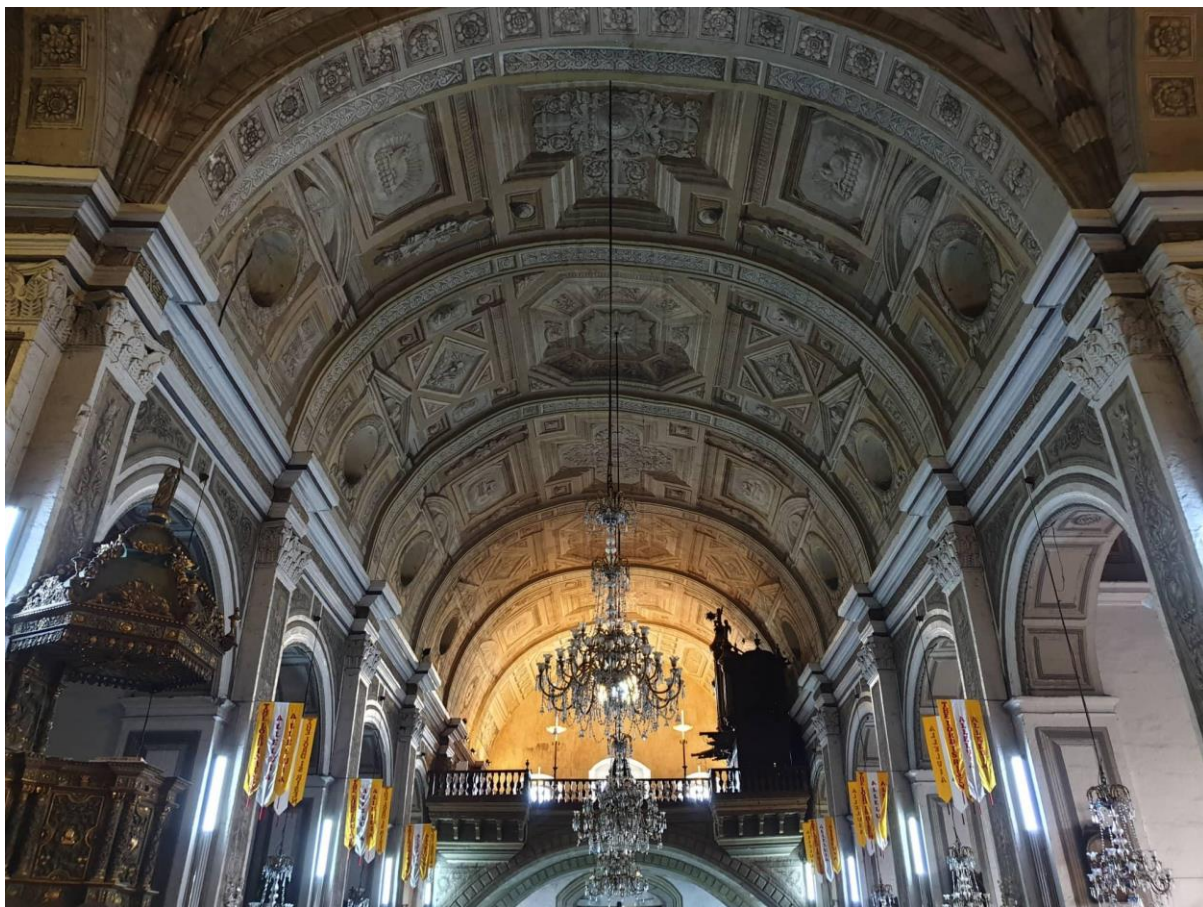


Baroque Churches of the Philippines (Philippines) (677bis)

2024 State of Conservation Report





PAMBANSANG KOMISYON PARA SA KULTURA AT MGA SINING

Baroque Churches of the Philippines (Philippines) (677bis)
2024 State of Conservation Report

On behalf of the Philippine State Party

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Acknowledgments

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Republic of the Philippines Office of the President

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS

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Baroque Churches of the Philippines (Philippines) (677bis)**2024 State of Conservation Report****I. Executive Summary**

The State Party acknowledges that the construction of the Binondo-Intramuros Bridge (BIB) was situated at the northern boundary of the buffer zone of the World Heritage property of the Baroque Churches of the Philippines (San Agustin Church). Information of the development was not proactively informed to the World Heritage Committee and the Advisory Bodies prior to the beginning of its construction in 2018. Through a historical review, the State Party recognizes that one of the main problems encountered during the four years of construction of the bridge was the lack of understanding of the responsibility of stakeholders for the buffer zone of the property. The amendment of the Heritage Law of the Philippines, Republic Act No. 11961 which was enacted in 2023, will address this legal gap of protection. The Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the law is being developed and is aimed at minimizing such issues in the future.

The BIB Project completed its work in 2022. Constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the challenges of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts to actively monitor the construction of the bridge but efforts were made to provide Archaeological Impact Assessments, Heritage Impact Assessments, and Conservation Management Plan to investigate potential impacts of the project to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and develop a stronger heritage-focused development strategy.

