

THE VICTORIAN & ART DECO ENSEMBLE OF MUMBAI

SUBMISSION TO UNESCO AS A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Image Courtesy: Jehangir Sorabjee

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GOVT. OF MAHARASHTRA

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A1. Delineation of the Property & Buffer Zone

A1.1 Identification of the Property

Name of Property	The Victorian & Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai
Area of the Property	71.25 Ha
Area of the Buffer Zone	372.91 Ha

Location

The Site is located virtually at the southernmost tip of the city of Mumbai, located on the western coast of India, along the Arabian Sea and is one of the busiest metros of the world, with a population of nearly 15 million.

The Site comprises of predominantly two architectural styles, the 19th century collection of Victorian structures and the 20th century Art Deco buildings along the sea, conjoined physically and through a planned urban alignment by means of the historic open space of the *Oval Maidan*. Across the green expanse of the *Oval Maidan* lies the 20th century Art Deco extent of the site, comprising sections of the proposed Marine Drive Precinct. Together they constitute the entire extent of the proposed World Heritage Site, which extends approximately 1.9 kilometres from north to south and 1.2 kilometres from east to west. The Nominated Property consists of 108 buildings primarily of Victorian and Art Deco style of architecture with the *Oval Maidan* in the centre. Among these 108 are also few buildings belonging to Indo-Saracenic style and Neo-classical style of architecture, which form an integral part of the overall history, development and character of the area.



A 1.2 Delineation of the Property & Buffer Zone

Rationale for Delineation of the Property

The Nominated Property of the Victorian and Art Deco Ensemble comprises a unique composition of buildings representing two distinct architectural genres separated by the legendary cricket ground, i.e. *Oval Maidan*. The setting of the WHS is characterised by the stupendous foreground provided by the *Oval Maidan*. While the Victorian group of buildings is bound by Mahatma Gandhi Road on one side, the other conforms to the open space of the *Oval Maidan*. Similarly, the Art Deco section follows the succinct line of the western sea board on one side and is bound on the east by the *Oval Maidan*. The sea-side promenade of the Marine Drive also forms part of the Nominated Property.

On the North, the Property follows the edge of Veer Nariman Road (Churchgate Street), one of the axes of the original city planning and also includes the Western Railway Headquarters. To the South, the Nominated Property envelops the buildings along the Regal Circle, which completes the ensemble of Victorian and Art Deco ensemble through the incorporation of the Maharashtra Police Headquarters, one of the early Victorian Neo-Gothic buildings in Mumbai as well as iconic Regal Cinema, one of the early Art Deco cinema halls in Mumbai, which then came in 'fashion'.

Other buildings of Neo-Classical style as well as Indo-Saracenic style are also incorporated in the Nominated Property for they exert a strong presence on the urban fabric of Mumbai and form an integral historical as well as visual and physical link with the overall Victorian and Art Deco ensemble. The Property also includes statues and fountains, an important element in the overall urban landscape of Mumbai since early stages of planning.

Together, this ensemble represents the most identifiable, complete and collective examples of the Victorian and Art Deco genre, while recognising the Indo-Saracenic Style, the transition style between these two genres of architecture.

