

Museum of the City in Riobamba

Reinforcing Identity

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Introduction

The museum of the city was an idea generated by the municipality to have a place in the city to gather main valuable objects of different museums and establish a place where the city history could be shown and get the habitants to know the city.

Although the city was destroyed and rebuilt in another place in early XIX century, it kept the idea of “damero” the grid used by Spanish conquers. It is easily readable and even original street material can be found there.

The city is consider a “new city” due to its built in early XIX century and its grew in early XX century with great samples of neo-classic style architecture designed mainly by Italian architects (Durini, Russo, among others) and local work force.

In these days, the city importance that once it has is vanishing due to many problems, heritage ignorance, lack of pertinence by habitants and economical problems as well.

Unluckily with the building ready to be used, the plan to put up a museum has never been completed. There is no museum plan, and just a few objects are displayed, therefore it does not work as it was thought it could be.

Abstract

A city without built heritage does not have a history/story to tell. A city without history/story does not go anywhere. These are some of the reasons why it is important to work in this building and create the museum of the city.

This research tries to complete a project that once had a valuable idea, but never fulfilled it. This is one case with no maintenance plan afterwards the restoration work, that at the end has given to the city a nice building to see but not to use neither to keep it for a long time.

Background

History of the city

Riobamba, located 188Km south of Quito, the capital of Ecuador, the city is surrounded by snow top mountains. Is geographical situated in the middle of the country which gave to the city protagonism along the history of Ecuador.

The city has 128.000 habitants among half caste and aborigens who coexist in 2.812,29 hectares.

The city of San Pedro de Riobamba is the capital city of the province of Chimborazo named after the main volcano of the zone. Riobamba is located in the north part of the province at 2754 meters above sea level. The weather is template dry and climate varies between 12° to 18° C.

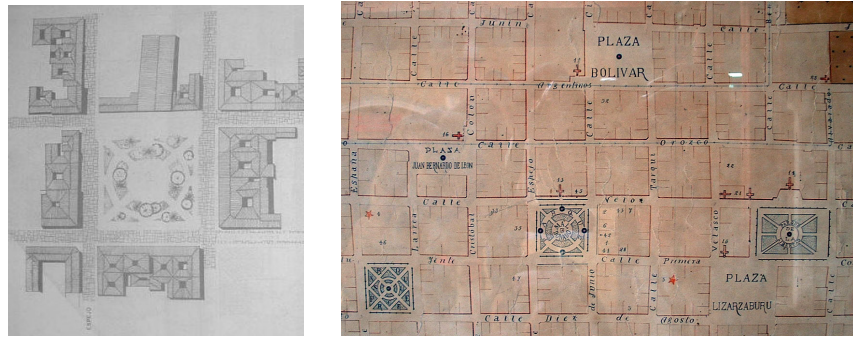
The city coordinates are 1° 41' 46" south latitude and 0° 3' 36" west longitude of Quito meridian. Is geographically situated in the centre of the country equidistant from north and southern borders, just 188 kilometers from the capital city.

History of the building, location and surroundings

The building is a Neo-classical style house, on Primera Constituyente and Espejo in one of the corners of "Parque Maldonado", the city main square. It is surrounded by important buildings such as the cathedral and other buildings in same architectural style, such as the municipality palace, the governorate building, the curia, and some former dwellings adapted for public and private offices.

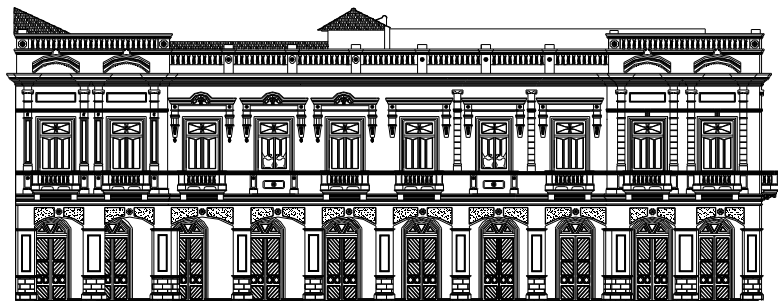
The house of the museum was built in 1921 by Vicente A. Costales. Originally there were two separate houses designed as dwellings in upper floor and shops in lower floor. One house was for the builder

and his family and the other for his son, Dr. Francisco Costales and his wife.



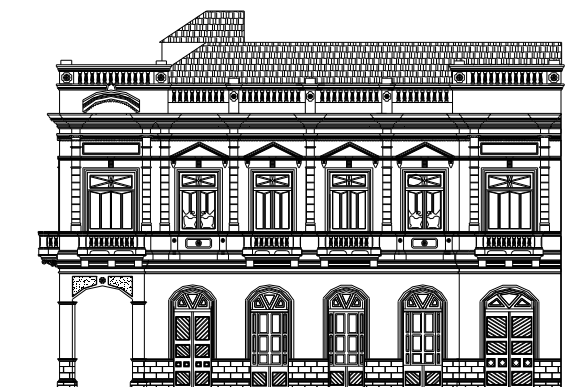
Both properties belonged to many owners after originally ones, until they were finally bought by the municipality in the eighties.

