The Aga Khan
Historic Cities Programme

STRATEGIES FOR
URBAN REGENERATION

PRESTEL
Programme Scope / Objectives

The scope of programme activities includes documentation, the conservation of historic public and private buildings and the rehabilitation of historic landscape and restoration of green open spaces. Also involved are the upgrading of basic infrastructure, the development of craft skills, and the promotion of activities intended to improve household incomes. Support for neighbourhood planning initiatives, technical assistance to institutions responsible for planning and urban management, and support for professional development are also part of the intervention.

The city of Kabul is thought to have grown around a Buddhist settlement mentioned by Ptolemy in AD 150. The fortified Citadel of Bala Hisar bears witness to its turbulent history, as do the defences along the ridge of the Sher Darwaza Mountain to the south, dating in part to the period of Hindu rule prior to the advent of Islam in AD 871. Kabul seems to have remained little more than a military outpost during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the cities of Ghazni and Herat witnessed significant prosperity and architectural innovation. It was not until the early sixteenth century, when the founder of the Mughal Empire Babur visited and laid out several gardens in and around the city (including the newly rehabilitated park now known as Bagh-e Babur), that Kabul seems to have grown in importance. While based in India, Babur’s successors continued to show an interest in Kabul, with Shah Jahan’s governor, Ali Mardaan Khan, building the covered Char Chatta bazaar in the centre of the commercial quarters in the mid seventeenth century. By the time that Timur Shah moved his capital from Qandahar to Kabul in the late eighteenth century, Kabul was home to approximately 60,000 people.

Accounts from nineteenth-century travellers to Kabul describe a dense settlement of traditional dwellings, accessed by means of narrow alleyways and divided into distinct quarters, some of which were walled. The only neighbourhoods in which this dense urban fabric has survived are Asheqan wa Arefan and Chindawol. Apart from the imposing brick Mausoleum of Timur Shah, built in the late eighteenth century, and the royal residences and walled gardens within the citadel, the bazaars and serais seem to have been the principal landmarks in the city. The Char Chatta bazaar was the target of a punitive raid on Kabul in 1842 by British troops, who returned in 1880 to destroy Bala Hisar Citadel, which until then had been the seat of power.

Shortly after this event, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan laid out a new palace north of the Kabul River, outside the confines of the historic city, whose population had by then risen to about 500,000. Merchant families who had previously lived close to the bazaars in the city centre began at this time to move to more spacious new homes built on market gardens to the north and west. Zamargar Park, now in the centre of modern Kabul, formed part of a walled orchard in which a number of residences and pavilions used by the royal family and members of the court stood. The earliest suburbs of Kabul began to develop after the...
Asheqan wa Arefan shows restored external street view within the project cluster in historic quarters of the Old City. A typical traditional housing stock in the war-affected area, AKTC has invested in repairs or construction of drains, paving of alleyways and facilities – have been restored over the past seven years. During the same period, some fifteen important historic homes have been rehabilitated in these quarters, where more than seventy families have been able to undertake essential repairs to their traditional homes through a system of small-scale grants. This conservation work has provided opportunities for on-the-job training for more than a hundred carpenters, plasterers and masons, many of whom live in the historic quarters. Much of the fragile stock of traditional housing in the Old City is subdivided and residents, half of whom are tenants, have access to only the most rudimentary services, due to decades of under-investment and neglect, as well as more recent conflict-related damage. In order to address the abject conditions facing the majority of residents in this area, AKTC has invested in repairs or construction of drains, paving of alleyways and streets, and safer water supplies, benefiting nearly 20,000 inhabitants since 2002. These interventions have generated significant employment within the resident communities, who have also benefited from a range of measures aimed at promoting small-scale economic activity, especially among women. Together with the jobs created through conservation projects, these investments have contributed to the process of recovery across these quarters, where self-built repairs and infill construction are on the increase. In the context of a process of urban recovery that since 2002 has been largely ad hoc and uncontrolled, AKTC works with Afghan institutions and residents to prepare neighbourhood plans to guide reconstruction and development within specific quarters, while ensuring that such initiatives are consistent with wider planning processes for the metropolitan area of Kabul. An important contribution to the planning process was made through the formulation in 2005 of a joint planning framework for the residential neighbourhood of Chindawol, which remains under intense pressure from commercial development in adjoining areas. Initial mapping of land use, infrastructure and services was followed by a series of intensive participatory planning exercises with municipal staff and representatives from Chindawol, leading to identification of development priorities over a five-year period, along with assignment of institutional responsibilities. It was in order to address the issue of responsibilities for planning and urban management that an Old City Development Commission was formed in 2004, with a view to ensuring more effective collaboration between concerned institutions. With participation from ministerial and municipal staff, academics, professionals and community representatives, the Commission serves as a clearing house for information and provides a valuable platform for consultations between professionals and residents on critical development and technical issues. Its efforts to contribute to the process of planning, however, have been less successful, due both to a lack of professional capacity and persistent institutional rivalries. As pressure on urban land and housing mounts, and uncontrolled ‘development’ encroaches on the surviving historic fabric, the future of the Old City requires action at various levels: formulation of effective national policy on urban heritage; promotion of consultative processes of planning; more effective urban management; enhancement of professional and craft skills; technical support for families to repair or upgrade homes; and promotion of economic activity to enable them to afford these.

