

Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns (COMUS)



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Establishment of Gyumri Heritage Centre

Preliminary Technical Assessment

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1. Introduction

1.1 Country or the area: Shirak Region, City of Gyumri

1.2 Organization that compiled the information:

Gyumri Municipality (Gyumri, 3105, Vardanants Square 1) "City Research Centre" NGO (Gyumri, 3105, Gayi Avenue., Apt. 12B)

1.3 Contacts: Hovhannes Sahakyan, Ashot Mirzoyan

1.4 E-mail: hovhannessahakyan85@gmail.com, ashotmirzoyan@gmail.com

1.5 Name of the building or the place and the address:

Gyumri Municipality

Shirak Region, Gyumri, 3105, Vardanants Square, 1

1.6 Building/monument/site type:

1. Gyumri Municipality building anchor floor (initial stage)
2. Any building that is a historic heritage (main stage)

1.7 Current use(s):

1. The anchor floor of the building is not being used
2. Cannot be currently described

2. Summary: the Site and Its Management

The "Establishment of Urban Heritage Centre" is a Project that directly contributes to enhancement of the social value of historical heritage of Gyumri. Due to this project numerous historic buildings in the city will be involved in the process of development of the urban economy (trade, tourism, creative industry, traditional crafts and other sectors).

As a joint initiative of the European Union and the Council of Europe, this Project is implemented through the coordination of the interests and goals of the local and national stakeholders (ministries, municipalities, NGOs, businesses, and individuals).

Due to this, the Project acquires implementation feasibility and the necessary level for sustainability.

The Project aims to create a structure which will be dealing with the collection and analysis of information about the ancient history and formation of the Gyumri settlement. It will deal with the creation of different social initiatives, narratives on the value and culture related to the city and new initiatives linked to tourism.

The Centre will help the residents living in historic buildings to participate and be involved in the events taking place in the zone of historic buildings and historic preserve, and will support to the consolidation and coordination of state and non-governmental players' intentions and actions acting in the field.

It is proposed to have a resource centre, rooms for public meetings, creative laboratory and tourism information centre within the premises of the Centre.

One of the favourable conditions for the establishment of the Centre is the willingness of Gyumri Municipality to support the project and make some investments for its establishment, including the proposal to provide 650 square meters area which is not being used by the Municipality.

Based on the fact that currently there is no structure with public ownership (both state and community owned) that could be adjusted for the establishment of the Heritage Centre, it is proposed to implement the process of the Centre establishment in two phases: the initial phase, which will be implemented in the building of the Municipality, and the main phase, which will be implemented in any of historic buildings selected for that purpose.

Such a structure can dramatically change the image, attractiveness, competitiveness of both the historic core of Gyumri and the whole settlement. .

This project that includes economic logic, a huge social component and added values, is of great interest for European and global institutions dealing with professional, humanitarian and development policies.

The direct cost of the Project is 124 billion 550 thousand AMD (235 thousand EUR), and it can be implemented within a period of two and a half years.

3. Administrative Information

3.1 Responsible Bodies:

The area is the property of Gyumri Municipality, RoA Shirak Region.

3.2 Map reference:

40.78515574 widths, 43.84261608 lengths

3.3 Type of the Monument:

Gyumri Municipality administrative building is not a monument.

3.4 Ownership:

The area is the property of Gyumri Municipality, RoA Shirak Region.

3.5 Statutory Protection/Constraints

Due to the fact that the structure is within "Kumayri" museum preserve borders, the architectural solutions of the change / adjustment shall be subject to agreement of Gyumri Mayor and state and territorial government and other interested structures as defined by the RA Urban development legislation.

4. Summary of Condition

4.1 Summary of Physical Condition

Building constructions are in a very good condition.

4.2 Condition Risk Assessment – graded A-H

A

4.3 Intervention priority, high / medium / low

H

5. Existing Information

The plan of the building and the implementation plan package are in the archive of Gyumri Municipality. The Municipality Department of Urban Planning and Architecture has the drawings of the architectural part in electronic format at its disposal.