Based on documentation one house was renovated in 1965 by one of the new owners, and then the whole house was restored in 2000 for its new use as a local museum.



Both houses served as dwellings, rented rooms for different kind of shops and then they were partially empty until restoration.

Main restoration work was done in 2000, roofs, floors, handrails, among other stuff were replaced and both buildings were connected, now they work as one, unluckily no drawings can be found of the original layout of the properties.



Function, size, materials and status

As I mentioned before originally there were two houses now working as one. First one had 541m² and the second one 567m². Therefore the total size of the house is 1108m²

The building keeps the idea of a two story house with internal yard surrounded by columns and an upper balcony. In the restoration work, patios were covered with metallic structure and polycarbonate sheets.



The construction technic used in the building is self sustaining structural wall system with thick walls of red brick. Most of the roof is a wooden structure covered ceramic tiles, part of it is accessible and now used as a terrace, patio floors are of stone and rooms floors are of wood.



Three rooms in the upper floor have detailed decoration in walls and three rooms have detailed paint metallic ceiling tiles.



Internally, it has exhibition rooms, offices, training classrooms and a small auditorium, among other rooms used for diverse activities.



The team that works there is conformed by the manager and a graphic designer; so far the museum has an important annually event caled “Salón Nacional de Artes Plásticas, focused in new artists in the country.

The gallery has almost 30 exhibitions per year within art, sculpture, drawing, etc. Including international exhibitions of photography and painting.



Besides these activities, the building has been occupied with offices for municipality departments and NGOs.

Adjacent to the museum is an empty lot, which is meant to be an office building attached to the museum for a better internal distribution.



Analysis

The cultural historical values of the building

This building has architectural/technique main value. It is important as an example of architecture of a period of time. Mainly most of the neoclassical style architecture have been attributed to Italian architects however documentation regarding this building clearly shows local architects and builder did also contribute with the architecture of the city with fine examples of buildings characterized with well decorate facades and interior decoration such as wall painting and decorate metal ceiling tiles. The building is listed as monumental architecture by “Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural”, INPC, (National Institute of Cultural Heritage).

Besides described values, it has additional historical, location and identity values.

It lays across the street of the main city square in one of the main zones of the city centre close to some other samples of neo classical architecture. This zone is listed as heritage by “Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural”, INPC, (National Institute of Cultural Heritage).

Nowdays, it has value for the citizens as it is the Museum of the City, the place intended to be one of the most important places in the city showing locals and visitors the identity of Riobamba and its habitants.

Problems

As stated before the building opened up to the public as the Museum of the City, although due to political and economical problems, it was never completed. Nowdays it works more as a temporary exhibition galley.

Main trouble so far is the lack of a set annual budget to include maintenance and the non existence of economical authonomy to manage resources as results of activities in the museum. At the

moment municipality treasury works as a central point of collection and annual sharing out of income.

The use of the building is inappropriate, no zones are define, there is a mixture of public and private activities. No vertical communication for elder or disable people, no signage neither adecuate lighting in some areas.

There is no budget for maintenance neither maintenance nor conservation plans for the building.

Buildings in the block do not work as a unit within a certain plan of preservation, I consider important to have goals so that all of them walk to the same objective.

Proposal

To reopen the museum will help to preserve some of the legacy and to reinforce the identity of the city. The city needs a place where the community can interact and find a new way to help understand their history.

To have a new addition for modern facilities, technical equipment, and a better internal organization.

To prepare a plan that must include a new floor organization including the design for the new building and a general conservation schedule for both buildings, considering the surroundings and the problem that working with an old and a new building connected and functioning for the same purpose mean. It is important to include vertical circulation for elder and disable people.

To include in the management plan some extra services that need to be provided in a museum, such as a cafeteria, specialized library and souvenirs and art crafts shop, therefore refurbishing some of the rooms for this purpose. All this activities will give an economical benefit to the institution.

The final goal is to have a set place for the museum, working to reinforce the identity of the city and to have a certain number of new events every time where habitants are livily part of the activity, these might include artisan fairs, traditional games, contests.

Method

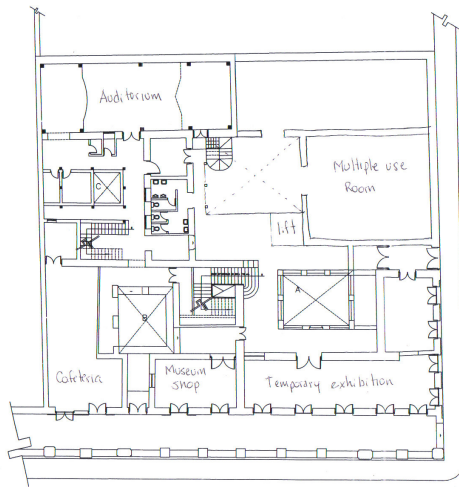
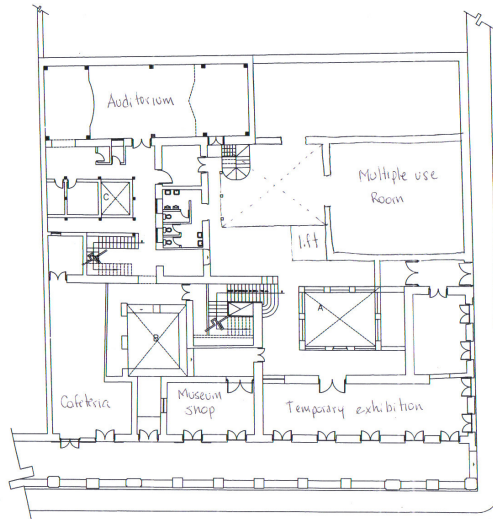
Information