Left, AKTC is working to preserve traditional housing stock in the war-affected historic quarters of the Old City. A typical street view within the project cluster in Asheqan wa Arefan shows restored external facades and access improvements.

Right, the process of planning involves consultations between government professionals and community representatives.
Challenges

PROGRAMME RISKS
While significant physical gains have been made in conservation of historic property and upgrading of community infrastructure, self-built residential (re)construction is widespread, the process is largely ad hoc and rarely conforms to the outdated Master Plans which continue to serve as an official reference for urban development.

SITE CONDITIONS
Districts 1 and 7 have some of the highest densities in the city, and access is primarily by means of narrow alleys between single traditional homes or on steep hillsides. This poses a challenge for both conservation and upgrading works, as did the clearance of unplanned ordnance that was necessary during the early stages of the programme.

DEMOGRAPHICS
The historic quarters in District 1 have some of the highest recorded densities in Kabul, at more than 300 persons per hectare. AKTC baselines indicate a 15% increase in residential population in District 1 between 2000 and 2005, with a slightly smaller increase in District 7 for the same period.

HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY
Nearly half of households occupy rented property, with less than 300 persons per hectare. AKTC baseline surveys indicate a 15% increase in residential population in District 1 between 2000 and 2005, with a slightly smaller increase in District 7 for the same period.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS
The historic fabric within District 1 is designated for comprehensive ‘redevelopment’ in the various Master Plans drawn up for Kabul since the 1990s, but is now widely acknowledged to merit ‘special heritage zone’ status – even though there is no urban heritage policy in place for it. Among adjoining areas, a new plan for District 7 has been under formulation since 2006.

PLANNING ISSUES
Ultra-urban proposals for the rehabilitation of the historic quarters of Kabul have been drawn-up since 2003, none has been formally adopted, nor have neighbourhood plans been officially endorsed. Instead, the process of urban planning in Kabul continues to be ad hoc, and precise responsibilities for formulation and implementation remain unclear.

BASELINE STANDARDS
Since 2005, baseline surveys have been conducted in residential areas of Districts 1 and 7, covering more than 30,000 people. In addition to the monitoring of physical transformations in the area, several surveys of informal commercial activity have been undertaken in District 1 since 2004.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INITIATIVES
In addition to some 200 craftsmen trained through apprenticeships during the course of conservation works in Districts 1 and 7, more than 100 women continue to take part in vocational training aimed at improving household livelihoods in the programme area.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS
With excessive war damage and limited access to basic infrastructure and services for those living in informal areas, environmental conditions are generally poor.

INFRASTRUCTURE
A legacy of under-investment in drainage, water supply and electrical networks, coupled with excessive war damage, requires significant investments to achieve even the most basic levels of service coverage for the fast-growing population of Districts 1 and 7.

ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE
Degradation of and encroachment on key open spaces is widespread. Public parks or open spaces have generally not been effectively monitored, and are often used for parking or the disposal of domestic waste. With many areas of the Old City laid waste as a result of factional fighting, property disputes are common and encroachment on public open spaces is widespread.

BUILDING CONDITIONS
The combination of lack of maintenance and war-related damage means that the bulk of the housing stock, which largely traditional, is in a poor state of repair. Added to this, high levels of occupancy in subsidised homes in District 1 pose a challenge to efforts to improve living conditions for the occupants.

Significant Issues and Impact

MATERIAL IMPACT
The historic fabric within District 1 is designated for comprehensive ‘redevelopment’ in the various Master Plans drawn up for Kabul since the 1990s, but is now widely acknowledged to merit ‘special heritage zone’ status – even though there is no urban heritage policy in place for it. Among adjoining areas, a new plan for District 7 has been under formulation since 2006.

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Environmental concerns
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Infrastructure
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Planning issues
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Baseline standards
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Socio-economic initiatives
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Conservation aspects
Significant progress has been made since 2003 in the conservation of a cluster of historic buildings situated between the Timur Shah Mausoleum, on the banks of the Kabul River, and the neighbourhood of Ashqep. The latter is an ecosystem that houses two residential enclaves that were home to some 60,000 people.
Bagh-e Babur

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

Laid out in the early sixteenth century by the Mughal emperor Babur, the site now known as Bagh-e Babur was rehabilitated between 2002 and 2008. The natural landscape was central to the life of Babur’s court, and he was buried in the garden in around 1540. Among his successors, both Jahangir and Shah Jahan commissioned works on the site, in honour of Babur.

Accounts of nineteenth-century travellers suggest that the garden subsequently fell into disrepair, and its perimeter walls were reportedly damaged in an earthquake in 1842. Repairs were carried out at the turn of the century, during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, who constructed a complex for use by his family within the garden. Further transformations took place during the twentieth century, when European-style elements were introduced into the landscape and a swimming pool and greenhouse were built on an upper terrace. By the time fighting broke out in Kabul in 1993–94, the character of Bagh-e Babur was much altered and the site was in a poor state of repair. Situated on the front lines between factions, the garden and surrounding area was laid waste, and it was not until 1995 that the clearance of mines could begin, and residents return to their war-damaged homes.

