

From Colonial to Contemporary: Adaptive Reuse as a Strategy for Reviving the Cultural Heritage and Architectural Grandeur of South Bombay's Colonial Buildings

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Abstract

As the cultural, historical, and economic nucleus of British India, South Bombay's colonial architecture embodies the city's layered identity. However, post-independence urban expansion and rapid modernization have contributed to the neglect and demolition of many heritage structures, gradually erasing the area's architectural legacy. This research paper investigates adaptive reuse as a sustainable strategy to revive the cultural identity and architectural grandeur of South Bombay. This study examines adaptive reuse through two case studies – IFBE (Ice Factory, Ballard Estate) at Ballard Estate and Anita Dongre's Flagship Store at Kala Ghoda – focusing on architectural interventions, building history, and functionality. Using ethnographic and documentary research within a structured framework, it explores how colonial structures adapt to contemporary urban needs by integrating context, material, function, technology, and user experience, highlighting adaptive reuse's relevance on both architectural and urban scales. In India, adaptive reuse remains underutilized due to bureaucratic constraints, systemic disorganization, and a significant lack of awareness among policymakers and the public. As a result, many historic buildings face decay or are lost to commercial redevelopment. This research highlights the relevance of adaptive reuse on both architectural and urban scales and emphasizes the importance of context-sensitive design, user experience, and cultural continuity. By critically evaluating the challenges and opportunities of adaptive reuse, particularly through case studies of South Bombay's colonial architecture, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on heritage conservation. It aims to inspire architects, developers, and policymakers to adopt adaptive reuse as a viable tool for sustainable urban development – preserving the past while accommodating the future.

Keywords: Adaptive reuse, South Bombay, heritage conservation, contemporary functions, architectural interventions, sustainable urban growth

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INTRODUCTION

To explore adaptive reuse as a strategy for reviving the cultural heritage and architectural grandeur of South Bombay's colonial buildings through a detailed analysis of the architect's approach, design interventions and architectural and urban relevance to determine its effectiveness and long-term viability.

Research Questions

The research aims to initiate dialogue around and address the following questions:

- How can adaptive reuse serve as a design strategy to preserve and reinterpret the architectural and cultural identity of colonial-era buildings in South Bombay?

- What architectural approaches and spatial interventions do contemporary architects employ to negotiate between historical preservation and modern programmatic needs?
- How do these transformed buildings contribute to the urban fabric in terms of user experience, cultural relevance, and social engagement?
- What are the challenges and limitations encountered during the adaptive reuse process in this context, and what do they reveal about broader patterns of heritage conservation in India?

These questions guide the research and position the study in encouraging one to rethink adaptive reuse through the lens of design, historical narrative and place-making.

Objectives

The objectives of the research are outlined as follows:

- In-depth examination of case studies.
- Understand the architect's approach.
- Highlight innovative architectural strategies.

The overarching aim of this research is to reflect the need for a growing awareness among architects and developers to advocate adaptive reuse as a sustainable model for future urban growth in historically rich urban contexts like that of South Mumbai.

Relevance of Research

This research holds particular relevance within the field of architecture and urban conservation by examining how adaptive reuse can reconcile historical preservation with contemporary urban needs. Particularly in the context of South Mumbai – a region rich in colonial-era architecture, yet increasingly susceptible to commercial exploitation and urban redevelopment – this study offers a way to sustain historical legacy with commercial ambition. The study identifies adaptive reuse as a critical design and planning strategy to combat haphazard urban growth by bridging the past and the present.

By integrating architectural, cultural, and user-centric dimensions, the research proposes a holistic framework for approaching and assessing the viability and success of adaptive reuse. It also enriches the evolving discourse on post-colonial conservation, not only contributing to academic inquiry, but also highlighting the role architects and policymakers can play in shaping a more culturally rooted and ecologically responsible urban future.

Moreover, in the Indian context, adaptive reuse remains an underexplored approach, with much of the existing practice, theoretical understanding and regulatory policies shaped by Western models. This study aims to bridge that gap by bringing local examples to the forefront and highlighting both the merits and limitations of the selected case studies. These insights can further inform future research and practical application in historically rich contexts such as that of South Bombay.

ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

Existing Frameworks for Evaluating Adaptive Reuse

Several frameworks have been developed to assess the transformation and success of an adaptive reuse project considering different lenses of evaluation.

The Heritage Value Framework by the International Council on Monuments and Sites assesses the architectural, historical, social, and cultural dimensions of heritage while adaptively reusing the building. However, its emphasis is largely architectural with a focus on the preservation of the built form. Brooker and Stone's adaptive reuse framework (2004) [1] centers on architectural strategies such as preservation and transformation in reimagining the function of a building. It provides a typological analysis guided by physical modifications. Bullen and Love's framework (2011) [2] categorize adaptive reuse projects based on their physical integrity and the technical aspects of sustainability, construction

methods and functional integration. The guidelines proposed by Baldwin E (2019) [3] covers aspects of materiality, structural integrity and adaptability in offering practical guidelines for adaptive reuse projects. Arfa, Lubelli, Quist and Zijlstra (2022) [4] identify the various steps right from initiation of the project to its post occupancy evaluation to build a comprehensive conceptual model for evaluating adaptively reused buildings, as seen in Figure 1.

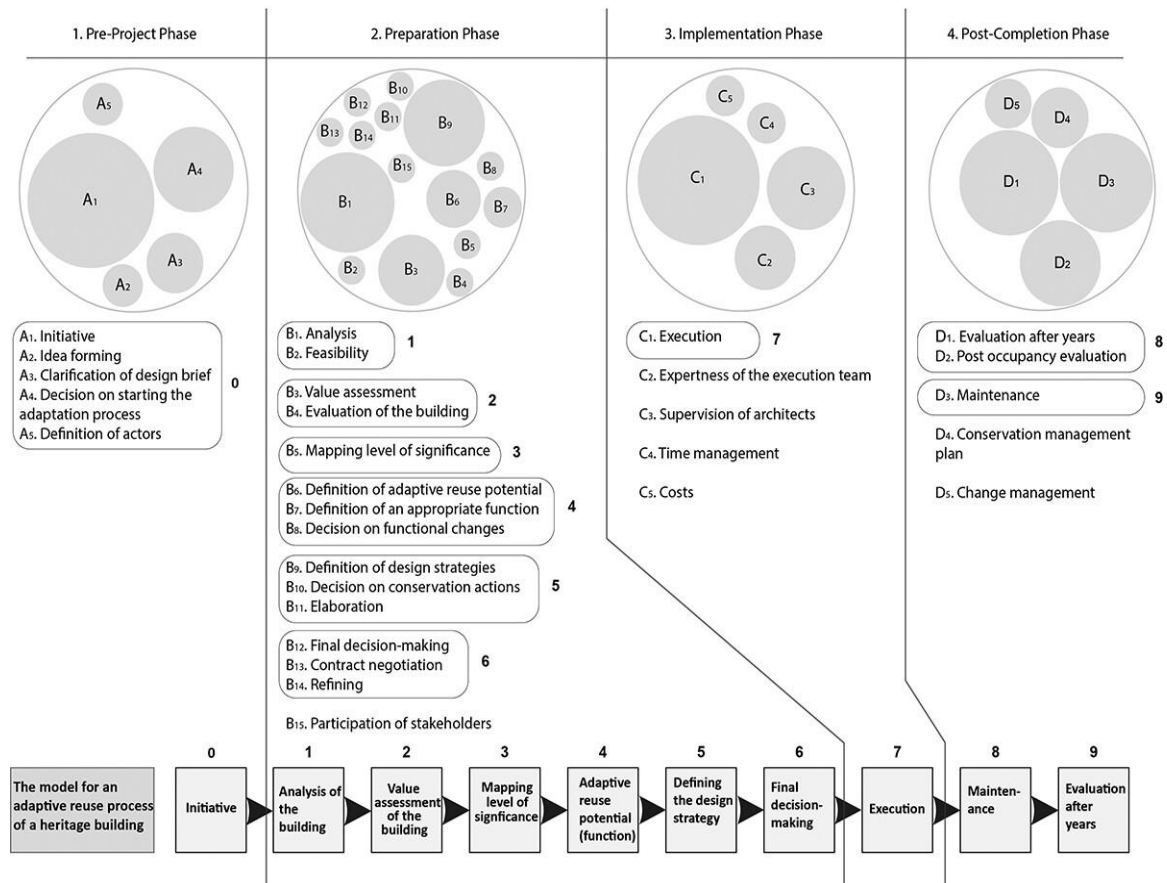


Figure 1. The comprehensive 10-step framework of an adaptive reuse project, developed by Arfa, Lubelli, Quist and Zijlstra (2022).

Source: Arfa, F. H., Zijlstra, H., Lubelli, B., and Quist, W. (2022, April 19). Retrieved from Taylor & Francis.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17567505.2022.2058551#d1e681>

Viewing adaptive reuse solely as a physical transformation and identifying the design strategies alone do not consider interdisciplinary connections that govern the process too, limiting the discussion to just the field of architecture. Connections can – and should be – forged between the architectural enhancement of the building with the fields of social sciences, critical heritage and cultural geography, while also drawing on inferences from the fields of memory studies and literature (Lanz and Pendlebury, 2022; Li Y, Zhao, 2021) [5, 6]. (refer Figure 2).

Comprehensive Framework for Analysis

The framework for analysis in this research paper ensures a comprehensive evaluation of the selected case studies. Existing analysis frameworks often focus primarily on physical interventions rather than the continuity of narratives that contribute just as much to the significance of the structure. The parameters of analysis in this model, as seen in Table 1, are interconnected and touch upon the various aspects of a building’s transformation, not only from an architectural standpoint but also from a cultural, social, and experiential perspective. The research is hence informed by a nuanced and well-rounded view of the adaptive reuse process.

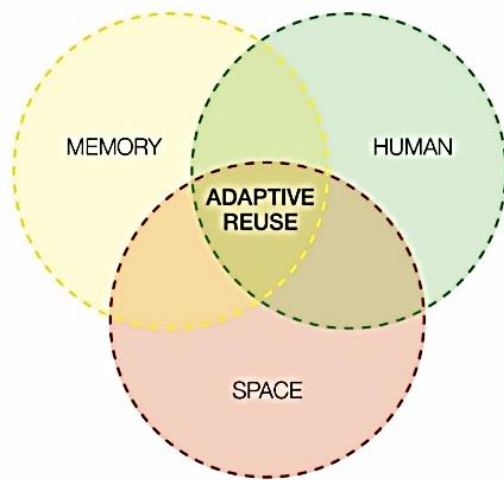


Figure 2. Adaptive reuse is the convergence of memory, human experience and spatial transformation.

Table 1. Outline of the comprehensive framework used for the critical analysis of adaptive reuse projects.

