

# Old Public Jailhouse

Guayaquil, Ecuador

## *Conservation Plan*



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## **Abstract**

The present proposal is about the Old Public Jailhouse in Guayaquil, which started to be built in 1886 and was finished in 1905, after the *Great Fire*. This fire was named this way because it destroyed 75% of the city, including the most important public buildings and left without home to great part of its inhabitants.

This building was the first, in Guayaquil and in Ecuador to use concrete as a construction system and is the oldest and unique building in all Guayaquil that survived the Great Fire. In Guayaquil the tradition was to use timber to construct different kinds of buildings but after being burned for several times, it was necessary to look for fire resistant materials, such as concrete, brick, iron, etc. One can say that the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> meant a turning point to Guayaquil's architecture.

Although the compromise to rehabilitate this building exists, this hasn't begun because the city and local authorities haven't seen the importance of the inhabitants' historic memory and identity reflected in the jailhouse.

# Introduction

## Architecture in Guayaquil



*Las Peñas neighborhood, c. 1910*

It is not easy to understand how a city as Guayaquil, where the historical growth, urban planning processes and municipal laws have determined the loss of valuable evidence of the architecture from the past, can still conserve valuable buildings able to be qualified as heritage; in fact, Guayaquil still offers a historic center with symbolic value, defined by the colonial design and framed in geographical references as the river, the hills and water inlets, the center of the main administrative, financial and trade activities, major monuments and squares and parks.

The “Great Fire” on October 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, 1896, was in the history of the city, one of the most catastrophic due to the magnitude of its effects, but after the project of the French engineer Gaston Thoret, the city was definitely unified, because until that moment it has been separated in the original Old City and the New City, designed by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.



*Guayaquil, after the “Great Fire”, 1896*

After the fire, houses preserved the spatial structure and punctual characteristics of the traditional colonial architecture and repeated the principles of the traditional architecture; that is, the use of timber in the construction, spatial organization around an interior courtyard, external porches, “chazas”<sup>1</sup> and facades with classical composition.

One building that establishes a difference in this tradition is The Municipal Jailhouse, started in 1886, projected by the Italian architect Rocco Queirolo, and completed between 1902 and 1905, with a reinforced concrete slab by the Venezuelan engineer Francisco Manrique.

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<sup>1</sup> Wood jalousie windows

## The Academic Heritage

This period (1916-1929) is characterized by the incorporation of the Academic Classicism in the formal codes of architecture, mainly through principles of reinforced concrete already used as a new construction system.



*Palacio de la Gobernación, 1924*

It is worth to mention the establishment of several construction companies with foreign technicians and designers, specially Italians, some of them were: Departamento de Construcciones de la Sociedad Bancaria del Chimborazo, Compañía Italiana de Construcciones and Sociedad Técnica Fenix .

The economical crisis in 1929 also had an impact on architecture and the architects started to develop projects where the classical ornamentation was reduced.

## The Modern Heritage

Since 1930 more buildings without ornamentation are built, as a reaction to the Academy, with similar formal codes of modern architecture and new proposals ranging from the neo gothic: Guayaquil`s Cathedral (1928-1973) the Archbishop`s Palace (1967); Neo Moorish proposals as Torre del Reloj (1931); or the “*Californian Spanish style*” initiated in 1940.

Within the modern architecture it is worth to mention the projects of Francesco Maccaferri developed in the 1930s, such as: Maccaferri building (1930), Villa Ycaza Cornejo (1933); Bucaram building, in 1937; Parodi House and Cucalón and Jouvín buildings, in 1938 and M. E. Cucalón, in 1940.

In 1949, La Casa de la Cultura del Guayas, projected by Architect Guillermo Cubillo starts the consolidation of the modern architecture. Since this moment, some big infrastructural projects are also developed such as Coliseo Cubierto de Deportes(1963); Dolores Sucre High School (1964); Seguro Social; and the Seguro Social Hospital (1956-1970).

