between fostering economic growth through pilgrimage, tourism and protecting Varanasi's heritage. The goal is to formulate an Urban Conservation & Regeneration Plan that combines sustainable urban planning, robust conservation strategies, and community involvement to ensure the preservation of Varanasi's invaluable heritage while facilitating responsible urban growth.

Holistic Urban Planning: Develop comprehensive urban planning strategies by critically reviewing current master plan that considers the historical context, cultural significance, and future needs of Varanasi.

Conservation Strategies: Implement conservation measures to safeguard heritage sites, including the Ghats, temples, and other architectural landmarks.

Community Involvement: Foster community participation to ensure the preservation of cultural practices, local traditions, and a sense of ownership among residents.

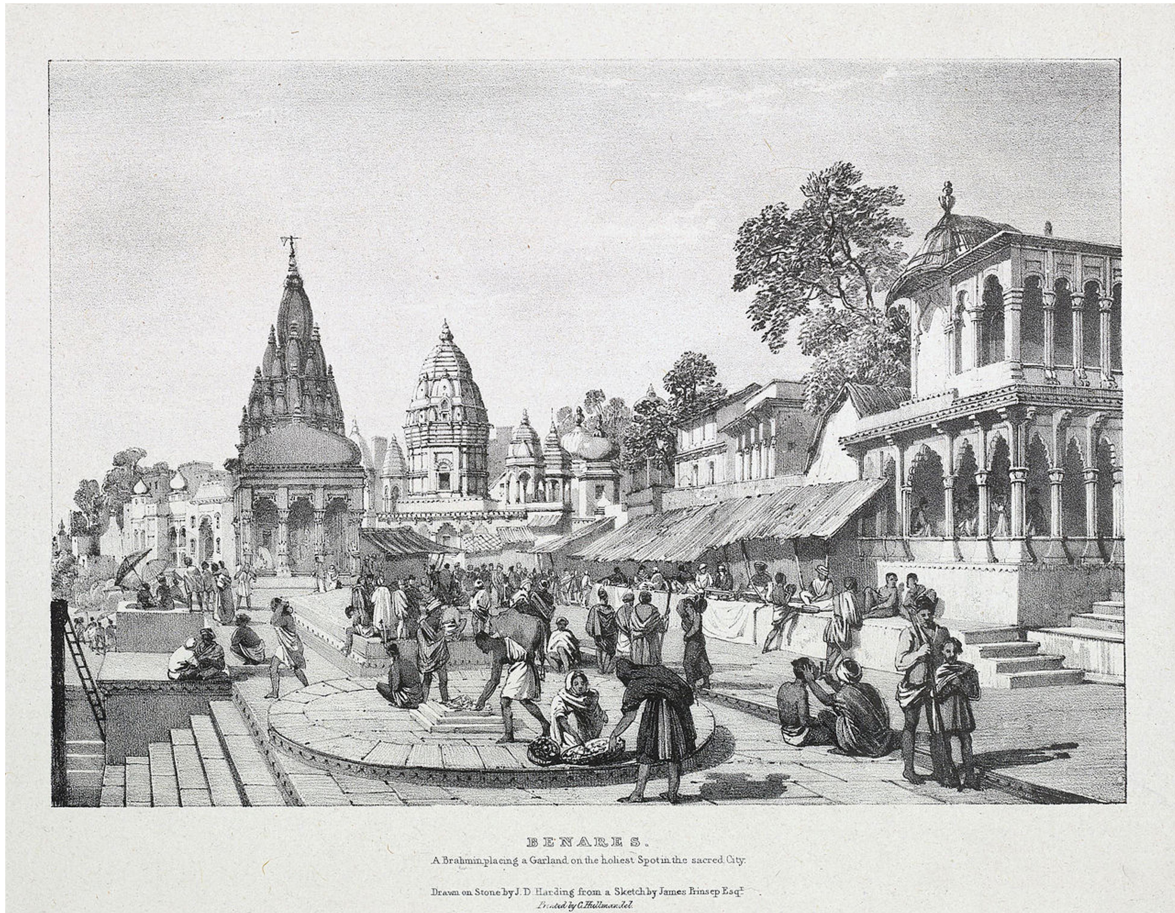
Evaluation of Development Projects: Critically assess ongoing and proposed projects, including the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, Smart City initiatives, and Hriday schemes, to ensure alignment with conservation goals.

Application of HUL Toolkit: Utilize the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) toolkit to assess the impact of development projects on the cultural and historical fabric of Varanasi.

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals: Integrate the project with global sustainability goals, considering environmental, social, and economic dimensions.

New Urban Agendas: Align the plan with emerging urban agendas, considering the changing dynamics of urban spaces in India.

The Urban Conservation & Regeneration Plan for Varanasi aims to strike a harmonious balance between preserving cultural heritage and facilitating sustainable urban growth. By addressing the challenges posed by urbanization and development, the project seeks to ensure that Varanasi's ancient legacy continues to thrive in the contemporary world, meeting the aspirations of its residents while upholding its global cultural significance.