Fields of investigation	Parameters of analysis	Points of evaluation
Cultural And Historical Backdrop	Placemaking and Historical Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing typology and relevance Multi-layered historical narrative Location in urban context Immediate surroundings
	Pre-Intervention Building Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition when acquired Existing spatial configuration Existing materiality and elements
Design Intent	Key Stakeholders and Design Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The architects and the client Individual design philosophies Guiding design principles
Physical Interventions	Programmatic Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New typology and relevance Spatial modifications Contemporary requirements
	Materiality, Structure and Building Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materiality and elements Architectonic expressions Structural framework Integration of services
Spatial And Social Interaction	Socio-Spatial Dynamics and Placemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing typology and relevance Multi-layered historical narrative Location Immediate surroundings
	Spatial Engagement and User Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical placemaking Response to the context Tangible and intangible symbolism
Challenges And Critique	Constraints and Complexities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges faced during construction Challenges faced in present day
	Critical Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness of transformation Relevance to context Scope for improvement

The different parameters used to analyze case studies are:

- Placemaking and historical narrative.
- Pre-intervention building assessment.

- Key stakeholders and design approach.
- Programmatic transformation.
- Materiality, structure and building systems.
- Socio-spatial dynamics and placemaking.
- Spatial engagement and user experience.
- Constraints and complexities.
- Critical analysis of the transformation.

SECONDARY CASE STUDIES

St. Ann's Warehouse

Located at the edge of Brooklyn Bridge Park, the 1868 Tobacco Warehouse – originally built as a five-story tobacco inspection warehouse – stood as a pre-Civil War brick ruin when awarded for adaptive reuse in 2010. Decades of fires, neglect, and structural modifications had reduced the once-thriving node of 19th-century commerce to a fragile shell. By 2007, it was roofless, and the decaying timber and masonry required urgent stabilization shell, as seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3. The condition of the Tobacco Warehouse prior to adaptive reuse.
Source: (n.d.). St. Ann's Warehouse / Marvel Architects. Esto. Retrieved from Arch Daily.
<https://www.archdaily.com/922616/st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects>



Figure 4. The transformation of the dilapidated shell into the St. Ann's Warehouse post adaptive reuse.
Source: Sunberg, D. (n.d.). St. Ann's Warehouse / Marvel Architects. Esto. Retrieved from Arch Daily.
<https://www.archdaily.com/922616/st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects>



Figure 5. The flexible 700-seater theatre in the St. Ann's Warehouse today.
Source: Sunberg, D. (n.d.). St. Ann's Warehouse / Marvel Architects. Esto. Retrieved from Arch Daily.
<https://www.archdaily.com/922616/st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects>

Shift this content to above Figure 5 Marvel Architects, in collaboration with St. Ann's theatre group and consultants like Charcoalblue and Buro Happold [7], transformed the ruin into a vibrant cultural venue (St Ann's Warehouse, n.d.) [8]. refer Figure 4 Programmatically, the intervention introduced a flexible 700-seat theatre, a small studio, ancillary spaces, and the Max Family Garden as an outdoor extension of the theatre (Maggiara, 2019; Oikonomopoulou F, 2018) (as seen in Figures 5 and 6) [9, 10]. The space supports multiple configurations, from thrust stages to flat-floor events, reflecting the ethos of adaptability, as seen in Figure 7.



Figure 6. Performances of various scales and configurations take place in the St. Ann's Warehouse.

Source: Sunberg, D. (n.d.). St. Ann's Warehouse / Marvel Architects. Esto. Retrieved from Arch Daily.

<https://www.archdaily.com/922616/st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects>

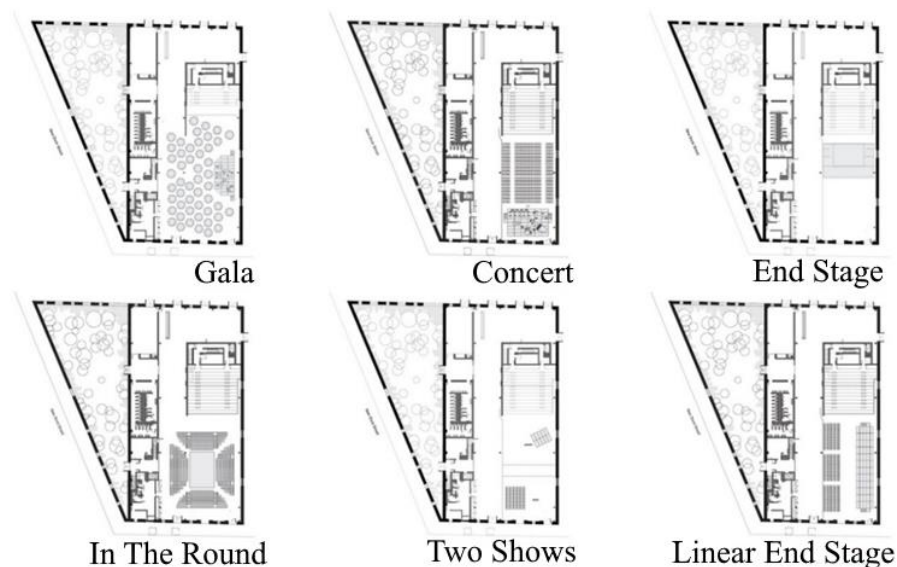


Figure 7. Diverse spatial configurations can be achieved within the existing floor layout of the warehouse.

Source: (n.d.). St. Ann's Warehouse / Marvel Architects: Flexible Theater. Marvel Architects. Retrieved from ArchDaily.

<https://www.archdaily.com/922616/st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects/5d4b3d20284dd1bafc000215-st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects-flexible-theater>

The restoration of the two-story historic masonry walls was central to the transformation of the warehouse, explains Marvel Architects (Plevoets B, 2011) [11]. The original five-brick-thick walls, which could no longer bear vertical loads, were retained and structurally supplemented with a new steel frame inserted within the shell. As seen in Figure 8 This steel frame supports all major interventions – catwalks, rigging systems, and MEP services – while preserving the untouched historical brick envelope.



Figure 8. The overhead catwalk houses all technical elements and audio equipment, keeping the floor unobstructed and adaptable for a variety of functions.

Source: Sunberg, D. (n.d.). St. Ann's Warehouse / Marvel Architects. Esto. Retrieved from Arch Daily. <https://www.archdaily.com/922616/st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects>

Above, a cantilevered band of solid glass bricks forms a clerestory that visually demarcates the new construction from the old, facilitates daylighting, enhances acoustics, and allows for structural height without violating flood elevation limits. This clerestory transforms the building into a glowing beacon by night, reinforcing its role as a cultural landmark, as seen in Figure 9.



Figure 9. The transformation of the dilapidated shell into the St. Ann's Warehouse post adaptive reuse.

Source: Sunberg, D. (n.d.). St. Ann's Warehouse / Marvel Architects. Esto. Retrieved from ArchDaily. <https://www.archdaily.com/922616/st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects>

Interior partitions were defined using plywood and blackened steel, chosen for durability and to complement the weathered textures of the brick, as seen in Figure 10 Key technical elements – catwalk-mounted equipment, radiant fin tube heating, and elevated mechanical systems – were designed in response to lessons from Hurricane Sandy ensuring resilience and LEED Gold performance.



Figure 10. The contrast and cohesion created between the contemporary materials coming together alongside the existing historic brick, as seen in the entrance foyer along Brooklyn Bridge Park.

Source: Sunberg, D. (n.d.). St. Ann's Warehouse / Marvel Architects. Esto. Retrieved from Arch Daily. <https://www.archdaily.com/922616/st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects/5d4b3aa7284dd155ac0000e1-st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects-photo>

The project strengthens social identity. Local artists contributed to signage and lighting, while salvaged materials and architectural gestures – like framing the Brooklyn Bridge – link the space to its context, as seen in Figures 11 & 12. Visitors experience a blend of history and innovation – whether in the garden or beneath the clerestory glow.

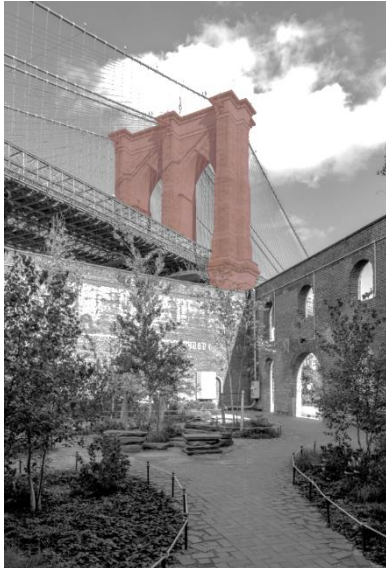


Figure 11. Visual connection established between the Brooklyn Bridge and the warehouse from the Max Family Garden adjoining the warehouse.

Source: Sunberg, D. (n.d.). The Triangle Garden in the direction of Brooklyn Bridge. Esto. Retrieved from Marvel Architects. <https://marveldesigns.com/project/st-anns-warehouse/>



Figure 12. View of the Brooklyn Bridge from the entrance vestibule of the warehouse along Dock Street.

Source: Sunberg, D. (n.d.). St. Ann's Warehouse / Marvel Architects. Esto. Retrieved from Arch Daily. <https://www.archdaily.com/922616/st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects/5d4b3aba284dd1bafc00020b-st-anns-warehouse-marvel-architects-photo>

In a discussion with the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen (2021) [12], Marvel Founding Partner, Lissa So, enumerates how the adaptive reuse of St. Ann's Warehouse [13] had to balance conservation with complex challenges – acoustic isolation, structural inaccuracies, flood resilience, budget constraints, and regulatory hurdles – resolved through collaboration and innovation. While the transformation reactivates the historic shell as a vibrant cultural venue, greater material cohesion and urban porosity could deepen its sensory and civic engagement (Figures 13 & 14).



Figure 13. Townhouses 94 and 96 on P C Hooftstraat before transformation.
Source: (n.d.). Warenaar | Real Estate Amsterdam. Retrieved from YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFlEszODnBM>



Figure 14. The transformation of the townhouses as Crystal House today.
Source: (n.d.). Retrieved from MVRDV.
<https://www.mvrdv.com/projects/240/crystal-houses>

St. Ann's Warehouse [13] today stands as a powerful example of adaptive reuse, preserving historic materiality while embracing new spatial and technical systems. It honors the layered memory of the site, transforming architectural decay into a stage for contemporary cultural expression.

Crystal House

Located on P.C. Hooftstraat – Amsterdam's luxury retail boulevard – the Crystal House by MVRDV represents a bold architectural intervention that merges material innovation with a historic urban setting, as seen in Figure 13 and Figure 14. Originally lined with 19th-century houses, the street has undergone significant transformation due to commercialisation and infrastructural upgrades (MVRDV, n.d.) [14]. In this context, the Crystal House replaces two townhouses with a modern retail store that preserves the silhouette of the original while reimagining its material expression.

Commissioned by real estate firm Warenaar, MVRDV envisioned a flagship retail store that retains Dutch heritage while aligning with global design sensibilities. This store serves as a luxury retail space – initially for Hermes and now for Chanel – and evokes the street's original masonry fabric while adapting to zoning requirements, as seen in Figure 15. The resulting façade redefines traditional masonry as a fully transparent brick façade, constructed with 6,500 handcrafted glass bricks bonded with UV-cured adhesive instead of traditional mortar. As seen in Figure 16, the façade gradually transitions from glass to traditional terracotta as one moves upwards, and maximizes transparency, allowing the building to reflect both its literal surroundings and the aspirational character of high-end retail (Bristogianni et al., 2017) [15]. Internally, Hermès' layout uses natural light, wood textures, and warm tones that echo Amsterdam's urban palette and enhance spatial engagement (Levy, 2019) [16].

