STATE PARTY
Mexico

STATE, PROVINCE OR REGION
Tlaxcala

NAME OF PROPERTY
Franciscan Ensemble of the Monastery and Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, Tlaxcala (As Extension of the property “Earliest 16th-Century Monasteries on the Slopes of Popocatépetl”)

GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES TO THE NEAREST SECOND
The Franciscan Ensemble of the Monastery and Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption is located in the state of Tlaxcala, in the Mexican Central Plateau, 19°18’50.34” North Latitude and 98°14’15.57” West Longitude.

TEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE BOUNDARY(IES) OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY
The Franciscan Ensemble of the Monastery and Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, located in the Historic Center of the city of Tlaxcala, capital of the State of the same name, borders:
To the north, with the Xicohténcatl Square, that in the past was part of its lower atrium and Morelos street that extends from this point to the east.

To the south, with the Del Vecino street and its monumental stairway.

To the east, with private housing complexes and Prolongación Morelos street.

To the west, with the Bullring “Jorge Aguilar El Ranchero” and the streets De la Capilla and Independencia, this last formed in the past the borders of the lower atrium of the Ensemble.

MAPS OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY, SHOWING BOUNDARIES AND BUFFER ZONE

1. In addition to the maps related to the location of the Ensemble, Documentary Annex I «Cartography», contains Geographic Information System (GIS) with socio-demographic data, geographical, statistical and urban areas relevant to understand the setting and infrastructure of the urban area where the Franciscan Ensemble of the Monastery and Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption is located. This information system was developed by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) with data updated as of July 2019.
Nominated property and Buffer Zone

Franciscan Ensemble of the Monastery and Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption of Tlaxcala

- **NAME OF PROPERTY**: Franciscan Ensemble of the Monastery and Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption of Tlaxcala

- **CITY**: Tlaxcala of Xicohténcatl

- **STATE OR PROVINCE**: Tlaxcala

- **DATE**: May 2019

- **SCALE**: 1:1,000

- **DATUM**: GCS WGS 1984

- **D WGS 1984**

- **COORDINATE SYSTEM**: N 19°18'50.34" W 98°14'15.57"

- **CENTRE POINT COORDINATES (MONASTERY)**

- **UTM X (meters)**: 2,135,477,061
- **UTM Y (meters)**: 2,237,031
- **X (Decimal Degree)**: 98°14'15.57"
- **Y (Decimal Degree)**: 19°18'50.34"

- **KEY:**
  - Open areas
  - Buildings
  - Property 1.91 ha
  - Buffer Zone 14.83 ha

- **NOMENCLATURE:**
  - Franciscan Ensemble of the Monastery and Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption of Tlaxcala

- **GOBERNADOR DE MEXICO**

- **NOMINATED FOR INCLUSION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST OF THE FRACTONAL ENSEMBLE OF THE MONASTERY AND CATHEDRAL OF OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF TLAIXCALA**

- **DATUM**: GCS WGS 1984

- **D WGS 1984**

- **COORDINATE SYSTEM**: N 19°18'50.34" W 98°14'15.57"
The Franciscan Ensemble of Tlaxcala and the Popocatépetl Volcano. Photo: Omar Gutiérrez.
CRITERIA UNDER WHICH PROPERTY IS NOMINATED (ITEMIZE CRITERIA)

(ii).
Exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design

(iv).
Be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history

DRAFT STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

a) Brief synthesis
The Franciscan Ensemble of the Monastery and Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption is part of the first construction program launched after the arrival of the first twelve Franciscans that arrived to the current Mexican territory in June of 1524, guided by friar Martín de Valencia. From that constructive program, besides Tlaxcala are still standing the monastery of San Miguel Arcángel in Huejotzingo and the current Cathedral of Santa María de la Asunción in Cuernavaca, both included in the Inscription “Earliest 16th-Century Monasteries on the Slopes of Popocatépetl”, recognized by the World Heritage Convention of the UNESCO during its meeting in Thailand in December of 1994.

The same as that series of declared property, the Franciscan Ensemble of the Assumption conserves some architectural solutions, unprecedented in the western world, such as the open chapels.

During the first phase of the evangelization in the New Spain, the Franciscan site of Tlaxcala had hierarchical importance by constituting the headquarters of the first Diocese in New Spain and seat of its first Cathedral. Its constructive elements and methods show the strength of the multiculturalism starting from the recognition of the own knowledge and of the respect and tolerance to the culture and nature of the other, values that today more than ever are an important global and local exchange currency.