6. Scope of the PTA

The PTA was prepared by A. Mirzoyan (local expert), studies on the spot lasted 2 days, and the report was compiled in 5 days.

7. The PTA

7.1 Background: Form, Function and Evolution

In 2015 the Municipality Cultural Department presented the idea of creating a museum of immovable heritage of Gyumri to Gyumri Mayor. Gyumri Mayor assigned the Department of Urban Planning and Architecture to explore and present grounds and prepare a project for the creation of an architectural history museum of the community.

During the same year, the specialists of the Department of Urban Planning and Architecture prepared a proposal, which in addition to museum exhibition (showing things) of the historical heritage, included several other functions, including meeting / conference rooms, thematic research and resource centre rooms, tourism information centre, production (design) studio, hospitality rooms and offices for "Kumayri" museum preserve.

A draft (concept) proposal was prepared for the mentioned project.

7.1.1 Summary of the "Urban Heritage Centre" Action Presented in the Reference Plan

Following details about the action of "Urban Heritage Centre" are included in the Reference Plan:

Description of the Problem

A lot of cultural and educational institutions and museums are busy with collecting and analysing information about the ancient history of Gyumri settlement, its development, construction and design. However, the results of the work of all these institutions are separate and there is no institution that would combine this diverse information, and make a synthesis of it as a complex knowledge of the past, present and future of Gyumri settlement.

Objective

- Create a multi-functional centre for analysing and planning of the urban developments which will enable to compile, coordinate and implement public development, architectural and engineering projects, helping the local self-government and regional government bodies to reach their objectives.
- Document, maintain, provide information and re-evaluate the city's history and architecture development process:

Results and Impact

- The urban development processes, including urban planning, architectural, transportation, historic heritage, housing, landscaping and environmental issues and projects will be dealt in a coordinated way, according to the principle of being mutually beneficial for the stakeholders.
- The city's reputation will be raised as an investment area. The city population will get an opportunity to participate in the selection and evaluation processes of the main directions of the city development.

Implementing and Cooperating Body

According to the Reference Plan, main implementer of the "Urban Heritage Centre" action is Gyumri Municipality. RoA Ministry of Culture, State Urban Development Committee affiliate to the RoA Government, the Armenian Union of Architectures and the National Museum-Institute of Architecture are mentioned as institutions supporting the project.

Selection of the Site

An unused area of about 1200 square meters on the anchor floor of Gyumri Municipality has been proposed for the implementation of the project.

Participation

Residents, civil society, local self-government bodies, active groups.

The Link between the Action and the Common Vision

"Urban Heritage Centre" action was viewed within the context of the Common Vision and the five main objectives, namely: Gyumri residents, viewing themselves as the heirs of unique and high-value urban culture, lifestyle and architecture highlight the need for conservation of the historic environment of the city, as a powerful incentive for the spiritual and economic progress of the city (common vision) and the disclosure of the identity of the city, by taking into consideration the presence of traditional crafts, humour, cultural structures (museums, music schools, etc.), the soviet past, post-earthquake situation and the closed border (Main objective N 4).

7.2 Significance

This chapter includes additional information about the "Urban Heritage Centre" action, as well as expert evaluations and comments that are presented with respective justifications.

7.2.1 Objective and Results

Analysing the main objective of the creation of the "Urban Heritage Centre" one could arrive at a thought that it largely corresponds to the goal and the five respective objectives of COMUS project. In this respect it is important to mention three of them:

- Promoting the importance of heritage
- Support to common approaches
- Introduction of public debate and ensuring the direct participation of citizens in the decision making process.

7.2.2 Justification of the Need for the Process of Promoting the Importance of the Historical Heritage of Gyumri.

Historical heritage occupies the most important place in the value-system of Gyumri residents. When describing their settlement or themselves, the Gyumri people refer to the architectural merits of their city, the character, lifestyle and traditions typical to Gyumri people with great pleasure. Armenians call Gyumri father's city, a city of crafts and art.