In 2002 an agreement for the rehabilitation of the eleven-hectare garden was signed between the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the Transitional Afghan Administration. In parallel with clearance of remaining unexploded ordnance, work began in 2003 on conservation of Babur’s grave enclosure, which had been significantly altered over time. Apart from the carved headstone erected by Jahangir in 1607, few original elements survived and the marble enclosure recorded by nineteenth-century travellers had disappeared. Following archaeological excavations, levels around the grave were lowered and a wall rebuilt around the original grave platform, after removal of a modern concrete structure. Based on marble fragments found in the grave area, it was then possible to erect a replica of the marble enclosure around Babur’s grave, inside the walled area.

The war-damaged marble mosque dedicated by Shah Jahan in 1675 was re-roofed with lime mortar and cracked marble elements were replaced, while the mihrab wall was refaced with marble in 2004. Among other historic buildings subsequently restored were the nineteenth-century Garden Pavilion and

The landscaping aims to restore the character of the original garden through the introduction of flowing water. Above, a water channel is seen flowing from the Garden Pavilion in the distance.

Opposite page: The same area is seen during the early stages of the rehabilitation.

Following pages: The Kuh-e Sher Darwaza hill settlements provide a dramatic view of Bagh-e Babur.

Project Scope / Objectives

Documentation, archaeological excavation, grading, replanting and the installation of irrigation systems have been undertaken here. The reconstruction of perimeter walls and the central axis, as well as the conservation of the Shah Jahan Mosque, was also included. The rehabilitation of Babur’s Grave enclosure, the rehabilitation of the Queen’s Palace and Pavilion, construction of the Caravanserai and new swimming pool, and development of an operational plan and procedures for the site were also carried out.
Opposite page: Top, 1.5 kilometres of walls were rebuilt or repaired around the garden where people stroll and relax. Stone pathways and stairs have been laid on either side of the central axis.

Right, work undertaken since 2002 on Babur’s marble grave enclosure, which comprises a central arched opening flanked by pairs of marble lattice, or jali, screens, aimed to re-establish the original character of the grave area, seen also in section, below.

The landscaping aims to restore the character of the original garden, through the reintroduction of flowing water and the grading of adjoining terraces that have been replanted as distinct orchards. Stone pathways and stairs have been laid on either side of the central axis, which is flanked by an avenue of plane trees, interspersed with pomegranates, apricots, apples, cherries and peaches. Outside this zone, the terraces have been planted with mulberry, apricot, fig and almond trees, with copse of walnut along the reconstructed perimeter walls.

Along the central axis, water descends through a series of channels, water chutes and ponds, before being filtered and pumped back to the main holding tank at the base of the Garden Pavilion.

Phasing 2002 → 2008

Survey and project design; site clearance and grading; reconstruction of perimeter walls.

Archaeological excavations; restoration of Shah Jahan Mosque; landscaping and installation of irrigation system; construction of a Caravanserai.

Reconstruction of Babur’s grave enclosure and central axis; rehabilitation of Garden Pavilion and Queen’s Palace; landscaping and installation of irrigation.

Upon completion of rehabilitation, a Memorandum of Understanding for the formation of the Bagh-e Babur Trust was signed; implementation of operational plan and procedures.

Right, the war-damaged marble Mosque dedicated by Shah Jahan in 1675 was re-roofed with lime mortar and cracked marble elements were replaced, while the mihrab wall was refaced with marble in 2004. A plan and elevation of the Mosque are also shown, below.
In parallel with the garden rehabilitation, support has been provided for improvements in living conditions for the 10,000 residents of the surrounding neighbourhoods, through community-managed upgrading of storm-water drainage, water supplies and access. In 2007 a series of vocational training courses for women and men were initiated, in order to contribute to improving household livelihoods in the district. Upon completion of the rehabilitation work, the signature in early 2008 of a Memorandum of Understanding between Kabul Municipality, the Ministry of Information and Culture and AKDN paved the way for the formation of an independent Babur Garden Trust, which now operates the garden. Revenue derived from the growing numbers of visitors and market economy is recorded in 2007 to be 250 person/revenue in District 7 continues to rise.

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Timur Shah Mausoleum and Park
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

One of the largest surviving Islamic monuments in central Kabul, the Mausoleum of Timur Shah marks the grave of the son of Ahmad Shah Durrani, who effectively united Afghanistan in the late eighteenth century. Born in 1746, Timur Shah served as governor of Herat before facing down a military challenge to the throne from his elder brother, and then moved his capital from Qandahar northeast to Kabul. His son Zaman Shah laid him to rest in 1793 in a garden on the banks of the Kabul River, but it was not until 1817 that the actual construction of the Mausoleum began.

Timur Shah’s Mausoleum comprises an octagonal structure with two intersecting cross-axes organized on six levels. Above a crypt in which the grave stands is a square central space surrounded by an octagonal structure, with four double-height iwans on the main elevations. There are sixteen brick-vaulted spaces of varying size on the first floor, encircling the central space, with a flat roof above, surrounding the sixteen-sided drum under the domes. Following the central Asian tradition, the Mausoleum has an outer dome constructed on a high drum above a ribbed inner dome.