The Ensemble of Our Lady of the Assumption of Tlaxcala constitutes a fundamental piece to understand the cultural values of universal scope present in the first Franciscan, Dominican and Augustinian foundations, seated in the slopes of the Popocatépetl, although it went ahead...
in its founder role inside the continent’s process of evangelization; it also provides information on the first and decisive moments of the American evangelization and adds an outstanding wealth of movable and immovable property representative of diverse historic times that constitute a material testimony of the cultural exchange that had as scenario the Franciscan Monastery and the Temple of the Assumption, today Cathedral of Tlaxcala.

In San Francisco different constructive technologies converge, tangible in the prevalence of the exterior and the disposition in stepped platforms, of pre-Hispanic origin, associated to the austere forcefulness of the spaces and architectural elements of Medieval and Renaissance tradition and with the refinement of the Islamic inheritance that is expressed in the alfarje of the Cathedral of the Assumption.

This way, the Franciscan Ensemble of The Assumption is presented to us as a synthesis architecture that attests the emergence of a new society starting from the encounter and the amalgam of cultures strongly characterized as they were the native and the occidental.
The topographical characteristics of the lot assigned to the seraphic order allowed the construction of a great atrium in two levels; the section that remained below was endowed with a double stair, circumstance that allowed building, in the main rest of those circulations, the chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, of singular architectural value by having the first arches and ribs of Gothic style built in continental America, as friar Gerónimo de Mendieta who resided in the Franciscan monastery of Tlaxcala at the end of the 16th century, referred in his *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana*.

Since its inception, the Cathedral of the Assumption was conceived to have a wood and tiles cover, as it was registered in the Actas de Cabildo of Tlaxcala. The weight of that roof, lighter than the vault, made the system of buttresses unnecessary. Over the years, that wooden structure has remained and today it is presented to the world as a convincing example of the exchange of influences present in the monumental Ensemble of the Assumption of Tlaxcala.

Among the components of the serial property “Earliest 16th-Century Monasteries on the Slopes of Popocatépetl”, this is the only one that has a tower exempt from the body of the temple that joins the Ensemble through an arcade that supports a sentry passage.

The Franciscan Ensemble of Tlaxcala also highlights to have been the cornerstone for the construction of the city of Tlaxcala. Contrary to other cities, Tlaxcala grew under the shade of San Francisco becoming the guardian of the incipient city, as it can still be appreciated in the architectural perspective and marking its urban layout, as it was attested and written by the chroniclers of the 16th century.
b) **Criteria under which inscription is proposed and justification**

(ii).

Toward 1526, the indigenous authorities gave the Franciscans a lot located on a small valley, Chalchihuapan, surrounded by seven hills, characteristic that evokes the foundation of outstanding cities in the universal history such as Jerusalem, Rome and Byzantium. The quality of being a new space destined to be occupied by a new community, the ecclesia indiana, gave the Franciscans the opportunity to continue their utopian zeal: to found the New Jerusalem.

In an early way, Tlaxcala was distinguished to be “a sociopolitical space, a fertile space for the circulation of ideas, the cultural negotiations and prints for the consolidation of a republic of Indians.”

The Franciscan Ensemble of the Assumption is a clear example of how the exchange of human values led to the creation of urban spaces.

The sources of the 16th century highlight the foundational role of the Assumption in the urban program of the city of Tlaxcala, toward the third decade of the 16th century: besides being its origin, San Francisco shaped the layout of the first urban core of the capital of that indigenous province.

Besides constituting a fundamental space for the religious conversion, during the 16th century, the Franciscan space of the Assumption presents features and marks that could be decisive for the design, reciprocity and urban sense of the city, certainly without ignoring to

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2. Óscar Armando García Gutiérrez, “Un convento franciscano en una ciudad de indios. Fundaciones previas y primeros procesos de edificación (1527-1538)” in Alejandra González (coord.), La invención de un convento, UNAM, 2014, p. 44.
have been first urban center place of meeting for the configuration of an emergent culture, the mestiza.3

Regarding the constructive technology present in the Franciscan Ensemble of the Assumption, it is remarkable that 80% of the visible walling is spoil materials, that is to say, recycling materials constituted by the stone that was part of pre-Hispanic constructions, visible in platforms, walls and contentions.