These thinking is not only built on the unique "Alexandropol" traditions of the formation of urban environment and lifestyle from 19 to the early 20th centuries, but also established during the Soviet period (functioned from 1980 to 1988) to the existence of "Kumayri museum-preserve". Aiming to maintain the historic value of residential and public buildings and making them serve to the spiritual and economic development of the city, the "Kumayri museum-preserve» was implementing research, development and restoration works, in fact performing the role of a body coordinating and managing the urban development, heritage conservation, housing, transport and other processes performed in the museum area.

Despite this fact, the current valuation of the population of Gyumri heritage remains a major problem, since the actions in this area are extremely limited and insufficient. That topic is not included in formal and non-formal youth education programs, it rarely becomes the subject of television and press coverage, valuable buildings and historical memories around them remain not reachable for the residents, and the scientific and popular publications related to the city are a few and sometimes contradictory.

As the majority of historical objects in Gyumri are in poor and extremely poor condition, they have become a symbol of inconvenience and outmodedness in the people's perceptions.

During the recent years, due to the unfounded demolition and deliberate transformation of several historic buildings, pessimistic views in relation to the preservation of the historic face of the city have deepened among the people.

Thus, on one hand an extremely emotional and non-balanced approach towards the evaluation of cultural heritage is shaped among people, while on the other hand, the need to preserve heritage might be totally suspected.

7.2.3 Support to Common Approach

In Gyumri, the following existing structures (bodies) directly relate to the sphere of heritage:

- Administrative bodies with supervisory and regulatory functions (local divisions of the state and territorial management bodies, Gyumri Municipality, separate “Kumayri museum-preserve” division of the municipality);
- Bodies with research functions- academic (Shirak Centre of Armenological Research), public (City Research Centre), educational (Gyumri State Pedagogical University), museum (Shirak Ethnography Museum, Urban Life-Style and Architecture museum) and others;
- Investment bodies – individuals and local organizations, Gyumri Municipality.

Among the bodies outside of Gyumri, one can mention the following:

- With supervisory and regulatory functions (including spatial planning and other sphere management), administrative (state, territorial government) bodies;
- Research functions- academic, public, educational, museum structures, including the RoA Academy of Sciences bodies, RoA National Archive, RoA National University of Construction and Architecture; National Museum-Institute of Architecture;
- Investment bodies – Armenian and foreign individuals and organizations, state bodies and institutions.

Examining the specifics of the operation of the listed bodies one can come to conclusion that majority of them lack participatory and integrated management approach and the application of partnership, including public-private partnership mechanisms.

Thus, it becomes difficult to ensure the connection between the activities of bodies that form the Gyumri heritage preservation, supervision and development, as well as public thinking and identity and the achieved results.

7.2.4 Introduction of Public Debate and Direct Participation of Residents in the Decision-Making Process

According to the Republic of Armenia acting legislation, public shall be informed about the urban planning projects and plans. Due to this law, residents can get information in advance about the changes expected in the city. Currently, the public awareness raising process is implemented in limited cases and mainly in relation to “large” constructions. Thus, it could be concluded that public awareness raising process is newly being formed in Gyumri and has not yet become a well-designed, regulated and constantly applied process.

On the other hand, limitation by the logic of just “notifying” the population does not ensure the real participatory role of public in urban management sphere.

7.2.5 Recommendations Relating to the Structure of the Centre

Summarizing the above thoughts, let us mention that the proposed “Urban Heritage Centre” action is completely grounded, if one views the creation of the centre as a means to settle the three main problems discussed.

In addition to the settlement of the discussed issues, the establishment of the centre can also contribute to the development of tourism in the city of Gyumri. In order to implement this function, five operational units shall be included in the centre, namely a resource centre, a meeting zone, a creative zone, information centre and book store.