Surveys of the structure in 2002 revealed that part of the upper dome had partially collapsed and that rainwater had penetrated parts of the supporting drum. This area was therefore the focus of the initial conservation work, once the damaged roof sheeting and timber structure had been removed. Examination of the upper dome revealed that it had been built in stages, using ‘skins’ of brick masonry laid in relatively weak lime mortar. After the erection of a bamboo platform over the lower dome, and installation of two tension belts around the drum, a reinforced-concrete beam was poured around the inside, anchored into the brickwork with forty-eight stainless-steel anchors. Unstable sections of brickwork in the upper dome were removed, and repairs undertaken to match the original structure, using special bricks laid in lime mortar. The original geometry, comprising six layers of brickwork at the springing, reducing to two at the apex, was reproduced in the repairs.

As the upper roof was not part of the original scheme, a new geometry was devised for its profile, based on a harmonic curve that matched the proportions of the main structure. A total of thirty-two laminated timber rafters, measuring up
A section plan of Timur Shah Mausoleum includes the Park.

To thirteen metres in length, were produced to support a new ‘shell’ roof, which now spans the repaired dome. Timber boards were then screwed in a circumferential pattern over these rafters, prior to the fixing of galvanized sheeting.

While work proceeded on the main dome, repairs were carried out on the flat roofs and supporting vaults. Areas of facing brick on the elevations were also repaired, as were the soffits of the main vaults, where there was a high quality of brick masonry. In order to protect the lower sections of masonry and facilitate public access, a seven-metre-wide brick platform was built around the Mausoleum.

During the course of conservation work, negotiations took place for the relocation of the two hundred or more informal traders who had encroached on what had been the garden around the Mausoleum. A range of options was explored aimed at incorporating the traders into a new development on or adjoining the garden of the Mausoleum, but these were not approved by the Municipality, and the traders were removed in 2005. Since then, a perimeter wall has been constructed to protect the site, which has been planted with an orchard of mulberry trees – matching those seen in historic photographs – and last out with paths for pedestrian access through the garden.

Since its restoration, the central space of the Mausoleum has been the setting for lectures, seminars and exhibitions, and discussions are under way with the relevant authorities for the space and reclaimed garden to be used for cultural events on a regular basis. Despite the challenging physical and institutional context in which the project was realized, it stands as an example of how an important historic monument can help to encourage a wider process of regeneration in a fast-changing urban setting.

The informal commercial market, with over 200 traders, which occupied the original municipal park surrounding the Mausoleum, was relocated. Pedestrian paths and orchards have been placed in this new green space.

Challenges

SITE CONDITIONS
The limits on access to the Mausoleum posed a significant challenge, as did encroachments around the monument and across the adjoining park area.

DEMOGRAPHICS
The Mausoleum now stands in one of the busiest commercial areas in central Kabul – a fact that affected the negotiations leading up to the reclamation of the Park that had been encroached upon by informal traders.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS
The reclamation of the Park has contributed to improving the environmental situation in an important commercial neighbourhood. The site of the Kabul River remains a concern.

INFRASTRUCTURE
The poor state of infrastructure in the area around the Mausoleum and Park represented a challenge.

ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE
Encroachment by informal traders on a park (now re-claimed) that had originally surrounded the Mausoleum meant that the public was denied access to an important public green space.

BUILDING CONDITIONS
The poor condition of the Mausoleum, and the structural instability of its upper dome, represented a major challenge.

Significant Issues and Impact

DATA COLLECTION/SURVEYS
A range of surveys were conducted within the commercial area that surrounds the Mausoleum and Park.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS
Under the Kabul Master Plan, this area of District 1 has been designated a commercial area, although there are questions as to the future of the pockets of residential property to the west, and the Kabul River to the north.

PLANNING ISSUES
The reclamation of the Park has restored the desig- nated land use, although the lack of proper control on properties around the site could affect its use as a public green space.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS/MONUMENTS CONSERVED
The conservation of the largest surviving Islamic monument and across the adjoining park area.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING/CAPACITY BUILDING
The conservation work on the Mausoleum provided opportunities for the development of skills among Afghan craftsmen and professionals. The continuing use of the building for student lectures contributes to developing their awareness of cultural issues.

CONTRACTING METHODS
Given their specialized nature, conservation work was undertaken with direct labour, supervised by AKTC professional staff.

RELEVANT CODES/STANDARDS ADOPTED
All conservation work has been undertaken in accordance with the relevant international charters and Afghan domestic laws. The formulation of operational procedures draws on experience gained during the course of establishing the Bakh-e Balat Trust.

Partners

PUBLIC PARTNERS
Kabul Municipality, Ministry of Information and Culture.

PRIVATE PARTNERS
Informal traders, shopkeepers.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS
Community representatives.

