This once fortified city is located in the north-west area of metropolitan Lahore, the capital of the province of the Punjab, and measures about 2.5 square kilometres. This historic core of Lahore has a concentration of monuments and buildings that reflect cultural diversity in architecture. Despite a dynamic and tumultuous past spanning several centuries, this area has retained much of its historic urban form.

The Walled City of Lahore project was initiated in 2006 by the Government of the Punjab and the World Bank. The following year the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) entered a ‘Public-Private Partnership Agreement’ (PPP) with the provincial government to provide technical and financial assistance for the project and to undertake to build capacities in urban heritage conservation. In early 2008 AKTC signed a ‘Memorandum of Association’ with the World Bank. The Historic Cities Programme (HCP) has provided strategic planning services for the entire historic city while extending professional assistance for a pilot urban rehabilitation project that is integrated in a city-wide strategic framework for conservation and redevelopment.

The World Heritage Site of Lahore Fort (the Shahi Qila) and other equally spectacular monuments from the Mughal period, such as Badshahi Mosque (1683), Wazir Khan Mosque (1634) and the Wazir Khan Hammam, lend their splendour to the city. Additionally, several structures from the Sikh period and British colonial sites add to the city’s charm, highlighting the importance the city held for a sequence of empires that ruled over South Asia. At present, the city possesses nearly two thousand buildings of significant architectural merit. Despite the lack of appropriate regulatory mechanisms pertaining to building demolition and construction, the Walled City is physically distinct, marked off from the surrounding colonial period city by the Circular Garden and the Circular Road.

In 1959 an excavation at Lahore Fort revealed the city’s pre-Muslim occupation, dating back almost 1500 years. In the early eleventh century AD, Lahore became the seat of Sufi learning under Ali ibn Usman Hajweri, known as Data Ganj Bakhsh by his devotees. Lahore was subsequently conquered by the Ghaznavids under Sultan Mahmud in 1026, commencing the Muslim phase of its political history. Under the Mughal dynasty (1526–1789), Lahore flourished as an important provincial city periodically substituting for the Mughal capitals at Agra and Delhi. From 1789 onwards, Lahore was ruled by the Sikhs until the

Lahore Area Programme

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British annexation of the Punjab in 1849. In 1947 a substantial part of the Old City was destroyed as a result of communal strife and arson associated with the Partition of the South Asian subcontinent. This area is now home to intense commercial pressures resulting in the piecemeal demolition of the historic residential fabric.

The ‘Strategic Plan’ developed by HCP for the Walled City aims to redefine the city’s role as a heritage site within Metropolitan Lahore. Promoting heritage-sensitive urban design, infrastructure improvement and residential land use, the Area Development framework integrates both landmark monuments and historic neighbourhoods. The framework provides for increasing residents’ capacities to engage in the revitalization of the city and for generating opportunities for income. These broad priorities are being pursued at three levels.

The Walled City is surrounded by regional transportation functions that support local commercial markets. The ‘Strategic Plan’ proposes the gradual relocation of such metropolitan functions to more suitable sites elsewhere in Lahore in conjunction with associated land use such as wholesale and warehousing. This is being considered by the Punjab Government.

The Plan promotes the re-establishment of residential and other functions compatible with the city’s historic character and makes provisions for reclaiming green areas in and around the Walled City. Special attention is being given to the restoration of the monumental complexes and open spaces associated with them and other architectural heritage as well as upgrading and expanding public utilities in neighbourhoods.

A legislative initiative is now underway to develop new planning and regulative processes. The framework also outlines building regulations in order to check the uncontrolled demolitions of historic building stock and their conversion into commercial entities.

The Plan outlines strategies for consolidating residential use and rehabilitating building stock. The overriding focus of attention concentrates on revalorizing mohallas in their historic and topographic context. Pilot initiatives integrate facade improvement, infrastructure upgrading and (historic) home improvement. Community-driven initiatives are also encouraged through training of local youth in spatial mapping and building trade skills as well as incentives for home improvement to owners through technical support.