Moving forward, the State Party is committed to doing a Traffic Impact Assessment to mitigate potential long-term impacts of the BIB to the OUV of the property. It is also committed to provide stronger pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to visitors of Intramuros and the San Agustin Church and measures have already been completed in the last three years. Programs such as the removal of parking areas within the World Heritage property, creating al fresco dining area, pedestrianization of the General Luna Street, removal of coach parking areas within Intramuros and developing traffic control management within the buffer zone are some of the efforts already in place to reduce potential traffic and pollution concerns brought about by the construction of the bridge. The State Party also notes that there are already observed benefits of stronger pedestrian and cyclist connectivity that the bridge has created after its construction.

The State Party is committed in protecting the OUV of the property anchored to the Philippine interpretation of the Baroque style which forms a distinct church-building tradition in the country. This is the most important attribute of the property and activities in the future will ensure a focus on this responsibility to the Convention. A separate detailed initiative will look at the heritage management strategy for the World Heritage Bid for the Colonial Urban Plan and Fortifications of the Walled City of Manila.

II. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

Presented below is Decision **45 COM 7B.171**, followed by the responses of the State Party.

Item 4 of Decision 45 COM 7B.171.

Notes with concern that the construction of Binondo-Intramuros Bridge (BIB) project was completed without change to its design and location nor consideration cancelling the project despite the Committee's previous requests, and regrets that the State Party did not submit requested documentation for this project, including updated Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA), Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), and Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for review, as requested by the Committee, prior to construction works proceeding;

RESPONSE:

In response to the statement regarding the requested documentation, the State Party acknowledges the Committee's expression of regret and concerns and wishes to assure the Committee that the previous decision has been carefully considered and integrated into the ongoing commitment of the State Party to protect the World Heritage Site and its associated values.

The Binondo-Intramuros Bridge (BIB) Project was the subject of a letter sent by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to the State Party dated 24 September 2018, noting that the proposed project would connect the Manila districts of Intramuros, at Solana Street and Riverside Drive, and Binondo, at Muelle de la Industria Street and San Fernando Street. Notably, the Walled City of Intramuros serves as the buffer zone of the World Heritage Property of San Agustin Church. Consultations were conducted by the project proponent, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), with several institutions, including the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the Intramuros Administration (IA), the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP), the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), and the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines (UNACOM), in order to draft a response to the query from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

A Partial Work Suspension Order for the project was issued effective 11 December 2018. Taking note of the ICOMOS Philippines' Position Paper, the State Party investigations indicated that the main impact of the new construction was on the San Fernando Bridge in Binondo, Manila, a structure originally built in 1796.¹ Changes to

¹ ICOMOS Philippines Position Paper: Heritage Perspective on the Binondo-Intramuros Friendship Bridge, 2018, 5.

the BIB were done by the DPWH and the CCCC Highway Consultants, Co. Ltd. for concept designs.² These designs were reviewed in accordance with the prevailing Heritage Law, Republic Act No. 10066, which mandates the preservation of Important Cultural Properties.

After thorough evaluation and consideration of inputs from the Technical Working Council (composed of authorities from the NCCA, NHCP, and NMP), the bridge design was revised to adopt split-type ramps, avoiding interference with the Important Cultural Property of the San Fernando Bridge. The modifications also reduced the total length of the bridge from 734 meters to 680 meters. These changes were included in the State of Conservation Report in 2020 to demonstrate the measures taken by the State Party to mitigate the impact of the bridge on adjacent heritage structures.

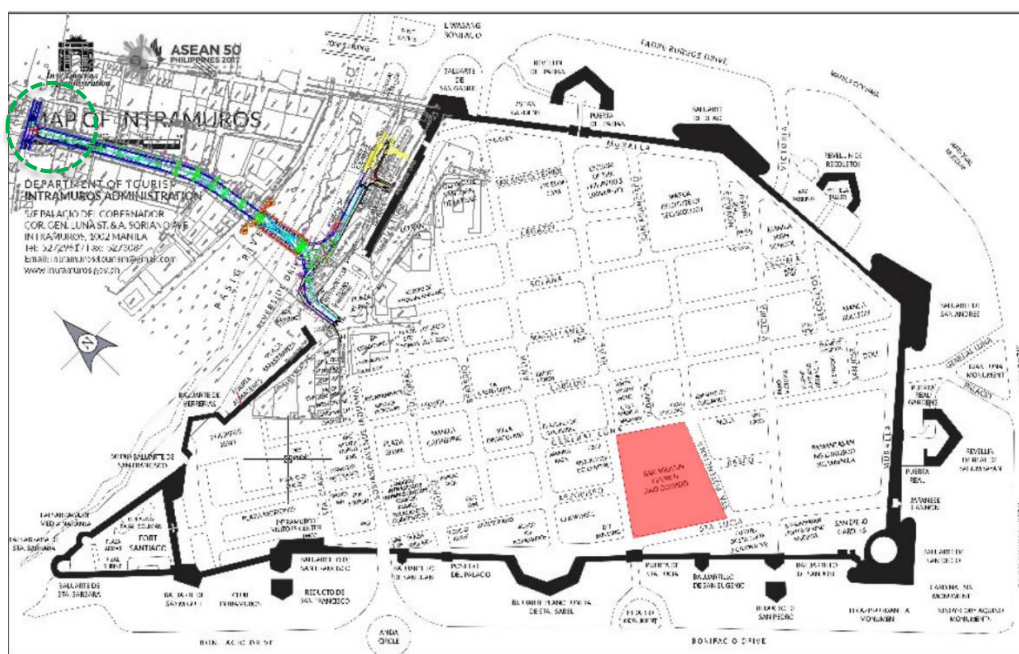


Fig. 01 Site map shows the initial design of BIB which would have impacted San Fernando Bridge (as encircled in green). (Source: Heritage Impact Assessment Report, 2020)