Authoritative Framework

Memorandum of Understanding’ between Kabul Municipality, the Ministry of Information and Culture and AKDN signed in 2002, covering a range of urban conservation measures in District 1, Kabul.
project scope / objectives

the scope of the intervention includes documentation and conservation of historic buildings, together with the reclaiming and landscaping of public green space. basic infrastructure has been upgraded, while the development of craft skills measures aimed to enhance household livelihoods and support for neighbourhood planning initiatives are also within the programme.

asheqan wa arefan

the neighbourhood of asheqan wa arefan takes its name from two historic graves at which afghans come to worship and pay their respects to this day. as with the conservation of ten other buildings of religious significance in the area, the project was vital in building confidence within the community during the initial stage of the programme of the aga khan trust for culture (aktc) in the old city of kabul in 2002. found to be in a poor state of repair, the distinctive colonnaded entrance and passage that leads to the grave of asheq required extensive structural repairs, while the lower grave of aref, which retains its traditional wooden enclosure, was re-roofed, as were those of the adjoining summer and winter mosques. the courtyard of the shrine, which provides an important focus for residents in the area and visitors alike, was landscaped and improvements made to the public water supply and ablution facilities located at its perimeter.

the mosque of sedukan, which in its present form dates from the mid nineteenth century, lies to the north-east and was identified by residents as a priority in 2005. here, it was necessary to entirely reconstruct flood-damaged sections of the lower brick masonry structure, including the traditional hypocaust that provided underfloor heating to the ground-floor prayer space that is mainly used in winter. this was followed by the restoration of a finely carved wooden colonnade that divides the upper prayer space and the timberwork on the main east elevation. drawing on the experience gained in sedukan, a further ten community mosques, along with a large brick-domed madrasa, were restored in the old city between 2002 and 2010.

work began in early 2004 on the early twentieth-century house of muhammad amin, one of eleven historic homes to have been restored in the area. still inhabited by the son of its original builder, who was a carpenter, the dwelling is arranged on three levels around a courtyard, whose elevations retain the characteristic vertical-sliding timber shutters. subsidence under sections of the structural timber-frame of the house was addressed, and then repairs were carried out to load-bearing external brick masonry. following this, mud bricks infill between the lightweight timber framing – a widely used technique to strengthen structures in this earthquake-prone zone – was repaired on the upper levels. a more complex process of restoration was followed in the wasay house, which is

the entrance portico to asheqan wa arefan shrine, with its series of decorated plaster niches, was uncovered during the course of repairs and restored.

opposite page: a view inside the uliya madrasa shows the extent of damage to the structure as a result of conflict. work is proceeding fast on restoring the building, which will be returned to community use.

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work began in early 2004 on the early twentieth-century house of muhammad amin, one of eleven historic homes to have been restored in the area. still inhabited by the son of its original builder, who was a carpenter, the dwelling is arranged on three levels around a courtyard, whose elevations retain the characteristic vertical-sliding timber shutters. subsidence under sections of the structural timber-frame of the house was addressed, and then repairs were carried out to load-bearing external brick masonry. following this, mud bricks infill between the lightweight timber framing – a widely used technique to strengthen structures in this earthquake-prone zone – was repaired on the upper levels. a more complex process of restoration was followed in the wasay house, which is
thought to date from the mid nineteenth century and required stabilization of the entire structure. Historic photographs of the dwelling enabled the project team to ascertain the original decorative scheme, on which basis war-damaged parts of the internal moulded plaster decoration – including a series of recessed niches or chinikhana used for the display of porcelain – and timber screens within the main space on the first floor were restored. Here, as in other conservation projects, the documentation of the building has enabled a better understanding of the diversity of construction and decorative techniques used in the Old City over the past 120 years.

Even with some of its finest historic buildings restored, living conditions for many residents of the Old City remain poor, with widespread overcrowding and limited access to services within homes. The rehabilitation of traditional bathhouses or hammams, many of which were no longer operational, offered a means of improving family health and hygiene. For instance, the war-damaged domed structure of the hammam in the Shuturkana neighbourhood was entirely rebuilt, and the traditional hypocaust system of heating its semi-subterranean spaces was rehabilitated. Reopened in late 2006 and managed by private operators, the hammam is used by more than 150 residents a day on average, and generates revenue that is used for upgrading public infrastructure in the surrounding area.

As part of efforts to improve living conditions for the residents of the Old City, nearly six kilometres of underground and surface drains have been repaired or rebuilt over the past eight years, while an area of more than 22,000 square metres of pedestrian alleyways and streets have been paved within the historic fabric. The opportunities provided for residents to develop their skills and to find employment have been as important as the physical outcome of the conservation and rehabilitation work in Asheqan wa Arefan and adjoining residential neighbourhoods in the Old City. To date, nearly 320,000 workdays of skilled and unskilled labour have been generated among communities in the Old City, while more than 150 young men have undertaken apprenticeships as carpenters, masons and plasterers, working alongside highly skilled Afghan craftsmen. As part of an initiative aimed at improving family livelihoods, more than two hundred women from the neighbourhood have attended courses in tailoring, embroidery and kilim-weaving, along with literacy classes.
Challenges

PROJECT RISKS
Growing pressure on city-centre property presents a continuing threat, as does the absence of a coherent framework for urban development for Kabul as a whole.

SITE CONDITIONS
With some of the highest densities in the city, and access primarily by means of narrow alleyways between fragile traditional homes, conservation and upgrading faced significant logistical and technical challenges.

DEMOGRAPHICS
At more than 300 persons per hectare, the historic quarters have some of the highest recorded residential densities in Kabul. Surveys indicate a 15% increase in residential population in District 1 between 2003 and 2005 alone.

HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY
With nearly half of households occupying rented property and two thirds of families dependent on a single income (usually derived from casual labour), the Old City is one of the poorest areas in Kabul.

AVAILABILITY OF DRINKING WATER AND PROPER SANITATION FACILITIES
The piped water network in District 1 suffered extensive war-related damage, and more than a third of families rely on public sources, where contamination is common. There is no mains sewage.