1. Resource centre (180sqar meters of useful area). Here the works of processing, digitization, preservation and dissemination of print, photographic, mobile and digital information created in different times are done. Due to it, it will be possible to accumulate large-scale informative, artistic and scientific material and provide it to the interested subjects. It can be implemented on the anchor floor of the Municipality.
2. Meeting zone (320 square meters of useful area). It serves for group meetings and discussions. It is a specially adjusted studio, where public meetings can be held. The area is accommodated for television and radio transmission. In addition an exhibition hall can also be situated here, that will tell about the old and modern art, crafts, education and entrepreneurship (creative, service, hosting, catering, etc.) structures. In the above mentioned exhibition hall sales of the displayed material or the provided service can be organized. For example, 19th century jewellery designs of Gyumri (Alexandropol) can be

exhibited here, together with the three-dimensional modelling techniques for jewellery design, developed by the Gyumri Techno Park. Or, there may be displayed pottery samples of the same historical period with sale of items made in Gyumri modern ceramics schools. It can also be provided to other users for the organization of conferences. It is recommended to implement in a different structure.

3. Creative zone (120 square meters of useful area). It serves for the creation of materials with new and creative interpretation of the urban heritage (textile, graphics, video and multimedia). It can partially be implemented on the anchor floor of the municipality.
4. Information unit (120 square meters of useful area). Here the information collected, processed and created by the centre may be accumulation which will be provided to foreign and local tourists, business or private visitors and city residents in the form of a service. It can be implemented on the anchor floor of the municipality.
5. Book Store (120 square meters of useful area). This is an area to display, use and sale thematic publications (books, booklets, maps). It is recommended to implement it in a different structure.

7.2.6 Cooperation

The objectives of creating the centre may be viewed both as a process of spiritual enrichment of urban life and heritage management, and as a profit-creation (economic). Its creation may succeed if effective cooperation links (bodies) are created. It is necessary to shape as clearly as possible the concept of combined objectives of the stakeholders and the different mechanisms of involving new stakeholders in this project.

As it becomes a link between the public bodies dealing with the issues of the city of Gyumri, private (business or benevolent foundations) and scientific and educational bodies and the residents, including those who live, act and create in the Kumayri preserve zone, there is a great importance to shape common understanding about the need for its creation.

7.3 Vulnerability/Risk assessment

The implementation risks of this project can be considered in different stages of project implementation.

It is possible that during the idea development stage, there is no sufficient success in terms of raising initial interest among the stakeholders and combining their interests, creation of management, including administrative, economic and financial mechanisms, accumulation of sufficient material resources needed for the start.

There might be a lack of mechanisms to facilitate the problems and circumstances that might emerge in the project implementation phase between the participating parties - abuse of decision making right, poor management of construction, material and human resource accumulation and other problems.

During the operation phase there might emerge a cost deficit for direct targeted costs needed for the operation of the site, or disagreements between the stakeholders concerning the project implementation process and results, or other problems.

7.4, 7.5 Technical Condition and Outline Summary of Required Repairs

"Urban Heritage Centre" project plans to locate the centre on the anchor floor of Gyumri Municipality. This building was constructed in 2008-2011 due to the investments made by the RoA Government and the community. Currently, all the three floors of the building are exploited. 2 technical and 4 archive rooms of the municipality are located in one part of the basement floor. 1500 square meters out of 1700 square meter area is not used. Majority of the rooms on the floor have windows that ensure sufficient lighting. The building has entrances from three sides.

For the targeted use of the area, internal walls should be installed, rooms should be decorated and engineering systems should be mounted. In order to see the main entrance, also some small scale external works are needed.

The net height of the area is 240 sm. In a building with such parameters, only those functions may be performed, for which it would be possible to ensure the respective climate and sanitary conditions (first of all ventilation and lighting).

It is recommended to implement a part of the centre functions in a different building, the dimensional and geometric features of which would allow including additional functions. In order to preserve the format of COMUS project, it is much desirable that the selected building be a historic monument.

Thus, the process of creating a heritage centre can be implemented in two phases: initial, which will be carried out in the municipality building, and main, which will be carried out in a historic building selected for that purpose.