*From left to right, INCA building (1951), School of Architecture (1974), Seguro Social (1961)*





# Background

## Geography and location



The Republic of Ecuador was founded in 1830, when the country obtained the independence from Spain. Ecuador is a small country of 270,000 sq. km. and with approximately 13 million inhabitants, 74.3 percent of whom live in cities. Ecuador, which sits on the north Pacific coast of South America, between Colombia and Peru. Ecuador straddles the Equator, from which the country receives its name, between latitudes 2° N and 5° S and 74° and 82° W. Although its size, is divided in

three continental natural regions Coast towards the west, the Highlands in the center, and the Amazonian region towards the east; and one insular: The Galapagos Islands.

## Climate

The location of Ecuador in the tropical stripe in combination with the Interandean Region, allows for a variety of climates, from the coastal and Amazonian tropical hot-humid climate to the thermal layers of the highlands.

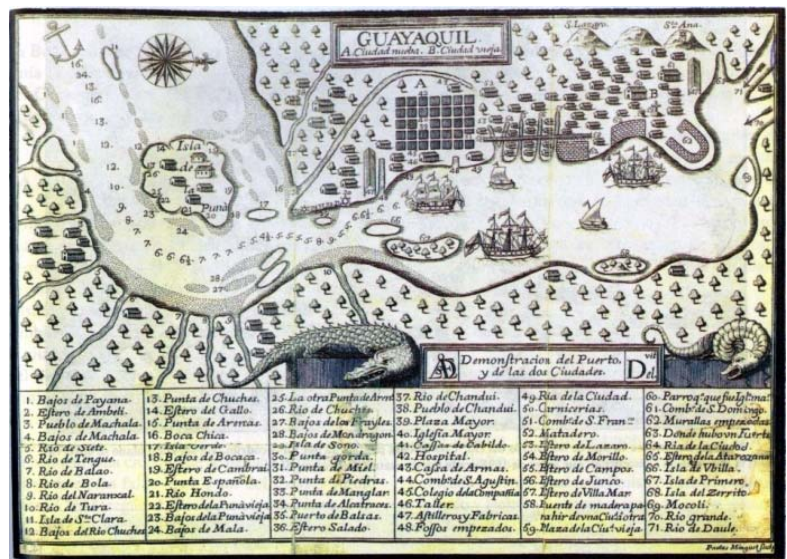
The Coast Region experiences only two climatic seasons in the year, classified in five months of warm humid and rainy, from January through May, and seven months of temperate and dry, from June through December. In the particular case of Guayaquil, the weather annual range is between 25 and 26°C. The annual average precipitation is 1 500 mm<sup>2</sup>.

## Santiago de Guayaquil

After thirteen years of its foundation in 1547, the city of Santiago de Guayaquil was moved some 50 kilometers from the Gulf of Guayaquil, in the few high lands of the foothills south of “Cerrito Verde”, about what was described as a small irregular square. Between the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, had risen from 300 to about 800 inhabitants, and in 1688 it had about 2,000 inhabitants.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century passed there were a succession of all kinds of disasters which finished in 1687 with the destruction of the city after the attack of Pirates Crogniet, Le Picard and Dew, and this, along with the fact of population growth in a reduced

*Santiago de Guayaquil in 1746*



<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ambiente.gov.ec/WEB/Publicaciones/Archivos%20pdf/Marino%20CosteroWEB.pdf>

settlement, prompted the Town Hall to take the decision to move the city about a mile south of its original site, on piece of land considered to have the best defense surrounded by swamps and little flooding.



In this movement established in 1692, it was decided to draw a “*line and ruler*” orthogonal grid with straight streets and square blocks, with twenty-five city blocks: twenty-four of them built and a central square for the Cathedral.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was marked by the process of population growth to the south of the city. The architecture was still composed of wooden buildings with roofs with ceramic tile, ground floor with arcades and shops and two upper floors, with balconies and large windows with front galleries.

A number of improvements and new urban public services are beginning to appear in the city in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, despite these improvements, the city remained noisy and filthy.

The “*Great Fire*” in 1896 is undoubtedly one of the greatest tragedies suffered by the city in its history, burned a total of 92 blocks of 458 which was then the city, destroying 1103 homes and buildings the existing 4265. They stayed close to 33,000 homeless people, a total of approximately 59,000 people living at that time in Guayaquil.

Nowadays, Guayaquil is the nation’s principal seaport and international trade center, and also is considered the economic capital of Ecuador.