INFRASTRUCTURE
Decades of under-investment in drainage, water supply and electrical networks, coupled with extensive war damage, means that significant investments are required to achieve even the most basic levels of service coverage for a fast-growing population in District 1.

BUILDING CONDITIONS
Lack of maintenance, together with war-related damage, results in the bulk of the traditional housing stock being in a poor state of repair. Added to this, high levels of occupancy in subdivided homes pose a challenge to efforts to improve living conditions.

Significant Issues and Impact

DATA COLLECTION/SURVEYS
Since 2004, regular baseline surveys have been conducted in District 1, covering more than 30,000 people.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS
The historic fabric within District 1 is designated for comprehensive ‘redevelopment’ in the various Master Plans drawn up for Kabul since the 1960s, but is now widely acknowledged to merit ‘special heritage zone’ status – even though there is no urban heritage policy to frame this.

PLANNING ISSUES
While several proposals for the rehabilitation of the historic quarters of Kabul have been drawn up since 2003, none has been formally adopted, nor have ‘neighbourhood plans’ been officially endorsed.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS/MONUMENTS CONSERVED
Since 2002, more than a dozen public buildings and 15 historic homes have been conserved within a cluster of historic fabric in the Old City.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/PROGRAMME
All conservation and upgrading activities have been undertaken in close collaboration with community representatives, who have also steered in managing and securing contributions to certain projects.

VOCA TIONAL TRAINING/CAPACITY BUILDING
More than 100 craftsmen have been trained through apprenticeships during the course of the conservation work, and some 60 women continue to take part in vocational training.

QUALITY OF LIFE
The deterioration of open spaces has been addressed through investments in urban squares, the reclamation of historic gardens, and landscaping measures in degraded municipal parks.

Partners

PUBLIC PARTNERS
Kabul Municipality, Ministries of Urban Development, Information and Culture, and Religious Affairs, Kabul Old City Commission.

PRIVATE PARTNERS
Property owners, businessmen, traders.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS
Community representatives.

Donors


Authoritative Framework

‘Memorandum of Understanding’ between Kabul Municipality, the Ministry of Information and Culture and AKDN signed in 2002 for urban conservation programme in District 1.
From its origins as an outpost of the Achaemenid Empire, the repeated strengthening of the Citadel of Qala Ikhtyaruddin, and the setting out of a walled settlement by the Ghaznavids, the city of Herat has had a turbulent history. Situated at the crossroads of regional trade, in the midst of rich irrigated agriculture, the area has been a prize for successive invaders. The city became a centre for Islamic culture and learning during the reign of Timur, whose successors commissioned several monumental buildings, but it then fell into decline under the Mughals. Considered part of Persia during the Safavid era in the eighteenth century, it was not until 1863 that Herat was incorporated into the emerging Afghan state.

The distinctive rectilinear layout of the city of Herat was delineated by massive earth walls that protected the bazaars and residential quarters that lay within. This was the extent of the city until the middle of the twentieth century, when administrative buildings were constructed outside of the walls to the northeast. In time, wealthier families moved away from the densely-inhabited historic fabric into suburbs that spread across what had been gardens to the north. The historic quarters remained home to some 60,000 people by the time that unrest broke out in 1979, resulting in the depopulation of the western quarters, where traditional buildings soon fell into disrepair or collapsed and infrastructure was looted or damaged. It was not until 1992 that clearance of mines and unexploded ordnance began, enabling families to resettle in the war-affected historic quarters and begin the process of rebuilding.

With a rapid increase in the urban population since 2002, pressure on central residential neighbourhoods has intensified, even though the state of infrastructure and the few public facilities result in poor living conditions for most inhabitants. In many cases, returnee families who had become accustomed to modern dwellings while in exile have demolished their traditional homes and, in the absence of building controls, built incongruous concrete structures, dozens of which now rise above the skyline of the Old City. Residential areas that adjoin main roads are rapidly being commercialized, with the construction of multi-storey ‘markets’ which have both an environmental and visual impact on the historic fabric.

In order to address these transformations, the programme of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in Herat has since 2005 involved processes of documentation, building conservation and upgrading, in parallel with measures to...
strengthen the capacity of and coordination between key institutions. Given the pace of change, one of the first priorities was to map the historic fabric and establish systems for monitoring demolitions and new construction. A survey of more than 25,000 residential and commercial properties in the Old City, undertaken in 2005–06, yielded important information on the current urban environment, and this has now been mapped and linked to a database, which has proved to be a useful resource for identifying priorities for intervention and could also be invaluable for physical planning.

The prime focus of AKTC's conservation work has been on two clusters of historic fabric, extending across the Bar Durrani and Abdullah Mesri quarters, where investments have been made in the conservation of key public buildings – mosques, cisterns and bazaars – as well as historic houses. A system of small-scale grants and building advice was also established, aimed at enabling some fifty owners of traditional homes to undertake basic repairs, which has resulted in improved living conditions while protecting the integrity of the historic fabric. As well as safeguarding historic property, these projects have provided a platform for the training of craftsmen, while demonstrating the potential of conservation and adaptive reuse in a context where there is a growing tendency to demolish historic property and 'redevelop'.

