Executive Summary

The 2012 Pingyao Ancient City conservation program has continued to focus on historical courtyard conservation with great success. The government has started restoration work on two courtyards on Fanjia Jie under the design directions of Tongji University. The residents have been relocated according to standard procedure during restoration, and inappropriate structures have been demolished. The major structural work has been completed including roof repair, repair and replacement of wooden structural members and exterior walls, and replacement of wooden openings.

With advocating from GHF, the Pingyao municipality issued the notice on “Incentive Methods for the Conservation of Historic Residential Buildings at the Ancient City of Pingyao” in March 2012. A total of 173 courtyard house owners applied for the Preservation Incentive Fund (PIF), out of which 54 households were deemed to satisfy the application criteria and were selected to participate in the program. These houses were surveyed by two certified appointed historical architecture design firms and which provided the final repair plan and budget. The proposed plans and budgets were reviewed and revised by an independent expert committee organized by the Pingyao Planning Bureau before commencement of site work in July 2012. To date, a total of 22 households out of the qualified 54 have begun repair work and are expected to complete repair and restoration by June 2013.

Along with the PIF, GHF is also supporting UNESCO Beijing to contract Shanghai Tongji University for production of a practical guide on repair and maintenance of historical courtyard residences in Pingyao (“Guidelines for Conservation of Historic Courtyard Buildings and Environment of Pingyao Ancient City”). This will service both the owners of the courtyard houses to repair and maintain their own home as well as staff of the planning bureau while reviewing, approving and advising the residents when they submit their applications for construction permits; the guidelines will be presented in two different volumes catering to each user group, and all applicants who receive PIF grants must abide by them. Tongji has completed the preliminary draft, and it was reviewed by an expert panel in Beijing in September 2012.

12 Mijia Xiang has continued to be used as the GHF field office and as a community center, while the rehabilitation of 27 Mijia Xiang has been completed and is up and running as Pingyao’s first self-sustaining non-profit facility. The courtyard house has provided lodging for fellow professionals who travel to Pingyao for research or professional interests. Free lodging is provided to students or researchers in need of financial assistance; otherwise, the fees charged are used to maintain the basic upkeep of the courtyards.
Above: Map of Pingyao Ancient City showing the areas where GHF is working on courtyard conservation.
Above: Map of Pingyao Ancient City showing the Core Zone and the Buffer Zone.
2012 Project Progress

Planning

As part of the planning and documentation process, comprehensive technical documentation and detailed conservation planning was conducted on the two historical courtyard houses in Fanjia Jie that underwent restoration and repair in 2012. However, the Fanjia Jie restoration project has reached a critical point of decision making from the municipality level on infrastructure building, especially on the design and installation of communal heating system. Professors from Shanghai Tongji University have already made a presentation on heating options and are currently waiting for the municipality to agree to make the investment on the appropriate option.

In addition, the first draft of the practical guide to repairing and maintaining historical courtyard residences in Pingyao was produced in collaboration with UNESCO Beijing and Tongji University. Upon completion, an expert panel meeting was held in Beijing in September 2012 to review the preliminary draft, and six top national experts provided further comments and suggestions for revision before the final set of guidelines is completed.
Conservation

Following the success of the pilot rehabilitation of the courtyard house at 12 Mijia Xiang, work began on a second house - at 27 Mijia Xiang - in September 2011. After witnessing GHF’s restoration effort at No.12 Mijia Xiang, the owner initiated contact with the local Urban Planning Bureau to request assistance from GHF. An agreement was reached, and the building was rehabilitated completely in 2012, including retrofitting and improved electrical wiring, heating and insulation.

Above: 27 Mijia Xiang during restoration work.
2012 also saw the beginning of restoration at two other historical courtyard houses in the Fanjia Jie area of Pingyao, including the removal of inappropriate built structures in a planned heritage park green space.

Finally, the Pingyao Municipality launched a Preservation Incentive Fund and identified 54 courtyard houses to receive funding for rehabilitation and restoration, following the model established by the GHF-funded work at 12 and 27 Mijia Xiang. This is the first time that the government is providing subsidies to private homeowners to help maintain their homes, of which many are in poor condition.