Regarding the World Heritage Property of the Baroque Churches of the Philippines, specifically the San Agustin Church, the State Party notes that the affected area of the construction was isolated at the northern boundary of the buffer zone. The radial distance between the BIB project and the church is approximately 555 meters, where surrounding structures served as barriers, protecting the church from temporary noise and vibrations during construction.

² Baroque Churches State of Conservation Report, 2020, 255.

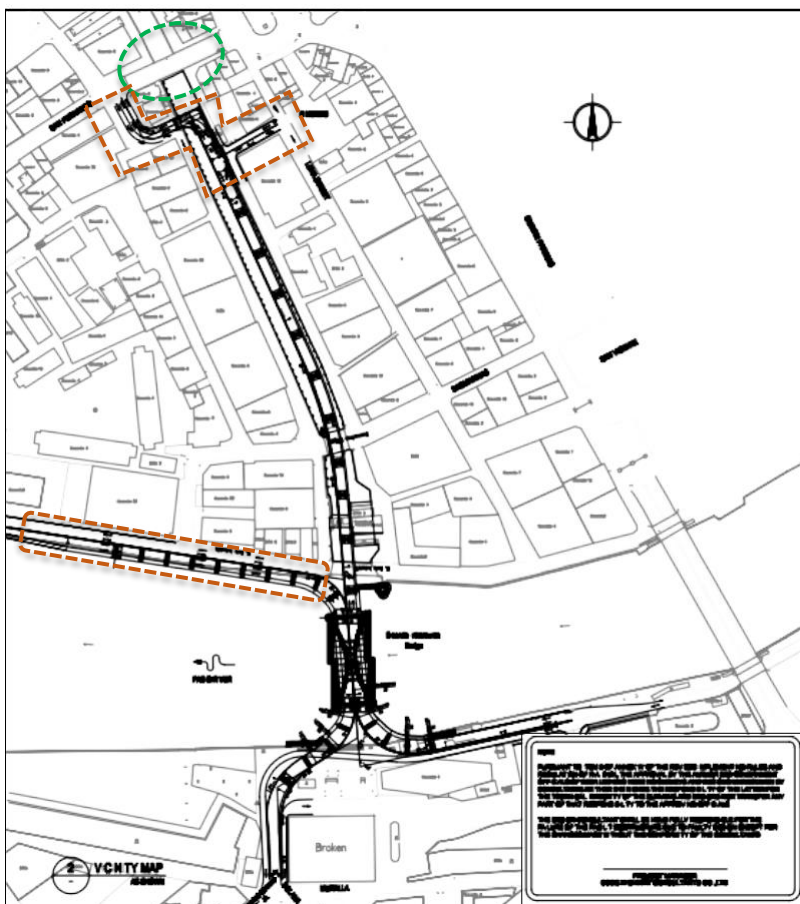


Fig. 02 Site map shows the final design of BIB which avoided San Fernando Bridge (as encircled in green). The road leading to Binondo was shortened and a split-type ramp was introduced. (Source: Heritage Impact Assessment Report, 2020)

Noting further that the buffer zones of World Heritage properties provide additional protection to ensure the core zone of the property remains intact, the State Party conducted several studies from 2019 to 2022 to examine various heritage aspects and address the concerns of civil society and the international community. A summary of these studies is provided below:

A. Archaeological Impact Assessment and Heritage Impact Assessment

Two studies were commissioned to investigate the impacts of the BIB on the buffer zone of San Agustin Church. These assessments were conducted by Archaeology+Heritage (A+H) Co. as a combined Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) and Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA).

- 1) In 2019, the objectives of the AIA were to assess the quality of archaeology within the BIB construction site and to expose as much of the archaeology within Intramuros as possible, in order to formulate recommendations for the appropriate government agencies and developers. This report was submitted as part of the State of Conservation Report of 2020, dated 1 December 2020.
- 2) The 2022 AIA report aimed to supplement the 2019 report by taking into account the comments of the ICOMOS Technical Review on the Baroque Churches of the Philippines and the potential impact of the BIB Project on existing and relevant archaeological remains in the area, particularly at the Baluarte de Santo Domingo. Due to constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic during which, cultural work was not considered an essential service, this assessment was unfortunately only commissioned after the BIB was constructed. This report was submitted as part of the State of Conservation Report of 2023.