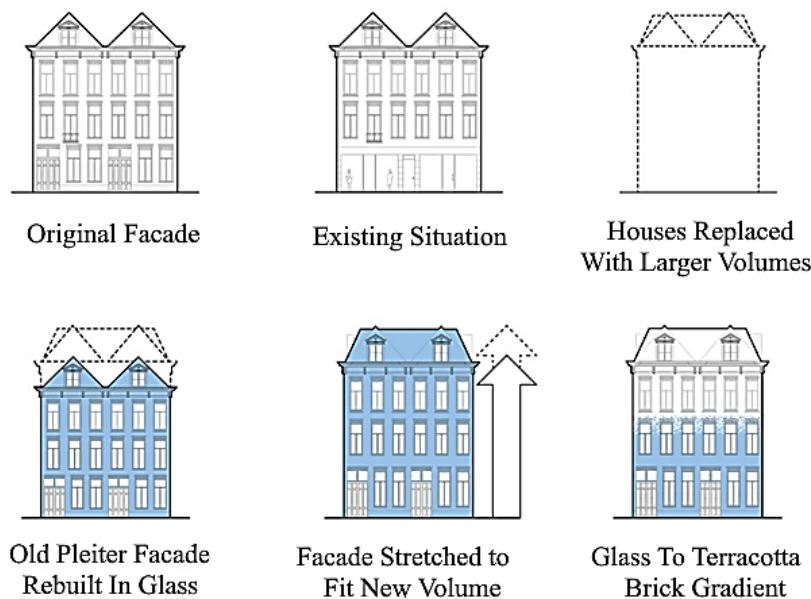


Figure 15. Diagrams illustrate the transformation of the original townhouse into the Crystal House – retaining the historic architectural profile while reinterpreting the façade through innovative glass materiality and volume adaptation.

Source: (n.d.). Crystal Houses / MVRDV: Diagram. Retrieved from ArchDaily.

<https://www.archdaily.com/785923/crystal-houses-mvrdv/57179bbbe58ece074f00027c-crystal-houses-mvrdv-diagram>

Winy Mass, architect and co-founder at MVRDV explains that the project sought to “bring back what will be demolished but develop further” (2016). Technically ambitious, the construction demanded strict environmental controls and specialized craftsmanship, with glass bricks offering recyclability and durability (Figure 16). Structural integrity was achieved through glass buttresses and hidden concrete plinths.



Figure 16. The seamless intersection between glass bricks and terracotta bricks as seen from the interior – showcasing the fusion of modern and traditional materials in the façade.

Source: (n.d.). Retrieved from MVRDV.

<https://www.mvrdv.com/projects/240/crystal-houses>

Despite its innovation, the Crystal House has drawn critique for prioritising form over depth. In a case of form follows image and not function, the façade’s dramatic transparency is largely skin-deep and limited to the façade, while the interiors and user interfaces remain largely conventional. The project has been accused of facadism, offering visual continuity rather than preserving authentic material layers. While it embodies modernity and global retail aspirations, it misses opportunities for richer tactile, spatial, and historical engagement (Figure 17).

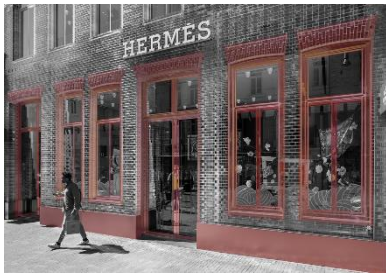


Figure 17. The framing members of the doors and windows are also constructed from glass, with the concrete ram-raised plinth standing out as the only structural element not made of glass.

Source: (n.d.). Retrieved from MVRDV.

<https://www.mvrdv.com/projects/240/crystal-houses>

Ultimately, the Crystal House is a landmark of design and engineering, challenging material conventions. Yet its lasting value lies in how effectively such experimental architecture can balance visual impact with cultural resonance and urban memory.

Inferences from the Secondary Case Studies

The adaptive reuse of St. Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn and the Crystal House in Amsterdam exemplifies how architectural innovation can revive historical structures as dynamic urban landmarks. St. Ann's transforms a 19th-century tobacco warehouse into a state-of-the-art performance space, balancing preservation with modern functionality. Similarly, the Crystal House reinterprets a traditional Dutch townhouse using glass bricks, merging heritage with cutting-edge materiality. Both projects highlight adaptive reuse as a tool for cultural and architectural renewal rather than mere conservation. While they could engage more deeply with their surroundings, these interventions showcase how heritage can remain a living, evolving presence in the city. Their relevance extends to cities like Mumbai, where colonial structures face neglect and over-commercialization. These global precedents offer valuable lessons in respecting history while embracing innovation, urging Indian cities to reimagine everyday heritage as vital contributors to the urban and cultural fabric.



Figure 18. The dilapidated shell of the abandoned Ambico Ice Factory as seen during the process of adaptive reuse.

Source: (n.d.). Exhibition: Refraction: The (Re)Making of the Ice Factory'. Malik Architecture.

PRIMARY CASE STUDIES

IFBE (Ice Factory Ballard Estate)

Placemaking and Historical Narrative

Established in 1878 as the Bombay Ice Manufacturing Company (later the Ambico Ice Factory) this industrial facility was a pioneering steam-powered plant serving Bombay's growing demand for ice. Located in Ballard Estate – a hub of maritime trade developed between the 1900s and 1920s, the factory was strategically placed near docks, railways, and mercantile institutions, as seen in Figure 20. Its Edwardian Neoclassical setting within a European-inspired urban grid reinforces its historical significance. The site, with entrances from Calicut Road and Cochin Street, is flanked by chawls and restaurants, reflecting a layered urban context. Beyond ice production, it challenged British monopolies and housed a substation vital to the precinct, context (refer Figure 21). marking it as a key player in Bombay's industrial and cultural evolution.



Figure 19. The transformation of the Ambico Ice Factory into IFBE post adaptive reuse.
Source: Sarangi, S. (2022). Retrieved from Google Maps.

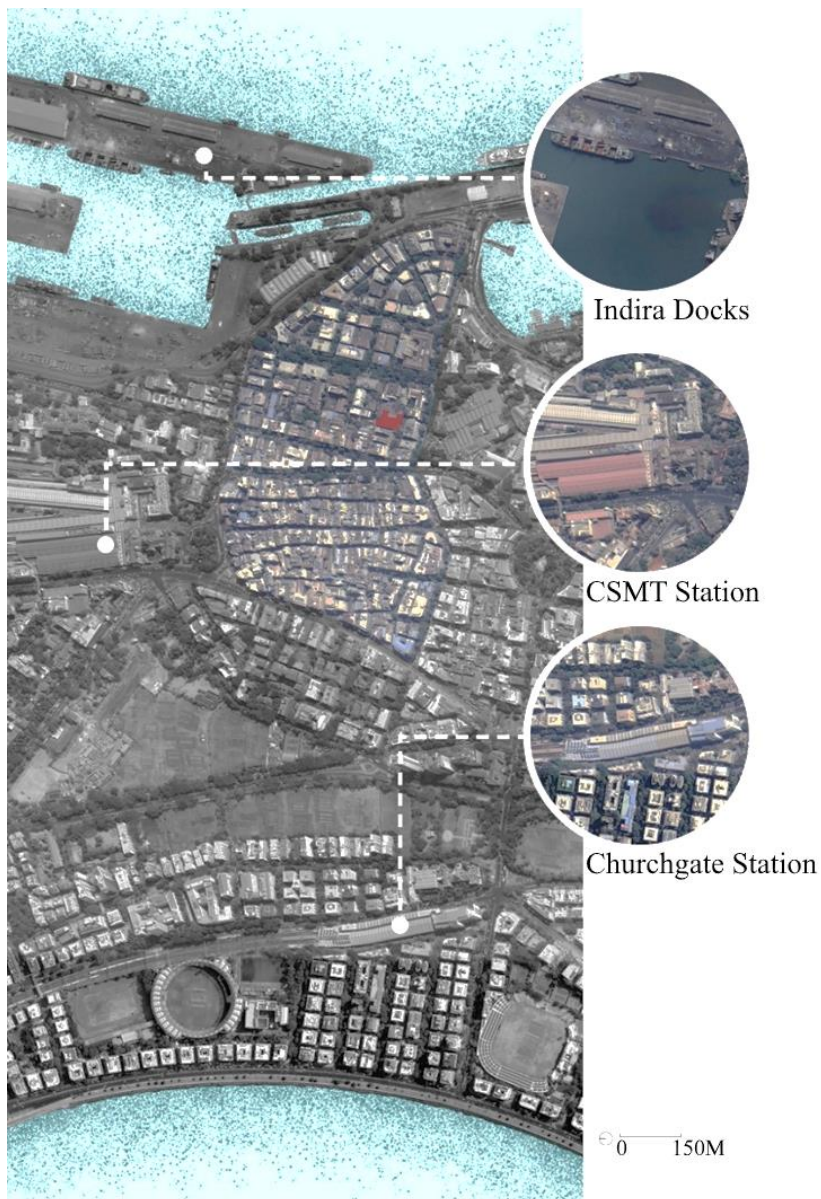


Figure 20. Map of South Mumbai highlighting the location of IFBE in Ballard Estate along with key colonial-era infrastructural nodes – Indra Docks, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST), and Churchgate Station – that were instrumental in shaping the region’s economic and industrial growth during British rule.
Source: (2025, March 3). Base image retrieved from Google Earth Pro. Illustrated by the author.

Pre-Intervention Building Assessment

By the time the Ambico Ice Factory ceased operations and moved to Navi Mumbai during the COVID-19 pandemic, the structure was severely dilapidated. (refer Figure 18) Years of abandonment, unregulated modifications, and structural overloading had compromised its spatial coherence and material integrity, as seen in Figures 22. Architect Kamal Malik's encounter with the site during the pandemic inspired the vision for the Ice Factory, Ballard Estate (IFBE) [17]. Restoration demanded an archaeological approach – the building's roof had almost collapsed, the brick walls were deteriorating under thick plaster, and the banyan tree lay trapped under rubble and concrete (Abdel, 2023) [18]. The dilapidated condition of the former ice factory presented an immense challenge to the architects, who had to peel back years of manipulation and neglect to realize the true potential of the building while honoring its industrial legacy.

Key Stakeholders and Design Approach

The transformation of Ambico Ice Factory into IFBE was led by Malik Architecture, engineer Abhijeet Mehta, and client Lotus LLP. Malik Architecture (n.d.) talks about the holistic approach towards the factory's transformation stating, *"The mission is guided by three metaphors: the banyan tree, which represents the seed of transformation; ice, which represents the cyclical nature of change; and the factory itself, which represents the voice of the Indian artisan."* The project blends visionary design and structural innovation to reimagine adaptive reuse as mindful regeneration, honoring the original structure while reconnecting it to Mumbai's cultural fabric (Kamath A, 2023) [19].



