



# Best Practices Database

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## Historical evaluation and protection of Buildings in St. George's Grenada

Good Practice

New for 2002

**Categories:** Urban and Regional Planning:  
- cultural heritage conservation  
Architecture and Urban Design:  
- historic preservation  
Urban Governance:  
- legislation

**Level of Activity:** National

**Ecosystem:** Island

### Summary

The main objectives of this project were firstly, to produce a list comprising the buildings of major architectural, political, cultural and historical significance in the town of St. George's. The study focused on a description of physical appearance, age and uses (both past and present) of such buildings. In order to preserve them, there needs to be adequate protective legislation.

The second objective was to draft "the Preservation of Historic Buildings, Monuments and Sites Act and Regulations". The draft explains the rationale for listing the buildings. It provides guidelines for work to be done on them, be it restoration, repair, extension and demolition. Penalties for infringements are also incorporated into the draft. The long process of enactment has started with a submission to the Attorney General of Grenada and the government's legal draftsman.

The final objective was to restore the historical pedestrian access in the form of cobblestone alleys and steps to the town's historically listed buildings. There are eight (8) such alleys and two (2) of them have been restored. The town of St. George's lies on both sides of a hill and the surrounding coastal flat land. The two alleys provide pedestrian traverse at various points, and are frequently used by nationals and tourists alike.

### Narrative

#### Situation Before The Initiative Began

Before the initiative began, no listing of historic buildings could be found in a centralized location. The (access) alleys were all in a state of disrepair despite promises to address them by the relevant authorities. While a law on preservation existed, it was inadequate and poorly implemented.

#### Establishment of Priorities

To produce a list of architecturally and historically significant buildings in St. George's, repair/restore the pedestrian walkways that were most frequently used and in the worst state of disrepair and to get immediate action toward passing the protective legislation.

These priorities were established firstly by consultation with the members of the Foundation. Many of them had been approached by concerned citizens of the state, asking the Foundation to take action on particular matters. After this, funding was sought for the individual components. The level of funding received and donor willingness dictated what scale and direction the project would take.

#### Formulation of objectives and strategies

The main objectives were to provide an analysis of the buildings in the study area. The Foundation set out to assess the buildings on the street that comprise the town's Central Business District (CBD).

This documentation would reveal the physical state of the buildings thus identifying the legislative process necessary to safeguard them. The legislation also includes the historical sites and monuments together with the alleys, which comprise this category. So it was prudent that steps be taken to arrest their decay.

The Foundation's project sub-committee presented its recommendations to the general membership who ratified them for implementation.

#### Mobilization of Resources

Once the components of the initiative were agreed upon the Foundation began to seek funds for them. The project sub-committee, in consultation with the Foundation's general membership, developed a list of likely sources of funding. These included members of the public, the local business community, the government of Grenada, Organisation of American States (OAS), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Alliance Francaise in Grenada, and the French Government through its embassy in St. Lucia.

Technical assistance especially with the listing and the recobbling project, was obtained either from the French Embassy in St. Lucia directly or through them from other French territories in the Caribbean. A Guadeloupean firm supplied an expert in the field of cobblestone laying who was on site for the duration of the Simmons Alley restoration. He also trained a group of Grenadian workers thus ensuring that there is local expertise on hand where there was none before.

The human resources were provided exclusively from Grenada. They were either members of the Foundation with relevant expertise or skilled workers from local businesses and organisations.

#### Process

One of the perpetual problems of the Foundation is its lack of funds. The nature of the projects that it undertakes is such that they require considerable funding. For this initiative, the combination of donations from members of the public, local businesses and international donor agencies has proved quite fruitful. We hope that their generosity will continue, but of that we cannot be assured.

The Foundation however has undertaken projects that can be revenue generating for the parties involved and or lead to an increase in the skilled personnel of Grenada where none previously existed. The economy of Grenada depends heavily on tourism and increasingly many visitors are commenting favourably on the restoration of the pedestrian cobblestone alleys. To date there have been donations from several persons in order to achieve initiatives like this one. Donor agencies, in particular the international ones, are particularly amiable to projects of that nature, given their multiplier effect.

## Gore to Church Street Steps and recobbling

The Gore - Church Street steps were the first to be repaired in 1995. On the completion of this phase of the initiative the Foundation was unsatisfied with the quality of the work and decided to should seek expert advice.

