



THE DON MARIANO RAMOS HERITAGE HOUSE: CONSERVATION THROUGH ADAPTIVE REUSE

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ABSTRACT

The Don Mariano Ramos Heritage House is a surviving expression of Bacolod City's architectural, political, and socioeconomic history during the expansion of the Negros sugar industry. This descriptive, site-specific heritage assessment documented the house's existing condition and cultural significance and translated the findings into a simplified conservation management plan for adaptive reuse. Evidence was drawn from archival and documentary research, measured architectural survey, direct observation, photographic condition mapping, non-destructive visual inspection, semi-structured key-informant interviews, and a values-based assessment completed by four assessors. During the condition assessment, the conservation experts estimated that approximately 70% of the original fabric was retained. This was a descriptive visual judgment: separate expert estimates, a component-level inventory, and a formal consensus procedure were not undertaken. The percentage is therefore interpreted as an indicative estimate rather than a reproducible quantitative measurement. Measured plans showed that 197.83 of 549.54 square meters, or 36.0%, remained under family occupancy. The survey documented roof and drainage defects, moisture-related deterioration of soffits, ceilings, finishes, and timber components, localized floor-wall separations, possible pest activity, and a reinforced-concrete terrace beam with spalling and exposed corroding reinforcement. Recalculation of the 96 recorded checklist entries produced a weighted cultural-significance score of 3.80, led by historic value (4.35) and aesthetic value (4.15), followed by scientific (3.90), social (3.30), and spiritual or symbolic value (3.13). The findings supported a phased, values-based adaptive reuse concept protecting significant fabric and family-occupied areas while accommodating potentially compatible cultural, educational, limited café-service, workshop, and small-event functions. Adaptive reuse was established as a conservation direction at the conceptual level, with implementation dependent on structural, fire-safety, accessibility, building-services, carrying-capacity, financial, and code assessments.

Keywords: adaptive reuse, architectural heritage, cultural significance, heritage conservation, conservation management plan, Bacolod City

INTRODUCTION

Heritage buildings are physical records of the cultural, social, technological, and economic conditions from which communities developed. Their materials, workmanship, forms, spaces, settings, and accumulated associations allow later generations to encounter history through places that continue to occupy the contemporary landscape. Yet these structures are increasingly vulnerable to rapid urban development, changing patterns of land use, environmental deterioration, and the high cost of specialized maintenance. Studies of cultural landscapes have shown that the intensity of urbanization can alter historic settings and threaten the integrity of protected sites (Pham et al., 2021), while climate-related changes in temperature, humidity, rainfall, flooding, and extreme weather accelerate the decay of already fragile heritage fabric (Mekonnen et al., 2022; Sesana et al., 2021). The conservation problem is therefore not limited to preserving old materials. It also concerns how historically meaningful structures can remain useful, cared for, economically viable, and connected to the communities that give them value.

The environmental implications of decisions about existing buildings further strengthen the case for conservation. Construction, demolition, material production, and building operation account for substantial energy use, resource extraction, waste generation, and carbon emissions (Sizirici et al., 2021). Demolishing an existing structure discards the energy and resources embodied in its materials and usually creates demand for new construction. Adaptive reuse offers a different pathway by retaining serviceable building fabric, extending the structure's functional life, and accommodating new uses within an existing physical resource. In heritage settings, adaptive reuse is not merely a development technique. It is a conservation strategy that must negotiate the relationship between continued use and the protection of cultural significance (Arfa et al., 2022; Lanz & Pendlebury, 2022).

Philippine ancestral houses illustrate this relationship particularly well. Buildings produced during the late Spanish colonial and American periods combined imported architectural languages with local materials, craftsmanship, climatic responses, and domestic practices. Their high ceilings, large openings, elevated living areas, hardwood construction, decorative ventilation features, and hybrid masonry-and-timber systems show how external influences were transformed under Philippine conditions (Ching et al., 2017; Cordero, 2024). These houses are also social documents. They preserve evidence of family life, patterns of labor and hospitality, regional economies, political authority, and the social aspirations of the people who commissioned and occupied them. Their value therefore rests not only in ornament or age but also in the histories, memories, and identities embodied in their continued presence.



The study's reviewed family records, historical photographs, local narratives, and available heritage sources associate the Don Mariano Ramos Heritage House at 44 Burgos Street with Don Mariano Ramos, early local governance, and Bacolod's growth during the Negros sugar economy. Local historical accounts describe Burgos Street as a corridor of prominent residences known as "Millionaire's Row" and report that Japanese forces occupied the house during World War II (Reyes, 2008). These claims are retained as documented local and family accounts rather than independently verified archival conclusions. The study's comparative architectural reading identified Spanish, Italianate, early American, and Art Deco influences in the tower, façade composition, openings, finishes, and ornamental details; interpreting these features as expressions of prewar elite resources and cosmopolitan preference is therefore an inference from the study's documentary and architectural evidence (Ching et al., 2017; Cordero, 2024).

The house remains significant because much of its original architectural character survives. Hardwood floors, carved and paneled doors, textured-glass windows, decorative transoms, ornamental moldings, balustrades, iron grilles, ceiling patterns, and the original spatial organization continue to convey its period, workmanship, and social function. The prominent octagonal tower or mirador remains its most recognizable feature. At the same time, age, prolonged exposure to moisture, roof deterioration, vegetation, inappropriate additions, changing maintenance conditions, and the pressures of the surrounding urban environment threaten the survival of this fabric. Continued family occupancy has helped retain the house as a living place rather than an abandoned artifact, but occupancy alone cannot address all of its structural, material, operational, and financial requirements.