Rationale for Delineation of the Buffer Zone

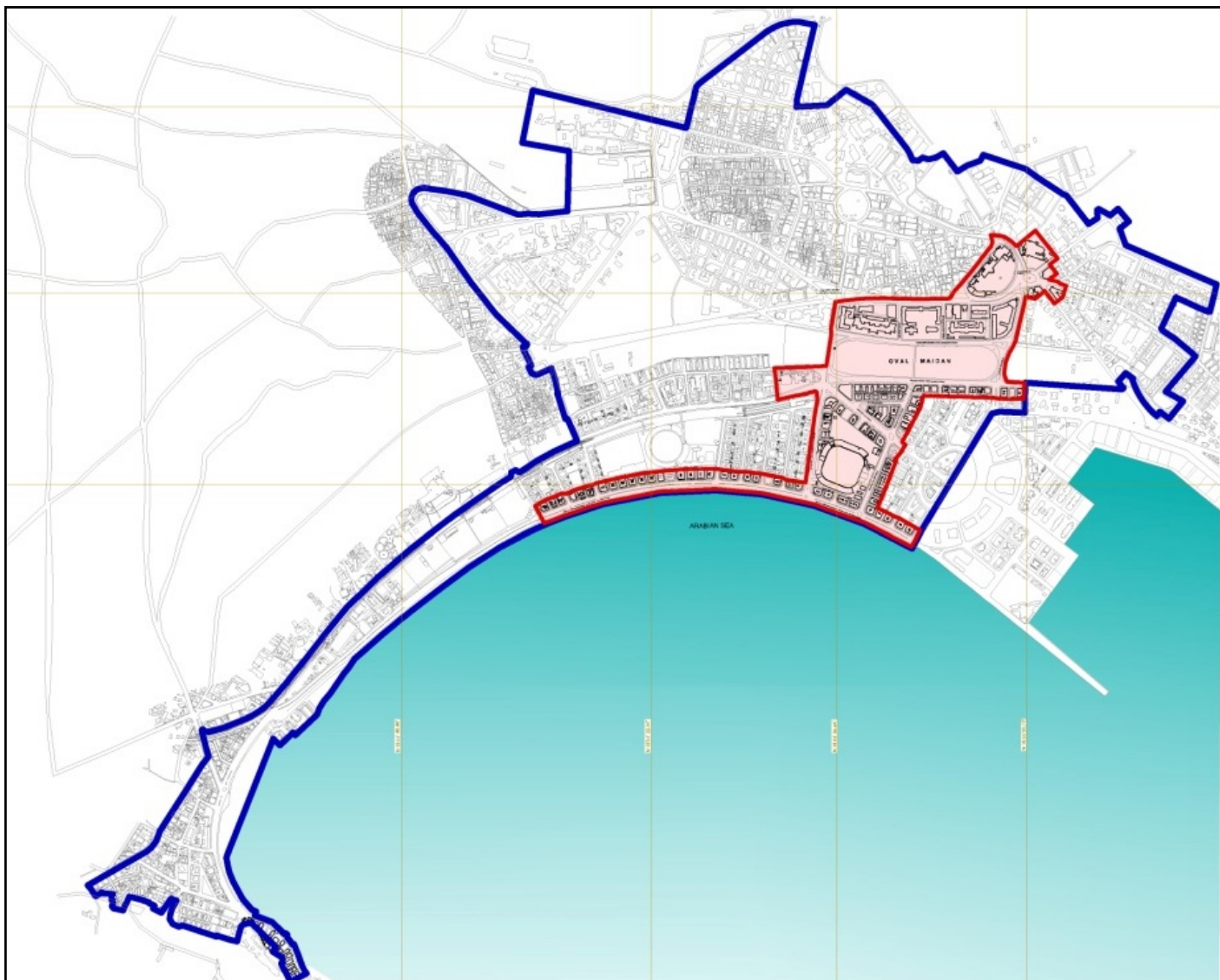
The idea of the buffer zone is to ensure protection to the property. Fortunately, in case of the Nominated Property, the buffer zone is defined by two Heritage Precincts, viz. the Fort Precinct and the proposed Marine Drive Precinct.

The Fort Precinct is afforded legal protection vide the Heritage Regulations for Greater Mumbai, adopted by the Government of Maharashtra in 1995. The guidelines of height control, development and other changes have already been outlined in the Regulations. The proposed Marine Drive Precinct extends upto Malabar Hill to include entire stretch of Marine Drive, Chowpati at Girgaon, while Madame Cama Road serves as the southern edge of the Precinct.

The Victorian & Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai, India
Submission to UNESCO as a World Heritage Site

This contiguous space thus forms the much needed buffer for the WHS to put into place further development control restrictions, signage controls, traffic regulations, to introduce uniform conservation methodologies and improve visitor interpretation facilities and amenities.