There are currently 22 courtyards under restoration (paused during the cold winter months but will resume in spring), most of which involved structural repair of exterior walls and roofs. To accompany the establishment of the grant, is a guideline to teach homeowners and technicians to repair and maintain historic courtyard residences, as produced by Tongji University; such that after repair is completed, the homeowners will know how to continue to maintain and improve their historic houses in the future.

This is a significant move for the conservation of Pingyao; even though the historic courtyard houses have always been an important component of its universal value, but due to ownership issues, private homeowners have never received any assistance in the past to maintain their historic homes. This will encourage and reward residents to take care of their historical properties and continue to live in the ancient city.
Community Development

GHF Pingyao Project community development initiatives continue to center around support of 12 Mijia Xiang as a community center. To complement this, the newly restored courtyard house at 27 Mijia Xiang is serving as a non-profit and self-sustaining facility for visiting professionals and students. For those in financial need, accommodation is provided free of charge, while those who can afford to pay see their contribution go toward maintaining and running the facility.

Above: The reading room in the community center at 12 Mijia Xiang.

Above: One of the guest rooms at 27 Mijia Xiang.
The historic city is a living heritage site and the residents that have continuously occupied the city throughout history are an integral part of the site significance. However, the current dilapidated conditions of the historic courtyard houses greatly compromised the habitation quality. The significance of the courtyard restorations and the Preservation Incentive Fund (PIF) does not manifest only on the conservation aspect, but is also a milestone for community development in Pingyao.

The above mentioned programs, including the design and issuance of the “Guidelines for Conservation of Historic Courtyard Buildings and Environment of Pingyao Ancient City” not only serve to protect the historic buildings but also to rehabilitate the courtyard houses such that modern living conditions can be satisfied. Homeowners will be advised on the appropriate ways to improve building performance and functions, providing special considerations for adaptive reuse of the historic structures. Communal spaces such as community center and green spaces are also being considered in the design of the program. This can be considered as a first public attempt to support and address resident concerns and needs regarding their historical homes and neighborhoods.
Partnerships

GHF is working with a number of partners to realize the successful preservation of Pingyao Ancient City including:

Pingyao County People’s Government

UNESCO Office Beijing

Shanxi Urban Planning Society
About Global Heritage Fund

GHF’s mission is to save the Earth’s most significant and endangered cultural heritage sites in developing countries and regions through scientific excellence and community involvement. Founded in 2002 by Dr. Ian Hodder of Stanford University Archaeology Center and Jeff Morgan, GHF is the only non-profit international conservancy working exclusively in developing countries, where there are many threatened heritage sites but few financial- and technical resources and little expertise to conserve them.

GHF goals include:
- Preserving structures and physical evidence of cultural heritage
- Advancing education about, and protection of, endangered heritage sites
- Advancing community involvement and benefits from preservation

Our work takes each selected heritage project through a process called *Preservation by Design*, encompassing master planning, scientific conservation, community involvement and partnerships to provide enduring protection, management and financial support. GHF currently has 12 projects in 10 countries, including China, India, Guatemala, Colombia, Peru and Turkey.

While the nature and depth of each of our projects differ, one theme runs throughout: that the monuments, art and architecture of our ancestors can, if respected, bring lasting cultural, social and economic benefits to civil society. GHF’s mission is to help people realize the value of these assets in places where the sites are all too often neglected - or worse. GHF invests in countries and regions that have few resources for cultural-asset preservation and development.

Holistic and effective preservation of cultural resources requires extreme care and planning to make preservation economically viable to local stakeholders. GHF goes beyond heritage conservation: We provide catalytic funding, site planning and technical training for local people to become capable stewards, giving them the opportunity to contribute more easily to their families and communities. GHF’s projects also have benefits that surpass their primary conservation and development objectives; our work holds particular significance because the monuments that we select are rich symbols of national identity and patrimony.

For more information on GHF’s mission and projects, see:

[www.globalheritagefund.org](http://www.globalheritagefund.org)

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