The Philippine policy environment recognizes the importance of protecting cultural properties. Republic Act No. 10066, or the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, provides a national framework for the identification, protection, conservation, and management of cultural heritage. National Historical Commission of the Philippines guidelines similarly recognize heritage houses for their historical, cultural, social, architectural, or artistic value (NHCP, 2023). Legal recognition, however, does not automatically produce a viable conservation program for a privately owned ancestral residence. Conservation requires documentation, condition assessment, prioritization of interventions, compatible use, financing, technical expertise, and sustained collaboration among owners, government agencies, heritage professionals, academic institutions, and communities.

Adaptive reuse is especially relevant to this gap between recognition and long-term care. The approach retains an existing building while introducing a use capable of supporting its continued maintenance and social relevance. It can reduce demolition waste, conserve embodied resources, stimulate local cultural activity, and create opportunities for tourism and community enterprise (Aigwi et al., 2023; Rudan, 2023). Nevertheless, reuse is not automatically conservation. A new function may damage significant spaces, conceal historic fabric, introduce excessive services, overload structural systems, or displace existing social meanings if it is selected without a clear understanding of the property's significance. Successful adaptive reuse therefore begins with evidence: what is significant, what condition it is in, what changes it can tolerate, and what uses are compatible with both the building and its custodians.

The study was grounded in a sequence of international conservation principles. The Athens Charter established documentation and an understanding of existing physical conditions as prerequisites for responsible intervention. The Venice Charter strengthened the principles of authenticity, integrity, and respect for historic fabric while recognizing that socially useful functions may support the conservation of monuments (Jokilehto, 2021). The Nara Document on Authenticity broadened the understanding of authenticity beyond original material to include cultural context, traditions, use, spirit, and meaning. This is particularly important for a family-owned heritage house whose significance depends on physical fabric as well as lineage, memory, occupancy, and community association (Archibald, 2024).

The principal values-based framework was the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter. The Charter defines cultural significance through aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, and spiritual values and requires that decisions be based on an understanding of those values. It promotes a cautious approach: change as much as necessary to care for the place and make it usable, but as little as possible so that cultural significance is retained (ICOMOS Australia, 2013). Its distinction between maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation, and compatible use is central to the present study. The framework prevents adaptive reuse from being treated as a purely commercial redesign and instead positions it as an intervention whose legitimacy depends on its effect on significant fabric, setting, use, associations, and meaning.

Sustainable development theory provided the study's long-term orientation. The Brundtland formulation of sustainable development emphasizes meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Applied to architectural heritage, this means treating an existing building as a finite cultural and material resource. Adaptive reuse supports environmental sustainability by retaining embodied materials and reducing demand for demolition and replacement; social sustainability by maintaining identity, memory, and community attachment; cultural sustainability by transmitting historic knowledge and craftsmanship; and economic sustainability by creating appropriate functions that can contribute to maintenance and operation (Cucco et al., 2023; Lazar & Chithra, 2022). The Burra Charter and sustainable development theory thus converge in a model of stewardship: the place must remain meaningful, materially legible, functional, and capable of being cared for over time.



Existing adaptive reuse literature offers models for evaluating new uses, but international studies often concentrate on monuments, industrial buildings, or institutional properties in settings different from privately owned Philippine ancestral houses (Arfa et al., 2022; Lanz & Pendlebury, 2022). Within the literature reviewed for this study, comparatively few publications documented Bacolod heritage-house projects through an integrated condition assessment, formal evaluation of cultural significance, stakeholder evidence, and operational conservation framework. This is a bounded observation about the reviewed corpus, not a claim that no other Bacolod applications exist. The Don Mariano Ramos Heritage House therefore provides a site-specific case for demonstrating how these components can be combined.

The study aimed to formulate an effective and locally realistic conservation response for the Don Mariano Ramos Heritage House. Specifically, it sought to: (1) assess the existing physical and architectural condition of the house; (2) determine its historical, aesthetic, scientific, social, and spiritual or symbolic significance; and (3) develop a simplified conservation management plan founded on adaptive reuse. The investigation was bounded to the house, its immediate grounds, surviving architectural fabric, documented historical associations, present occupancy, and conservation potential. It did not adjudicate ownership or broader sociopolitical disputes. The three objectives structured the data collection, analysis, presentation of results, and proposed conservation actions.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Contemporary heritage conservation has moved from a narrow concern with restoring monuments to an interdisciplinary process of managing change. Li and Tang (2024) describe the development of conservation as a progression toward broader recognition of cultural context, community meaning, and the need to balance material protection with contemporary realities. This shift is significant because buildings inevitably change through weathering, use, repair, altered surroundings, and the succession of generations. The central question is therefore not whether change will occur, but whether it will be guided by an understanding of significance and managed in a way that keeps important values legible.

The Burra Charter offers one of the clearest formulations of values-based conservation. Cultural significance may be embodied in a place's fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places, and objects. These dimensions cannot be reduced to a single visual judgment. A heritage house may be aesthetically important because of its proportions, craftsmanship, materials, and sensory qualities; historically important because of its association with people, events, and patterns of development; scientifically important because it provides evidence of past construction and domestic practices; socially important because communities identify with it; and spiritually or symbolically important because it sustains belief, memory, or emotional attachment (ICOMOS Australia, 2013). The framework requires assessment before policy: values must first be documented, and only then can conservation priorities and allowable changes be defined.

Authenticity and integrity are related but distinct concerns. Authenticity addresses the credibility with which a place expresses its values through form, materials, workmanship, use, traditions, location, setting, spirit, and feeling. Integrity concerns the wholeness and intactness of the attributes necessary to convey those values. The Nara Document is important because it rejects a universal material standard detached from cultural context. For a Philippine ancestral house, authenticity may reside in original hardwood and masonry, but it can also reside in family continuity, spatial practices, oral history, and the building's relationship with its neighborhood. An intervention that preserves every surface but eliminates meaningful use may therefore be as questionable as one that introduces a profitable use while destroying significant fabric.