If we consider, that in this case additional possibilities to make corrections and adjustments are provided, tension of the necessary financial flows is lowered, harmony and interconnected process of developing structural (institutional) and physical elements is ensured, then the two-phase process of the centre creation is justified and is viewed as an advantage.

7.6 Opportunities for Social Applications and Sustainable Development

The Project contains large social criteria. It involves the construction of an unprecedented collaboration between the public and private sectors. Creation of the centre will contribute to the combination of interests and missions of different participants (sides) and implementation of mutually beneficial actions. Several units of the centre (creative zone, information centre and the book store) work according to profit initiation principle and are able to cover the costs of the centre.

7.7 Finances

The useful area needed for the centre is 480, and the common area is 650 square meters. The average cost of 1 square meter construction work on similar objects (structures) is 159 thousand AMD (300 EUR). For the initial furnishing of the Centre, 10 million 600 thousand AMD (20 thousand EUR) are needed. The research and planning works will be 5 million 300 thousand AMD (10 thousand EUR). Organizational work, including information support, public relations and organizational costs will be 5 million 300 thousand AMD (10 thousand EUR). Thus, the amount needed for the establishment of the structure is 124 million 550 thousand AMD (235 thousand EUR).

7.8 Management

The Centre shall have a participatory management principle. It shall have a mission, structure, management and report system as agreed by the founders. Responsibilities and functions shall be distributed according to the investment (size of financial investment and volume of implemented work) profile. In order to reach success, it is strictly necessary to create a structure that would ensure transparency and have a good reputation.

8. Documentation

PTA includes the plan of the current situation with explanations and photos.

The analysis of the purpose, results and other components of the "Urban Heritage Centre" project revealed that the implementation of this project can have a great influence for the preservation and development of historic and cultural heritage of the city of Gyumri.

The results of this kind of project can become tangible not only during the process of its implementation or immediately after the first steps of its creation, but also in a long-term perspective. This kind of structure can drastically change the image, attractiveness and competitiveness of both the historic core and the whole settlement.

Given the ratio of financial investment and the expected results, it can be certainly considered as a highly feasible initiative.

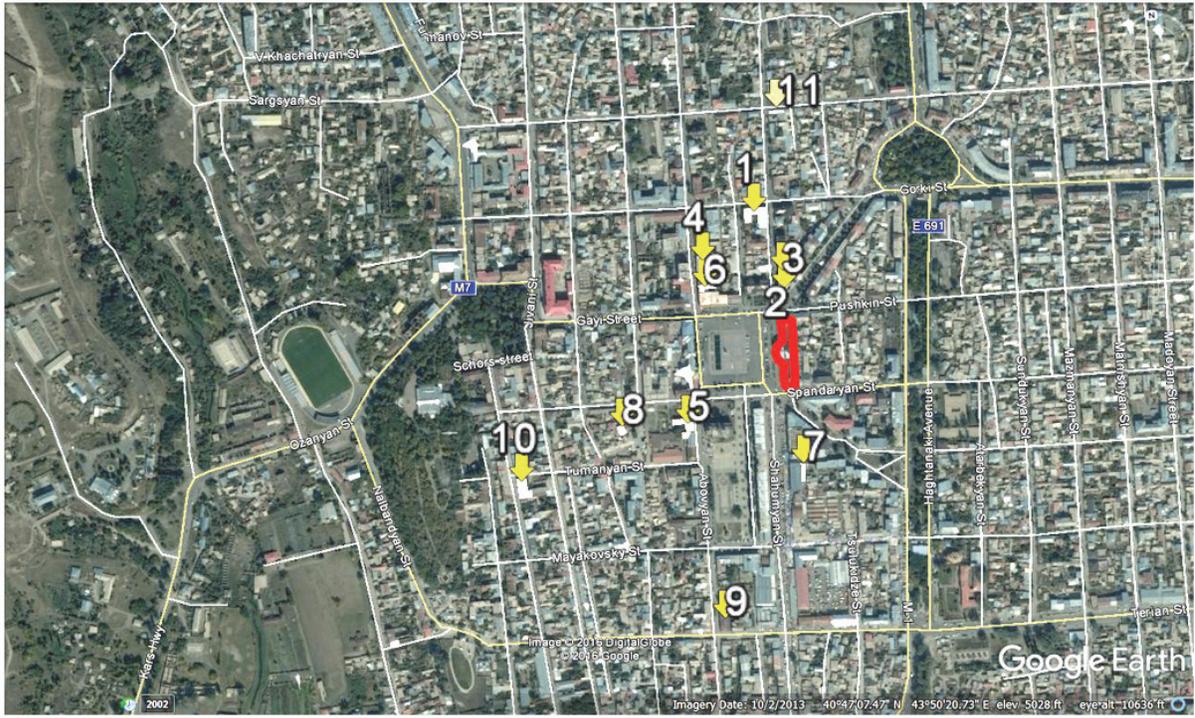
We propose to review some of the ideas and thoughts formulated in the reference plan, and to pay special attention to some of them. Including, formulating the mission of the structure should avoid the replication of functions of some existing governmental and non-governmental organizations. (Some functions listed in the RP are replication of the functions of acting structures, and some imply functions that exceed the local nature of the activity of the Centre).