At the centre of one such cluster lies the domed Chahar Suq Cistern, constructed in 1634, which, along with smaller cisterns, remained the primary source of water for inhabitants of the Old City until the 1970s. The massive structure supports a brick dome that spans nearly twenty metres over a square reservoir which, at the time of initial surveys, was filled with domestic waste. Extensive repairs were carried out on the war-damaged dome and the masonry substructure that had been weakened by encroachments from adjoining shops. An urban square has been created in front of the north entrance, after the relocation of shops that had encroached on this area. Since its conservation, the Chahar Suq Cistern has been in regular use for cultural events, including exhibitions and music recitals.

Of the other cisterns that have been conserved in the Old City, one is being used as an art gallery, another is being converted into a public library, while another serves as a study space for students of a madrasa. Among other initiatives aimed at promoting the adaptive reuse of historic buildings is the Karbasi House, now a school for traditional music and crafts, and the Yu Aw Synagogue that is now used as a kindergarten. Among the thirty other public buildings that have been conserved in the Old City are the historic...
mosques of Hazrat Ali and Khaja Rokhband as well as several shrines, synagogues and a hammam or bathhouse. The largest single project to be undertaken in Herat by AKTC is the conservation of parts of the historic Citadel of Qala Ikhtyaruddin, where work began in late 2008 and is due for completion at the end of 2010.

Together with conservation of historic homes, these initiatives have provided opportunities for training in traditional construction and decorative techniques. Among the most significant of these dwellings is the Attarbashi House, which dates from the early twentieth century and retains distinctive northern and southern ranges of rooms (for use in summer and winter respectively), arranged around a courtyard. Traces of decorated plasterwork and intricate lattice orosi screens were found in a partially collapsed section of the house, which has been reconstructed, along with a small hammam for use by the family. To the south, in the Abdullah Mesri quarter, a very unusual painted mural was discovered in 2008 in the Ghulam Haider Posteen Doz House. Once the home of a wealthy family, the complex was found to be in a poor state of repair, and conservation work is under way on the structure, following documentation and stabilization of the mural.

As much as building conservation, however, the upgrading of infrastructure is critical to the future of the Old City of Herat. In order to contribute to the improvement of living conditions, nearly five kilometres of underground and surface drains have been repaired or rebuilt, and more than 6,000 square metres of pedestrian alleys and streets paved to facilitate access through the historic fabric. Together with the building conservation work, this has generated more than 240,000 workdays of skilled and unskilled labour, largely drawn from residents of the Old City, since 2005. These investments have directly benefitted at least half of the population of the Old City, prompting community-implemented improvements in some quarters that were not covered under AKTC’s urban conservation programme.

Aside from the physical challenges facing the historic fabric and the need for additional investment to render the Old City more habitable, the issue of management of the urban environment is now more critical than ever. Despite assurances that new development will be rigorously controlled, and appropriate plans drawn up to ensure safeguarding of the unique fabric of the Old City, city officials seem unable or unwilling to act to halt demolitions or inappropriate ‘redvelopment’. Given that many such officials lack the professional training or experience to effectively manage urban growth in this sensitive context, AKTC staff provide technical assistance to a Commission for the Safeguarding and Development of the Old City of Herat, comprising representatives from key institutions and professional bodies. While it has made limited progress on the reform of systems of building permits and the monitoring of new construction or demolitions, the Commission...
Challenges

PROGRAMME RISKS
White significant progress has been made in conservation of historic property and upgrading of community infrastructure, the lack of control over private development continues to affect the integrity of the surviving historic fabric of the Old City.

SITE CONDITIONS
The area is densely populated, with homes often overcrowded, and access is primarily by means of narrow alleyways. This poses a challenge during the course of both conservation and upgrading works, as did the presence of unexploded ordnance.

DEMOGRAPHICS
With an average of 385 persons per hectare, the residential quarter in the Old City have some of the highest densities in Herat, and there are indications that this is increasing as the value of property rates, and families are forced to move into overcrowded homes in what remains the most affordable part of the city.

HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY
A significant proportion of residents in the Old City inhabit rented homes, and rely on casual labour for their livelihoods.

STATUS OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION
There are very few educational or health facilities within the Old City, and residents have to travel elsewhere to have access to these services.

AVAILABILITY OF DRINKING WATER
AND PROPER SANITATION FACILITIES
More than a third of the homes in the Old City do not have access to a supply of safe piped water. While there is a system of underground drums which has been augmented in some quarters, most liquid waste flows into the 80 open sewers that lie within the historic fabric.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS
With extensive water damage and limited access to basic infrastructure and services for residents of the Old City, environmental conditions are generally poor.

INFRASTRUCTURE
A legacy of under-investment in drainage, water supply, and electrical networks, coupled with extensive water damage, requires significant investments to achieve even the most basic levels of service coverage for the resident population.

BUILDING CONDITIONS
The combination of lack of maintenance and war-related damage means that the bulk of the traditional housing stock is in a poor state of repair.

Significant Issues and Impact

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS
The historic fabric of the Old City has been ignored in the various Master Plans drawn up for Herat since 1970 and, although there is widespread support for it to be given some form of 'special heritage zone' status, there exists no legal framework in which this might occur.

PLANNING ISSUES
A range of planning proposals for key clusters within the Old City has been drawn up, but none has been formally endorsed. Instead, development takes place in a largely ad hoc manner.