Adaptive reuse operates within this tension. Arfa et al. (2022) characterize it as a process through which a heritage building is modified for continued or new use while its cultural significance is retained. Plevoets and Cleempoel (2019) emphasize that the design challenge lies in negotiating between the existing building and contemporary requirements. The strongest reuse strategies do not treat the historic structure as an empty shell. They read its spatial hierarchy, construction logic, and character-defining elements as constraints and resources. New insertions are distinguishable yet compatible, services are introduced with minimal damage, and future removal remains possible where practical.

Compatibility is consequently more important than novelty. A compatible use places little or no adverse effect on cultural significance and fits the building's structural capacity, circulation, room sizes, environmental characteristics, and social meaning (ICOMOS Australia, 2013; Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019). It also generates a level of activity that can be supported without excessive wear or permanent alteration. In a large ancestral residence, cultural exhibitions, interpretive programs, small events, workshops, and carefully managed hospitality uses may be more compatible than intensive commercial functions requiring major kitchens, heavy equipment, large crowds, or extensive subdivision. Where a heritage house remains partly residential, compatibility also includes coexistence with continued family occupancy.

Reversibility and minimal intervention further discipline reuse (ICOMOS Australia, 2013; Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019). Reversibility does not mean that every intervention can be removed without trace; rather, it requires that



new work avoid unnecessarily foreclosing future conservation options. Freestanding exhibit panels, modular furniture, surface-mounted service routes, detachable lighting, and temporary outdoor structures are preferable to permanent partitions, destructive chases, or irreversible alteration of original fabric. Minimal intervention similarly does not mean neglect. It means undertaking the least amount of change necessary to achieve safety, stability, continued use, and the retention of significance. Where a corroding structural member threatens safety, appropriate repair is necessary. Where an intact historic element remains serviceable, replacement merely for visual uniformity is unjustified.

Preventive conservation is indispensable because major restoration is often the result of deferred routine care. Roof leaks, blocked drainage, vegetation, termites, rising damp, failed coatings, and exposed services can produce cumulative damage far exceeding the cost of early intervention. Condition surveys create a baseline against which deterioration can be monitored. Photographic records, measured drawings, material inventories, maintenance logs, and periodic inspection reports allow owners and professionals to distinguish stable aging from active failure. Conservation management plans translate these observations into schedules, priorities, responsibilities, and decision rules (Eldib, 2024; Garzulino et al., 2021).

Material compatibility is another recurring principle. Historic materials behave differently from many contemporary substitutes. Dense cement repair, impermeable coatings, incompatible metal fasteners, or chemically aggressive treatments can trap moisture, accelerate decay, or transfer stress to adjacent fabric. Conservation repair is therefore informed by the original construction system and by the physical and visual compatibility of new and surviving materials. Traditional windows illustrate this principle because their proportions, glass, joinery, ventilation performance, and accumulated evidence contribute to authenticity (Pickles et al., 2021). The same relationship applies to hardwood flooring, Machuca tiles, decorative plaster or concrete, ironwork, and timber framing.

Adaptive reuse also aligns with circular-economy principles. Retaining an existing building keeps materials in service, reduces waste, and avoids the environmental burdens of extracting, manufacturing, and transporting replacements. Rudan (2023) argues that cultural heritage can participate in a circular economy when reuse creates new cultural and tourism products without exhausting the resource on which they depend. The value of the building is not consumed through intensive commercialization; rather, appropriate activity helps finance stewardship. Aigwi et al. (2023) similarly identify adaptive reuse as a climate-mitigation strategy within the built environment because it can lower embodied impacts and support more sustainable patterns of urban development.

The benefits extend beyond material efficiency. Heritage buildings can provide settings for education, cultural production, social interaction, and local enterprise. They can strengthen place identity by keeping recognizable historical anchors within rapidly changing cities. Lazar and Chithra (2022) emphasize that culture is integral to sustainable development because people's sense of place, continuity, and belonging affects the social resilience of communities. Billore (2021) likewise links citizen engagement with the conservation and sustainable development of built heritage. These perspectives reinforce the need to involve owners, descendants, residents, historians, conservation practitioners, local government, and cultural agencies in decisions about reuse.

Participation is particularly necessary when a place carries multiple or unequal meanings. An ancestral house may symbolize civic leadership, craftsmanship, and regional prosperity, while also reflecting social hierarchy and concentrated wealth. Responsible interpretation acknowledges these layered histories instead of presenting heritage as decorative nostalgia. Stakeholder interviews and oral histories recover intangible associations, identify contested or overlooked narratives, and clarify which parts of the house matter to different groups. They also reveal practical considerations involving privacy, access, maintenance, and family use.

Philippine heritage governance provides the legal and institutional setting for these practices. The National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009 establishes responsibilities for cultural-property protection (National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, 2010), while the NHCP and National Commission for Culture and the Arts provide guidance relevant to identification, documentation, intervention, and management. Early coordination with heritage authorities connects owners with technical guidance, reduces the risk of inappropriate work, and aligns adaptive use with broader cultural programs. Academic institutions contribute documentation, research, conservation training, and public interpretation, while local government contributes incentives, development controls, disaster planning, and heritage awareness.

The literature therefore supports an integrated approach in which documentary and physical evidence establishes significance, identifies threats, defines fabric for retention, informs compatible use, regulates intervention, and structures management. Continued monitoring, financing, documentation, and shared stewardship are integral to this process. These principles provided the analytical basis for examining the Don Mariano Ramos Heritage House and translating the results into a simplified conservation management plan.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive, site-specific heritage-assessment design. Documentary, interview, observational, measured, photographic, and numerical rating evidence was integrated to describe the property and formulate a conservation response. Architectural measurements supported recording and planning, while the rating matrix summarized assessor judgments of cultural value. The design was appropriate to the objectives because it enabled



the physical condition, historical associations, architectural attributes, stakeholder knowledge, and prospective reuse of one heritage property to be examined within a common descriptive framework.