The two trenches, Trench 1 and Trench 2, were excavated at the project site, along with the observation of two Pile Construction Trenches (PCT), as illustrated in Figure 03.

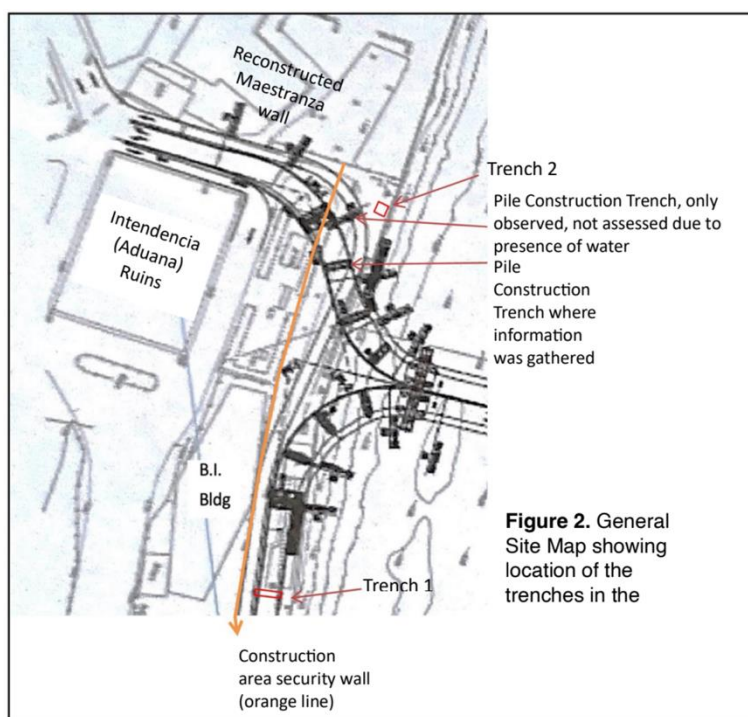


Fig. 03 Site map shows the location of the trenches in the area (Source: Archaeological Impact Assessment Report, 2019)

The result of the investigation was that both trenches 1 and 2 did not provide evidence supporting the presence of Baluarte de Santo Domingo. However, the observed PCT revealed adobe blocks that were too small to be definitively linked to the main construction of the Baluarte. Inferentially, these blocks may have served as a supporting structure or been associated with the nearby wharf or pier and could be the demolished portion of the Intramuros wall.³

Based on data from the initial assessment, no remains of the Spanish-era fortifications of Santo Domingo were unearthed, exposed, or recovered. This included areas within the piling trenches on the down-ramp, Plaza Mexico, and the Binondo side of the BIB. Most of the trenches failed to distinctly reveal structures beneath the ground at a depth of four meters, resulting in limited inferences. However, certain evidence suggested traces that could potentially align with the Intramuros wall. This presents an opportunity for further archaeological investigations and future excavations in the area as part of a bigger initiative to look at the historical fabric of the walls of Intramuros. This investigation can be reviewed as part of the preparation of the World Heritage bid for *the Colonial Urban Plan and Fortifications of the Walled City of Manila*.

B. Heritage Impact Assessment

The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for the BIB identified both temporary and long-term impacts on the surrounding area. Temporary impacts include an increase in dust pollution caused by soil and cement particles, as well as emissions from heavy equipment, which persisted only until construction was completed. Noise pollution, generated by machinery and heavy equipment, and visual obstructions along the Pasig River were also temporary. Additionally, vibrations from construction activities and the movement of heavy equipment to and from the construction site occurred only during this period. To mitigate noise pollution, prefabricated structures were used to minimize impacts during the construction period.

Potential long-term impacts primarily involved increased pollution. Mitigation measures to address pollution, which could potentially affect the World Heritage property and its buffer zone, include rerouting traffic and imposing vehicular weight limits in the vicinity of San Agustin Church. These measures were implemented by the Intramuros Administration in collaboration with barangay officials and representatives from schools and private businesses within Intramuros. These actions align with the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) Basic Conservation Principle, which requires controlled traffic in historic towns and the planning of parking areas to protect the historic

³ Report on the Archaeological Impact Assessment on the Binondo-Intramuros Bridge Project, 31-34.

fabric and environment (NHCP Basic Conservation Principle No. 12).⁴ Importantly, the bridge had no effect on the vista points of the Church of the Immaculate Conception of San Agustin or the Manila Cathedral due to their distance and the presence of intervening taller structures.⁵

Additional mitigation measures to address the long-term impacts of the BIB have been continuously implemented by the responsible authorities to safeguard the historic and cultural integrity of the area. One significant measure is the structural assessment of the Church of the Immaculate Conception of San Agustin to evaluate and address effects related to vibrations caused by increased vehicular activity. This critical task has been undertaken by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) back in 2022 initially in keeping with the recommendation of the HIA, ensuring that the structural stability and preservation of this UNESCO World Heritage Site are prioritized.⁶ This was followed by another structural assessment of the property on 16 November 2024, which was facilitated by the NCCA in line with the plan to implement seismic retrofitting of the Church.

More mitigation measures on traffic volume and its status can be observed as part of the response to the Committee's Decision Item V below.

