

ICOMOS PHILIPPINES

POSITION PAPER



International Council on
Monuments and Sites

Conseil International
des Monuments et des Sites

Komite ng Pilipinas

HERITAGE PERSPECTIVE ON THE BINONDO- INTRAMUROS FRIENDSHIP BRIDGE

BINONDO-INTRAMUROS BRIDGE

807 m Steel Bowstring Arch Bridge with intersecting and reclining arches connecting Intramuros (at Solana Street and Riverside Drive) and Binondo (at San Fernando Street with a viaduct over the creek adjacent to Muelle del Binondo).

Year of Completion: 2021

FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF
TOURISM
INTRAMUROS
ADMINISTRATION

1. SIGNIFICANCE: INTRAMUROS, BINONDO, & SAN NICOLAS



Intramuros is where the modern nation state, as we know it today, was formed over 450 years ago. It is best understood in relation to its surroundings, particularly the neighborhoods of Binondo and San Nicolas.

Intramuros is the historical and cultural heart and soul of the Philippines. Here, the modern national state of the Philippines was formed almost 450 years ago, first as the seat of the Spanish colonial government for over three hundred years, then as the focus of our ancestors' fight against colonial rule. Throughout the Spanish Era, Intramuros was the undisputed religious, political and educational center of the Colony. The influence of its residents, primarily religious leaders, colonial administrators, educators and Spanish migrants was felt in

every corner of the country. Hence, Intramuros is important not only to the history of Manila, but the entire Philippine nation.

Recognizing the central role the Walled City played in Philippine history and culture President Ferdinand Marcos in 1979 enacted Presidential Decree 1616 which created the Intramuros Administration and mandated it to “direct the orderly restoration and development of Intramuros as a monument to the Hispanic period of Philippine history” (PD 1616, Section 1).

Intramuros is best understood in relation to its surroundings - particularly the neighborhoods of Binondo and San Nicolas. In 1594, only twenty-three (23) years after the founding of Manila, Binondo was established as a small quarter for Chinese and Chinese-Filipino Mestizos. These residents provided invaluable and vital service to the Spanish colony as laborers, craftsmen, contractors and traders. The latter, playing an important role in the historic Manila-Acapulco Galleon trade that connected four countries and three continents for over 250 year years. Intramuros is unthinkable without the presence and contribution of the Chinese and Chinese Mestizos in Binondo.

Up until 1894, San Nicolas was a barrio of Binondo. Between 1876 and 1886, Chinese migration to the Philippines increased dramatically, with new residents setting up home in the Binondo barrio. In 1892, San Nicolas became the cradle of the Philippine Revolution when the Katipunan was founded here by Andres Bonifacio. San Nicolas was once one of the wealthiest suburbs in the Philippines and many of its grand bahay na bato have survived the war. Next to Vigan and Taal, San Nicolas the largest number and highest density of colonial-era bahay na bato (over 150 as of 2016) in the Philippines. The district still contains such important houses as the birthplace of General Antonio Luna, the huge and ornate foundry of Hilario Sunico (famous 19th century bell-caster, whose church bells can still be found all over the archipelago today) and his private residence; the only surviving Tribunal of the Spanish era in Manila, and the oldest extant fire station in Metro Manila.

2. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS ON HERITAGE SITES, PARKS, PROMENADES, TRAFFIC, ARCHAEOLOGY, ENVIRONMENT



Heritage Impact Assessments or similar studies are usually a part of international Best Practice in heritage management. Such studies are carried out before new construction work is implemented to ensure that the new development will not have negative impact on the heritage significance of the site.

The proposed vehicular bridge will have massive negative impact the historic districts of Intramuros and Binondo:

A. Impact on Heritage Sites

The following heritage structures and sites will/may be affected by the Intramuros-Binondo Bridge

i. Intendencia (Aduana) Building.

A structural evaluation has shown the Intendencia to be structurally weakened and currently in a vulnerable condition. Given the soft underground and relatively high water content, there may be risk of liquefaction during piling. The DPWH

should submit a Conservation Plan that outlines how destructive effects of piling can be avoided.