The study site was the Don Mariano Ramos Heritage House at 44 Burgos Street, Bacolod City. The property occupies approximately 2,000 square meters, historically comprising two lots of about 1,000 square meters each. The unit of analysis was the heritage property, including its principal structure, immediate grounds, character-defining architectural elements, present family-occupied areas, documentary history, and proposed reuse zones.

Primary site evidence was gathered through direct observation, dimensional survey, measured drawings, architectural sketching, photographs, video, and field notes. The non-destructive condition survey covered accessible floors, walls, ceilings, openings, doors, windows, transoms, balustrades, brackets, stairs, roof components, structural supports, finishes, and service-related alterations. Observations recorded material loss, cracking, displacement, corrosion, moisture effects, biological activity, possible pest activity, weathering, and incompatible interventions. The resulting evidence described visible conditions at the time of inspection and served as the baseline for conservation prioritization.

Secondary evidence consisted of historical photographs, family and local narratives, archival and municipal records where available, museum and heritage sources, architectural literature, academic studies, conservation manuals, and national and international conservation guidance. These materials were used to reconstruct the property's historical development, identify architectural influences, compare surviving elements with established typologies, and situate the house within the development of Bacolod City and Negros Occidental. Documentary, physical, and interview evidence were cross-checked to reduce reliance on a single account.

Six interview participants were purposively selected: two conservation experts, two historians, and two descendants of Don Mariano Ramos. Their specialized knowledge was adequate for the study's bounded, site-specific objectives and for triangulation with documentary and physical evidence, but it was not intended to represent community-wide perceptions. Eligibility was based on relevant training or experience, knowledge of local history or conservation, institutional or project involvement where applicable, verified family connection for descendants, and willingness to participate. Separately, four individuals completed the cultural-significance checklist. The supplied anonymized source matrix identifies them only as Assessors 1–4 and does not establish their participant categories or whether they were drawn from the six interview participants. Consequently, the manuscript uses "interview participants" for the six informants and "assessors" only for the four checklist raters, without asserting an undocumented overlap.

The interview instrument contained three group-specific schedules, each with 12 open-ended questions and follow-up probes. Questions for historians addressed historical context, events, architectural influences, social status, past use, irreplaceable features, urban change, and interpretive narratives. Questions for conservation practitioners addressed present condition, priority materials, authenticity, compatible functions, acceptable modern interventions, codes, maintenance, and risks. Questions for descendants addressed family memories, historical use, valued spaces and objects, public access, acceptable reuse, traditions, representation, and concerns regarding alteration. The protocol underwent qualitative expert content review by a doctoral-level external reviewer and a reviewer affiliated with WVSU Calinog. They examined the relevance and alignment of questions with aesthetic, historical, sociopolitical, scientific or research, and conservation-management domains; the external reviewer also recommended grouping related questions by cultural-significance domain. Interviews were conducted from March 18 to March 24, 2026. They were recorded, transcribed, and returned to participants for verification and proofreading before analysis and comparison with documentary and site evidence.

Interview transcripts and field notes were analyzed through a structured descriptive coding process. First-cycle coding assigned relevant statements to the three objectives and their evidence domains: existing condition; historical, aesthetic, scientific, social, and symbolic significance; and acceptable conservation and reuse directions. Related codes were then grouped into descriptive categories. Within and across the conservation-expert, historian, and descendant groups, the researcher identified recurring statements, isolated contrasting or exceptional views, and retained the participant group attached to each interpretation. These patterns were compared with archival records, measured drawings, photographs, direct observations, and the materials-and-substance inventory. Convergence strengthened a descriptive finding; disagreement or absence of corroboration was reported cautiously rather than resolved by assumption. The interviews therefore functioned as site-specific key-informant evidence, while architectural and physical findings remained grounded in recorded site conditions.

Architectural and condition evidence was analyzed through measured-drawing preparation, comparative style analysis, typological classification, material inventory, and condition mapping. Each observed element was considered in relation to its location, material, function, condition, historical contribution, and tolerance for change. The analysis distinguished character-defining fabric from later or less significant alterations and organized observed concerns according to material and likely deterioration mechanism.

Cultural significance was assessed through a checklist developed with reference to a template supplied by an architectural professional. Its domains—aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, and spiritual value—were informed by the Burra Charter (ICOMOS Australia, 2013), but the numerical scale and unequal weighting scheme were study-



specific and were not prescribed by the Charter. The response scale defined 5 as exceptional or outstanding value at the national or international level, 4 as high value at the regional or provincial level, 3 as moderate value at the city or municipal level, 2 as low value with limited recognition, and 1 as very little or no identifiable value. Four assessors rated five criteria in each of the first four domains and four criteria under spiritual value. The researcher established weights of .20 for aesthetic, .25 for historic, .15 for scientific, .25 for social, and .15 for spiritual value to reflect the study's stated priorities. The weights did not undergo independent validation and are therefore treated as a study-specific analytic choice and limitation rather than an external standard. Domain means were multiplied by the assigned weights and summed, and all means and contributions were recalculated from the 96 individual recorded ratings before reporting.

The simplified conservation management plan was derived by aligning the recorded physical conditions, corrected cultural-significance results, documentary and stakeholder evidence, present occupancy, spatial organization, and the conservation principles of compatible use, minimal intervention, material compatibility, and reversibility. Areas and elements of higher significance were assigned tighter intervention controls, while previously altered or service areas were considered for carefully managed operational requirements. The resulting concept organized conservation work, prospective reuse, access, and management into phased actions.