The presence of non-Hispanic reminiscences is also overwhelming, for example, the indigenous manpower and the pre-Hispanic technology: in their walls, in the posa chapels of the upper atrium and the Chapel of the Rosary, even in the supportive elements of the first body of the exempt tower.

The distributions, emplacement and location that shape the characteristics and peculiarities described in the Inscription of the “Earliest 16th-Century Monasteries” are also present in the Franciscan Ensemble of the Monastery and Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption of

3. Ibid., pp. 53 y 57.
Tlaxcala, making of it a singular example of the constructive program implemented by the Franciscan, Augustinian and Dominican orders, with the notorious exception that Tlaxcala preceded most of them.

The Assumption is the tangible expression of the new community life —manifested through language, religion, education, architecture and diet, among others— constituted from the traditional indigenous organization and enriched with new practices and western knowledge, as it happened in the former Hospital of the Incarnation, installed in the Franciscan headquarters and where the western medicine found in the indigenous phytotherapy a flawless complement.

In addition, in Tlaxcala, the first Franciscans implemented an educational program through which the indigenous children learned, besides Spanish, Latin and other knowledge like music, painting, stone and wood handling, thus participating in a cultural process in which indigenous
dexterity, sensitivity and aesthetics were exploited for a new cultural expression, a process that also helped to define the face of a new society: the *novohispana* (New Hispanic).

The architectural and open spaces of the Assumption of Tlaxcala gained relevance by remaining as silent witnesses in the process of preparation of indoctrination materials and strategies proven initially with the Tlaxcalteca community: schools for indigenous children, dictionaries in Náhuatl, evangelization theater, *autos sacramentales* (sacramental plays) and mural painting as a resource of the Christian pedagogy, later on practiced in other latitudes.

Notably, San Francisco of Tlaxcala was also the creative space where the friar-chroniclers of this first stage of the New Hispanic historiography developed their works, among them, Toribio de Benavente, Gerónimo de Mendieta, Juan de Torquemada and Agustín de Vetancourt who compiled the telling of Pre-Columbian times and narrated the vicissitudes faced with the propagation of Christianity in this part of America, besides registering in their works the process of cultural transfer and the formation of a new society.

On the other hand, being the city of Tlaxcala seat of the first Bishop in New Spain, generated an unprecedented coexistence between this indigenous community and the prelate, what in 1536 allowed him to address to Pope Paul III his *Latin Letter*, which contained his point of view on certain qualities of the natives that made them worthy of a better quality of life. It was
such the argumentative force of the *Latin Letter* that, finally, it derived in the promulgation of the Papal Bull *Sublimis Deus* that recognized the rationality of the natives and their free access to hug the Catholic faith, constituting this way a universal contribution of the Bishop of Tlaxcala.

Finally, associated to the Franciscan Ensemble of the Assumption, there is an event significant for the Tlaxcalteca community and outstanding for the rest of the catholic world: among their spaces took place the indoctrination of those first three children that, soon later, would be sacrificed because of their faith, becoming this way the firsts of the evangelization and the first saints that America gave to the history of the Catholic Church: the “Three Martyr Children.”

(iv)

The monasteries located on the slopes of the Popocatépetl volcano are a representative group of early 16th century religious buildings in continental America. In addition to contributing novel elements to the history of architecture, such as open chapels, enriched the traditional use of spaces such as the atrium. In this sense, these first constructions contributed to define a type of viceroyal architectural model that comprised basically the atrium, the nave of the church, the posa chapels, open and collateral, processional roads and hydraulic works in their dual function of reservoir and water conduction. This architectural program was expanded in the territory of the newly born viceroyalty of New Spain between the 16th and 18th centuries.

Under this new model of monastic complex, open spaces such as open chapels or wide atria gained meaning primarily through their liturgical, devotional and communal use. As the historical annals of the 16th and 17th centuries prove for the case of the Franciscan site of the Assumption, among which the works of Diego Muñoz Camargo, Toribio de Benavente, Gerónimo de Mendieta and Agustín de Vetancourt stand out, the atrium had an equivalent importance to other built spaces, including the temple’s own nave.