BASELINES STANDARDS
In 2005-06 a property survey was conducted in the Old City, covering more than 25,000 premises. Subsequent monitoring within the historic fabric has enabled physical transformations that continue to be tracked.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INITIATIVES
Some 150 craftsmen have been trained through apprenticeships during the course of conservation works in Herat. The generation of employment through AKTC's conservation and upgrading activities over nearly five years has, therefore, made an important contribution to the urban economy.

CONSERVATION ASPECTS
With many historic buildings in Herat and the environs requiring conservation, efforts have been focused since 2002 on clusters of historic property within the Old City, as well as the shrine complex in Guzargah, which data from the 19th and 20th centuries. All works have been undertaken in partnership with Afghan counterpart staff, in order to ensure that both crafts and professional skills are developed during the course of the works.

QUALITY OF LIFE
Efforts are being made to transform the area around Qala Ikhtyaruddin into a public green space.

POST-IMPLEMENTATION PLANS
An Old City Commission has been established during the course of the conservation programme and is officially mandated to monitor development in the Old City and to oversee future planning initiatives.

Partners

PUBLIC PARTNERS
Herat Municipality, Office of the Governor, Departments of Urban Development, Information and Culture, and Religious Affairs.

PRIVATE PARTNERS
Herat Old City Commission, property owners, business men, traders, NGOs, Herat Professional Shura.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS
Community representatives.

Donors

Federal Republic of Germany, United States Embassy, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Prince Claus Fund.

Authoritative Framework

Memorandum of Understanding, between the department of Historic Monuments of the Ministry of Information and Culture and AKTC, signed in 2005, covering the urban conservation works in the Old City. Separate agreement covering the conservation work on Qala Ikhtyaruddin agreed with the Ministry of Information and Culture in late 2005.
The shrine complex of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari in Guzargah, north-east of Herat, is both an important example of Timurid architecture and a popular place of pilgrimage. Having spent a life of contemplation and writing in and around the village, Ansari was buried here in 1089. Records suggest that a madrasa was established in Guzargah in the late twelfth century, and this was probably the complex reconstructed by Shah Rukh in 1424 and which now makes up the shrine complex.

The large courtyard of the hazira of Abdullah Ansari, with its arched iwans on the main axes and rows of study rooms between, takes a form that is more commonly associated with a madrasa. Both the main entrance arch and the high iwan that rises above Ansari's grave retain sections of fine glazed tile epigraphy and areas of geometric decoration. Some of the finest extant Timurid decoration in the region has been documented here as part of the limited intervention of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in the complex.

Beginning in 2005, repairs were carried out to all roofs of the Shrine, which had been poorly maintained risking damage to the fragile internal plaster decoration in parts of the complex. During the course of this work, evidence emerged of alterations that had been made over time to the eastern iwan, which rises more than eighteen metres above the surrounding village. The removal of concrete that dated from the 1970s permitted a detailed structural analysis, on which basis a series of brick buttresses were constructed on the eastern side. At the same time, three vaulted rooms in the north-east corner of the complex, which were found to be unstable, were reconstructed on the same footprint as the original, using traditional materials. One of these rooms houses an intricately decorated basalt grave known as the Haft Qalam. It is foreseen that these spaces will in time be used to display important objects from the Shrine.

Opposite page: Above, the entrance iwan to the Shrine retains sections of fine glazed-tile epigraphy and areas of geometric decoration. Below, an axonometric of the Shrine complex.

Project Scope / Objectives

The restoration of the Shrine complex at Guzargah involved structural analysis, detailed surveys, roof repairs and landscaping, together with reconstruction and restoration to better enable pilgrim visiting and document the surviving Timurid decoration.
Challenges

PROJECT RISKS
The principal risk in conserving the Shrine complex was in securing acceptance from the resident community and the many pilgrims who visit the site.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS
The principal environmental challenge lay in the protection of the historic garden and graveyard, which risked being encroached upon.

BUILDING CONDITIONS
Poor maintenance of the Shrine complex resulted in the various buildings being in a highly vulnerable condition at the start of the works.

Significant Issues and Impact

HISTORIC BUILDINGS/MONUMENTS CONSERVED
All significant historic buildings within the Shrine complex have been conserved, although there remains significant work to be done on the tile and plaster decoration.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/PROGRAMMES
All conservation work was undertaken in close collaboration with the Mir of Guzargah and other community representatives, who played a critical role in facilitating the works.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING/CAPACITY BUILDING
Dozens of craftsmen were trained during the course of the conservation works.

CONTRACTING METHODS
With the exception of landscaping, all works were carried out with direct labour supervised by AKTC professional staff.

RELEVANT CODES/STANDARDS ADOPTED
All conservation work in Guzargah has been undertaken strictly in accordance with the relevant international charters and Afghan domestic law.

Partners

PUBLIC PARTNERS
Ministry of Information and Culture.

PRIVATE PARTNERS
NGOs.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS
Mir of Guzargah, community elders.

Donors

Federal Republic of Germany.

Authoritative Framework

Memorandum of Understanding’ between the department of Historic Monuments of the Ministry of Information and Culture and AKTC, signed in 2005, covering amongst other things the conservation of the Shrine complex of Abdullah Ansari in Guzargah.