C. Conservation Management Plan

Since 2019, Intramuros has been developing its Conservation Management Plan (CMP) to create appropriate management strategies for the area, recognizing its role as an urban heritage site. The plan addresses the challenges and issues brought about by urbanization while ensuring the conservation and resilience of its built structures and tangible heritage.⁷ Additionally, the CMP has formulated a statement of significance for the Walled City,⁸ guiding conservation policies while also highlighting the need for strategies to promote economic activity for residents and stakeholders.

The CMP acknowledges that the setting of Intramuros has evolved from its original design as a fortified city located at the confluence of the Pasig River and Manila Bay.⁹ Initially surrounded by moats on the landside to maintain its isolation, the modern Intramuros is now situated within a highly urbanized area, bordered by the Philippine Ports Authority to the west (stretching from the

⁴ Report on the Heritage Impact Assessment on the Binondo-Intramuros Bridge Project, 88.

⁵ Ibid., 75.

⁶ Ibid., 89.

⁷ The Intramuros Conservation Management Plan, 1-1.

⁸ Ibid., 3-1.

⁹ Ibid., 2-1.

Manila Hotel to the Del Pan Bridge), Luneta and the American-period government center to the east, and the commercial districts of Binondo, San Nicolas, and Santa Cruz across the Pasig River to the north. The CMP documents the changes that have occurred across various parts of the Walled City, noting significant transformations in its form, function, and environmental setting—particularly in areas like Baluarte de San Diego. Several maps included in the CMP illustrate these dramatic changes over centuries, notably the extensive damage to the fortifications during World War II.

Recognizing the layered history of the buffer zone and the need to balance heritage conservation with economic activity (including sustainable transport strategies) within the historic center, the CMP adopted a Historic Urban Landscape approach in its development.¹⁰ The CMP was included in the State of Conservation Report of 2023, submitted to the World Heritage Centre.

¹⁰ The Intramuros Conservation Management Plan, 4-8.

Item 5 of Decision 45 COM 7B.171.

Notes that the updated HIA concluded that no immediate and direct physical impact has been observed on San Agustin Church including during the construction period, but also notes with concern the significant potential indirect and long-term impacts arising from growth in traffic volume identified through the HIA process, and therefore requests the State Party to implement mitigation measures and to submit a report on these measures and monitoring results, to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, in order to assess the effectiveness of mitigation against adverse impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property;

RESPONSE:

The State Party acknowledges the concerns raised by the World Heritage Committee regarding the BIB project and assures that efforts to implement effective mitigation measures are actively underway, with several actions already in progress. According to the HIA, the impacts identified are not immediate, providing an opportunity to carry out planned interventions to minimize potential adverse effects on the surrounding heritage areas. To ensure the continued safeguarding of the values and attributes of the Baroque Churches of the Philippines, the State Party remains committed to ongoing mitigation efforts, the implementation of these measures, and the monitoring of plans to manage and/or reduce potential indirect and long-term impacts resulting from increased traffic volume.

The details of each measure and plan are listed below:

Mitigating potential long-term impacts arising from the potential growth in traffic volume

Traffic Impact Assessment

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the site and develop an effective strategy to mitigate potential future impacts, discussions among various stakeholders were held in 2024 to address the potential long-term effects of the BIB on the World Heritage Property. During a coordination meeting between the DPWH and the NCCA, it was agreed that a Traffic Impact Assessment would be conducted to evaluate the potential impacts of the bridge on the World Heritage Site, particularly regarding changes in vehicular traffic and increased urban activity.

The proposed Traffic Impact Assessment is intended as a continuation of previous studies. It aims to monitor and analyze traffic flow under various scenarios following the construction of the BIB. The assessment will focus on evaluating and mitigating

potential traffic impacts by building upon prior research and providing a comprehensive understanding of traffic dynamics under different conditions. Key objectives include monitoring post-construction traffic conditions and devising effective mitigation strategies for long-term sustainability. This study will seek to provide a balanced perspective by weighing the benefits of improved connectivity and economic opportunities against the potential risks to the cultural heritage site. Additionally, it aims to identify and recommend traffic mitigation measures that benefit concerned stakeholders and bridge users.

The following traffic surveys are currently being discussed, with one or a combination of techniques to be potentially implemented:

- Traffic Volume Counts
- Origin-Destination Survey
- Road Inventory Survey
- Travel Time and Delay Survey
- Parking Surveys

Based on the outcomes of these surveys and subsequent simulations, the Impact Evaluation process will be developed, along with mitigation strategies for both short- and long-term solutions. These may include measures such as rerouting, signal adjustments, or traffic restrictions to address identified issues effectively.

Lastly, by employing a multi-stakeholder approach and leveraging advanced tools, the TIA will secure institutional and stakeholder support, ensuring the inclusion of diverse perspectives to enrich the study's depth and inclusivity. The proposed study also aims to balance the conservation of San Agustin Church with the modern infrastructural needs facilitated by the BIB.