Figure 21. Location of IFBE with respect to its immediate context in Ballard Estate.
Source: (2025). Base image retrieved from Google Maps. Illustrated by the author.

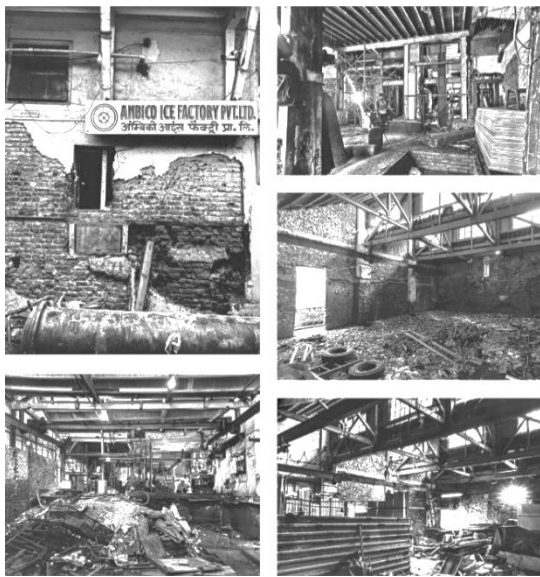


Figure 22. Images documenting the transformation of the 143-year-old Ambico Ice Factory into a multidisciplinary cultural space, capturing the building's pre-restoration condition.

Source: (n.d.). Exhibition: Refraction: The (Re)Making of the Ice Factory'. Malik Architecture.

Programmatic Transformation

The adaptive reuse of the Ambico Ice Factory transformed it into IFBE – Ice Factory, Estate (refer Figure 19) Ballard Estate- a vibrant multidisciplinary hub for architecture, design, and the arts, completed in 2022, as seen in Figure 23.



Figure 23. The diverse functions IFBE houses today, highlighting its adaptability and cultural vitality.

Source: (n.d.). IFBE.space.

Rooted in the building's industrial history, IFBE reimagines heritage within a contemporary urban framework, fostering creativity, sustainability, and inclusiveness. The project preserves key structures like the substation and ice factory and the revitalized courtyard, anchored by the majestic banyan tree, connects diverse functional zones visually and spatially. (refer Figures 24 and 25). The transformation of each space in IFBE is done with the intent of reviving the original spatial quality of lightness and openness, keeping the original structure intact, as seen in Figure 26–31 With flexible, interconnected spaces and active public engagement, IFBE exemplifies holistic adaptive reuse, setting a precedent for preserving Mumbai's architectural legacy amid urbanization and commercialization (Figures 24–30).

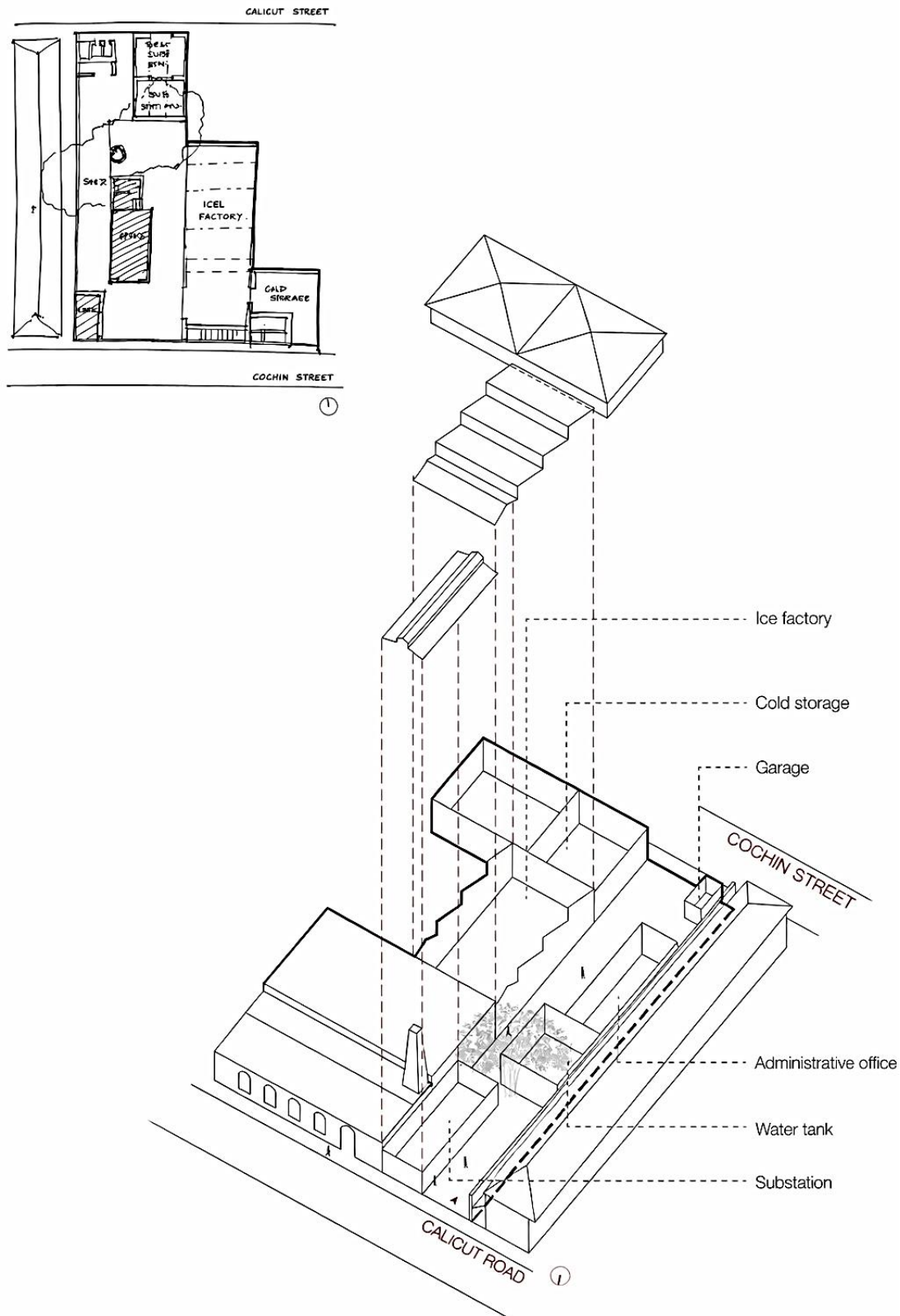


Figure 24. Site study sketch from the initial stage of discovery; spatial organization of the original functions of the complex prior to adaptive reuse.

Source: [Plan] (n.d.). Exhibition: Refraction: The (Re) Making of the Ice Factory'. Malik Architecture.

[Exploded axonometric] (n.d.). IF.BE Ice Factory Ballard Estate / Malik Architecture: Sketch- Case Study. Malik Architecture. Base image retrieved from ArchDaily. Redrawn and illustrated by the author.

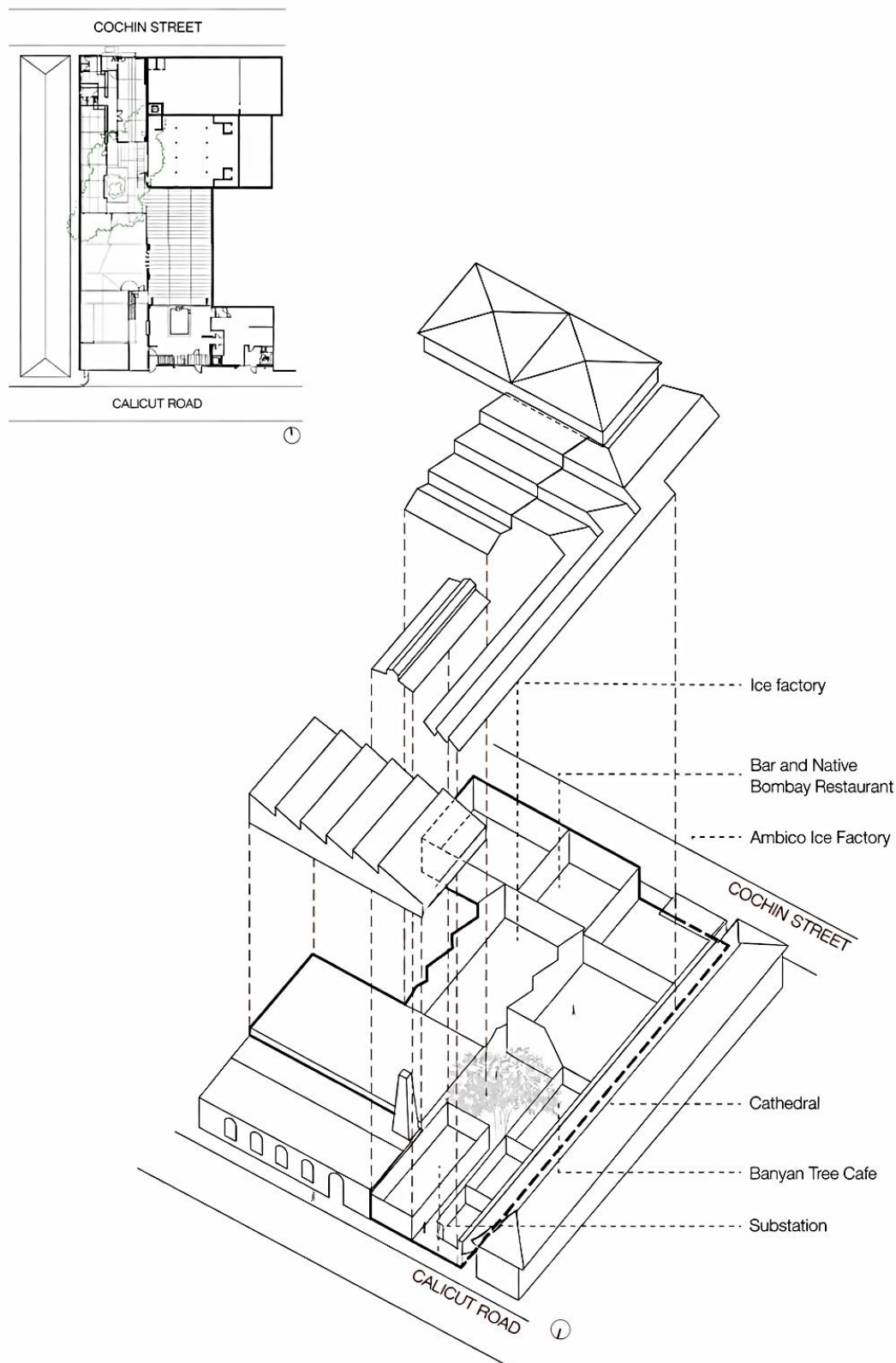


Figure 25. Plan and exploded axonometric of IFBE’s reconfigured spatial organization after adaptive reuse.

Source: [Plan] (n.d.). IF.BE Ice Factory Ballard Estate / Malik Architecture: Ground Floor Plan. Malik Architecture. Base image retrieved from ArchDaily. Redrawn and illustrated by the author.
<https://www.archdaily.com/1004691/ie-ice-factory-ballard-estate-malik-architecture/64c3a01aedf169411e7f5f56-ie-ice-factory-ballard-estate-malik-architecture-ground-floor-plan> [Exploded axonometric] Author.