Mr. Jost Antoine who is a cobblestone laying expert from the firm Antilles Restauration, Basse-terre, Guadeloupe resided in Grenada for one (1) month while the restoration of Simmons Alley was done. He assisted in the training of six Completed Simmons Alley (6) Grenadians - four (4) masons and two (2) helpers in the art of cobblestone laying and repair. This ensures that the problem of skilled personnel should not reoccur.

Mr. Stephan Chardot, a French engineer attached to the Physical Planning Unit (PPU) assisted the Foundation in drafting the contract between the French contractor and the Foundation. He also assisted the Foundation in supervising this phase of the project, while the day to day project management was undertaken by the Foundation.

## Hospital Steps and Walkway

The local firm of Bryden and Minors funded the restoration of the Hospital steps and walkway to the tune of EC\$25,000. After presentation and approval of the subproject proposal and the erection of sign-boards identifying the phase, a launching ceremony was held on May 24,2000 attended by the parliamentary representative for the town of St. George the Honourable Brenda Hood among others. The project management was undertaken by the Foundation.

## The Listing

The listing of historic buildings in the town of St. George was funded by the French Government and together with the Foundation and the Physical Planning Unit of the Ministry of Finance agreed on an assessment form and procedure for phase implementation. Researchers were qualified architects as stipulated by the donors. The Foundation completed 80% of the listing while 20% was done by the PPU.

## Legislation

The draft Act was produced by a member of the Foundation who is a lawyer with assistance from Mr. Nuna Rais of the French Mission. The Foundation also received assistance from regional NGO's who supplied copies of similar Acts from their countries of Jamaica and St. Kitts & Nevis.

## Results achieved'

Since "the Preservation of Historic Buildings, Monuments and Sites Act and Regulations" has not yet been passed into law there are no visible results to date. The Government however in its recent 2002 budget presentation in December, 2001 indicated that planning legislation would be enacted in 2002. The listing has been very favourably received. Requests from national organizations, private individuals, students, educational institutions among others, for copies of the listing attest to its importance. These persons and organizations are using the information to strength their respective projects, which have interest in the area of preservation.

This has led to closer contact with these organizations to the extent that defunct ones are re-awakening and those with similar interest are coming together to have more impact. The restoration of the alleys has led to an improvement in the accessibility of many properties in St. George's. Although the town is small its topographical constraints necessitate effective paths to get from one side to the other. In a small number of cases there are residents who use the alleys as major access points to their homes. The

hospital steps are particularly well appreciated, as they are the major pedestrian thoroughfares from the town's bus terminals to the hospital. At times even patients can be seen using them.

There is no quantitative way to measure the direct impact of the restoration of the alleys through revenue gained from tourism, the Foundation however has been made aware by the Board of Tourism of their appreciation of the work done. This appreciation is evident through the comments overhead by members of the public in the street, visitors comments to their Grenadian hosts (as we have many return visitors) and their letters in the local press.

### Sustainability

The financial resources employed in this initiative came in the form of grants and donations. Therefore there are no loans to be repaid. The continuation of the Foundation's work depends on the generosity and goodwill of our partners and like-minded persons or organizations. The Foundation is of the view that in order to sustain this level of funding what is required is continuous and highly visible exposure of the partners to the public. This can be achieved by submitting detailed accounts of the funds disbursed during and after the initiative so that partners are assured of value for money. This has shown dividends in that partners have funded subsequent projects. In this manner financial sustainability is achieved.

In the phase of the initiative that dealt with the recobbling of Simmons Alley, the employees were all male skilled and semi-skilled. In the listing of historic buildings phase they were all professionals in keeping with one of the stipulations of the partner. In this manner the Foundation sought to have equality of opportunity in the range of expertise. The semi-skilled workers and masons were given specific training that relates to the repair and laying of cobblestones. This knowledge which was not available locally before, could lead to economic and social Mobility for these workers. In addition the Court initiative will be sustained with their help and by training others in the country, thus increasing the pool of skilled persons.

One of the major lasting effects of the listing and proposed legislation is that the general public has become sensitised to the need for conservation. At present the behaviour patterns have shown signs of change because persons are willing to speak out about this issue. Evidence of this is seen in letters to the press.

Persons and organizations also have become more amenable to suggestions from the Foundation with regard to renovations of historic buildings that they are undertaking. Cultural consciousness and preservation sustainability are the major successes of this initiative.

In the implementation of the recobbling of Simmons Alley existing cobblestones were recycled, additional stones were obtained from the St. Marks River where periodic clearance of the river's course and banks are done to maintain the smooth flow of water which is used for irrigation and domestic consumption. This initiative used the product of the river management, thus making optimum use of the natural environment's resource. This resource is sustainable as the clearance is a continuous process.