*Top: Guayaquil and The Guayas River, c. 1930.*

*Below: Guayaquil and The Guayas River, 2008.*





## History of the Old Public Jailhouse



GUAYAQUIL—Cárcel de Mampostería de la Ciudad.

*The Public Jailhouse, c. 1909*

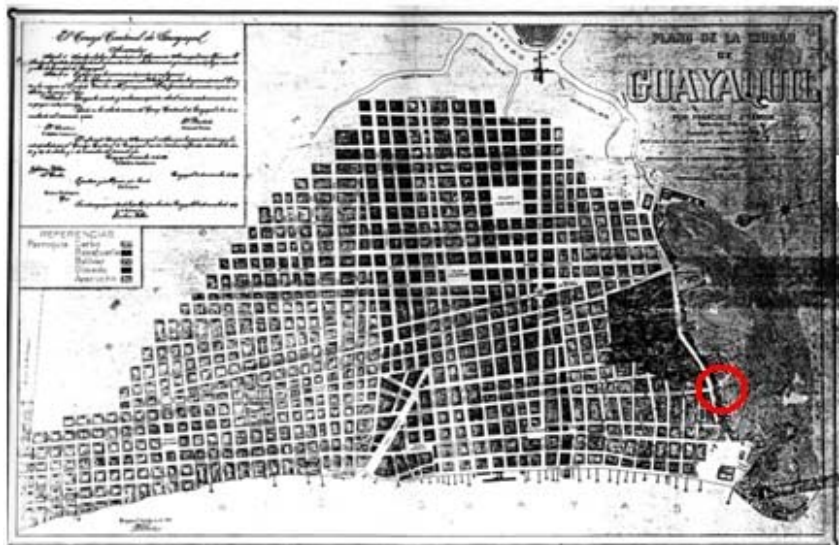
At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the authorities of Guayaquil, decided to build a new prison, built in reinforced concrete. The construction of the Public Municipal Jailhouse started in 1886, projected by Italian architect Rocco Queirolo Pinasco. The construction process developed slowly until 1896, but due to the *Great Fire* it stopped. On October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1903 it was decided to call to continue the construction that was assigned to the Venezuelan engineer Francisco Manrique Pcanís, who finished the construction in October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1905.

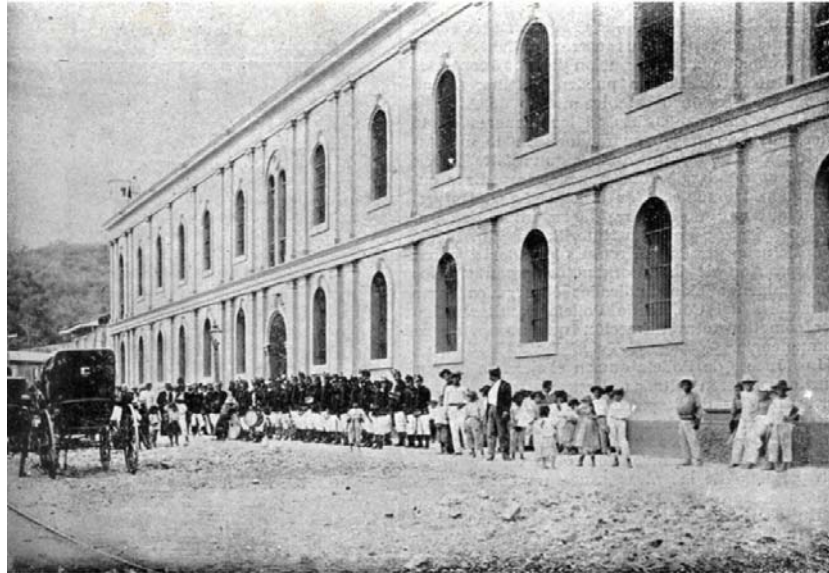
In December 17<sup>th</sup> 1907 the building was given to the Municipality for its use as public jail. In 1923 the building was deemed unsafe and inadequate and stated that it was a ruin, however continues its use as a jail until 1964.

This building was officially declared an Ecuadorian Landmark protected by the National Institution of Heritage (Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural del Ecuador) in 1982, as part of the architectural heritage of Guayaquil.