The Traffic Impact Assessment represents a mitigation measure spearheaded by the State Party to address growing concerns regarding traffic volume in Intramuros. This planned initiative underscores a committed effort to mitigate potential and cumulative impacts associated with the BIB. It will provide overall direction to traffic management strategies that will align with the historical and cultural significance of the area. By systematically analyzing traffic patterns and implementing solutions, this plan hopes to reflect a forward-looking approach to preserving the heritage value of Intramuros and minimizing potential impacts to the World Heritage property of San Agustin Church while accommodating the demands of modern urbanization.

Following the data collection phase, advanced traffic modeling tools, such as PTV VISSIM or SYNCHRO, may be employed to simulate traffic conditions. It has been agreed that the State Party, through the NCCA, will hold a series of harmonization meetings with the DPWH in the first quarter of 2025 to finalize the strategy for conducting the Traffic Impact Assessment.

Pedestrianization within the Walled City of Intramuros

The Intramuros Administration has begun implementing a Traffic Management Plan as one of the mitigation measures for the potential long-term impacts of the BIB Project. This initiative was recommended by the NCCA National Committee on Monuments and Sites, later adopted by the NCCA Board of Commissioners as Board Resolution No. 2019-337, and subsequently forwarded to the Intramuros Administration for execution.

It is worth noting, however, that improving the overall traffic condition of Intramuros has been a priority for the State Party even before the development of the BIB Project. In fact, a study by the Intramuros Administration, funded by the World Bank in 2014, had already identified that creating a shared space for pedestrians and cars or complete pedestrianization of General Luna Street will be an important initiative as it will provide an unobstructed route linking important attractions inside Intramuros.¹¹ The relocation of coach parking was also identified to be moved to the outside of the walls to minimize coaches navigating the narrow streets.¹²

In July 2021, as part of its campaign to gather stakeholder feedback amid the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Intramuros Administration held an online citizen assembly. Residents and visitors were invited to share their opinions on the proposal to turn General Luna Street into a pedestrian-only zone. An online platform (<https://pol.is/2yyrtwkpxt>) provided a space for voting, allowing citizens to share insights that would help shape the approach to this initiative. The Urban Planning and Community Development Division (UPCDD) of the Intramuros Administration is committed to fully implement the proposed Traffic Management Plan to improve the quality of visitor circulation in the walled city.

Currently, the Traffic Management Plan allows for partial pedestrianization of General Luna Street while maintaining vehicular activity at specific intersections. These intersections include Beaterio Street (one-way); Anda Street (two-way); Urdaneta Street (one-way); Sta. Potenciana Street (one-way); Victoria Street (two-way); and San Jose Street (two-way). However, vehicles are prohibited from entering General Luna Street from Muralla Street, where a road barrier has been installed. Another road barrier is positioned at the corner of General Luna Street and Beaterio Street. The intersections between General Luna Street and Sto. Tomas and Postigo Streets are closed to traffic. Meanwhile, complete pedestrianization has been implemented on Real Street, from its corner with Cabildo Street to its corner with Arzobispo Street. This scheme was made more tangible through the Intramuros Active Transport Infrastructure Program, allowing construction of bike lanes and walkway network.

¹¹ Improving Mobility in Intramuros, 38.

¹² Ibid., 41.

Removal of Vehicular Parking Lots within the Core Zone of San Agustin Church

To enhance pedestrianization efforts in Intramuros, particularly along General Luna Street, the World Heritage Site of San Agustin Church and its stakeholders decided to eliminate parking areas within the core zone of the property. This initiative also presented an opportunity to install a UNESCO World Heritage Site Marker, which was inaugurated on 15 March 2024. As part of this pedestrianization strategy, a church patio free of parked vehicles was created. The World Heritage Marker was placed at the center of the plaza and complemented by landscaping in designated areas. Additionally, a new coffee shop was opened to the public on the ground floor of the convent, offering an al fresco dining experience and serving as an alternative source of revenue to replace income previously generated from parking fees. These changes have significantly improved the visual character of the church patio.

Before Pedestrianization



Fig. 04-05 The area in front of San Agustin Church before the pedestrianization plan (Source: (left) Mike Aquino, (right) LMP 2001, Wikimedia Commons)

After Pedestrianization



Fig. 06-08 The San Agustin Church patio area after the pedestrianization plan has been implemented, and the area after March 2024 when the installation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Marker (Source: (left) Ivan Henares, (middle) San Agustin Church, (right) LMP 2001, Wikimedia Commons)



Fig. 09-10 The location of Los Frailes Café and extension of the coffee shop, as well as dining al fresco
(Source: San Agustin Church)

The State Party believes that, following the completion of the BIB, the traffic situation in Intramuros has not diminished tourism within its premises or its surrounding areas. On the contrary, the Binondo-Intramuros Bridge has drawn new visitors to the walled city, particularly from the historic district of Binondo. Post-COVID-19, coupled with improved pedestrian connections, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of visitors coming to San Agustin Church. The site management team has made the following observations:

- Visitors are becoming increasingly aware of the cultural significance of San Agustin Church and the importance of its preservation and conservation. More individuals are visiting the church to learn about the Augustinians' conservation efforts, the maintenance processes, and the role of government institutions in protecting a UNESCO World Heritage Site like San Agustin Church.
- The creation of a plaza at the San Agustin Church patio has complemented the pedestrianization efforts. Both initiatives support better conservation management of the site while enhancing the character of its outdoor space.
- The Binondo-Intramuros Bridge has not caused an increase in traffic along General Luna Street due to the efforts of the Intramuros Administration and its ongoing pedestrianization program.
- Heavy container trucks are no longer permitted by the Intramuros Administration, resulting in reduced pollution emissions within the area.