Delineation of the Property & Buffer Zone



A2. History & Description

In 1862, with the demolition of the fortifications of Bombay fort, a vast stretch of land to the west of the fortified town was opened for development. The Rampart Removal Committee chaired by James Trubshaw was mandated to plan for this area west of the fort walls with grand public buildings in the Victorian Gothic style. The Gothic revival buildings along the eastern edge of the Esplanade, (a compulsory open space that provided a clear range of fire for the Bombay Fort) were originally conceived to sit along what was in the 1860s the western sea front of Bombay. Thus, the Secretariat, University Library & Convocation Hall, High Court, Public Works Department Offices, the Central Telegraph Office and the adjoining General Post Office were built fronting the sea across the Esplanade between the 1860s and 1870s. What was particularly important about the design and positioning of these buildings was their brilliant interface between the urbanity of the Fort and the green of the Esplanade (later came to be known as Oval *Maidan*).

The Esplanade soon came to be known as the Oval *Maidan*. Along its periphery lay the railed-in 'Rotten Row', a greensward reserved for equestrians. The north and south edges of the *Maidan* were especially transparent, allowing the visual continuum of the open space on both sides. Statues of Bombay's luminaries once lined these edges of the *Maidan*, making the grandeur of the town humane at the street level.

With the ambitious Backbay Reclamation scheme of the 1920s to reclaim land to the west of the Esplanade, a vast expanse of sea facing land was created. On this westerly swath of land along the Oval was planned a large housing scheme, conceived in the Art Deco style, facing the imposing Gothic edifices on the eastern edge of the *Maidan*, and anchored at the northern end by the Eros Cinema. Despite the varying scales and styles of buildings, the open *maidan*, or urban void, created an absolutely fantastic setting and urban composition with two centuries of building styles valiantly and defiantly fronting each other across the *maidan*.

Collectively, all the various Art Deco styled buildings in these newly reclaimed lands at Marine Drive, Churchgate and Queen's Road created a cohesive image – clearly another layer both physical as well as in terms of style that was added to the city. Like the Gothic buildings in their time represented a new face of the city and an expression of power, so too the Art Deco buildings and precincts symbolised the shift in expression to represent contemporary aspirations. This time in the 1920s and 1930s, the city had once again renewed itself to keep pace with international trends, thus truly making Bombay India's connection to the west and the world – the Gateway to modern India.

A3. Tourism Surveys & Tourism Potential of the Area

A3.1 Tourism Statistics

Mumbai is one of the leading destinations, where international visitors arrive in large numbers. Tourism Survey conducted for the state of Maharashtra by AC Nielsen ORG-MARG between July'09 and June'10 provides the month-wise numbers of domestic and foreign visitor arrivals in Mumbai. It was observed during the study that 25% of the domestic visitors to the State of Maharashtra visited Mumbai, whereas 79% of the foreign tourists visiting Maharashtra visited the city.

The number of tourists visiting Mumbai can also be discerned through the number of visitors to the ticketed monuments of Elephanta Caves and Kanheri Caves in Mumbai. Another important source of information on the number of visitors is the ticket sales of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (Prince of Wales Museum).

A3.2 Tourism Potential of the Area

Mumbai attracts many visitors, both domestic and international, in large numbers. The city is accessible through well-knit air, rail, road as well as sea networks that serves as a major impetus for tourism growth. Mumbai is described as a 'Pulsating, Alive, On the Move, Vibrant, Fun – this is Mumbai'. What makes visit to Mumbai interesting is the dynamic mix of new and old, which creates a rare charm. Over the years, as colonialism gave way to independence, Mumbai has transformed itself into an entity with thriving markets, business houses and many different communities reflecting a cosmopolitan and trendy atmosphere rarely seen elsewhere.

Mumbai has two World Heritage Sites of Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in heart of the city, while Elephanta Caves in the vicinity; thus a major draw for the international tourism. The monumental Victorian architecture of Mumbai including its Art Deco successor appeals to the visitors including the caves, museums and other cultural centres so also the beaches and sea-side promenades. Major restoration as well as revitalisation projects have further ensured that the city retain its character and charm. Cultural festivals such as Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, Elephanta Festival have given further boost to the cultural tourism in the city.