After having different functions through the years, in 1992 the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil received the building in concession, by the Government, for 49 years, with a commitment to use it exclusively devoted to cultural and academic purposes. However, it has been seventeen years and has not been possible to realize this task.

*Guayaquil in 1907, with the location of the Public Jailhouse*





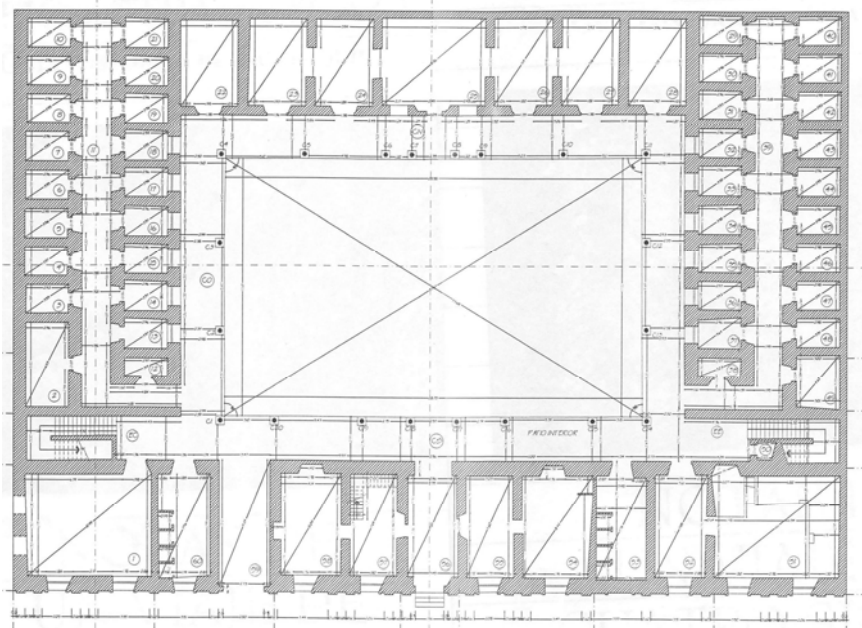
*The Public Jailhouse,  
Exterior view, c. 1920*

The building occupies an area of 2036, 40 sq. meters, and is close to one of the most important historical areas of Guayaquil, now a cultural and touristic circuit.

The building is a two stories block, while inside the pavilions are presented as a solid block with a central courtyard around which are the cells, and a gallery is presented as a cloister. The main facade is flat, where a cornice marks the division of the two floor plants. The towers stand out in each of the corners.

Structurally, the building is solid brick and one meter thick concrete walls which rest on a flat slab of reinforced concrete.

*Ground floor plan*





## Old Public Jailhouse Values

- This Prison is the first building made of cement and iron in Guayaquil, and possibly of Ecuador, and it is one of first constructions that used this construction system.
- It is the oldest building that exists in Guayaquil, being the only building that survived the *Great Fire* of 1896.
- It is part of a cultural historic circuit that includes: Las Peñas neighborhood, Santa Ana Hill, El Carmen Hill, Santo Domingo Church, Anthropological and Contemporary art Museum, Luis Vernaza Hospital, buildings that are part of the oldest part of town.

## Problems and actual situation

The abandonment of the building for many years has developed many problems, the main are:

- Changes in the interior spaces and constructions added on the top floor.
- Serious structural damage in the floor slab and roof slab, steel structure exposed, which also is affected by corrosion
- Serious impact on the facilities, exposed electrical installations and inadequate sanitary facilities, potable water and sewerage, pipes completely collapsed
- Loss of iron doors in the cells located on the ground floor.

*Different views of the interior of the building*







## Past interventions

In 2002, as part of the city historic areas recovering, the Municipality of Guayaquil conducted an intervention of the façade of the building. Those works included the recuperation of surveillance towers, provided that this work will include upgrading the interiors.

## Proposal

Use:

- a) Reconvert the building oriented to repression into a space of cultural and educational development.
- b) Preserve and retrieve a symbol of the city.
- c) Integrate the building to a cultural historic and tourist circuit.
- d) Comply with the commitment made to the State by Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil.
- e) Provide the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil with a space to develop their social and cultural outreach.
- f) Develop an area to show the history of the building and the conservation process.