Fig. 11-12 After the construction of the BIB, Intramuros has acquired a new image of a heritage place attracting more environmentally friendly activity as tourists and locals walking or cycling from Binondo can walk directly to Intramuros. (Source: (left) CRISRIDER PH, (right) Iya Gozum)



Fig. 13-14 The cleared area of the church supports locals and foreign visitors who visit the church to have more activities such as the processions at San Agustin (Source: (left & right) San Agustin Church)

By alleviating traffic congestion and fostering a pedestrian-friendly environment, the plan not only resolves longstanding urban challenges but also enriches the experiences of residents and visitors. It promotes meaningful engagement with the World Heritage Site, highlighting both its tangible and intangible values, including the Baroque Churches of the Philippines. This careful balance between functionality and heritage preservation reflects the State Party's dedication to sustainable and inclusive development.

Item 6 of Decision 45 COM 7B.171.

Regrets that the BIB has impacted the overall extended setting of the property in the buffer zone and extended setting of the property, and therefore also requests the State Party to consider further mitigation measures and submit a plan for implementing these measures to the World Heritage Centre for review by Advisory Bodies;

RESPONSE:

Management of the Buffer Zone of the San Agustin Church

As the designated buffer zone for the Baroque Churches of the Philippines, the walled city of Intramuros plays a crucial role in safeguarding the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of San Agustin Church. The State Party acknowledges that the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site was established to enhance the protection of the values and attributes associated with the property's OUV. This is anchored in the Philippine interpretation of the Baroque style, which represents a fusion of European church design and construction with local materials and decorative motifs, forming a distinct church-building tradition. The buffer zone supports the authenticity of the property and provides a historical and cultural context that enhances the church's significance as one of the Baroque Churches of the Philippines. The Conservation Management Plan of Intramuros includes provisions to preserve sightlines, manage land use, and maintain the historical ambiance of the area.

In terms of World Heritage responsibilities, the designation of Intramuros as a buffer zone for the Baroque Churches was established in 2013. However, the Heritage Law of the Philippines, enacted in 2009, does not provide specific definitions or guidelines regarding the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders within these larger areas of supportive protection mechanisms. This absence of clear guidelines makes it difficult for stakeholders to make well-informed decisions, potentially undermining the long-term conservation of World Heritage Properties in the Philippines. The State Party recognizes this critical gap in national policies, which can result in inconsistencies in implementation and pose challenges to the effective protection of World Heritage properties.

To address these concerns, the NCCA will hold roundtable discussions in the second quarter of 2025 to emphasize the importance of buffer zones for World Heritage properties. These discussions aim to develop clearer strategies for defining, governing, and legalizing the protection mechanisms required for buffer zones. The outcomes will contribute to the formulation of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act No. 10066 and its amendment, Republic Act No. 11961, which pertain to laws and regulations on cultural heritage.

At the local level, the Intramuros Administration has expressed its willingness to collaborate with the NCCA and other cultural agencies to address these gaps. Specifically, the Intramuros Administration is committed to participating in workshops and training sessions conducted by the NCCA to enhance its understanding and implementation of buffer zone management strategies, thereby strengthening its responsibilities concerning the core zone of the Baroque Churches of the Philippines.

Furthermore, recognizing that *the Colonial Urban Plan and Fortifications of the Walled City of Manila* was added to the Philippines' Tentative List in 2024, the State Party welcomes the guidance of the World Heritage Committee and its Advisory Bodies. Their advice will be incorporated into the development and implementation of measures to address any potential concerns related to the extended setting of Intramuros.

As a foundational step, the State Party has initiated the development of the Implementing Rules and Regulations for Republic Act No. 11961 of 2023, which provides the framework for establishing buffer zone guidelines.

Under the draft IRR, Section 10.1 stipulates that all declared immovable cultural properties shall have designated core and buffer zones.¹³

Furthermore, the draft provides Rule VI, Section 27 which mandates the NCCA and the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), in collaboration with the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), to establish guidelines for the declaration and management of heritage zones, encompassing core and buffer zones,¹⁴ also, to ensure the transparency in accessible information, the data and relevant information submitted to NCCA will be accessible for the public.

Regarding impacts on buffer zones, the draft Rule VIII, Section 37.2 requires that any proposed project affecting the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of a World Heritage Site (WHS) or its buffer zone be reviewed by the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies before irreversible decisions are made.¹⁵ Additionally, the draft Rule XXII, Section 91 prohibits modifications, alterations, or developments within designated buffer zones or within five meters of the visible perimeter of heritage sites without prior approval from the NCCA or NHCP.¹⁶

These provisions in the draft IRR aim to demonstrate a commitment to continuously adapting national legal measures for significant enhancement, aligning with the protective principles of the World Heritage Convention. They also seek to ensure the

¹³ Draft Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Republic Act No. 11961, 20.