Figure 26. Substation before transformation.

Source: (n.d.). Malik Architecture. Retrieved from The Plan.

<https://www.theplan.it/eng/award-2023-Renovation/ifbe-ice-factory-ballard-estate-reimagining-space-rescuing-an-old-banyan-tree-malik-architecture>



Figure 27. Substation after transformation.

Source: Ramamrutham, B. (n.d.). IF.BE Ice Factory Ballard Estate / Malik Architecture. Retrieved from ArchDaily.

<https://www.archdaily.com/1004691/ie-ice-factory-ballard-estate-malik-architecture/64c39ff9edf169411e7f5f4d-ie-ice-factory-ballard-estate-malik-architecture-photo>



Figure 28. The courtyard before the adaptive reuse of the ice factory, cluttered with structures and debris that suffocated the banyan tree.

Source: (n.d.). Malik Architecture. Retrieved from The Plan.

<https://www.theplan.it/eng/award-2023-Renovation/ifbe-ice-factory-ballard-estate-reimagining-space-rescuing-an-old-banyan-tree-malik-architecture>



Figure 29. The courtyard at IFBE after adaptive reuse, revitalizing the historic banyan tree and restoring the courtyard's original openness.

Source: Ramamrutham, B. (n.d.). IF.BE Ice Factory Ballard Estate / Malik Architecture. Retrieved from Arch Daily. <https://www.archdaily.com/1004691/ie-ice-factory-ballard-estate-malik-architecture/64c39fbf4b883f501ac6fcc5-ie-ice-factory-ballard-estate-malik-architecture-photo>



Figure 30. The dilapidated state of the ice factory post abandonment, with decaying walls and structural damage.

Source: (n.d.). Malik Architecture.

Materiality, Structure and Building Services

The adaptive reuse of the Ambico Ice Factory into IFBE involved careful preservation of the original structure. Brickwork was exposed by removing plaster layers, and Burma teak roof members were treated and polished rather than replaced. Sagging wooden joists were reinforced with steel plates to maintain structural integrity without altering the original load system refer Figure 32. The pitched lantern roof in the substation was restored to enhance natural light and ventilation, extending visually through the complex into the cathedral's glass accent wall, as seen in Figure 33.

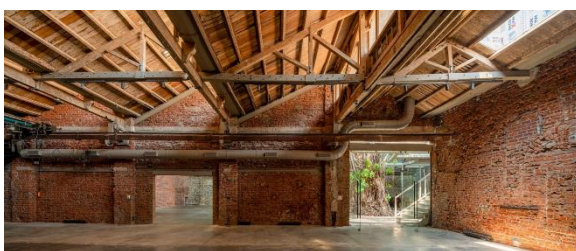


Figure 31. The ice factory today as the heart of IFBE – preserving the brick walls and retrofitting the damaged structural members restored the ice factor's original spacious quality.

Source: Ramamrutham, B. (n.d.). IF.BE Ice Factory Ballard Estate / Malik Architecture. Retrieved from Arch Daily. <https://www.archdaily.com/1004691/ie-ice-factory-ballard-estate-malik-architecture/64c39ffcedf169411e7f5f4e-ie-ice-factory-ballard-estate-malik-architecture-photo>



Figure 32. Visible wear, discoloration, and sagging timber roof members were intentionally retained and structurally reinforced with steel plates to preserve the industrial facility's historic character while ensuring structural integrity.

Severely deteriorated brick walls along the eastern edge were partially reconstructed, blending three generations of brickwork, as seen in Figure 34. The existing north-facing trusses turn perpendicular above the cathedral and pivot into east-facing lights, making the space structurally robust (Figures 33–35). This dual light strategy ensures that natural light floods the space throughout the day. The wooden trusses are adapted into steel for durability and larger spans. A lightweight glass roof shelters the courtyard, allowing a visual connection to the sky.

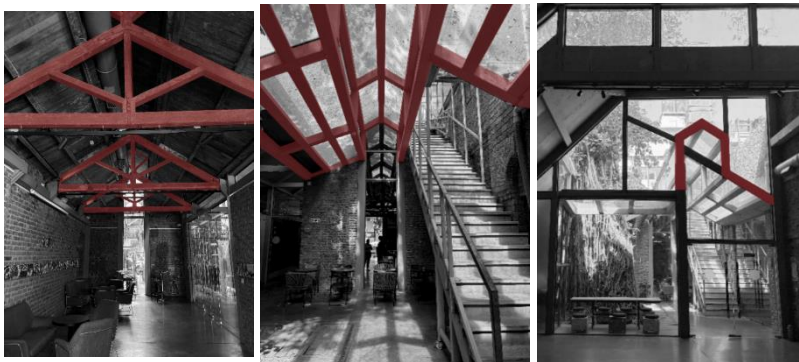


Figure 33. The distinct roof profile of the substation has been highlighted by extending it from the substation through the courtyard to the glass accent wall of the cathedral.



Figure 34. The wall facing the street reveals three distinct phases in the Ice Factory's timeline, each marked by variations in brick type and construction technique.

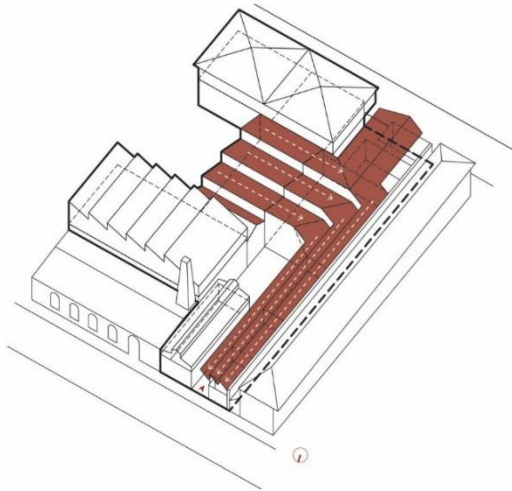


Figure 35. The existing north lights turn sharply above the cathedral to form east-facing roof trusses.

In conversation with site architect Dubey, he recalled how services were a major challenge during adaptive reuse. Contemporary services like air conditioning are discreetly integrated within the roof itself, respecting the building's historic refer Figure 36 fabric, and floor-mount lighting emphasizes exposed brick textures without damaging surfaces. The design embraces rawness and imperfection, preserving IFBE's industrial authenticity while meeting modern functional needs.



Figure 36. Remnants of the former industrial complex were preserved and revealed through the masonry wall of the ice factory. Air conditioning units have been inserted into the roof.

Socio-Spatial Dynamics and Placemaking

IFBE's adaptive reuse fosters a strong sense of place by blending the past and present. The sloping roof has been designed sensitively to allow light and ventilation into the neighboring settlements. As seen in Figures 37 and 38 The cooling coils used in the ice factory have been retrieved in the present-day structure as coil pits, providing visible connections to the factory's industrial history. IFBE stands as a threshold between the past and the future, of "what IF", and of all that "can BE" (IFBE.space, n.d.) [20], creating a vibrant platform for cultural exchange and urban renewal in Ballard Estate (Figure 37).

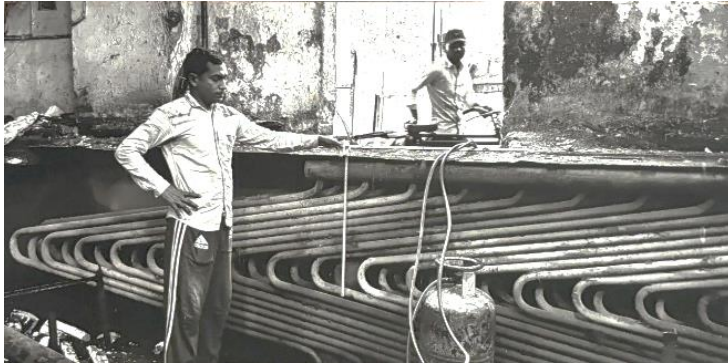


Figure 37. The massive coils were originally used to cool ice in the factory.
Source: (n.d.). Exhibition: Refraction: The (Re)Making of the Ice Factory'. Malik Architecture.



Figure 38. The coil pit at the entrance showcases the original cooling coil as an artefact, immediately linking visitors to the site's legacy as a former ice factory.
Source: (n.d.). IF.BE Ice Factory Ballard Estate / Malik Architecture. Malik Architecture. Base image retrieved from ArchDaily. Illustrated by the author.
<https://www.archdaily.com/1004691/ie-ice-factory-ballard-estate-malik-architecture/64c39fda4b883f501ac6fcca-ie-ice-factory-ballard-estate-malik-architecture-photo>

Spatial Engagement and User Experience

IFBE offers an immersive spatial experience that challenges conventional cultural spaces. Its interplay of light, volume, materiality, and proportions engages visitors deeply, challenging the norms of all-white galleries and all-black performance spaces (refer Figure 39). The central banyan tree provides shade and dynamic shadows throughout the day and connects the courtyard with the sky – an uncommon feature in the dense fabric of Mumbai. The vast, raw industrial space of the ice factory feels open and uninterrupted, with concealed structural elements enhancing flow. Past remnants like the chimney and pitched roof are celebrated, grounding visitors in the building's rich narrative. IFBE crafts an experience that is instinctive and creative, one that lingers in memory and shapes each visitor's personal associations with the space in every visit.

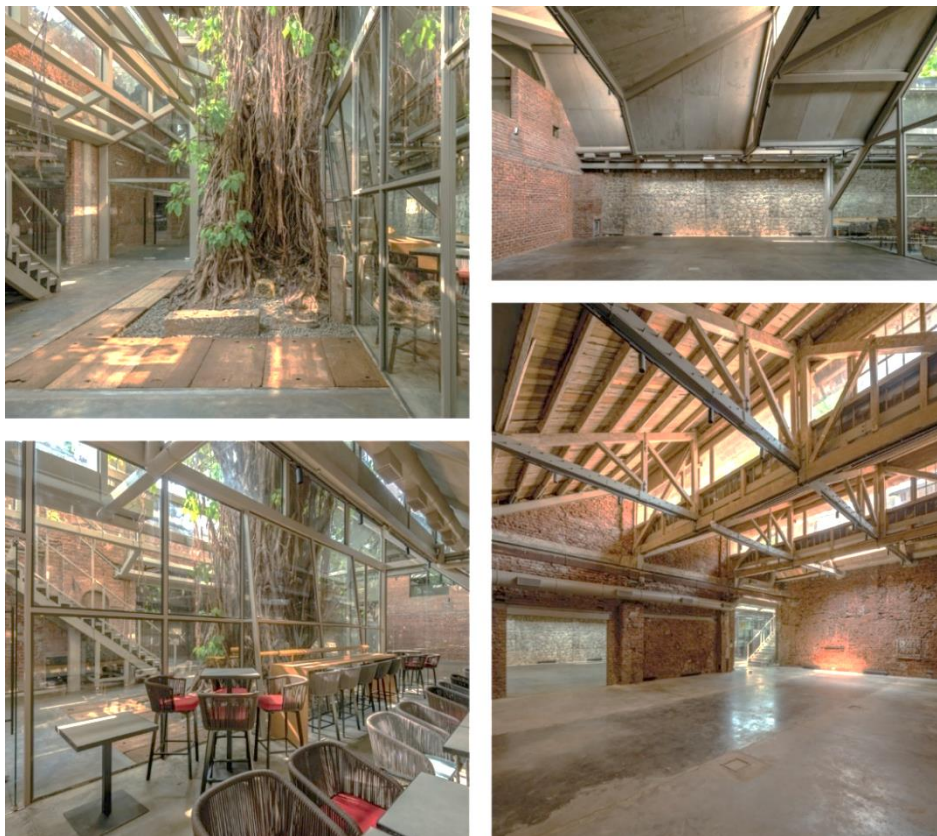


Figure 39. The quality of light, space and volume at IFBE open up the cluttered and decaying complex both spatially and visually, creating a unique experience rare to find in the dense fabric of Mumbai. *Source:* Ramamrutham, B. (n.d.). IF.BE Ice Factory Ballard Estate / Malik Architecture. Malik Architecture.