If heavy container trucks are allowed on the proposed bridge, the resulting large and constant vibrations may further weaken not only the masonry fabric of the Aduana, but also the Ayuntamiento Building's original ground floor walls.

The Aduana is the proposed future site of the National Archives of the Philippines, and is currently in the process of being declared as an Important Cultural Property by the National Museum of the Philippines.

ii. **Estero de Binondo.** Covering over the Estero de Binondo with a half-kilometer long elevated highway will turn it into an invisible canal, thereby eradicating one the historic sites of Binondo. During the Spanish era and much of the 20th century this estero was the inland port for much of the local trade network within Manila and its environs.

iii. **Puente de San Fernando (Puenta Blanco).** From 1796, due to demolition. The proposed bridge will terminate at the historic San Fernando Bridge (one of the few remaining Spanish-era bridges in Metro Manila), which will be demolished.

iv. **Anda Monument.** Originally from 1871. While this is not directly connected to the proposed bridge, it may still be affected by it if plans to relocate it to improve traffic flow to and from the proposed bridge are revived and implemented by the DPWH.

v. **Chamber of Commerce.** This 1930s building may be affected from piling work. The eastern ramp leading to the bridge may obstruct the riverside view of this building.

B. Impact on Parks and Promenades

i. Pasig River Promenade, Intramuros.

This promenade offers attractive panoramic views across the Pasig River and is one of the few remaining open spaces in the metropolis. It is also the terminus for the Pasig River Ferry. The eastern ramp leading to the proposed bridge will occupy most of the promenade, leaving only a narrow strip of land on the riverside.

ii. **Plaza Mexico, Intramuros.** The western ramp cuts across the historic Plaza Mexico, one of the last few oases in Intramuros, effectively reducing the plaza in size, obstructing the view of mature trees and river panorama. The bridge will also lead to the loss of two historic monument therein: the Legazpi Expedition from 1964 and a statue of Mexican president Adolfo Mateos. Additionally, the necessary high concrete ramps will block views of the Immigration Building all the way to the Chamber of Commerce and along the Aduana Building.

C. Archeological Impact

Riverside Drive is a potentially significant archaeological site due to its proximity to the Maestranza where artifacts were recovered in 2007 during the Maestranza Archaeological Project of the National Museum, Intramuros Administration and Department of Tourism. RA10066, Article VII, Sec. 30. d. states: Any government or nongovernment infrastructure project or architectural site development shall include anthropological, archaeological and historical and heritage site conservation concerns in their Environmental Impact Assessment System.

D. Impact of Traffic on Tourism in Intramuros:

If part of the goal of the proposed bridge is to ease the container truck gridlock on the Delpan and Jones Bridges, diverting it to one of the country's most important tourist attractions and historic sites in Metro Manila may kill the tourist experience of the walled city. The bridge will draw traffic into Intramuros via Soriano Avenue and General Luna Street - both the most important arteries of tourists' movement inside Intramuros. These pass all major Intramuros landmarks: San Agustin Church and monastery (a declared UNESCO World Heritage Site), San Luis Complex, Silahis Tourist Complex (Tradewinds, Ilustrado), Manila Cathedral, Plaza Roma, Ayuntamiento, Palacio del Gobernador, Aduana Building. The resulting noise, fumes, blocked views and potential dangers to pedestrians will diminish the tourist experience, restrict their movement, and lessen its tourist income potential. The situation would be worse if heavy container trucks were allowed.

Though to a lesser degree, this also applies to tourism activities in Binondo and San Nicolas on the northern side of the Pasig River. Additional traffic passing through the already congested Chinatown further diminishes its tourism appeal. Introducing a stream of traffic into San Nicolas could endanger the remaining bahay na bato, and reduce marginal attractiveness and potential for heritage tourism. On the Binondo side, cars exiting the 4-lane bridge will only encounter only 2-lane roads on both sides. The likely result will be massive traffic jams in already traffic-choked Binondo.

E. Environmental Impact:

Intramuros is a National Cultural Treasure pursuant to the National Museum Resolution dated December 22, 2014. This makes the site an Environmentally Critical Area pursuant to

Proclamation No. 2146, series of 1981. Under the DENR Revised Procedural Manual for Department of Environment Administrative Order 2003-30, technical information should be obtained from the National Museum on the impact of the project before the Environmental Compliance Certificate can be issued.