Prior to implementation, the study underwent internal research ethics evaluation and approval by the Graduate School panel of evaluators. At the time, a separate institutional research ethics review board had not yet been constituted; therefore, the panel itself evaluated the study's compliance with applicable research ethics requirements as part of proposal review and approval. The approval process did not issue a separate ethics approval number or certificate; accordingly, the ethical-approval statement is limited to the Graduate School panel's documented proposal review and approval. Participant engagement followed informed consent, voluntary participation, the right to decline or withdraw, privacy, confidentiality, and avoidance of harm. Direct descendants were de-identified in reporting. Recordings, transcripts, photographs, plans, access information, family narratives, and descriptions of vulnerable building areas were restricted to legitimate research use in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Data Privacy Act of 2012, 2012). The protocol stated that interview recordings and transcripts would be deleted after completion of the study and that data from persons who withdrew would be discarded. Property access and documentation were undertaken with permission from the Ramos family.

RESULTS

The first objective concerned the existing condition of the heritage house. The assessment recorded substantial retention of its principal form, spatial organization, and character-defining elements. The conservation experts estimated through visual assessment that approximately 70% of the original form and fabric was retained, based on components associated with the period in which the house was built. Separate expert scores, a component-level inventory, an averaging procedure, and a formal consensus method were not employed; accordingly, the percentage represents an indicative expert estimate rather than a reproducible quantitative measurement. Measured ground- and second-floor plans identified 197.83 square meters occupied by one descendant of Don Mariano Ramos within a total gross floor area of 549.54 square meters. Applying $\text{occupied area} \div \text{total area} \times 100$ gave $(197.83 \div 549.54) \times 100 = 36.0\%$. The remaining 351.71 square meters, or 64.0%, formed the spatial basis for exploring conservation-led reuse while retaining the private family zone.

The house displayed a hybrid architectural and structural character. The lower portions combined concrete or masonry walls and reinforced-concrete elements, while upper areas and the roof employed lighter timber construction. Concrete columns extended to the first-floor level, with wooden columns continuing above to support upper and roof framing. The configuration reflected the practical combination of heavier lower construction and lighter, climatically responsive timber work characteristic of ancestral residences of the period. High ceilings, large openings, ventanillas, operable windows, elevated floors, and extensive cross-ventilation remained evident.

The front elevation retained its principal composition, including the tower, arched openings, balconies, elevated entrance, symmetrical massing, and decorative details. Surface discoloration, biological growth, cracking, paint failure, vegetation near roof edges, and damaged wooden soffits were observed. The original porch and veranda tiles remained in place but showed surface wear and weathering. Similar conditions appeared on other elevations, with roof-edge deterioration, exposed openings, moisture staining, and localized decay affecting ceilings and exterior timber.

The windows and doors remained among the most intact and visually distinctive components. Tall hardwood-framed windows used textured glass, vertical and geometric muntins, arched or pointed transoms, quatrefoil-like motifs, and decorative iron grilles. Some openings had been modified with jalousie panels, additional metal grilles, coverings, or other security and weather-protection devices. These additions altered visual consistency but did not eliminate the legibility of the original compositions. The principal entrance retained its large double-leaf hardwood door, carved decoration, moldings, fluted side elements, and Gothic-inspired tracery. A later side-access door had been introduced near the entrance, creating a functional but visually simpler interruption in the original façade.



Original floor finishes survived across substantial portions of the house. The porch, entrance, kitchen, veranda, and selected service areas contained Machuca, decorative cement, or ceramic tiles. Interior formal spaces largely retained tongue-and-groove hardwood flooring arranged linearly or in geometric and parquet-like patterns using more than one hardwood species. The flooring was supported in observed areas by hardwood joists measuring approximately 2 by 6 inches. Much of the original installation showed no visible fasteners, while a previously removed and reinstalled section had been fixed with nails inconsistent with the original method. Wear, separation, and isolated dislodgment were observed, but much of the material remained serviceable.

Interior walls combined concrete, painted tongue-and-groove wood, and gypsum-board partitions on timber frames. The presence of early gypsum-board interior partitions was identified as a noteworthy material feature. Ceilings used painted plywood panels, molded trim, and geometric or curvilinear compositions associated with early twentieth-century decorative practice. Damage included moisture staining, failed paint, deteriorated boards, and exposed areas resulting from roof or soffit failure.

In the accessible portions of the structural system, no widespread visible indicators of distress were observed during the survey. Timber joists and observable roof framing generally retained alignment and continuity, and the building remained partly occupied. This observation should not be interpreted as verification or certification of structural adequacy. The assessment was visual and non-destructive; concealed members, foundations, connections, reinforcement condition, electrical systems, fire performance, and load capacity were outside the direct measurements made in the study.

Localized floor-wall separations were recorded in the lower living room where wooden flooring met the concrete perimeter wall. Additional concrete pedestals or piers had also been installed below portions of the structure. These observations documented past movement or intervention, while their installation history, foundation condition, effect on load paths, and present rate of movement remained outside the visual survey.

A reinforced-concrete beam supporting the ground-floor terrace exhibited chipping and spalling, with exposed reinforcement showing visible corrosion. The observed loss of cover made this the principal localized structural concern recorded during the survey. Corrosion depth, remaining reinforcement area, concrete strength, chloride or carbonation exposure, and residual capacity were not measured as part of the non-destructive assessment.

Roof and drainage failure emerged as the most consequential deterioration mechanism. Damaged roofing, soffits, and roof-edge components permitted water entry, producing moisture accumulation and progressive damage to timber, ceiling boards, wall finishes, masonry, and decorative elements. Poor drainage, vegetation intrusion, and prolonged exposure increased the effect of this moisture. Exposed utility lines and localized incompatible alterations also affected visual integrity and created additional management concerns.