The upper atrium, of trapezoidal shape, is a large terrace—a reflection of the hierarchy of the Franciscan Tlaxcalteca site at the beginning of the evangelization—in which are
Portal of Pilgrims, former Franciscan monastery. Photo: J. Guadalupe Pérez

Posa Chapel. Photo: J. Guadalupe Pérez
summarized the answers of trace and adaptation that was necessary to offer to the topographical characteristics of the site, which in turn allowed to communicate the lower and upper atria with the presence of the Chapel of the Rosary, of singular architectural value by presenting the first arches and ribs of Gothic style that rose in continental America.

At the same time, the layout of the atrium on two levels communicated by steps and ramps, a quality that makes it unique not only among the religious buildings of the first century of New Spain, but allows a kind of twinning with the original house of the Franciscan order in Assisi, Italy.

Given the irregular features of the hillside where it was built, the Ensemble of the Assumption was not placed within a quadrangular model divided at the same time into quadrants, as in the case of Tepoztlán (Morelos), Huejotzingo (Puebla) or Yanhuitlán (Oaxaca).4

Particularly in the first decades of the enterprise of conversion and evangelization, the double atrium of Tlaxcala served as the stage for the representation of numerous plays of evangelization theater, autos sacramentales (sacramental plays), royal funerals and, most notably, it was also one of the first schools where the children of this indigenous community learned not only Catholic doctrine, but a wide variety of arts, crafts and knowledge such as Latin, grammar, music and painting.

However, it is also important to highlight the spatial elements and distributions that grant an outstanding character to the site of Tlaxcala. We will begin by pointing out its construction on an acropolis from which it dominates a significant part of the city of Tlaxcala, A situation that gives it a broad vision of the shores where the four indigenous communities settled at the beginning of the 16th century.

On the site of the Assumption, the linear arrangement of the posa chapels is observed, unlike their cardinal distribution in other monastic ensembles. In addition, the spatial arrangement of the chapels, which seems to follow the order of the processional path, ends in front of what was the atrium of the open Chapel, called of Bethlehem.

4. Ibid., p. 57.
It is true that San Francisco of Tlaxcala presents an architectural program similar to the sites settled on the slopes of the Popocatépetl volcano, group that we often mention for its foundational value in the history of the religious architecture of the New Spain. However, we must reiterate the singular distribution of some compositional elements. Such is the case of the exempt tower.

In its initial stage, the architectural program contemplated the nave of the Cathedral at the center, flanked to the south by the Open Chapel and to the north by the house of the Franciscans in Tlaxcala. Therefore, when it was thought to provide the Ensemble with a tower, both sides were already occupied. The solution then, given the topographical characteristics of the land given to the Franciscans was to build the tower from the lower atrium and that the second and third bodies of the tower were visible from the upper atrium, keeping it exempt from the temple.

Its quality as an isolated tower gives it one more of its singularities: in situ, it visually joins both atria, reinforced by a sentry passage that recalls the military buildings of the Spanish reconquest period; In addition, the massiveness and height of the tower allows us to appreciate

![North arcade to the upper atrium. Photo: J. Guadalupe Pérez](image-url)
it from different perspectives of the city of Tlaxcala and even from the ancient pre-Hispanic settlements.

Initially without bells, the exempt tower constantly reminded the newly converted indigenous communities of their commitment to the new religion, their call; in a certain way, it resembled the ancient Arab minarets from which the muezzin called to the adán, the obligatory prayer. The exempt tower shows, once again, the convergence of different cultures in the Franciscan site of the Assumption, the strength and permanence of the multicultural dialogue.

Historically, applications for inscription of World Heritage sites have privileged the nomination of examples of relevant aesthetics or architectural monumentality. Now it is also necessary to consider their indissoluble link with the intangible property in which society has expressed and which, at the same time, has preserved the testimonial power until today.

c) Statement of Integrity
The Franciscan Ensemble of the Monastery and Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption of Tlaxcala maintains today the reason that gave it meaning almost 500 years ago: it is the constructive space that expresses the material and spiritual vision of the Tlaxcalteca community,
which opened up the sources of universal knowledge and incorporated them into their own knowledge. Today, it maintains the materiality and authentic image of the time of the encounter and the amalgamation of the two cultures that give rise to the Mexican identity.