PD 1151: Section 4. Environmental Impact Statements. Pursuant to the above enunciated policies and goals, all agencies and instrumentalities of the national government, including government-owned or controlled corporations, as well as private corporations firms and entities shall prepare, file and include in every action, project or undertaking which significantly affects the quality of the environment a detail statement on

(a) the environmental impact of the proposed action, project or undertaking

(b) any adverse environmental effect which cannot be avoided should the proposal be implemented;

(c) alternative to the proposed action;

(d) a determination that the short-term uses of the resources of the environment are consistent with the maintenance and enhancement of the long-term productivity of the same; and

(e) whenever a proposal involve the use of depletable or non-renewable resources, a finding must be made that such use and commitment are warranted.

PROPOSED BRIDGE DESIGN AND **PRESIDENTIAL DECREE 1616**



"The urban scale of 1890 shall be observed. In accordance with this, monolithic designs or structures that are out of scale in relation to the block and its immediate vicinity shall in no case be allowed."

The bridge's highly artistic, sculptural and fluid forms do not match the historic character of Intramuros, whose urban design charter mandates that new structures built within its vicinity heed to a "Spanish-colonial" ambience. New developments near or within the heritage site of Intramuros and historic districts of San Nicolas/Binondo may diminish the aesthetic and historic value of these areas as the "charming" character of streetscapes. Based on published photographs it appears that the current design will have a negative impact on Intramuros and Binondo/San Nicolas. As mentioned above, Section 1 of PD 1616 mandates the Intramuros Administration to "direct the orderly restoration and development of Intramuros as a monument to the Hispanic

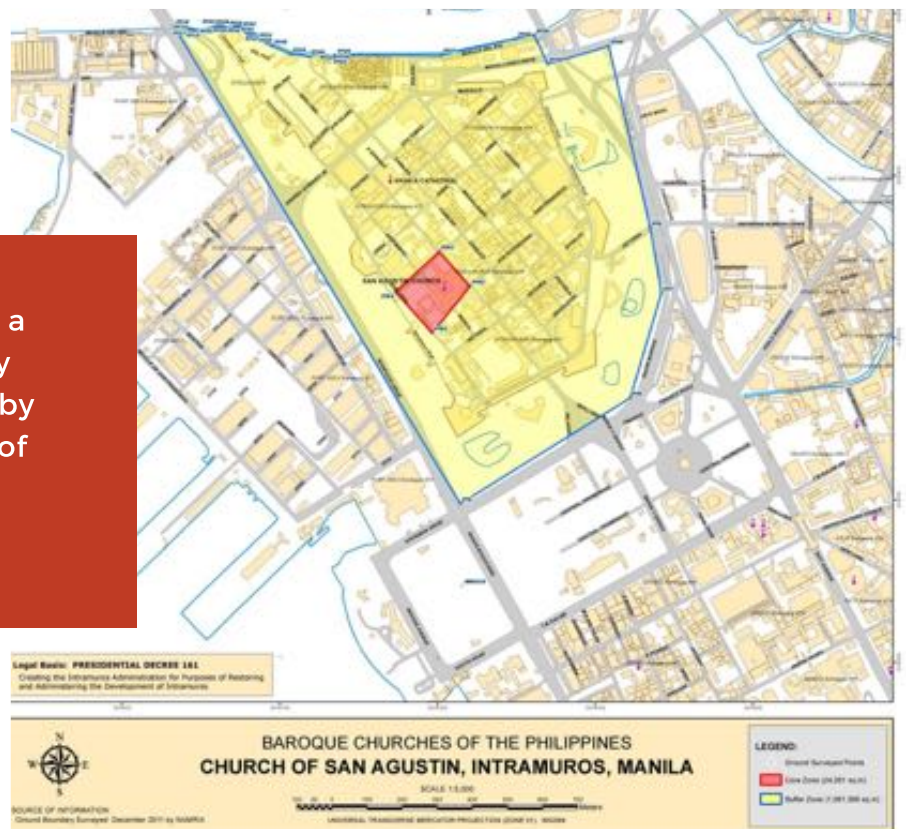
period of Philippine history."