The documentary and interview evidence reviewed for the study associated the house with Don Mariano Ramos and the early political development of Bacolod; this phrasing indicates evidentiary association rather than independent archival confirmation. Family and local historical accounts situated the residence on a corridor associated with prominent sugar families and reported later occupation by Japanese forces, including use of the elevated tower (Reyes, 2008). Because the wartime account was not independently corroborated by an archival or scholarly source in the materials available, it is retained as a reported local account. The evidence describes successive roles as a family residence, a setting for social and political interaction, a reported wartime-occupied structure, and a continuing home for descendants.

Using comparative formal and typological criteria—including massing and proportion, opening shape, façade ornament, column and balustrade treatment, geometric glazing, woodwork, ceiling and grille motifs, spatial organization, construction system, and climatic response—the study identified a synthesis of Spanish colonial, Italianate, early American, Neoclassical, Gothic-inspired, and Art Deco influences rather than a single pure style (Ching et al., 2017; Cordero, 2024). The classification is an interpretation derived from the documented features, not a claim of stylistic purity. Local climatic adaptation was read in the elevated form, large operable openings, high ceilings, ventilating transoms and ventanillas, and lighter timber framing above heavier lower construction.

The workmanship of the house was evident in the precision of its hardwood joinery, the absence of exposed fasteners in original floor sections, carved and molded decoration, patterned glazing, ironwork, and the integration of structural and ornamental functions. Hardwood species reported in the house included narra, molave, yakal, ipil, and apitong. The survival of these materials and details supported the house's value as evidence of early twentieth-century construction, craft knowledge, and material culture.

The second objective concerned the property's cultural significance. The completed source matrix contained 96 individual recorded ratings: four assessor ratings for each of 24 criteria. Recalculation of these entries corrected the domain means and weighted contributions presented in Table 1. Ranks are based on the unweighted domain means; weighted contributions are shown separately and are not the basis of rank.



Table 1

Recalculated Cultural-Significance Ratings

Value domain	Criteria	Mean	Weight	Weighted score	Rank
Aesthetic	5	4.15	.20	.83	2
Historic	5	4.35	.25	1.09	1
Scientific	5	3.90	.15	.59	3
Social	5	3.30	.25	.83	4
Spiritual/symbolic	4	3.13	.15	.47	5
Overall	24	—	1.00	3.80	—

Note. Domain means were recalculated from all 96 ratings recorded in the completed assessment matrix. Rank is based on the unweighted domain mean. Weighted score = domain mean × assigned study-specific weight. Calculations used unrounded domain means; individual contributions are displayed to two decimals. Consequently, the displayed contributions sum to 3.81 because of independent rounding, whereas the sum of the unrounded products rounds to the reported overall score of 3.80.

Historic value obtained the highest corrected domain mean (4.35) and weighted contribution (1.09). Representation of the era received a unanimous criterion mean of 5.00; association with Don Mariano Ramos received 4.50; integrity of fabric received 4.25; and association with events and contribution to local history each received 4.00. Aesthetic value obtained a domain mean of 4.15 and weighted contribution of .83. Its criterion means were 4.50 for integrity of form, 4.25 each for architectural design quality and materials and craftsmanship, 4.00 for sensory qualities, and 3.75 for visual harmony. One assessor questioned the perimeter wall in judging integrity, while another noted the early use of gypsum board.

Scientific value obtained a corrected domain mean of 3.90 and a weighted contribution of .59 after rounding. Architectural research potential and educational value each received 4.50; construction techniques received 4.25; documentation potential received 4.00; and archaeological potential received 2.25, accompanied by an assessor's observation that direct data or research on the place were limited. Social value obtained a domain mean of 3.30; its unrounded product was .825 and its consistently two-decimal weighted contribution was therefore .83. Collective memory received 4.00, community attachment 3.75, adaptive use 3.25, public awareness 3.00, and cultural practices 2.50. Spiritual or symbolic value obtained a domain mean of 3.13 and weighted contribution of .47. Symbolic meaning received 4.00, emotional significance 3.50, belief associations 2.75, and ritual practices 2.25. The sum of unrounded weighted products yielded an overall score that rounds to 3.80.

The third objective was addressed through the simplified conservation management plan. The plan combined significance zoning, condition priorities, continued family occupancy, and proposed adaptive use. Cultural display, educational activity, workshops, limited café service, exhibitions, small meetings, and intimate events were assigned to candidate areas outside the private family zones. These were presented as proposed functions within the planning concept, with final capacity and technical requirements reserved for subsequent professional studies.

The zoning strategy classified the façade, tower, principal hall, original spatial organization, significant openings, hardwood floors, decorative ceilings, main stair, and principal structural systems as primary-significance elements subject to the strictest intervention control. Secondary zones could receive minimal and reversible installations. Previously altered or service areas offered comparatively greater flexibility for utilities and operations. Outdoor areas accommodated reversible landscape and event elements using movable furniture, temporary canopies, portable staging, and permeable paving.

The proposed insertions remained distinguishable, visually subordinate, and removable. Freestanding display panels, surface-mounted or reversible lighting, modular furniture, and removable café elements minimized direct alteration of original fabric. Heat-, smoke-, grease-, and flame-producing food preparation was assigned outside the principal heritage structure. Passive ventilation and daylight remained the primary environmental strategies, while new building services followed routes selected to reduce physical and visual intrusion.

Implementation was organized into four phases. Phase 1 covered documentation, significance mapping, condition recording, roof and drainage work, and investigation of priority structural concerns. Phase 2 covered conservation of timber, masonry, finishes, openings, floors, ceilings, and the reinforced-concrete beam. Phase 3 introduced approved reversible gallery, café-service, event, accessibility, safety, and utility components. Phase 4 established operations, partnerships, cultural programming, preventive maintenance, monitoring, and periodic review.