Mumbai offers a cross section of budget to five-star hotels that cover the south area to far north in the suburbs. All these factors have contributed to the growth of tourism in Mumbai. It is likely to grow more in future. The Report on 20 year Perspective Plan for Development of Sustainable Tourism in Maharashtra dated March 2003 has given the estimated growth in total tourist traffic over the next 20 years to be increasing by 8.99% (from 1000000 in 2001-02 to 5590100 in 2021-22).

A4. Analysis of Issues in Conservation & Management

The Victorian and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai boasts of a robust and thriving urbanscape that is still active even after its initial inception. It is a tribute to the imagination of the builders that conceived and built these ensembles that survive homogenously and continue to embrace the changing aspirations of a vibrant 21st century modern city. However, age, environmental factors, deteriorating fabric, abrasive insertions and increased usage have caused them to erode in part. These and other factors are discussed here, while bringing up concerns for preservation of both the built heritage and the townscape, within the confines of the buffer zone and the demarcated setting.

A4.1 Present State of Conservation

It has been clearly established that the Nominated Property is a conglomeration of individual buildings stitched together by history, their setting, architectural similarities, response to their urban placement and many other intangible aspects. Hence these cannot be treated as disconnected, isolated monuments but as a group, morphing individually and changing collectively as part of a dynamic contemporary city of Mumbai. This altogether accounts for tremendous opportunities for the enhancement of the already vivid site, but also presents several complex challenges for the administrators and conservators of the site.

Several initiatives in the form of conservation projects, urban improvement schemes, studies and research projects as well as standardised urban furniture controls are being taken, which have ensured preservation and maintenance of the property and its setting. It however leaves further scope for works to be done for its continued sustenance and interest.

The monuments have survived in good condition despite the historic timeline and the abrasive natural and urban environment. Only a handful of the buildings are in a state of complete disrepair. Superficial conservation measures, as-needed repairs and ill-informed repairs in some cases in the past have taken a toll on the state of the few buildings. The state of disrepair of the Watsons Hotel building, and its partial collapse in 2005, has been a bone of contention with researchers, heritage enthusiasts, activists, the local community and the city in general.

The onus of maintenance and restoration of the Victorian public buildings in the WHS lies upon Public Works Department. Depending upon the needs of a particular building, yearly funds are allocated for repairs within the corpus of the Public Works Department and works are carried out periodically. In the last few years there has been an increase in the funds released for the restoration of the public buildings and several works are underway.

With regard to the Art Deco stretch the replacement of textural finishes and surface decoration remains to be the core issue and not as much the actual condition of the buildings which enjoy a fair level of maintenance. Misinformed repairs such as external re-plaster have been a cause for the removal of fine Art Deco embellishments that have further caused expansion cracking of the large cemented surface, necessitating further repairs. In case of Art Deco buildings, the archaic tenancy laws have resulted in an impasse. Repairs initiated by the Repairs and Reconstruction Board, formed under the aegis of the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) are based on a bi-annual review undertaken pre and post monsoon. Depending upon the need, maintenance works are commenced that are often haphazard and completely devoid of conservation guidance, resulting in the loss of historic elements and even transformation of its character.

From the increase in the sheer number of visitors and the de-facto rise in the number of functions that the public buildings cater to, it is evident that the Victorian buildings are stretched to their maximum capacity. To counter this increase, several internal and external additions were made, not sensitive to the character and form of the building. The transformations in Art Deco buildings include mainly facade alterations in the form of enclosing balconies, adding chhajjas, etc., addition of floors, and other such changes. However, the integrity of the area has remained intact to a great extent.

With regard to services, Sewage and water supply pipelines, installed during colonial times, are still in use today, but face problems of pilfering of water by hawkers and illegal pavement dwellers. External sewage pipes either in stoneware or cast iron are sometimes either redundant or not maintained. Mobile towers have been placed directly atop historic buildings with little or no discretion towards the users or the sanctity of the building.