A lithograph by James Prinsep (1832) of a Brahmin placing a garland on the holiest location in the city

Schedule

Archival Research:

- Historical & Archival Research on Historic City- Varanasi through publicly accessible secondary sources – Historic and contemporary documents, books, gazetteers, maps, photographs Understanding of the structure of the historic cultural city, regional characteristics, geography etc.
- Examination of international approaches, including Historic Urban Landscape (HUL)
- Critical assessment of master plans, HRIDAY, Smart city proposal, Kashi Vishvanath Corridor etc.
- Research on evolution of the urban form of Varanasi through identification of its urban systems and historical layers, Assessment of significance of the historic areas, precincts and urban systems characteristic of the historic city, trends for transformation – through secondary sources and studies

(Review I- 22/01/24)-Initial Understanding of the Historical Evolution, Layers, Significance of the City

- Critique of the Development Plans, various government programmes, to identify issues linked with the scale and rate of urban transformation, loss of heritage and alienation of the community. Initial assessment of any existing heritage management and planning policies, initiatives, interventions relevant for heritage.
- Demographic profile and characteristics of the diverse communities through evaluation and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative secondary sources (Census, Socioeconomic studies). Identification of stakeholders

- Identification of historic core of city, Preliminary Identification of tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage resources, Preparation of Base Map, Design of formats for primary surveys required for Site Visit, including PRA used for community planning and resource identification (GIS)

- Compilation of preliminary lists for site and activity schedule for site visit

(Review II-01/01/24)-Initial Understanding of the Historical Evolution, Layers, Significance of the city

Site Visit: (10/02/24-18/02/24 Tentative Dates)

- Preliminary Survey of Varanasi to delineate focus area.

- Site Visit to Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Ramnagar Fort, Alamgiri Masjid, Tulsi Manas Temple, Batuk Bhairav temple etc and the entire Ghat stretch.

- Stakeholder Meetings and participatory resource identification and mapping exercise. Study of the historic city / Nagar nigam area to identify natural heritage systems, community systems and sustainable livelihoods, circulation systems, open space systems, land-use patterns, built heritage systems and its components, ownership, infrastructure networks and administrative frameworks. Delineation of focus area(s) of study after establishing historical values and significance.

- Documentation of tangible and intangible heritage assets, including cultural mapping.

- Detailed primary surveys of the delineated focus area(s) at appropriate scale including studies of the natural resource base (Ganga); detailed evolution and historic layers, land-use patterns and land sub-division, figure-ground studies, physical and social infrastructure including water systems, circulation and open space systems; intangible heritage, skills, needs and aspirations of the communities; built heritage components and typologies and detailed architectural analysis of historic mixed-use and residential units and streetscapes, construction systems, building techniques and materials; compilation of detailed inventories, condition assessment of the historic building stock; identification of patterns of transformation, socio-economic drivers of change, and impact of administrative and planning systems, byelaws and regulations on the urban and architectural heritage of the focus area. Identification of intervention priorities and selection of detailed projects

Diagnosis -Post Site Visit(19/02/24-23/02/24)- Processing and Organizing the site study data

(Review III-26/02/24)-Presentation of Site Studies & Data):

Compilation, collation and analysis of primary and secondary studies to understand and interpret the values and significance of the historic city. Defining cultural significance of historic core, resulting in a statement of significance.

(Review IV-11/03/24)-Critical Analysis & Issues identification:

Identification of issues and priorities for development, on the basis of analysis of community needs and aspirations, socio-economic bases for inappropriate transformation — trends for (re)development, demolition and reconstruction rather than conservation, development and planning measures, Formulation of strategies and policies at the city and historic area/precinct level. Justification and presentation of detailed project areas.

(Review V-29/03/24)-Analysis, Inference and Formulation of Draft Proposals

▪Strategies for integration of urban conservation into planning procedures at the development plan level, detailed heritage inventory and resource mapping— defining the conservation approach, role of cultural tourism, revitalization of ghat area, Disaster management for risk of floods, and the Historic Urban landscape approach.

▪ Analysis of existing Byelaws and regulations applicable to focus area(s) of study. Provide solid legal foundation for reinforcing urban patterns with a clear vision of urban continuity through conservation planning guidelines, conservation interventions, contextual design and infill developments at the Zonal and Local Area Plan level

(Final Review VI-18/04/24)-Final Proposals

The urban conservation plan encompasses a meticulous framework for a chosen focal area, aiming to devise strategies such as restoration, adaptive reuse, retrofitting, and necessary development within Varanasi's historical zones. The plan also emphasizes on the public open spaces, while preserving its established urban framework and enhancing the overall living standards within the historic setting. The primary objective is to revitalize Varanasi by thoughtfully integrating new elements, sustaining the city's architectural legacy, Heritage and elevating the quality of life within its historical environment.

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- *Kashi The City Illustrious Or Benares 1909 by Edwin Greaves*