Like the mission, the name also (in the RP it is mentioned as Architecture Museum-Institute) shall have a clear coherence and be linked with the mission and the site as much as possible. For example, it can be Gyumri "Urban Heritage Centre".

The site (territory) is selected quite correctly. It is situated in the municipality domain and gets respective reputation, just due to that fact already, (and if successful the good reputation of the structure can contribute to the increase of the reputation of the municipality as a community centre). The Centre is located in the medium part of Kumayri preserve (which is also the nucleus of the city centre), in the central square.

In the initial phase, part of the expected costs can be covered by the subsidies provided by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development, Ministry of Culture, State Committee for Urban Planning and the municipality, and further it can achieve full self-financing.

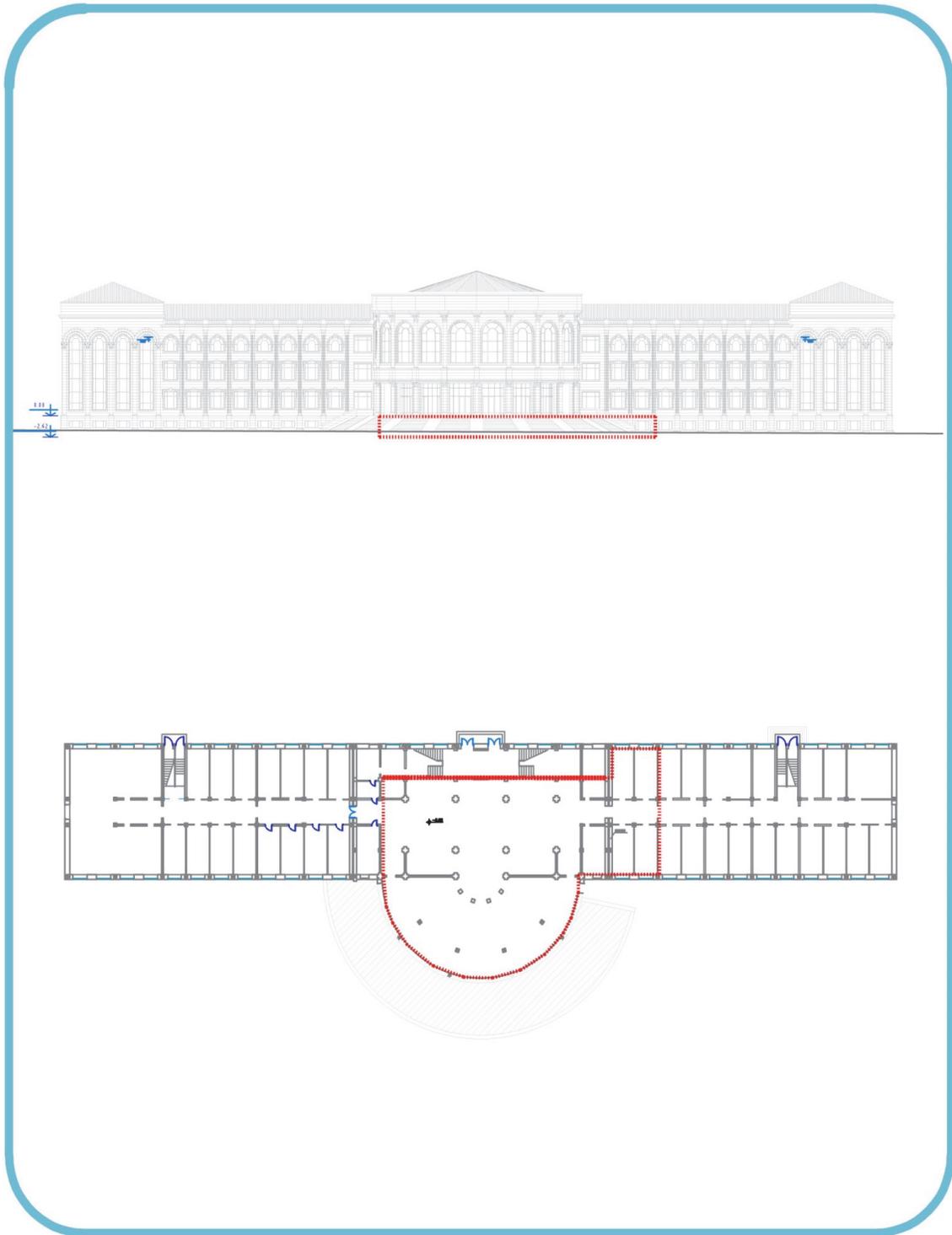
During the establishment of the structure it will be very important to ensure close cooperation with private foundations, international, professional, humanitarian and development agencies and other countries.



Picture 1. Location of the Proposed Objects (facilities)

No	Address	Used name	State indic. Of the mon.	Initial use	Current Use	Owner
1	Gorki 30	Gyumri restaurant	4.946	restaurant, residential	Not used	private, Gyumri community