Constraints and Complexities

During the adaptive reuse of the Ambico Ice Factory into IFBE, the architects faced numerous challenges – both anticipated and unforeseen. The deteriorating structure, with decaying foundations, sagging roofs, and compromised walls, made the site unsafe and uninhabitable. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly slowed down the project execution. Layers of plaster obscured original brickwork, requiring months of careful removal and revealing hidden architectural elements, revealed Malik Architecture. Innovative methods like hanging a bell to measure truss sagging helped devise the necessary interventions for repair. Ongoing issues include the incomplete black box due to structural limits, inefficient air conditioning, persistent water leakage, and poor acoustics from exposed brick walls. Despite these challenges, IFBE exemplifies adaptive reuse resilience, highlighting how overcoming constraints enriches the site’s dialogue between Mumbai’s past, present, and future.

Critical Analysis

The adaptive reuse of IFBE transforms an industrial relic into a creative cultural hub in Ballard Estate. Its raw, weathered materiality preserves the building’s history but can limit bold interventions, as seen in the inconsistent cladding of a brick column (Figures 40 & 41). Thermal inefficiencies, exacerbated by glass roofs and poor ventilation, compromise comfort, with temporary tarpaulin solutions detracting from the factory’s industrial character. The contemporary function diverges sharply from Ballard Estate’s Edwardian context, limiting broader public engagement and risking gentrification. Despite physical accessibility, IFBE remains socially detached from neighboring informal settlements, missing opportunities for inclusive interaction. The building’s current function lacks deep connection to its ice factory past, making heritage preservation more superficial than meaningful. Overall, while IFBE exemplifies adaptive reuse and architectural longevity, it falls short in fostering urban revitalization and inclusive cultural engagement necessary to sustain its legacy within Mumbai’s evolving fabric.



Figure 40. The condition of the Sassoon Building when acquired.
Source: (n.d.). K Unwalla Architects.



Figure 41. The Sassoon Building has been adaptively reused as Anita Dongre's flagship store.
Source: Thiru, S. (n.d.). Retrieved from Vogue India.
<https://www.vogue.in/fashion/content/anita-dongre-opens-a-new-flagship-store-in-kala-ghoda-mumbai>

ANITA DONGRE'S FLAGSHIP STORE

Placemaking And Historical Narrative

The Sassoon Building at Kala Ghoda, built in the 1860s for philanthropist David Sassoon, is a key colonial-era landmark in Mumbai. Originally a mews (a private residence with stables on the ground floor), it later housed the Sassoon Joseph David Company offices and was acquired by the Tata family in 1956, as stated by Shapir in his book "Bombay: Exploring the Jewish Urban Heritage" (2013) [21]. Located at a prominent corner near Jehangir Art Gallery and David Sassoon Library, it anchors Mumbai's vibrant art district, as seen in Figures 42 & 43. Despite many precinct buildings being altered, the Sassoon Building retains its original architectural identity as seen in Figures 40 and 41 and is a Grade III heritage site. Its adaptive reuse into Anita Dongre's flagship store exemplifies how colonial heritage can be preserved while embracing contemporary cultural and commercial uses, maintaining relevance in Mumbai's evolving urban fabric.

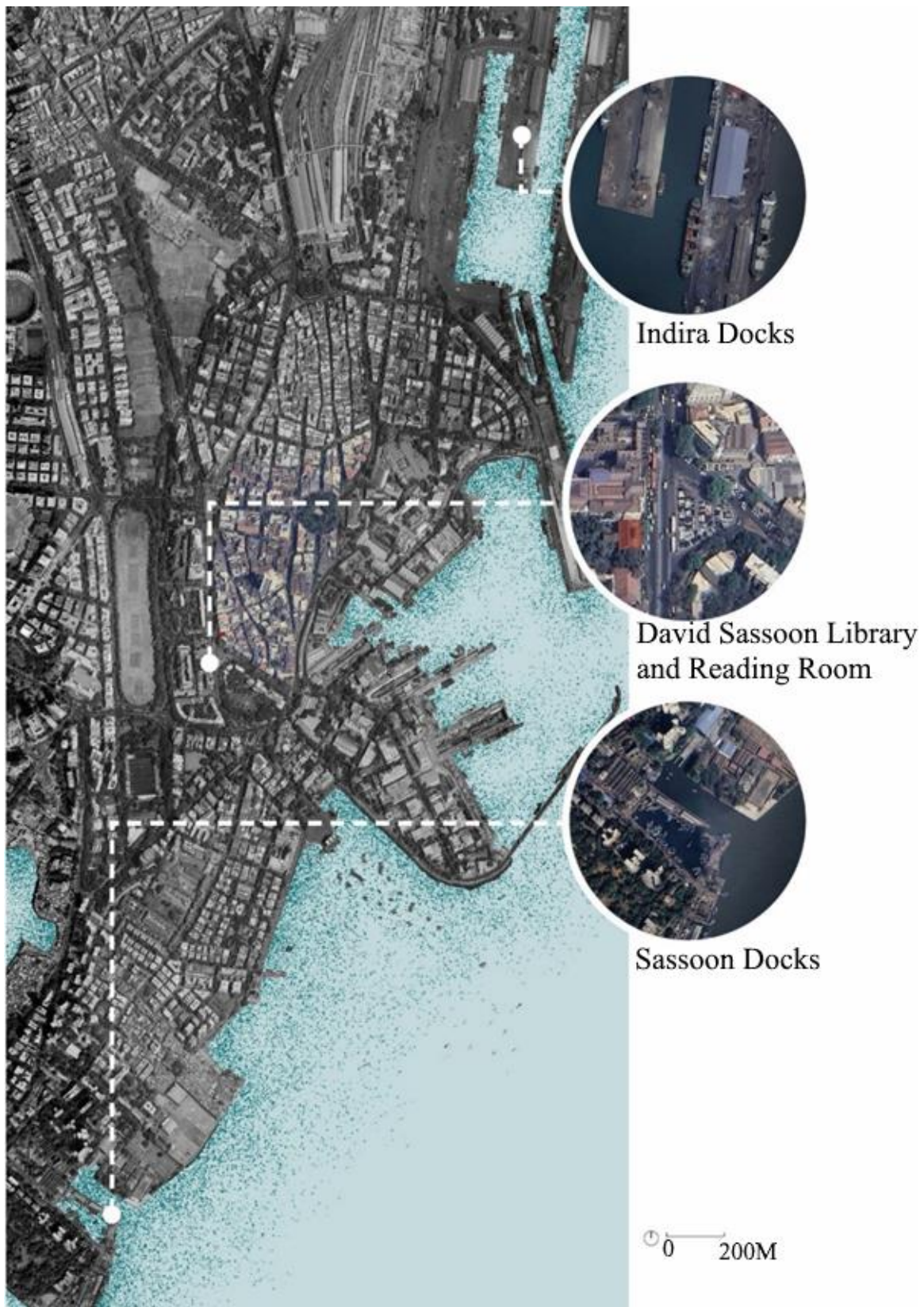


Figure 42. Map of South Mumbai shows Anita Dongre’s flagship store in Kala Ghoda, alongside Indira Docks, Sassoon Docks, and Sassoon Library – landmarks that reflect David Sassoon’s lasting impact on the city’s development.

Source: (2025, March 3). Base image retrieved from Google Earth Pro. Illustrated by the author.

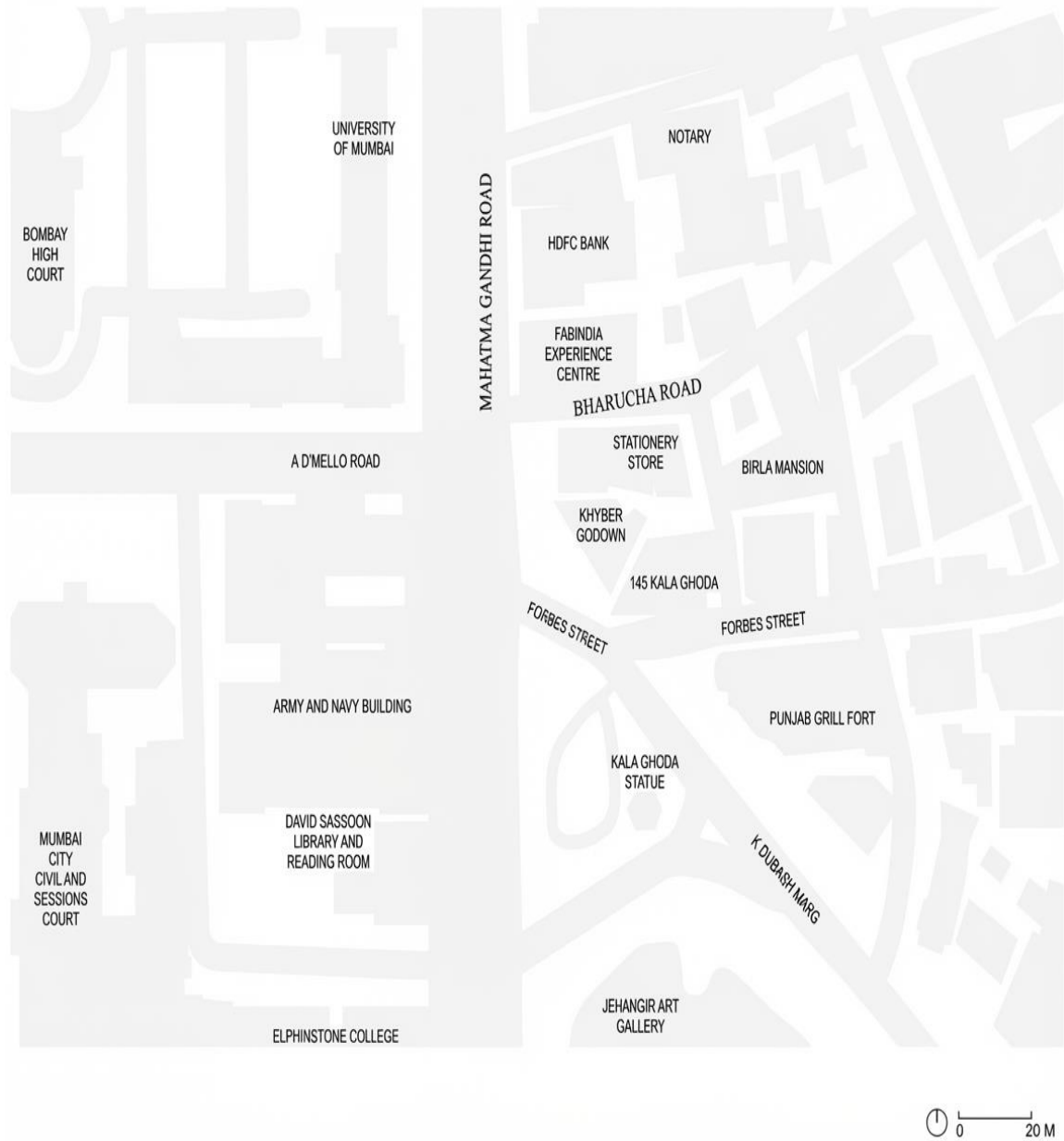


Figure 43. Location of Anita Dongre's flagship store with respect to its immediate context in Kala Ghoda.

