

A “PLACE-BASED” APPROACH TO REUSING INDUSTRIAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSETS

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The presentation will discuss how we use heritage as a driver of development specifically in Latin America. We will showcase our Montevideo project to illustrate our philosophy and approach. This project reuses the historic central station as the anchor of a large mixed use mixed income community revitalization effort. At the invitation of the Urban Development Department of the World Bank, we presented this project in September 2010 and it was extremely well received. According to the World Bank Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Thematic Group,

“Cultural endowments such as traditional architecture, unique streetscapes, and historic sites are increasingly recognized as important economic resources in both developed and developing countries. Cities are often an important focal point for development based on these resources because they provide concentrations of heritage assets, infrastructure services, private sector activity, and human resources. Improving the conservation and management of urban heritage is not only important for preserving its historic significance, but also for its potential to increase income-earning opportunities, city livability, and competitiveness.” (Infrastructure and Heritage Conservation: Opportunities for Urban Revitalization and Economic Development - Katrinka Ebbe, World Bank)

Heritage assets reside not only in the built environment or landscape, they also reside in the collective and cellular memory of both residents and visitors. Layered onto and absorbed into the physical fabric are experiential, emotional, and impressionistic elements generated by human interaction over time. These intangibles define authenticity; they define sense of place.

To optimize long term viability and ultimately protect the heritage resource, projects using these assets as drivers of development must support both their tangible and these intangible attributes. Only by valuing both, can identity be nurtured, pride of place be reignited, and sustainable economic growth be catalyzed.

Each place, no matter how large or small, has unique attributes and qualities, just as each of us has as an individual. Our development process begins by discovering those singular qualities and articulating them so that the team has a thorough and in-depth understanding of the identity of each location and site. An authentic, organic and dynamic development can then be planned and formed in harmony with funding requirements, municipal goals and local community needs, hopes and aspirations. In this way we successfully reuse cultural and industrial heritage resources for economic and social benefit, improving quality of life for residents while attracting sustainable tourism.

This place-based approach starts with the local community connecting residents to their own culture and heritage *first* by valuing (revealing and articulating) their sense of place, honoring memory and providing a source of pride. All of our developments are designed to be woven into the fabric and daily life of the local population. With this approach, residents become hosts and ambassadors of their cities and communities. To us, “pride goes before the rise.” Not only does this enhance livelihood opportunities, but local pride and the resultant buy-in of the community also provides a more secure and sustainable return on investment.

Research and Analysis

Our process of revealing and articulating the identity of place has two main components, research and analysis. The analysis is then distilled into clues, themes and vignettes that are written to connect to the mind, heart, and soul. These are impressions based on extensive research, scores of ranging interviews with local officials and residents and casual conversation overheard in the shops, restaurants and cafes. They are intended to guide the development infusing it with the resonant emotions, attachments, memories and perceptions of the host community. We will present an overview of our analysis for Montevideo and demonstrate how that is embedded into the development plan.

To express our development approach, we find stories to be most effective as they enable us to portray our projects in human terms honoring the impact of place on people and people on place.

In this case the story that epitomizes the Uruguayan spirit is one of a grandfather and his grandson. Many people with whom we spoke had a similar experience of the train station and the awe it inspired. They told us these stories of their first trip to the station with a wistful pride and a quiet smile. Based on this, we created a short illustrated narrative of a grandfather taking his grandson on the train into the city of Montevideo for the first time in the 1940s, prior to the political upheaval that swept the country in the late 1950s. Using this device, we connect our development plan to the community, the funders, and government officials using the intangible values so deeply ingrained in the fabric of the station and the memory of the population. The story allows us to present our development in an unexpected but authentic and heartfelt way.

We tell the story with six illustrations that honor the psyche of the city and its sense of place. The humility, the nostalgia, the importance of education, the emphasis on intellectual pursuit, the quiet elegance and refinement of the people are portrayed in simple drawings that punctuate the presentation. The story resolves with the grandson, now a grandfather himself, walking with his grandson outside the newly restored station saying “my grandfather was right, progress, Diego, is a good thing”.



Me acuerdo de la primera vez que mi abuelo y yo tomamos el tren para ir a Montevideo. Abuela vino a despedirnos, yo estaba tan emocionado!



My abuelo me contaba todas las cosas maravillosas que íbamos a ver.



Recuerdo que me decía cuanto habían cambiado las cosas a lo largo de su vida. Se sentía orgulloso y sereno



Cuando finalmente se empezaba a ver Montevideo a la distancia, no podía creer mi buena suerte. Mi corazón se aceleró con fuerza.



El tren paró y yo salí disparado, todavía lo escucho advirtiéndome "No corras..."; cada vez que vuelvo acá sonrío al acordarme de ese momento.



Ahora me doy cuenta lo que quería mostrarme, que las cosas realmente cambian mucho durante una vida. "El progreso, Diego...", me dijo, "es algo muy bueno..."

The Development

Our development places Montevideo where it belongs, on the world stage, as a source of national pride. Restoring the Estacion General Artigas will bring La Aguada back to its rightful roots as the heartbeat of the nation and the gateway to Montevideo.

We plan to restore and reuse the abandoned historic train station, warehouses, outbuildings and yards to create a thriving mixed use, mixed income development including museums, conference center, hotel, live-work housing, condominiums, offices, commercial and retail spaces all within an open pedestrian plaza linking the new train station and Antel tower to the city center. We work closely with local partners and with the municipality to make sure our development addresses community needs and dovetails with master plans for transportation, housing and vivienda.

By combining visitor and resident components in our plans, we create the organic vitality and vibrancy of real places. This unique aspect of our developments ultimately enables them to be self-sustaining, substantially improving quality of life for residents while providing dynamic and authentic visitor experiences. Title and ownership of heritage assets remain with the local community; we request concession on these so that control, stewardship and revenue generated stays in the community. Based on community needs and discussions with authorities, we request other incentives to make the deal attractive to private investors. Our capital stack is generally a combination of multi-lateral, public and private investment.

We believe this type of development fosters local empowerment and engenders pride of place thereby turbo-charging the local and regional economies. It dramatically improves lending effectiveness for multi-lateral development banks while significantly increasing social and economic benefits well beyond those achieved by tourism alone. By leveraging local heritage assets, our plan revives the site, and protects the heritage resource not only physically but emotionally, reigniting pride of place and strengthening the identity of the city.