2	Rizhkov 6	Lodka building	4.801	residential, public	Shirak Diocese, residential, public	Holy See Etchmiadzin, private
3	Varpetats 119 (also Shahumyan 119)	The house filmed in the movie "A Piece of Sky" movie "	4.3	residential	Major part is not used	private
4	Abovyan 135	Art Worker's House and Civil Acts Registration Office	4.468	Folk home, pharmacy, Civil Acts Registration Office and Art Worker's House	Only the section of Pharmacy is used	private
5	Abovyan 252, 254	Tigranov's house	4.357	residential	residential	St Etchmiadzin, Gyumri community, private
6	Abovyan 139	Russian Bookstore	4.42	public, residential	residential part is used	private
7	Neighbouring Shahumyan 131		N/A	residential	The building is destructed and not used	unspecified
8	Hakobyan 115	Armenian Catholic Church (Frank's Church)	4.868	A church, later - residential	residential	unspecified
9	Teryan 83 (Abovyan 163)	House of Mkrtych of Kyal (Stupid) Davit's family	4.331	residential	Temporarily not used	private
10	Achemyan 15	Yuzbashovs' houses	4.426	residential	Used	private, Gyumri community
11	Rustaveli 34	Residential house	4.287	residential house	Partially resided	private

Picture 2. A list of proposed buildings in the Centre



Picture 3. The area proposed by the Gyumri Municipality



Picture 4. The area viewed from Vardanants Square



Picture 5. Entrance of the area from Vardanants Square



Picture 6. Entry to the area from the Municipality building



Picture 7. Inner space of the area



Picture 8. Inner space of the area