Accompanying these efforts routine advice has been given to the Government of the Punjab on planning, legislative and administrative issues. Baseline surveys comprise a topographical map at the scale of the Walled City, an inventory of all 22,800 properties and a socio-economic survey of 1757 households across the city. An operational Geographic Information System (GIS) is in place.
Background

BRIEF HISTORY OF PROGRAMME AREA
Lahore Walled City is the historic core of Lahore and began on the banks of the River Ravi at least 1500 years ago. In the early 11th century AD, Lahore became a part of Seljuk Sultanate under Al-Ildephenos. Not soon after, in 1026, Lahore was conquered by the Ghurid invaders under Sultan Mahmul. The sultanates under the Delhi Sultanate (1186-1320) were turbulent, and physical evidence of the city’s entrance from the period is scarce. Under the Mughals (1526-1704), Lahore was an important provincial city and several important monuments were built, including the World Heritage Site of Lahore Fort, the Mosque of Wazir Khan (1634) and the Badshahi Mosque (1673). From 1769 Lahore was under the control of the Sikhs until the British annexation of the Punjab in 1849. The colonial period saw the destruction of the city’s fortifications and its gaza, and the establishment of important institutions and the architecture associated with them outside the historic core. In 1948, significant areas of the Walled City were destroyed by burning and looting, leaving an immediate mark in the form of commercial developments that replaced what was lost. The new markets continue to expand aggressively at the cost of the historic fabric; however, some 200 non-monumental buildings of architectural merit still survive.

Challenges

PROGRAMME RISKS
The project seeks to address many existing conditions – physical, socio-economic, cultural and administrative. The single most important challenge it faces is the continued lack of an enabling administrative and governance apparatus, being mitigated by certain legislative and administrative steps being taken by the Government of the Punjab. Other challenges are related to this, such as the unprecedented demolition of the historic building stock and its replacement by commercial structures.

SITE CONDITIONS
The historic city is an arid block, 2.6 km² in area, with a road system of 30-km. The city is already crowded with nearly 25,000 parcels of land, and gross residential density is in the range of 550 persons per hectare. The high density is a result of the rapid urbanization and loss of the residential fabric. However, some 2000 non-monumental buildings of architectural merit still survive.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS/MONUMENTS CONSERVED
The 150-year-old reservoir built at the city’s highest point and some of the water main of the old water supply network are still relied upon, and are part of a pressurized grid augmented by some 16 tube wells, drilled around the city. Failure of pressure in the system results in contamination and insufficient supply, leading to consumers installing small centrifugal pumps on the supply line. The drainage system is mainly coved-over open drains, many large open drains on one or both sides of the main thoroughfares, and main sewers in some beakers. It is a mixed sewage and storm-water system. The electrical and telecommunication distribution systems need much rejuvenation and updating to acceptable standards. A city-wide programme of infrastructure development and guidelines for implementation have been prepared. These aim to improve the water supply system, introduce a new drainage system separating storm water from sewage, and rationalize the electrical and telecommunication distribution system; all at standards well above the prevailing ones.

ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE
The Circular Garden, established in 1912, has been heavily owned by public and private sector unauthorized buildings, and by strip-commerce along Circular Road. Urban squares have also been owned by unauthorized commerce.

BUILDING CONDITIONS
Most buildings are founded on cultural debris and structural failure is endemic. To some extent, it is proposed to provide a new drainage system that alloes the percolation of water into the foundation-draining soil.

OPEN SPACES
The Circular Garden and along the Walled City serves as the main open space. However, it has been subdivided into routine encroachments by commercial enterprises as well as public institutions.

Significant Issues and Impact

DATA COLLECTION/SURVEYS
Topographical surveys using EDM/CAD; technology could only be carried out at night, owing to traffic conditions; inventory of 22,800 individual buildings, recording some 127 attributes, is now part of a GIS database.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS
Strategic Plan completed in February 2005, now due for a review and update.

PLANNING ISSUES
Ownership titles for properties are non-existent owing to land subdivision not having been recorded during colonial times; absence of land-use regulations; collapse of municipal governance; no clear demarcation of the municipal limits of the historic area, metropolitan and regional planning inadequacies negatively impact on Lahore Walled City.