



# The Ahmedshah Gujri Association

## ઘી અહેમદશાહ ગુજરી એસોસીએશન

( ગુજરી બજાર )

ગુજરી બજાર, વિક્ટોરીયા ગાર્ડન પાસે, મહાલક્ષ્મી મંદિર પાછળ, અમદાવાદ-૩૮૦૦૦૧.

પ્રમુખ : નફીસ એહમદ મો. ઇસ્હાકબાઈ ઘીયા  
૩૪/૨, બાસીવાલા બ્લોક, સ્યુ. ક્વાર્ટસ, તાજપુર,  
જમાલપુર, અમદાવાદ-૩૮૦૦૦૧.  
મો : ૯૮૨૪૦૮૨૧૬૨

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29<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Dear Mr. Manel Ripoll i Estera,

### Seeking Partnership for Community Heritage Conservation, Historic Market

It is a pleasure indeed to write to you about Ahmedabad's Historic Market, and hope this letter finds you in the best of health and spirit.


Gujri Bazaar or the Ahmedabad Sunday Market, is a 596 years old market (started 1414) that continues to this day, run by the community organization of traders that comprises both hindus and muslims, with 40% of its 1200 members being non-dependent women. In addition, the market has provided ad-hoc stalls for another one thousand traders each Sunday. The market is crucial in providing livelihoods to hundreds of thousands of Ahmedabad's residents and non-residents through complex chains of craftspeople, home-workers, mechanics, small traders, technicians, book-sellers providing a range of items such as all kinds of newly made or refurbished household goods, auto and mechanic supplies, rare coins and antiquarian books, new and used electronic items, cameras, clothes, bicycles, pushcarts, crockery and cutlery (some from the colonial period), paintings, furniture (new as well as period furniture), office supplies, school supplies etc at prices that are affordable, and this makes the market a huge draw from within the city and state, as well as from the region . It is the backbone of Ahmedabad's informal sector which comprises 75% of all of Ahmedabad's working population. The rich cultural, economic and social networks facilitated throughout history by the market have been documented in a 600 page unpublished handwritten manuscript, written by the association's office bearers over generations, and well preserved as a live-historical document that can continue to be augmented with time. It is situated at the Old City wall, at the Sabarmati Riverbank in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. However, the space for this market had been already reduced by construction activities of the Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project of the municipal government, and will be entirely evacuated soon, with no clear plans of rehabilitation or conservation. The condition of the market is declining due to the shrinkage of space available due to this major urban development project.

We, the representatives of the market traders and custodians of the market's heritage and its place in the contemporary transformation in Ahmedabad have embarked upon our own efforts to protect the market while investing significantly in its upgradation and modernization. We are receiving widespread support from the citizens of Ahmedabad and around, who are our primary customer base as well as those who consider the Gujri

Market a key signifier of the identity of the city. In particular, academic institutes of international repute – the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad along with the prestigious Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad have collaborated with us to research, document and facilitate our efforts. Additionally the key Planning school in Ahmedabad, CEPT University has also collaborated with them in petitioning UNESCO to aid in conservation efforts. At the NID, Ms. Sanaa Degani, a designer has conducted a community design and planning process for the upgradation of the market guided by experts and faculty members at NID – Dr. Jignesh Khakhar, Mr Vineet Diwadkar and Ms Tanishka Kachru, and assisted by other specialists. This process has been entirely based at the market and it is our effort for our own improvement and to stake our claim in our city's future, from which we are being removed, according to all the official proceedings of the urban renewal project known as the Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project. This project has already made many communities living on the riverbank destitute.

Through our friend and representative, Professor Navdeep Mathur of the Public Systems Group at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, we would like to establish lines of communication with market traders associations in Barcelona who have supported and made efforts to conserve and modernize their famous historic markets, and contribute to the development of the livelihoods of their residents. We would like to partner with the *Associacio de Comerciants de la Boqueria* in strategic ways – to learn, understand, and share processes of conservation, support and modernization in ways that contribute to our preserving our market and to our own municipal government valuing us and the contribution of the urban poor of Ahmedabad to the city's wealth. We would also like to have a strategic partnership with you and Barcelona's markets institute to create a link between our 2 cities' historic markets which would then jointly work with UNESCO to facilitate the conservation of the tangible and intangible heritage of the Gujri Bazaar and embed its place in the future of the city. We will plan to make proposals both to the UNESCO and the European Union to seek funding to support this collaboration. We hope through such a proposal we could support your visit to us in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India and take this preliminary communication towards a long lasting relationship forward.

With regards and looking forward to communicating with you in the future.

  
President A.G.A. Gujari Bazar

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