DISCUSSION

The condition and significance findings position the Don Mariano Ramos Heritage House as a living heritage property whose material and associative values remain closely connected. Surviving architectural fabric conveys age, workmanship, spatial hierarchy, climatic adaptation, and historical use, while continued family occupancy sustains



lineage, memory, and domestic continuity. This relationship explains why conservation cannot be reduced either to physical restoration alone or to unrestricted activation of apparently unused space. The significance of the property depends on retaining both its legible fabric and the family associations that continue to give that fabric meaning.

Moisture emerged as the most consequential deterioration pathway because roof-edge defects, damaged soffits, deficient drainage, vegetation, and exposed openings created routes through which water affected ceilings, walls, timber, finishes, and reinforced concrete. This pattern is consistent with conservation literature identifying moisture as a driver of biological growth, corrosion, timber decay, coating failure, and material movement (Mekonnen et al., 2022; Sesana et al., 2021). The findings therefore establish weather protection and moisture control as the logical first conservation priority within the proposed sequence.

The spalling terrace beam, floor-wall separations, and added supports illustrate the limits of interpreting structural behavior through visible condition alone. Spalling establishes that reinforcement corrosion has disrupted the concrete cover, but the degree of section loss and remaining capacity cannot be derived from surface observation. Similarly, a gap can record movement without revealing whether that movement is active, historic, material-related, or foundation-related. The study consequently distinguishes recorded defects from engineering conclusions, preserving the usefulness of the condition survey without extending it beyond its evidentiary scope.

The generally intact accessible timber elements support a selective conservation approach. Large-scale replacement would remove original material and craftsmanship that contribute directly to authenticity, while localized treatment corresponds more closely to the distribution of the observed deterioration. This interpretation reflects the Burra Charter's emphasis on retaining significant fabric and limiting intervention to what is necessary for continued care (ICOMOS Australia, 2013). It also recognizes that original hardwood, joinery, flooring patterns, and ventilating components are evidence, not merely finishes.

The high aesthetic rating is explained by the relationship among form, material, craft, and environmental response. The tower, arched openings, textured-glass windows, transoms, ventanillas, high ceilings, patterned floors, ceiling compositions, balustrades, and ironwork operate as an integrated spatial and sensory system. Light, ventilation, elevation, room sequence, and decorative hierarchy communicate both climatic adaptation and social organization. Their value lies in this combined performance; conserving isolated decorative pieces while disrupting the spatial system would preserve objects but weaken architectural meaning.

The house's stylistic significance also lies in hybridity rather than conformity to one pure category. Spanish colonial, Italianate, Neoclassical, Gothic-inspired, early American, and Art Deco elements were selectively combined within a tropical domestic structure. Textured glass, geometric motifs, arched and classical forms, high ceilings, and hybrid concrete-and-timber construction record a period of architectural transition. Philippine domestic interiors of the late Spanish and American Commonwealth periods similarly reflected changing materials, tastes, and social aspirations (Cordero, 2024), supporting interpretation of the house as evidence of local adaptation rather than a direct copy of a foreign style.

Historic value ranked highest because the evidence connects personal, urban, regional, and reported wartime histories. Documentary and interview materials associate Don Mariano Ramos with early local governance, while the property's location and scale situate it within the social order and wealth generated by the Negros sugar economy. Family and local historical accounts report wartime occupation and strategic use of the tower (Reyes, 2008). Because the study did not independently corroborate this account through archival or scholarly evidence, the wartime interpretation remains provisional. Taken together, the sources support a layered interpretation of leadership, labor, prosperity, conflict, and family continuity.

The corrected social and spiritual or symbolic means were lower than the historic and aesthetic means, but the difference is more appropriately understood as a feature of the available documentation and assessor perspectives than as proof that the corresponding values are unimportant. Public access has been limited, and oral histories, cultural practices, emotional associations, and ritual meanings remain less extensively recorded than architectural and political history. The small group of four assessors is an explicit limitation on inference: the matrix offers focused expert and stakeholder judgments and cannot be generalized as a measure of community-wide valuation.

The adaptive reuse concept follows logically from the coexistence of significant fabric, continued residential use, underused areas, and the recurring need for maintenance. Cultural and educational functions align with the historical and architectural content of the property, while limited hospitality and small-event functions may offer potential support for continued operation, subject to technical, regulatory, financial, operational, and carrying-capacity assessment. Their compatibility remains conditional because intensity of use affects loading, evacuation, fire exposure, wear, noise, privacy, waste, and service requirements. The concept therefore establishes a direction for controlled activation rather than demonstrated feasibility, unrestricted capacity, or commercial viability.

Food service demonstrates the practical tension between new function and heritage protection. Café activity can complement visitor use, yet heat, grease, smoke, water, waste, pests, and fire introduce material and operational risks. Assigning intensive preparation to a detached or less significant service area reduces those risks and limits



intrusive mechanical and utility work within the principal heritage structure. The same logic supports freestanding exhibitions, detachable lighting, modular furniture, and temporary outdoor facilities: new use remains legible without being allowed to dominate or permanently consume the historic fabric.

Conservation zoning translates the significance assessment into spatial control. Primary zones protect the elements most responsible for authenticity and architectural identity; secondary zones accommodate reversible use; and altered or service zones receive necessary operational systems. This differentiated approach avoids treating every part of the property as equally sensitive while ensuring that convenience alone does not determine where new work occurs. It also creates a traceable relationship between assessed value and allowable change.