The Ensemble conserves the components of its original building program, the same referred with meticulous drawings to the Spanish monarch Philip II by the mestizo chronicler Diego Muñoz Camargo by 1585: the temple dedicated to the Marian advocation of the Assumption and at its left the monastery of the Franciscan order, the posa chapels and the chapel of the Rosary along with its double stairway, the exempt tower, its sentry passage and the rampant roadway that leads to the Ensemble from the north. From the first map which attests the integrity of the Ensemble is only missing the Open Chapel that came in disuse, but that in an exceptional architectural solution was not demolished but attached to the Cathedral, appearing today as the Chapel of the Third Order and the “patio de abajo” or lower atrium, where there were only provisional buildings while the temple and the Open Chapel were finished in the upper atrium.

The temple of Our Lady of The Assumption maintains the liturgical use that gave it its raison d’être more than 480 years ago. In this monument the integrity and authenticity of the space and its most emblematic elements and property are evident: the Mudejar alfarje ceiling, the altarpieces of the nave and the side chapels, the choir and the tubular organ, the pulpit, the baptismal pile and an entire profusion of liturgical art property from different times that the temple preserves because it did not suffer spoliations, deteriorations or thoughtless modifications that many other monuments of its time suffered.

With regard to the former Franciscan Monastery, it should be noted that the architectural space has not been modified, although its social use has changed. The destination of the monastery building today is clearly compatible with its original community vocation and with the characteristics of its spaces: it currently houses the INAH Regional History Museum, which guards and exhibits pre-Hispanic and viceregal property, and also houses a library in the same enclosures where the chroniclers and religious of the 16th century worked.

d) Statement of authenticity

Being an architectural ensemble erected since the thirties of the 16th century, it is possible to think of the series of interventions that San Francisco of Tlaxcala has been subjected to, taking into consideration their settlement in a zone of frequent seismicity and with presence of water springs and runoff, which helps to explain the presence of 18th century architectural and decorative elements in a temple whose construction dates from the 16th century, such as reconstructed altarpieces and the recycling of ashlar sandstone from other stages of construction.
While we must recognize that not all interventions have been made with the original meaning of Franciscan construction, in order to preserve its materials, functions, uses and traditions, it should also be noted that we are committed to preserving the Ensemble in the conditions in which we have inherited it from the past.

As documentary sources from the 16th to the 18th centuries provide information about the sponsorships and patronages from which the Ensemble benefited, especially the interior of the Cathedral of the Assumption, the Acts of the Cabildo of Tlaxcala refer to the constant efforts of that indigenous authority to maintain the authenticity of the Franciscan space and, when it was necessary to reconstruct some sections or elements due to a natural deterioration, as it was the case with the Mudejar alfarje, the cloister or the exterior arcades, taking care of maintaining the austere character of the Franciscan composition, using materials from the same environment and without affecting the original construction.

The interventions of adaptation to museographic use and of monumental and artistic restoration carried out in the second half of the 20th century in San Francisco, have always sought to bring to light and preserve all historical vestiges as they have come from the past without falling into the temptation of stylistic or analogical reconstructions, always maintaining a clear and
palpable difference between the ancient and the reintegrated in the architectural and decorative elements.

The most recent studies and research tend to point out the concern of its historical custodians —the first of them the Tlaxcalteca community— and the current —the federal government through the National Institute of Anthropology and History and the authorities of the Diocese of Tlaxcala—, expressing their common concern to preserve the conditions of integrity and cultural values associated with the Ensemble, while respecting its artistic spaces and styles.

e) Protection and management requirements

By being an asset under the custody of the federal government, the legal protection of the Franciscan Ensemble of the Monastery and Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption of Tlaxcala is first determined by the constitutional provisions on the protection and conservation of the heritage; in addition, the Franciscan Ensemble is under the custody of the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) as determined by the Federal Law on Historic, Archaeological and Artistic Monuments and Zones published on May of 1972 and its Regulation issued on December 8 of 1975. Exceptionally, the INAH shares with the Diocese of Tlaxcala the custody of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption that maintains its liturgical use today as it did almost 500 years ago.

This legal certainty was reinforced by the Presidential Decree of 11 April 1986, which declared an “Area of Historic Monuments in the City of Tlaxcala de Xicohténcatl”, prompting the issuance of laws, Municipal and State regulations and regulations for its conservation. At present, the State Government of Tlaxcala, in collaboration with the City Council of the capital and the INAH review and update the legal instruments to propose modifications to the current legislation protecting the Franciscan Ensemble in order to ensure its enjoyment by the present and future generations.

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