Conservation Project:

- a) Establish the emergency measures designed to preserve the integrity of the building.
- b) Strengthen the structure, without altering their formal characteristics and adaptation to new use.
- c) Establish the nature of intervention that involves respect for the building, restoring the original settings.

## Method

- a) Determine current condition (pathology, damages, characteristics, etc.)
- b) Photographic and video documentation.
- c) Architectural drawings (floor plans, sections, facades, details).
- d) Structural analysis (foundations, roof, walls, staircases, etc.).
- e) Status of installations (electrical, water sewerage, drainage)
- f) Research of historical documents and photographs (old newspapers, old council and private files, archives, etc.)
- g) Taking administrative decisions to define the new use of the building.
- h) Elaboration of a complete architectural conservation design.
- i) Definition of the budget to implement the project.
- j) Promotion and public support.
- k) Establish a maintenance program.



## Conservation Project

### Determine current condition

An analysis of the building can be established that the main damages are:

- Added construction in the upper level.
- Severe structural damage in the slab floor and the 1<sup>st</sup> level slab
- Moisture in the walls
- Damage to electrical installations.
- Breakage of water pipes and drain pipes
- Superposition of paint on the exterior walls and in the interior.
- Alteration of original colors of the building.
- Loss of iron in doors and windows in the cells.

### Photographic and video documentation

Conduct a photographic and documentary record video from both the state and the intervention process of the building.

### Architectural drawings

It must be performed a detailed survey and architectural design of the building, both in architecture and in structural design in addition to surveying and architectural details. It is also necessary to perform the structural and facilities.

### Structural analysis

The main problem presented by the building is the damage in the slab, both floor and roof, this is mainly due to the system that is made of reinforced concrete flat slab.

Use of this system is typical of the early structural slabs made of reinforced concrete in the late nineteenth century, which, with the years suffer from internal oxidation of the structure and wear out the coating, leaving exposed the structural skeleton. In this building sit on the slabs bearing walls of brick and concrete one meter thick, this is in good condition.

### **Status of installations**

Many of the building facilities relate to those made in 1905 during the original construction, so their condition is deteriorated. The equipment is inadequate and outdated. Sanitary facilities, potable water and sewerage have serious damage because of the use of iron pipes that are rusted and broken into several parts.

### **Research of historical documents and photographs**

One of the problems is the study of such buildings is the lack of historical information; this is mainly due to the destruction of important files in the Great Fire of 1896. As noted, it is important to conduct a detailed investigation of the history of the building, its construction, its changes over time, agreed to consult, public and private archives, to obtain new data and images.

### **Define the new use of the building**

The decision regarding the new use of the building lies in the authorities of the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil, according to the agreement signed in 1992 with the State. The agreement requires that the university intended to use the building for cultural and social development.

Considering the building is integrated into a circuit of historic buildings in the city and adjacent to an area inhabited by poor people, the plan is to use for the development of university extension services related to some of the university faculties: Medicine, Law, Social Work, and Psychology. In addition the university will develop an area to exhibit their archaeological collection and other space to display the history of the building and the prison situation in the country.

### **Elaboration of a complete architectural conservation design**

In general the conservation project was established with the following steps:

1. Determine, according to historical research, the original layout of the spaces of the building
2. Identify areas that are not part of the original draft, planning their removal and release of the property.
3. Determine the budget of a new floor tile and new tile roof.
4. Define the new use of the building.
5. Prepare the architectural design with the addition of the new use
6. Develop the final architectural and engineering (electrical devices).

### **Definition of the budget to implement the project**

Before starting, is necessary to make a general budget, for each step of the project. In this case, the higher cost is given by the intervention and change in the slab and in the adaptation of new technical facilities.



## Promotion and public support

For the proper conservation and management should be considered the involvement of civil society in the conservation project. Whereas the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil is a private nonprofit organization, will be necessary to search for financing in local and national government. Moreover, much of the use of the building after his intervention would be oriented to community service.

## Establish a maintenance program

Finally, it is necessary to establish a plan for maintenance and sustainability of the building in order to safeguard its preservation and use.

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