### Lessons Learned

The need for quality control during the execution of projects came to the fore very early in the initiative's life. The first access way in Gore Street that was repaired in 1995 was not satisfactorily done. Some members of the Foundation were of the opinion that the work represented construction and not repair and restoration, which is the Foundation's main ethos. However this experience led to the acquisition of trained personnel in the field to help in subsequent phases of the project.

A more intimate appreciation of the legislative process was gained in this initiative. Even though the law is yet to be passed, there was much work done just to get to the stage of submission to the government's legal draftsman. Similar laws from other Caribbean territories were used for guidance in the initial stages of this project and the comparative study was very useful. In addition the final draft of

the act was produced after many revisions had been made. Each of these went through the membership of the Foundation and it was an enlightening process.

During the listing phase of the project, the enormity of the need was recognized. Initially the project was a national one, but due to funding and manpower it was limited to the town of St. George's. The final list of the architecturally and historically significant buildings of the town included a few entries that were incomplete on account of difficulties in obtaining the names of owners.

Given this need the Foundation is considering revisiting the scheme with a view to further developing the information on the already listed buildings and extending the project in phases to cover the entire nation. The urgency of this task is brought home further since many of the buildings outside the nation's capital are in a state of disrepair and are not likely to be standing much longer

### Transferability

In the listing phase of the initiative, the main partner, the Government of France through its mission here was instrumental in making the results accessible to all interested parties. They provided personnel, equipment and training to set up a geographical information systems (GIS) database at the Physical Planning Unit (PPU), Ministry of Finance. This database including graphical images stored the results of the project and makes easy access to them possible.

The researchers for this phase of the project came from three (3) organizations, the Foundation, the PPU and the French Mission. They were all architects and the project benefited from their expertise, the results were shared with these organizations which have influenced their work. Since the listing of historic buildings was prepared two organisations have shown interest in it: the cultural arm of the OAS - CARIMOS is compiling a regional list and the Foundation's would be incorporated into it. Secondly, a recently formed organisation - the Grenada Cultural Foundation has invited members of the Foundation to participate in its Heritage sub-committee. The Foundation's ethos will feature strongly in the decisions and actions of said committee.

Should the Foundation assist anyone to replicate this project, the need for a major public education drive cannot be understated. It is the view of some members of the Foundation that one of the reasons for the extremely slow passage of the act is that there is not enough pressure brought to bear on the authorities with respect to its importance. While the passage of legislation is lengthy it can be speeded up if there is public pressure so to do.

Secondly, the conservation and preservation of historically and architecturally significant buildings are costly undertakings. If the owners of such buildings are convinced of their importance and economic viability, much more of the nation's built heritage would survive. To this end an intense and continuous public education campaign is necessary. The Foundation together with like minded organisations have already begun this long road to heritage awareness and cultural consciousness of our fledgling nation

### Key Dates

Â· 25/07/1997 - Completion of recobbling part of Gore - Church Street steps

Â· 03/11/1999 - Formal opening recobbling of Simmons Alley

Â· 30/10/1999 - Completion of historical listing

Â· 25/05/2000 - Launching ceremony cheque presentation for Hospital steps and walkway

Â· 22/02/2001 - Handed draft legislation to Attorney General & Government's legal draftsman

## Contact

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**Type of Organization:** Non-governmental organisation (NGO)

## Partners

The French Embassy  
Mr. Michel Fiesch  
Castries, St. Lucia,  
West Indies.

**Type of Organization:** International Agency (Bilateral)

**Type of Partner Support:** Financial Support

The Grenadian Voice Newspaper  
Mr. Leslie Pierre  
Meiville Street, St.  
George's, Grenada, West Indies  
Tel: 473-440-3983  
Fax: 473-440-4117

**Type of Organization:** Media

**Type of Partner Support:** Technical Support

Bryden and Minors Ltd.  
Mr. Angus Minors  
The Lagoon Road,  
St. George's, Grenada, West Indies.

**Type of Organization:** Private Sector

**Type of Partner Support:** Financial Support

## Financial Profile

Year	Total budget \$US	Partner A (% of budget)	Partner B (% of budget)	Partner C (% of budget)
1999	30,000	100%	-	-
1999	3,700	10%	-	-
2000	10,000	-	-	100%
2001	1520	-	-	Huggins 30%
2001	1330	-	-	80%

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