Source: (2025). Base image retrieved from Google Maps. Illustrated by the author.

Pre-Intervention Building Assessment

When Anita Dongre acquired the Sassoon Building, it was defunct and heavily vandalized. In conversation with Khaki Lab in 2024 [22], Unwalla recalls the condition of the building when it was acquired – the previous tenants had altered the original fabric with superficial modifications, the materials and elements had either deteriorated or were missing, and what was left was in urgent need of restoration as seen in Figure 44 (The 1860s structure featured load-bearing walls of stone, brick, and lime, many of which improperly patched with cement, accelerating decay. The original open-plan design was lost under fragmented spaces and unsafe additions, such as a tilted balcony, detached from the main structure. Over time, adjacent blocks merged, altering spatial flow but retaining fluidity. Key heritage elements – stained glass, teak beams, cast iron railings, and a grand teak staircase – were damaged and in urgent need of restoration. Unwalla faced the challenge of preserving the building's architectural integrity while adapting it to contemporary use).



Figure 44. Images documenting the condition of the 165-year-old Sassoon Building at the initial stage of acquisition for adaptive reuse.

Source: (n.d.). K Unwalla Architects.



Figure 45. View of the second floor post adaptive reuse.

Key Stakeholders and Design Approach

Seasoned conservation architect Kirtida Unwalla was chosen to restore the Sassoon Building. Anita Dongre and her team at LABwerk designed the interiors, while Unwalla led architectural conservation, ensuring historical integrity. Dongre, an India-proud fashion designer, integrates Rajasthan's crafts and social sustainability into her brand. Their collaboration resulted in a flagship store that harmoniously blends 19th-century Bombay's heritage with modern luxury, celebrating both history and craftsmanship.

Programmatic Transformation

The Sassoon Building has been revitalized as Anita Dongre's flagship store, blending 19th-century Bombay heritage with contemporary luxury as seen in Figures 45 and 46. Unlike typical minimalist fashion boutiques, Dongre's store embraces craftsmanship and heritage. Restoration involved removing decades of insensitive alterations to reveal the original architectural fabric. Key interventions include splitting a central ground-floor column to enhance circulation, adding a lift for accessibility, and introducing a double-height cutout to connect floors visually (Figures 47). The expanded building blocks now serve functional retail spaces. Each floor highlights different brand elements and is linked by the grand teak staircase, creating a culturally rich retail experience while preserving the original structure and grandeur, as seen in Figures 48–53.



Figure 46. View of the third floor after adaptive reuse-transformation of the space into a luxury fashion boutique while preserving key architectural features.

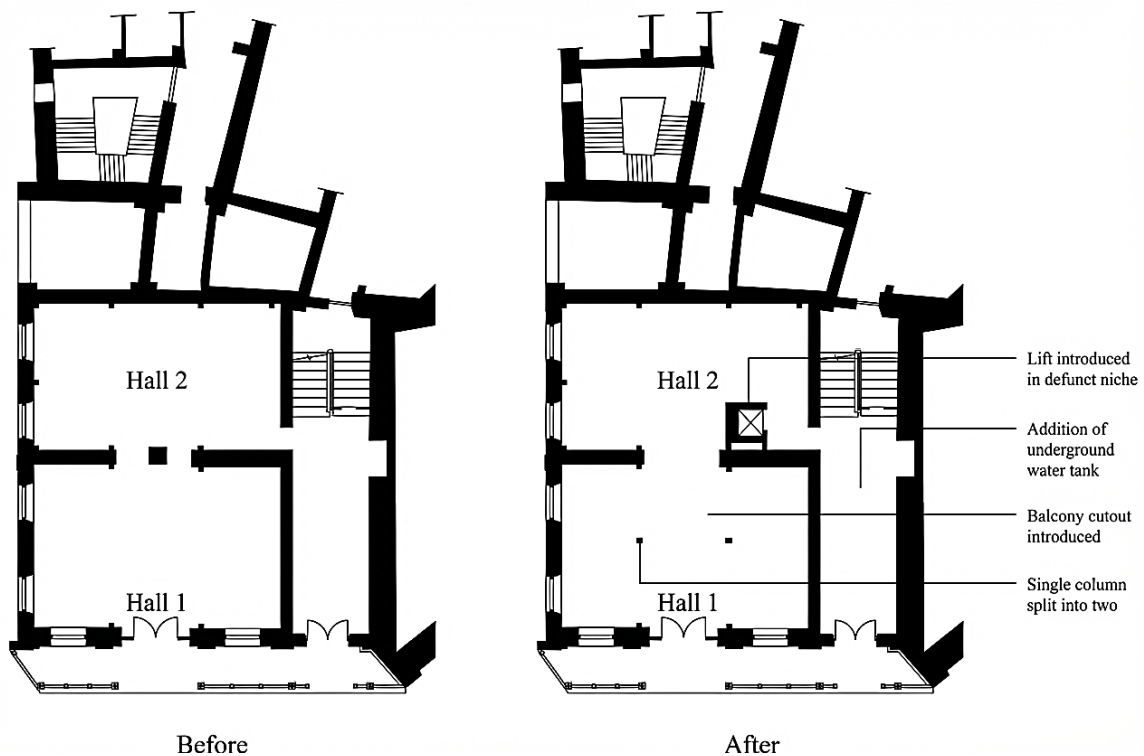


Figure 47. Physical transformation of the ground floor after adaptive reuse.
Source: (n.d.). Base image retrieved from K Unwalla Architects. Redrawn and illustrated by the author.



Figure 48. The condition of the ground floor when the building was acquired for transformation.
Source: (n.d.). K Unwalla Architects.



Figure 49. The ground floor after adaptive reuse.

Source: Thiru, S. (n.d.). Retrieved from Vogue India.

<https://www.vogue.in/fashion/content/anita-dongre-opens-a-new-flagship-store-in-kala-ghoda-mumbai>



Figure 50. The condition of the first floor of the building before adaptive reuse.

Source: (n.d.). K Unwalla Architects.

Materiality, Structure, and Building Services

Conservation architect Unwalla prioritized preserving the building's original architectural fabric and retained nearly 80% of original materials, including diverse window typologies, wooden frames, stained glass, lime plaster walls, and teak structural members, refer Figures 54 and 55 repairing and restoring them with care. Godrej Locks [23] Structural reinforcements, like Helifix bars and independent wooden support, stabilized deteriorated masonry without compromising authenticity. The ornate teak staircase was restored, Figure 56–58, and cast-iron balcony railings are replicated in steel for durability.



Figure 51. The first floor after adaptive reuse – restoring its spatial character and enhancing the user experience through interventions.

Source: Thiru, S. (n.d.). A small balcony enclosure inside the building that overlooks the ground floor. Retrieved from Architectural Digest India.

<https://www.architecturaldigest.in/story/inside-anita-dongres-new-flagship-boutique-in-kala-ghoda-mumbai/>



Figure 52. Dilapidated condition of the roof and Mangalore tiles prior to adaptive reuse.
Source: (n.d.). K Unwalla Architects.



Figure 53. The roof post-adaptive reuse – restoration of Mangalore tiles and structural members revive the original architectural character.

Source: (n.d.). VC Live: Season 2: Episode 8: Conservation Practice: A Smart Approach to Sustainable Development. Godrej Locks. Retrieved from YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbNoDtldMis>



Figure 54. Exposed teak beams on the ground floor left uncarpentered and unpolished, to tell the story correctly.

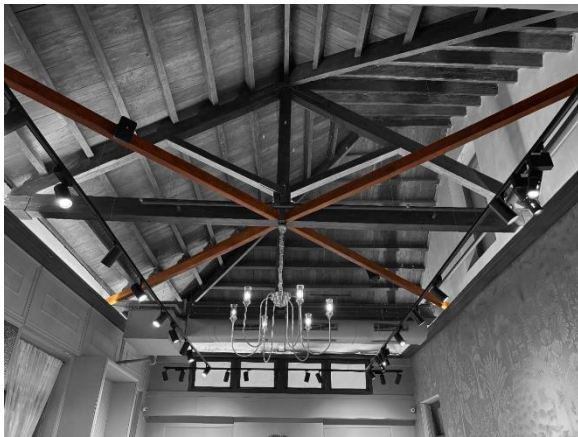


Figure 55. Diagonal bracing members added to strengthen the existing timber roof framing system.



Figure 56. Photographs of the staircase before adaptive reuse – showing signs of sagging, vandalism, and neglect.

Source: (n.d.). K Unwalla Architects.



Figure 57. The staircase as seen from the landing on the second floor.



Figure 58. The grand staircase after adaptive reuse, restored to its former grandeur.

Source: Thiru, S. (n.d.). The grand staircase that has been redeemed from the original building.
Retrieved from Architectural Digest India.

<https://www.architecturaldigest.in/story/inside-anita-dongres-new-flagship-boutique-in-kala-ghoda-mumbai/>

Modern services, such as fire safety, air conditioning, and drainage systems, are sensitively integrated, often left exposed to maintain the building's raw aesthetic refer Figure 59. An elevator was added in a defunct niche for accessibility. The external colonnade of Corinthian columns was retrieved and coated with anti-rust silver paint to maintain their aesthetic integrity while providing support to the balcony (Figures 60 & 61).

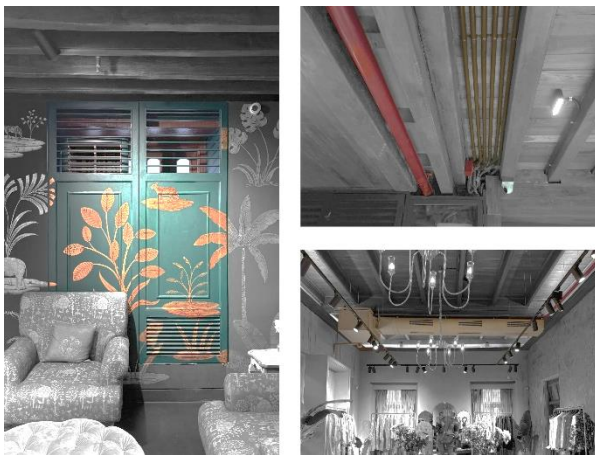


Figure 59. Services seamlessly integrated within the store, balancing aesthetics with functionality according to the building's new function.