The scale and design of the bridge thus violate Rule VI, Section 2 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of PD 1616 which govern the development of Intramuros and state: "The urban scale of 1890 shall be observed. In accordance with this, monolithic designs or structures that are out of scale in relation to the block and its immediate vicinity shall in no case be allowed."

Furthermore the proposed bridge cuts through where original walls once stood. The construction of the bridge therefore precludes the completion of the reconstruction of Intramuros' walls following the recent Maestranza Wall reconstruction.

PROPOSED BRIDGE DESIGN AND UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE INSCRIPTION

San Agustin, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO is protected by a buffer zone. Ramps of the proposed bridge infringe on this zone.



Intramuros has been listed by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) for possible inclusion in the Philippines' Tentative List for future declaration as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The proposed bridge in its current function may negatively affect the chances of Intramuros to be declared a UNESCO World Heritage site, thereby affecting the accompanying immense tourism potential for the district.

The San Agustin Church and Monastery in Intramuros, a declared UNESCO WORLD Heritage site since 1993, is surrounded by a buffer zone (defined by the World Heritage Committee in 2014, as per Document Dec37 Com 8B.48). The ramps of the proposed bridge infringe into this very buffer zone. While it may be remote, there is a possibility that UNESCO itself may raise concerns about the proposed bridge. As experience has

shown, this is not merely a theoretical scenario: the historic city of Dresden (Germany) was delisted as a World Heritage Site in 2009 due to the construction of the modern Waldschlösschen Bridge. It may also be prudent to consider how the bridge's construction within the UNESCO Buffer Zone might influence future Philippine nominations.

CONCLUSION



BINONDO-INTRAMUROS BRIDGE

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ICOMOS Philippines strongly discourages the construction of a vehicular bridge between Intramuros and Binondo due of its anticipated negative impact on several heritage sites, ongoing conservation efforts and current and future tourism efforts. As the experience with the Loboc Bridge has shown, there is a risk that the proposed bridge may become a `white Elephant` should it turn out that it cannot fulfill the hopes (especially with regard to traffic) placed into it. Worse, it may even have to be abandoned in the face of possible public opposition to its impact on our nation`s heritage enshrined in Intramuros. Construction of the Loboc Bridge in Bohol remains unfinished to this day.

There is a risk of public dissatisfaction with the potential negative impact the proposed bridge in its current form may have on the heart and soul of Philippine heritage and history. Given that the bridge is to symbolize China-Philippines Friendship, the public response of this initiative may run counter to the objectives of this project.

ICOMOS Philippines ICOMOS Philippine maintains that:

1. A well-designed, state-of-the art pedestrian-only bridge be considered as an alternative to the current proposal.

1. A pedestrian bridge may retain the principle design of the currently proposed bridge, but on a smaller and more slender scale in order to reduce the negative impact on Intramuros and Binondo/San Nicolas.
2. A pedestrian bridge could improve tourism between Intramuros and Binondo/San Nicolas by providing an exciting walking and viewing experience across the Pasig River. It will also support the LRT Ikot MNL initiative
3. A pedestrian bridge can become a new landmark for Manila, comparable, for example, to the world-famous Millennium Bridge across the Thames River in London, connecting the city's top tourist destinations St. Paul's Cathedral and Tate Modern Gallery. The Esplanade in Ilolo, and the High Line in New York are fine examples of how pedestrianized areas can become tourist destinations in themselves.
4. A pedestrian bridge can be a venue for heritage interpretation and exhibits that foster understanding between the Philippines and China.

B. Proper heritage, environmental and archaeological impact assessments must be conducted prior to the commencement of any work (excavation, piling, construction, etc.)

C. A pedestrian only bridge would have a number of advantages:

1. no additional traffic in Intramuros and Binondo
2. Less piling work required and at greater distance to the Aduana Building
3. No need to demolish historic structures
4. First step to revitalization of San Nicolas and support of ongoing Escolta revitalization
5. Minimal impact on the buffer zone around San Agustin Church