Issues of visibility, provision of adequate and design appropriate furniture and removal or relocation of hawkers is one of the biggest challenges for the spaces in and around the designated open spaces. The clean visual connections between private buildings and public monuments observed particularly at Flora Fountain and Wellington Fountain intersections, is completely obliterated on account of the surrounding parking. The call to free these much needed public plazas is recognised and included as part of the recommendations within the Management Plan, as these historic associations between buildings and spaces should be necessarily retained.

Waking up to the growing debate about the conscious need for open spaces in the city, several city based private firms and citizens' groups have taken the initiative to spearhead the cause of lack of public spaces, such as CitiSpace and the *Open Mumbai* project that aims at revamping open spaces in the City. Two of the most pioneering examples of exemplary public space usage and implementation are the Oval *Maidan* and Marine Drive, both typifying the exact function for which they were planned.

A4.2 Factors affecting the Property

Being an integral part of the dense urban fabric, the Nominated Property faces numerous pressures. Apart from the intrinsic factors, external factors such as development, visitor management, transportation to and within the site, etc. have an impact on the Property. Through a series of studies, research initiated by various agencies and data collected from agencies working within and for the site, as well as through a series of local consultations, the issues affecting the Site have been brought to the fore. This section is a concise assessment of the current issues affecting the site in order to generate recommendation for future decisions related to management and monitoring. While some of the issues would be addressed in short term, others would be dealt with at a larger planning and policy stage.

4.2.1 Development Pressures

Mumbai being such a highly contested area in terms of real estate, it is hardly surprising that the Nominated Property falls in one of the most expensive real estate zones of the world and is one of the most desirable places to live in the country. Since the site is a living, built, manmade landscape, certain amount of evolution and growth is to be expected. It is by means of sheer activist engagement, local community involvement, heritage regulations and media concentration that so much of built heritage and historic public realm survives to this day. There are issues such as Redevelopment/Inappropriate Development, Adaptive Re-use that need to be looked at. Adoption of the Management Plan and the Special DCR's for the Fort Precinct are seen as instruments to provide key development controls within the property and the buffer zone in future.

4.2.2 Environmental Pressures

Since the WHS is located in such close proximity to the sea, salt laden air has had some effect on the built fabric. Although constructed of hardy good quality material, the combination of environmental factors and urban air pollution has led to degeneration of the physical structure.

The result of a high level of air contamination on the built fabric is seen in accelerated levels of erosion of material particularly of the limestone detailing of the Victorian buildings. A continuous deposition of soot over historic buildings may seem to lend them an antiquated look, which is not desirable aesthetically or for the physical integrity of the facades. Acerbic action of the salt laden wind has resulted in the corrosion of the reinforcement within the concrete members of the Art Deco buildings.

4.2.3 Disaster and Risk Issues

The factors affecting the Nominated Property are both natural disasters and man-made disasters such as Heavy Rainfall & Flooding, Earthquake, Cyclonic Winds, fire hazards and also the newly emerged threat of terrorism among other issues.

4.2.4 Tourism and Visitor Experience

The tourist arrival in Mumbai is significant every year and it is only expected to grow. The experience on an average for most cases is welcoming and exhilarating in this fast paced city, with a lot of room for improvement particularly relating to the provision of social amenities and the use and treatment of its open spaces. Amenities with respect to drinking water fountains, toilets, seating, information sign posts etc. are already in existence but these are either inadequate or overly saturated.

4.2.5 Population and User Pressures

The city has witnessed unprecedented population explosion in the last century. Mumbai remains the most populated city in India and the fourth most populated city of the world. This population growth is reflected in the WHS in the form large influx of commuters, increase in residents, dense work environments, greater number of visitors and overcrowding of open spaces.

4.2.6 Issues of Urban Infrastructure

The keen foresight of city planners in the 20th and early 21st century has meant that road widening schemes, undertaken routinely at several sections of the city, are not necessary for the arterial and internal roads of the property. This has meant that the original setbacks, front open spaces and street vistas have been preserved for most sections of the WHS. Road dividers and medians installed in the WHS are either the generic ones that are installed across the city, or in some sections have been gradually phased out to incorporate the street furniture recommended within the manual for street furniture¹.

Fortunately the WHS does not consist of many infrastructure based implementations, save a few generic telephone booth and bus stops. These are, however, not very obtrusive and there is a move to replace them with better designs and locate them at discrete locations. The issues of Transportation like Public Transport, Pedestrian Movement, Car Vs the Pedestrian Conflict, Parking and Ancillary Facilities as well as Social Infrastructure, Solid Waste Management have been analysed in detail.

¹ *Planning and Design Guidelines for Street Furniture – Manual*, 2001, sponsored by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai

A4.3 Management of the Property

4.3.1 Ownership

Large number of buildings with multiple ownership patterns characterise the WHS and its buffer zone. The ownership pattern based upon the function and nature of buildings is primarily public or private. Public buildings are either State owned (for instance the Bombay High Court) or Central Government buildings (for example the Western Railway Headquarters) or owned by MCGM in case of Wellington Fountain. In case of private buildings, individual buildings comprise of single or multiple owners and are either corporate owned (for example the HSBC building), private owned and occupied (Eros and Regal Cinema) or private owned and leased to multiple tenants (Watsons Hotel building). The ownership patterns for private buildings are guided by the Bombay Rents, Hotel and Lodging House Rates Control Act of 1947.

4.3.2 Stakeholders

The character of the Nominated Property invites multitude of stakeholders including the people coming to office areas, business groups, commuters, tourists, students, government, etc. State Government has an important stake in the area and also in the management of the Property. Since the site covers an extensive area with multiple users, stakeholders and ownership division, it is almost a complex, living entity that is “managed” by a varied group with differing claims, aims and agendas.

This complexity increases manifold in case of the buffer zone, as the building stock and area is larger. Nearly all of these users have some stake in the Property, including various statutory organisations.

Some of the key stakeholders² are Government of India, State Government of Maharashtra. Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), Public Works Department (PWD), Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA), Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC), Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), Mumbai Metropolitan Region -Heritage Conservation Society (MMR-HCS), Urban Design Research Institute, etc.

² Fort Management Plan, Proposed Special Development Control Regulations, draft copy 3, for review, 16.06.08, UDRI

A5. Planning & Devt. Guidelines, Legal & Administrative Framework

A5.1 Legal Protection and Framework & Development Guidelines

The Nominated Property is part of two larger historic Precincts, in the form of the Fort Precinct and the proposed Marine Drive Precinct, under the Development Control Regulation for Greater Mumbai No. 67 or commonly referred to as DCR 67. Under this regulation, several buildings within the Property and Buffer are individually listed, listed under precincts or listed as part of ensembles or streetscapes.

Additionally, other building bye-laws that govern the site are those pertaining to development, which are general regulations or DCR's that cover the entire city and suburban area. Also, since several buildings are cessed properties (nomenclature explained further), the Rent Control Act as well as the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority Act are applicable.

UDRI has prepared special Development Control Regulations for the Fort Precinct and awaiting approval for implementation. It draws more specific regulations pertaining to sections or sub-precincts within the Fort Area that take into consideration varying typologies and/or identities both in terms of architecture and streetscapes. The sub-precincts have been analysed and guidelines derived to regulate urban transformation in conjunction with the existing architectural and/or urban fabric. The guidelines include aspects such as maintaining the skyline, height controls, restrictive covenants, amalgamation/subdivision of lands, allowed FSI for redevelopment and extra FSI conditions, permissible additions, alterations, signage and street furniture, etc.³

A5.2 Past Research, Studies and Existing Plans

The importance of the Site and the need for addressing the issues faced by the area is understood from the wide ranging, multi-disciplinary studies initiated over the years. These are related to development plans, historic studies, urban level researches, individual architectural surveys and documentation, photo essays, traffic analyses, air pollution records, environmental assessments, travelogues, etc. at the individual, academic, professional and organisational level. These include the projects and studies undertaken by UDRI, at MMR-HCS, MMRDA as well as implementation based projects such as MUTP , Eastern Freeway, Metro Line III, which would have a positive impact on the Property as it would provide alternative means of transport thereby reducing congestions that the Property witnesses at times.

³ Fort Management Plan Proposed Special Development Control Regulations, UDRI, 2008