Figure 60. Damaged condition of the columns when the building was acquired.

Source: (n.d.). K Unwalla Architects.



Figure 61. The structural columns supporting the balcony were salvaged, restored and enhanced by painting.

Source: Thiru, S. (n.d.). Retrieved from Vogue India.

<https://www.vogue.in/fashion/content/anita-dongre-opens-a-new-flagship-store-in-kala-ghoda-mumbai>

Through meticulous material conservation, structural reinforcement, and discreet modern upgrades, the project creates a harmonious blend of historical integrity and modern functionality in the adaptive reuse of the Sassoon Building.

Socio-Spatial Dynamics and Placemaking

The adaptive reuse of the Sassoon Building in Kala Ghoda breathes new life into a historic landmark with its contemporary function as Dongre's boutique (Figures 62 & 63). This transformation deepens the building's sense of place by harmonizing old-world architectural elements with vibrant modern design. The project reflects a strong commitment to sustainability through careful preservation, reuse of materials, and respect for the building's history. Dongre's integration of traditional Rajasthani *pichwaai* paintings and artisan craftsmanship refer Figure 62 enriches the store's cultural narrative, forging a meaningful link between heritage, fashion, and urban identity. No matter how the building evolves and which function it houses next, the small yet powerful plaque at the entrance as seen in Figure 64, will always stand as a reminder of the origins and legacy of this building, preserving its identity into the city's collective memory.



Figure 62. Pichwaai wallpaper adorning the store walls, serving as an ornamental backdrop for the display of apparel.



Figure 63. The Sassoon Building after being adaptively reused as Anita Dongre’s flagship store.

Source: Thiru, S. (n.d.). Retrieved from Vogue India.

<https://www.vogue.in/fashion/content/anita-dongre-opens-a-new-flagship-store-in-kala-ghoda-mumbai>

Spatial Engagement and User Experience

Unwalla fondly recalls the adaptive reuse of the Sassoon Building as one of her most rewarding collaborations. The seamless synergy between Unwalla, Dongre, and Trehan resulted in a unique, multisensory space that leaves a lasting impression. The experience begins outside, with the nostalgic facade’s chrome yellow and off-white tones, teak balcony, stained glass, and the luxurious emerald and gold logo hinting at the craftsmanship within (Figure 64).



Figure 64. Plaque at the entrance acknowledging the building’s heritage and historical significance.

Inside, traditional Rajasthani *jharokhas* frame windows, reinforcing the cultural narrative alongside *pichwahi* art and intricate apparel. Vintage photographs of Bombay's history line the walls, while a glance outward reveals its contrast against modern Mumbai – the panoramic view of the sunset behind heritage buildings in stone, and the bustle of traffic and people, offering reflection amid the city's energy, as seen in Figures 65 & 66. The tactile wood, detailed textiles, subtle aromas, and ambient sound enrich the experience, elevating the boutique beyond retail to a crafted journey where fashion, history, and heritage deeply resonate.



Figure 65. The balcony is as viewed during the day and at night.



Figure 66. View of the city bustles through the reflective corridor of the balcony.

Constraints and Complexities

The adaptive reuse of the Sassoon Building into Anita Dongre's boutique faced multiple technical and bureaucratic challenges. Structurally, the irregular footprint caused by conjoining adjacent blocks and the complex sloping roof complicated load distribution. The deteriorated balcony, nearly collapsing, demanded careful detachment and preservation of original materials for reconstruction.

Bureaucratic hurdles included strict heritage conservation rules by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, which mandated white fire-retardant paint on exposed timber, as seen in Figure 67. Unwalla successfully contested this outdated regulation by presenting material science evidence, allowing the timber to remain exposed and retain its raw aesthetic, crucial to the building's character.



Figure 67. Imagined scenario of the ground floor with exposed teak members painted white to comply with regulations, resulting in a loss of spatial character.

Source: Thiru, S. (n.d.). Retrieved from Vogue India. Illustrated by the author.

<https://www.vogue.in/fashion/content/anita-dongre-opens-a-new-flagship-store-in-kala-ghoda-mumbai>

Despite extensive interventions, leakage during Mumbai's monsoons remains an unresolved issue due to the building's age and irregular spatial layout. This project exemplifies the complex balance between preservation and adaptation, demonstrating both the creative potential and persistent challenges of heritage conservation in contemporary architecture.

Critical Analysis

The adaptive reuse of the Sassoon Building into Anita Dongre's flagship store skillfully merges colonial heritage with luxury retail, yet reveals tensions between conservation, commercialism, and public engagement. While the store creates a curated brand experience, challenges include inadequate natural light due to heritage constraints, underutilization of the balcony, and compromised material authenticity such as replaced stained glass and concealed lime plaster. Accessibility issues persist with uneven steps and lowered entrance levels. The inward-focused design limits interaction with Kala Ghoda's vibrant street life, reinforcing exclusivity in a diverse cultural precinct. The building's past functions are overlooked, raising questions about the depth of historical continuity in adaptive reuse. Though a successful heritage transformation, the project prioritizes commercial appeal over broader urban and social inclusivity, missing opportunities for a more layered engagement with the precinct's public and cultural fabric. This highlights the need for adaptive reuse strategies balancing architectural integrity, community, and functionality.

CONCLUSION

Adaptive reuse has emerged as a vital strategy for reviving the cultural heritage and architectural grandeur of South Bombay's colonial buildings. In a society increasingly shaped by diversity and a desire for layered narratives, historical structures offer embedded stories, spatial memories, and symbolic significance. Adaptive reuse enables these buildings to evolve – not by erasing the past, but by building

upon it. Instead of treating heritage as static, adaptive reuse reimagines architecture as dynamic – capable of reinvention while retaining its core identity. It is driven by a desire to preserve collective memory and resist the erasure of cultural associations. This is especially crucial in Mumbai, a city whose resilient spirit echoes Paris’s motto, *fluctuat nec mergitur* – meaning “tossed by the waves but never sinks.” Yet many heritage structures in South Bombay face abandonment or insensitive modifications, victims of unchecked urbanization and commercialization. In contrast, adaptive reuse creates “a future for the past.” It fosters continuity by preserving architectural integrity while responding to contemporary needs. Architect Rodolfo Machado’s metaphor of the palimpsest resonates here – adaptively reused buildings retain the traces of earlier texts, offering new narratives layered atop existing spatial memory. In this sense, adaptive reuse is as much about storytelling as it is about design. It invites architects and users alike to engage with history – not passively, but critically – allowing buildings to act as vessels of memory and agents of change. This narrative continuity deepens the user experience, offering not just visual richness but also a layered understanding of time and place. The transformation of former industrial and public buildings in South Bombay – once rooted in trade and colonial bureaucracy – into contemporary cultural or commercial hubs exemplifies this shift. Rather than overpowering their historic identity, these structures gain renewed relevance through duality. The spatial character that emerges from this coexistence is irreplicable in new construction and adds immense value to the city’s urban narrative. Furthermore, adaptive reuse supports environmental sustainability by conserving embodied energy and reducing the carbon footprint associated with demolition and new construction. In rapidly densifying cities, like Mumbai, where space is scarce and land is overvalued, adaptive reuse presents an economically viable and environmentally responsible alternative to redevelopment. It promotes a circular approach to architecture – one that values longevity, reinvention, and cultural stewardship over short-term gain. Through both primary and secondary case studies – the Ice Factory, Ballard Estate (IFBE), Anita Dongre’s flagship store, St. Ann’s Warehouse, and Crystal House – this paper has illustrated how adaptive reuse can successfully mediate between preservation and progress. While St. Ann’s and Crystal House engage with historic narrative and materiality in different degrees, IFBE and Anita Dongre’s store highlight the latent flexibility of colonial architecture to accommodate contemporary programs. Each project reflects a spectrum of adaptive reuse – from contextual transformation to bold reinterpretation – offering lessons in form, function, and the spirit of place. However, the process is neither simple nor linear. Adaptive reuse is a complex operation requiring a multidisciplinary approach. Architects must mediate between structural constraints, aesthetic coherence, programmatic change, and cultural significance. Success depends on collaboration between all stakeholders, and crucially, a shared vision. Commercial reuse, if done superficially, can exploit the visual appeal of heritage structures without respecting their deeper narratives. This calls for robust conservation guidelines rooted in ethics and contextual knowledge – not just bureaucratic mandates. The relationship between branding and architectural authenticity must be negotiated with care to avoid facadism or token preservation. Moreover, the impact of adaptive reuse extends beyond the building to its urban context. We must ask: does memory reside only in the form, or also in the lived experience and evolving identity of space? Successful reuse projects actively engage with the street, surrounding fabric, and public life – contributing meaningfully to the collective urban memory. Looking ahead, the future of adaptive reuse in South Bombay hinges on our vision: do we see the city as a patchwork of fragmented interventions, or a cohesive tapestry woven with architectural, social, and cultural threads? If we choose the latter, adaptive reuse becomes not merely a technical solution, but a powerful cultural process – one that enables cities to grow without losing sight of what they were. As the pressures of urbanization intensify, the role of adaptive reuse will only grow more urgent, demanding creative, contextually aware strategies that honor both memory and modernity. By drawing actionable insights from global precedents, we can craft context-sensitive frameworks that make adaptive reuse more accessible, aspirational, and sustainable. When executed thoughtfully, adaptive reuse reconciles Mumbai’s colonial past with its contemporary ambitions – honoring history not as a relic, but as a living, evolving part of the city’s identity.

Future Scope and Questions for Further Enquiry

This research provides a foundational understanding of how adaptive reuse can act as a catalyst for preserving and reactivating the colonial heritage of South Bombay. However, the evolving dynamics of urban development, climate concerns, and socio-cultural shifts invite further investigation into the long-

term viability, scalability, and inclusivity of adaptive reuse strategies. Future research can delve deeper into the economic sustainability of such interventions, their environmental impact, and their role in shaping collective memory and identity in increasingly globalized cities. Moreover, the intersection between policy frameworks, public–private partnerships, and heritage regulations requires critical analysis to identify gaps and opportunities that can enable more responsive and inclusive reuse practices.

As cities continue to grow vertically and digitally, the question remains: Can adaptive reuse remain relevant in a rapidly transforming urban future? This opens up multiple avenues for inquiry, including technological, ethical, and policy-driven dimensions of heritage conservation.

Questions for Further Research

- What frameworks or tools can be developed to assess the intangible cultural value of reused buildings, beyond architectural merit?
- How can adaptive reuse be integrated into urban policy and planning frameworks to ensure its systemic adoption rather than isolated case-based success?
- In the context of adaptive reuse, how do client–architect negotiations respond to heritage-specific constraints, and how do existing regulatory frameworks support or hinder the selection and transformation process?
- What are the long-term socio-cultural implications of repurposing heritage buildings for commercial or luxury use? Does it enhance public engagement or alienate local communities?

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