Adaptive reuse is consistent with sustainability because retaining serviceable fabric can conserve embodied materials and reduce demolition and replacement (Aigwi et al., 2023; Rudan, 2023). Continued reliance on passive ventilation and daylight also preserves existing environmental responses. In this study, these are conservation and planning benefits inferred from the reuse strategy rather than measured life-cycle, energy, social-impact, or financial outcomes. Their eventual magnitude will depend on the final design, operating model, maintenance regime, and intensity of use.

The phased structure of the plan reflects the dependence of adaptive reuse on prior conservation work. Documentation and control of active deterioration precede repair; repair precedes new installations; and operations follow only after the building, services, access, safety, and management systems have been resolved. This sequence prevents the proposed function from driving premature alterations and preserves the ability to adjust later stages as new technical evidence becomes available.

The study is bounded to one privately owned heritage property and to evidence obtained through documents, purposively selected key informants, four significance assessors, measured architectural recording, and accessible non-destructive visual inspection. The results provide a site-specific baseline and planning framework. Structural capacity, concealed material condition, geotechnical behavior, fire and electrical performance, accessibility compliance, visitor demand, operating feasibility, life-cycle performance, and community-wide valuation fall beyond the measurements undertaken and form the technical boundary between the present study and implementation.

Taken together, the findings show that cultural significance, physical condition, occupancy, and proposed use cannot be evaluated separately. Historic and aesthetic values explain what must remain legible; the condition assessment identifies where deterioration threatens that legibility; family occupancy defines an important continuing use and privacy requirement; and the adaptive reuse concept provides a controlled means of sustaining function. The simplified conservation management plan is therefore best understood as the organizing bridge among these four bodies of evidence.

CONCLUSION

The study documented a heritage house whose principal form, spatial organization, craftsmanship, historical associations, and continuing family use retain substantial conservation value. The visible-condition assessment identified moisture-related deterioration, roof and drainage defects, localized timber concerns, floor-wall separations, added supports, and a spalling reinforced-concrete terrace beam. Recalculation of the four-assessor matrix produced an overall weighted cultural-significance score of 3.80, with historic value receiving the highest mean (4.35), followed by aesthetic (4.15), scientific (3.90), social (3.30), and spiritual or symbolic value (3.13). These findings jointly establish the elements and meanings that the conservation strategy must protect.

The simplified conservation management plan answers the third objective by organizing protection, repair, adaptive use, and long-term management into a phased framework. Cultural, educational, workshop, limited café-service, and small-event functions are proposed as potentially compatible when private family zones, primary-significance elements, and the material integrity of the house remain protected. The study establishes this direction only at the conservation-planning level; implementation depends on subsequent technical, regulatory, operational, carrying-capacity, and financial studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ramos family and the proposed Heritage Conservation Management Team should first complete verified measured documentation and a room-by-room significance and condition inventory, including the basis of the original-fabric estimate and the floor-plan computation of occupied area. Immediate investigation should then focus on roof and drainage pathways, moisture, the spalling terrace beam, added supports, floor-wall separations, foundations, timber framing, and roof members. Baseline photographs and measurements should support periodic monitoring. These linked tasks consolidate the technical recommendations around the study's principal findings: evidence gaps, water entry, and localized structural concerns.

Immediate conservation work should prioritize water entry and safety-critical defects. Roof sheets, flashings, gutters, downspouts, soffits, drainage routes, exposed openings, and vegetation at roof and wall edges should be addressed under conservation supervision. Structural repairs should follow an engineer's investigation of material condition and



load capacity. Sound original hardwood, textured glass, doors, windows, transoms, ventanillas, tiles, ceilings, balustrades, brackets, ironwork, and tower elements should be repaired and retained wherever serviceable, using materials and methods compatible with the surviving fabric.

Before construction or public operation, the full conservation management plan should incorporate structural, fire and life-safety, electrical, accessibility, building-services, drainage, material, disaster-risk, visitor-capacity, code-compliance, cost, funding, and operating assessments. It should define significance zones, allowable interventions, approval responsibilities, conservation specifications, maintenance intervals, emergency procedures, documentation requirements, and the proportion of operating income reserved for conservation.

Adaptive reuse should begin through a controlled pilot program after technical clearances are completed. Guided visits, exhibitions, workshops, café service, and small events should operate at approved occupancy and scheduling limits. Monitoring should cover floor and structural response, temperature and humidity, noise, circulation, security, waste, family privacy, and maintenance demand. Intensive food preparation should remain in a detached or low-significance service area, while exhibitions and event facilities should use reversible and visually subordinate systems.

A Heritage Conservation Management Team should be formally constituted with defined decision authority. Membership should include family representatives, a conservation architect, structural and building-services professionals as needed, a historian or cultural worker, and appropriate government or heritage-agency partners. The team should maintain the conservation archive, approve interventions, regulate activities, coordinate emergencies, review monitoring data, and ensure that use remains subordinate to cultural significance.

Public interpretation should present the house through layered evidence: Don Mariano Ramos and Bacolod governance, the sugar economy and its social relations, domestic life and labor, architectural craft and climatic adaptation, wartime occupation, artistic and cultural associations, and continuing family stewardship. An oral-history program involving descendants, neighbors, former workers, cultural practitioners, and other knowledgeable persons should strengthen the social and symbolic record while respecting consent, attribution preferences, privacy, and access restrictions.

Future research should undertake structural and materials testing, geotechnical and moisture investigation, archival verification, oral-history analysis, community valuation, visitor carrying-capacity assessment, economic and operating feasibility, life-cycle and energy assessment, and post-occupancy evaluation if adaptive reuse proceeds. Bacolod City, the NHCP, the NCCA, academic institutions, professional organizations, and private owners should also develop coordinated technical assistance, incentives, emergency planning, documentation, and cultural programming for privately owned heritage properties.

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