All information regarding the building, starting with this document must be kept and any other document related as well, such as photography, layouts, drawings, plans, etc

Design

Based on the requirements by the museum personnel and their activities, design work will be carried out to comply with requirements. All the work done must give them a better place to work.

Architecture design:



Internal Distribution

Is important to connect both buildings and have them work as one. The explanation is divided in existing and new building for better understanding of the proposed zone.

A new visitors' tour is set considering private, semiprivate and public access. It needs to have a point to access and a point to exit, the new path takes the visitors through main rooms in an organized way without getting to semi private or private areas.

It is important to have the central courtyards used as gathering points, ticket counters and guide desks. The central yards need to have an activity assigned to it and not empty with nobody to show visitors all what can be found inside.

Existing building

First floor is intended for public access, it will include a cafeteria, an auditorium, museum shop, and temporary exhibition rooms.

Second floor to be used as permanent exhibition rooms.

Finally, a terrace for limited access.

All infraestructure supplies must be checked and security and surveillance system are mandatory in this building.

New Building

New building will have modern equipment, water supply and drainage, power supply, surveillance system, fire protection system, etc.

First floor is thought as a place for public acces as well with workshops and classrooms, although most of the zone is for training, there is a need for a museum storage to be in first floor and have authorized entrance only, this part will not interfere with the rest of zones for visitors.

Second floor and third floor will provide room for management offices for approximately 260 sq meters each floor.

The new projects must respect heigth o neighbour buildings, therefore heigth of each floor will not be the usually minimum height of 2,40mts. Anyhow heights for cultural buildings requiere more than minimun mentioned before.

New building needs to include vertical circulation for elder or disable people such as lifts

New building will connect to existing one generating an open space to preserve the idea of an internal central patio.

As other entral courtyards, new one will be covered with a light material and light structure.

Facades

Its design must blend within the context rather than breaking it.

Façade must keep the continuity of opennings in neighbouring buildings facades.

Must not use curtain walls, within the city centre some poor samples of use of glass rains have been found, they usually attempt to the aesthetic lecture of a unity in the blocks and it is preferable to use a simple modern architecture in the proposed building.

It must have ceramic tiles roof in order to keep same lecture than surrounding buildings.



It is important to clearly show that the new portion of the building belongs to the Museum of the City, some sort of distinguished material needs to be read in the new construction.

Maintenance plan

- Establish autonomy work form the municipality
- Create a management group of action that will follow the proposed plan, make sure it is adequate and fullfill needs. Once is it completed, the team must be responsible for the correct development of the conservation plan. Members need to be part of different city sectors, private and public, such as Architecture School, Municipality, National Heritage Institute, etc.
- Contact international organizations of heritage for support and advice.
- Increase personnel to work in the museum, and have capable and prepared staff to run the museum based on the reopening project.
- Clearly stablish positions and activities of each employee,
- Involve not only the personnel at the museum but local government, cultural entities and private organizatrion on the well sustainable future of the museum.
- Additional economical income by renting some of the museum areas, specially in first floor for private events.
- Prepare a safety and health environmental management plan for daily activities and for eventual disasters.
- Interact with community, prepare and maintain a continuos cultural programme for all targets.

Budget

For the construction based on average cost per square meter (USD\$600,00) the new building will cost USD\$468.000,00. Besides this amount the budget need to prepare and include a monthly budget for maintenance.

Organizations named below are some of the possible sources for project budget:

NATIONAL

Foncultura

Fonsal (local government agency)

Municipio de Riobamba (Municipality)

Ministerio de Cultura (Ministry of Culture)

Current Status of the Work

The project is only an academic work at the moment, although we are working on getting more organization and people involved. The next step is to get this building and the neighbour ones together as a project to have a conservation and preservation plan, this project will help not only to preserve the buildings but the zone where they lay on as well. At the same time we are working on getting the local authority interested in future plans of cultural development where this project can fit in.

Discussion & Conclusions

It is important also to connect this project with others in the city to create a well sustainable action in the future.

A possible museum net is needed where all the museums in the city can work for the promotion and increase of tourism in the zone.

This research work intends to contribute with the preservation of the city heritage by giving a new sample of how a built heritage can work for the city. Official authorities should work together with what community wants, needs and is looking for. Authority also must prepare public policies oriented towards the protection of all those places in the city that had not been given importance so far, and that unluckily are remaining as abandoned ruins of the past.

This can be the pilot project for some other similar type architecture / use buildings in the zone, such as the train museum building, the post office building, and former, independence building.

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Julio López (Architect)

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