¹⁴ Ibid., 37.

¹⁵ Ibid., 49.

¹⁶ Ibid., 95.



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early identification of potential impacts on the values of cultural heritage properties and their buffer zones.



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Item 7 of Decision 45 COM 7B.171.

Further requests the State Party to provide further information regarding the proposed, larger heritage development plan for the Intendencia and to clarify the current status of the potential reconstruction of the Baluarte de Santo Domingo, and reminds the State Party to inform the World Heritage Centre of any project that may impact the OUV of the property, and to submit project documentation including an HIA, for review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, before making any decision that would be difficult to reverse, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;

RESPONSE:

The Baluarte de Santo Domingo, once an integral part of the fortifications of Intramuros, underwent significant alterations during the American administration following the Spanish colonial period. These modifications included the deliberate removal of the Baluarte de Santo Domingo to emphasize the architectural prominence of the Intendencia, a monumental custom house. The demolition provided unobstructed views and sightlines of the Intendencia, allowing it to be appreciated from all perspectives, thereby underscoring its historical and governmental significance. This action was part of broader urban planning efforts that reflected the priorities and aesthetics of the time.

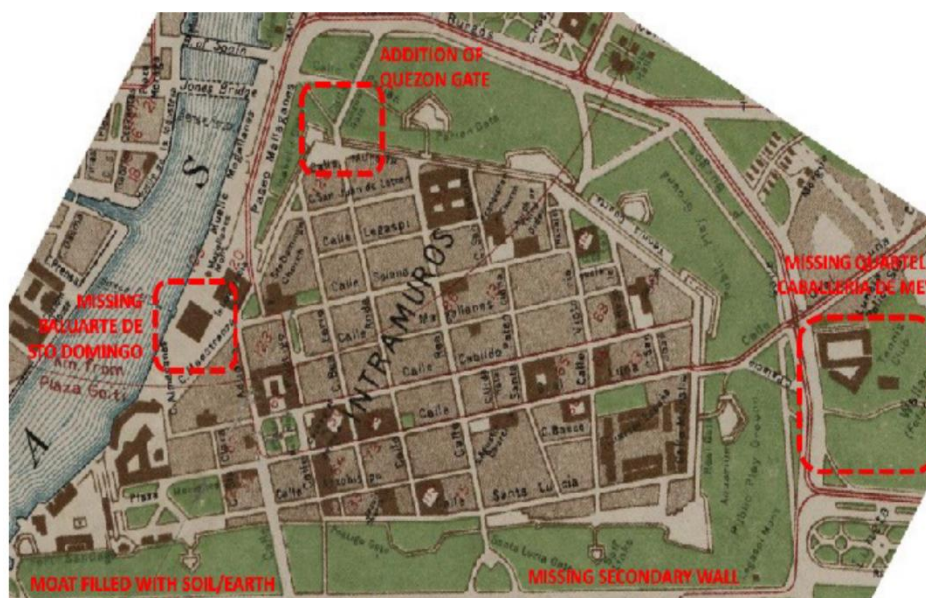


Fig. 15 A 1918 map by John Back showing a missing Baluarte de Sto. Domingo and the moat was filled with soil/earth. The CMP documents the changes that have occurred in the area for 400 years. (Source: Conservation Management Plan, 2019)

In light of contemporary conservation principles, such as those outlined in the Venice Charter, the State Party prioritizes maintaining the authenticity of the site. The intentional removal of the Baluarte is recognized as an integral part of the site's layered historical narrative. Consequently, the State Party does not wish to reconstruct the Baluarte, as doing so would risk introducing historical inaccuracies and potentially mislead the public about its original context and significance. Instead, the State Party proposes alternative interpretive methods, including virtual reconstructions and historical displays, to educate visitors about the Baluarte's history while preserving the integrity of the current landscape.

Regarding the BIB, concerns have been raised about its approach and descent encroaching upon the original footprint of the Baluarte de Santo Domingo. However, since the Baluarte no longer exists as a physical structure, its absence itself serves as a testament to the historical evolution of the site. While the modern bridge serves contemporary urban needs, its construction does not detract from the overall historical value of the area. The decision to refrain from reconstructing the Baluarte ensures that the public can appreciate the site's complex history, including the interplay between preservation, adaptation, and urban development.

III. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

[Note: this includes conservation issues which are not mentioned in the Decision of the World Heritage Committee or in any information request from the World Heritage Centre]

The State Party will continue to monitor developments in the future at the extended setting and will provide information to the World Heritage Centre to avoid conflicts that are difficult to reverse. The State Party will engage with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies on these matters to avoid potential effects to the property's Outstanding Universal Value.

IV. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

As per response to Item III above.

V. Public access to the state of conservation report

The State Party welcomes the open accessibility of this report on the World Heritage Centre website.

VI. Signature of the Authority

VICTORINO MAPA MANALO

Chairperson

National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA)