

# Adaptive Reuse of Old Houses as Restaurants in Quezon City, Philippines



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趣のある古民家や建造物を修理・改修し、別な目的に転用するadaptive reuseの可能性と課題を、ケソン市(フィリピン)の一画にある古民家をレストランに改装した複数の事例研究を通じて検証する。

## Abstract

Old houses are vital city structures due to their historical and cultural value. However, many have been abandoned because of structural issues and their inability to meet current needs. Adaptive reuse is a sustainable approach to revitalize old houses by giving them new functions. The vulnerable state of old houses in Quezon City makes it crucial to study those that now serve new purposes. This study examined old houses around Tomas Morato Avenue, Quezon City that have been repurposed into restaurants, and aimed to find out the significance of adaptive reuse of old houses into commercial spaces in terms of sustainability, use or functionality, and architectural and cultural design. Through interviews and field visits, the findings highlight that introducing commercial uses to old houses is vital for their maintenance and preservation. Turning them into family restaurants is compatible with their original function, and transforming them into public cultural spaces allows others to experience an authentic Filipino home. Additionally, their traditional design stands out against the contemporary architecture of modern restaurants. Ultimately, the adaptive reuse of old houses as restaurants contributes to sustainable growth in the city by turning underutilized heritage resources into functional economic and cultural spaces.

**Keywords** adaptive reuse, old house, heritage, sustainability, SDG 11

## Introduction

### *Background and Rationale*

Old houses are vital structures because of the historical and cultural value of their unique architectural and cultural structure and design.<sup>1</sup> However, more and more old houses have become dilapidated and abandoned due to structural issues, the generally poor condition of the house, the inability of old facilities to meet current needs, and the appeal of modern or contemporary architecture and design, particularly in the urban areas.<sup>2</sup> Architects and cultural heritage design experts have emphasized the importance of adaptive reuse to sustainably conserve the cultural value of old houses, save them from dilapidation and abandonment, and revitalize them by giving them new uses or functions.

Today, the adaptive reuse of old houses into restaurants or other commercial establishments is widely practiced in the Philippines and other Asian countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, preserving the rich and unique architectural heritage of these old structures and promoting the sustainable use of otherwise underutilized heritage resources.<sup>1,3</sup> The restoration of old houses improves the economic value of these old structures and strengthens the local economy by boosting tourism through heritage and generating jobs for the residents. Further, the preservation of the architectural uniqueness of old houses through adaptive reuse retains their cultural value, which, in turn, shapes the sense of place, identity, and belonging of the local community.<sup>4</sup> The adaptive reuse of old houses into restaurants or

other commercial spaces also allows new users to experience both local tangible heritage through the original architecture or design and intangible heritage through the food.<sup>5</sup>

Adaptive reuse revitalizes old houses by giving them new uses or functions and making them practical under current or contemporary sociocultural and economic needs, requirements, and conditions.<sup>1,2</sup> Hence, the new use or function assigned to old houses should assimilate into the local context to remain relevant in modern society while also maintaining compatibility with its old use or function to maintain cultural sustainability. This can be achieved by using appropriate designs and treatments to preserve the architectural design while being functional for everyday, modern use.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

The vulnerable state of old houses in Quezon City, where development is rampant and old structures are endangered by abandonment, demolition, and construction, makes it crucial to study old houses that now serve new purposes or functions that meet contemporary needs and lifestyles.

This study looked into old houses around the Tomas Morato Avenue-Scout Area in Quezon City that have been repurposed into restaurants to adapt to the conversion of the community from a residential zone to a commercialized district sprawling with business establishments and high-rise real estate. Through interviews and field visits, the study aimed to find out the significance of adaptive reuse of old houses into commercial spaces in terms of sustainability, use or functionality, and architectural and cultural design. Ultimately, the study aimed to show the significance of the adaptive reuse of old houses to the sustainable growth and development of cities.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### ***Current State of Cultural Heritage***

The United Nations (UN) highlights the importance of heritage in achieving sustainable development in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 or Sustainable Cities and Communities. The 1998 Stockholm

Conference on Cultural Policies for Development recognized the dynamic role of heritage in “building vibrant and creative economies.”<sup>6</sup> In the New Urban Agenda, heritage is championed for its significant contribution to inclusive, resilient, and sustainable growth in the cities.<sup>6,7</sup> For instance, the rehabilitation of old buildings in Halland, Sweden, showed the capability of heritage in sustaining regional growth and sustainable development.<sup>6</sup> The critical role of heritage within the sustainable development agenda catalyzed concerted global efforts towards preserving our cultural legacy.

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 10066, known as the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009 (the “Act”), was enacted to strengthen Filipino identity by preserving the nation’s cultural heritage.<sup>8,9</sup> The provisions of the Act are implemented at the local government level, with technical assistance from national government agencies such as the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, and the National Museum. Specifically, Local Government Units (LGUs) are mandated to inventory, evaluate, and document all cultural properties within their jurisdiction, including tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage. The Act also stipulates that private owners of critical cultural properties must register their properties with the Philippine Registry of Cultural Property, a cultural databank managed by the NCCA. In particular, owners of old houses, typically over fifty years old, are entitled to government funding and protection priority, incentives for private support, and an official heritage marker. The registration of cultural properties, including old houses, is crucial because it evokes “group consciousness” and fosters “community identity.”<sup>9</sup>

However, the direction of society today towards rapid development, particularly in the urban areas, marked by residential, industrial, and commercial expansion and developments, has led to challenges in heritage protection and preservation.<sup>10</sup> City developers and planners often consider culture and heritage as barriers to development and progress.<sup>8,10</sup> As such, heritage is generally considered the least essential resource within the development discourse unless developers can profit from it.

Compounding this, the physical composition of heritage structures is vulnerable to decay and deterioration due to the impacts of climate change.<sup>8</sup> Lifestyle changes have also altered the traditional structure and function of heritage structures, making preserving their traditional features and functionality more challenging.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from city developers and planners prioritizing development projects over heritage, heritage is not a priority in government projects.<sup>8,11</sup> For instance, in the Philippines, heritage structures are demolished to build housing that will accommodate the growing population and infrastructures that target to improve the lives of Filipinos. This is complicated by the unwillingness of government officials to initiate long-term heritage projects beyond their term in office.<sup>8</sup> For these reasons, funds and manpower allocated towards heritage protection and preservation by the government are often insufficient.<sup>8</sup> Hence, despite the passage of the Act and related laws, policies, and ordinances, they are barely implemented. Consequently, heritage structures are in danger of being lost.

The efforts of the government to protect and preserve heritage are uneven and biased, particularly when comparing the management and preservation of heritage in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, to the rest of the country. Manila has one of the most well-preserved and restored heritage sites and structures, including Fort Santiago, the Manila Cathedral, the San Agustin Church, and many others, despite the City suffering from shelling in World War II.<sup>8</sup> Although Manila has preserved and restored many of its heritage sites and structures, the reality is vastly different in the outskirts of Manila, in regions outside of Metro Manila, and in the provinces where tourism lags.<sup>8</sup>

However, even though Manila, particularly Intramuros and its surrounding areas, is a bastion of heritage preservation, its sites and structures are still vulnerable to abandonment and demolition to make way for development projects.<sup>8,10</sup> For example, in 2000, then-Mayor Lito Atienza ordered the demolition of the Manila Jai Alai Building, a heritage structure, with plans to build the Manila Hall of Justice.<sup>8</sup> However, the project was built at a different location. Likewise, heritage structures in

Calle de la Escolta or Escolta Street in Manila were demolished to construct modern buildings and architecture.<sup>10,8</sup> In particular, the El Hogar Filipino Building in Escolta Street was sold to real estate developers to construct a high-rise condominium.

### ***Heritage and Identity***

Heritage, mainly built heritage, is a mirror to the past and a marker of collective memory, identity, and nostalgia.<sup>12,13</sup> This is because built heritage embodies historical and cultural values that connect the past with the future and form the primary identity of cities.<sup>13</sup> Built heritage has demonstrated its capability to contribute to the sociocultural growth and development of cities through the strengthening of cultural assets and facilitating the formation of a shared sense of identity, place, and belonging.<sup>13,14,15</sup>

Cruz wrote in his paper on culture-oriented economic development that development, more often than not, entails the destruction of not only the physical structure of heritage sites and structures but also, as a consequence of this, of historical, cultural, and social values and norms, as well as collective memories, identities, and nostalgia.<sup>10</sup> Hence, there is a pressing need to protect built heritages worldwide to uphold and sustain our history, culture, and collective memory and identity.<sup>12</sup>

Architects and cultural heritage experts advocate for the adaptive reuse of built heritage to protect them and maintain their historical, cultural, and social significance and identity. Adaptive reuse is a sustainable approach to preserving and restoring built heritage, especially heritage structures that have become abandoned and lost their original function over the years, to accommodate new purposes and functions.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Adaptive Reuse***

Adaptation comes from the Latin words *ad* or to and *aptare* or fit, which, when put together, means “to fit.”<sup>9,15</sup> The term adaptive reuse, however, is a relatively new concept, typically denoting a change in use, functionality, or purpose.<sup>16</sup> Adaptive reuse is performed on old structures that have lost their original function or outlived

their original use or purpose due to abandonment and deterioration.<sup>11</sup> It retains the original facade and structure of old structures while accommodating new and future uses and circumstances and meeting the needs and requirements of new and future users.<sup>3,11,14,15,16,17,18</sup> The new use or function assigned to these old structures often differs from yet compatible with their original design intent.<sup>11,15,16,18</sup> This strategy not only improves the condition of the old building to be capable and functional under new circumstances but also extends its lifespan through appropriate designs and treatment.<sup>14</sup>

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Burra Charter 2013 defines adaptive reuse as a heritage preservation strategy that sustains the historical, cultural, and social significance of heritage structures while improving their functionality for present and future purposes.<sup>16</sup> The Burra Charter outlines five essential design principles for the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings to ensure their sustainability and usability, including considerations for functionality, durability, adaptability to the present context or environment, aesthetic appeal, and sustainability.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape underscores the significance of adaptive reuse within urban spaces, which involves conserving heritage structures by adapting them to function effectively within the ever-changing and evolving historic urban environment.<sup>16</sup> In the local context, Article 2, Section 3a of the Act defines adaptive reuse as converting heritage buildings or other structures for new use or purpose.

### ***Adaptive Reuse of Heritage***

The adaptive reuse of heritage structures enriches the historical, cultural, and social lives of cities by serving as mirrors to the past through retaining their original facade and structure.<sup>12,13,19</sup> The adaptive reuse of heritage structures that were previously abandoned enhances the attractiveness and visual appeal of cities, making them viable tourist destinations.<sup>3,10,11,13</sup>

Determining the new function or purpose of heritage structures is a deliberate and thoughtful process, with

one of the key considerations being to ensure their economic viability for the community and to improve their quality of life. This often entails repurposing heritage structures into commercial establishments like restaurants and cafes to sustain the maintenance and preservation of the old structure.<sup>13,14,15,17,18,20</sup> However, although adaptive reuse should lead to significant economic growth in communities, adaptive reuse, above anything else, is a way to preserve the historical and cultural value and identity of built heritages while also breathing new life into them to adapt to the current conditions and contemporary needs and lifestyle.<sup>3,11,12,13,17,19</sup> In other words, adaptive reuse should enrich both cultural values and the community's welfare.<sup>11,12,13,20</sup>

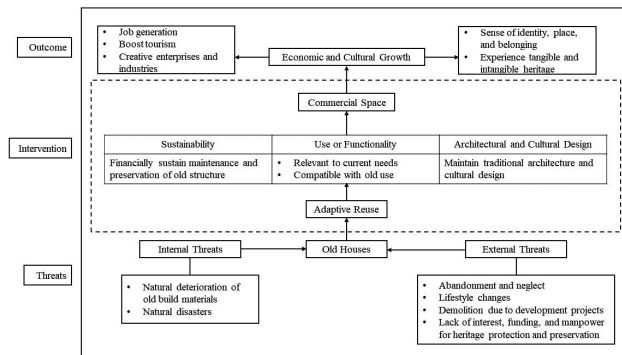
The adaptive reuse of built heritage is quite complex due to its cultural value, the stakeholders involved, and their sometimes-conflicting desires and motivations.<sup>16</sup>

This complexity is compounded by the concept of authenticity in heritage. In tourism, repurposed heritage structures often display “staged authenticity” because they are developed solely for consumption and appeal to foreign users instead of local use and benefits.<sup>19</sup> However, Cohen (as cited by Man 2023) suggests that, perhaps, the adaptive reuse of built heritage displays emergent—rather than staged—authenticity because the concept of authenticity can change over time and place due to changes in perceptions, culture, and values.<sup>19</sup> Regardless, the adaptive reuse of built heritage must always consider the local community, mainly how they form a sense of place, identity, and belonging through heritage structures.

Built heritage shapes the cultural and personal identities of local communities by connecting them to the past and collective memory and identity.<sup>17</sup> Ignoring local perspectives when introducing new uses and functions to heritage sites and structures may lead to the loss of local heritage and local identity.<sup>19</sup> Hence, the adaptive reuse of any built heritage must balance economic benefits and development with heritage preservation.<sup>19</sup> This entails preserving the original facade and structure of the heritage structure while also maintaining its functionality for present use and the economic sustainability of local users.<sup>13,18,19</sup>

According to the UNESCO Recommendations on the Historic Urban Landscape, adaptive reuse initiatives are consistent with the sustainable development agenda, particularly in stimulating city growth through maximizing underutilized heritage resources into functional economic and cultural spaces.<sup>7,13,14,19</sup> Adaptive reuse facilitates social solidarity and cohesion through local community-led adaptive reuse projects. It enhances economic sustainability through job creation and sustainable development, growth, and regeneration of urban spaces, creative enterprises, and industries.<sup>13,17</sup>

### Conceptual Framework



**Fig. 1. Threats, Interventions, and Outcomes of the Adaptive Reuse of Old Houses as Restaurants**

Source: Author's Construct

The conceptual framework (see Fig. 1) outlines the threats to old houses and presents adaptive reuse as an intervention to protect and preserve them, with the outcome of transforming old houses into commercial spaces that fosters economic and cultural growth in cities.

At the first level, threats to old houses are identified and categorized as internal and external. Internal threats are threats such as the natural deterioration of old building materials over time and natural disasters like earthquakes and floods. External threats are human-induced and include abandonment and neglect of old structures, lifestyle changes that cause old facilities to become obsolete, demolition due to development projects, and the lack of interest, funding, and manpower necessary for protection and preservation.

The second level tackles adaptive reuse as an intervention to protect and preserve old structures. This involves repurposing old structures into commercial spaces, ensuring their financial viability for ongoing maintenance and preservation. Adaptive reuse also ensures that old structures meet current needs while remaining compatible with their original purposes and maintaining the traditional architectural and cultural design of the old structure.

The third level considers the outcomes of adaptively reusing old houses into commercial spaces to promote economic and cultural growth. Economic outcomes include job creation, increased tourism, and the development of creative enterprises and industries. Cultural outcomes involve fostering a sense of identity, place, and community belonging, and allows for the authentic experience of both tangible and intangible forms of heritage.

### Methodology

This study used the case study design to document the different old houses-turned-restaurants around the Tomas Morato Avenue-Scout Area. The case study design was used because this approach involves the in-depth exploration of a phenomenon in its everyday context or setting.<sup>21,22</sup>

The researcher looked into the phenomenon of old houses adaptively reused into restaurants. In particular, this study employed the instrumental case study design because this approach looks into specific cases to gain a broader understanding or perspective of the phenomenon being studied.<sup>21,22</sup> In this case, the researcher looked into old houses-turned-restaurants around the Tomas Morato Avenue-Scout Area to gain a broader understanding or perspective of the adaptive reuse of old houses as commercial spaces, which is widespread in this area. This study also employed the descriptive case study design to extensively describe different cases of old houses-turned-restaurants in the area.<sup>21,22</sup> The case study design follows the study of Stake, which involves five stages: defining the case, selecting the case, collecting and analyzing the data, interpreting data, and reporting the findings.<sup>23</sup>

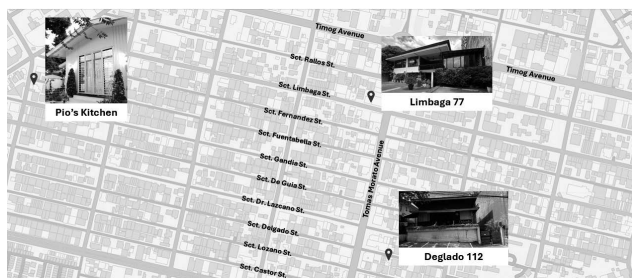
The data collection involved two qualitative methods: key informant interviews with restaurant owners and a cultural heritage expert specializing in Philippine architecture and field visits to the old houses. The researcher experienced difficulties in identifying old houses-turned-restaurants around the Tomas Morato Avenue-Scout Area due to the Quezon City LGU's lack of inventory of old houses. Nonetheless, the researcher identified ten restaurants in the area that were previously old houses through newspaper articles online and Google Maps. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, the study is limited to houses that were built postwar (i.e., 1950-1960s). The old houses-turned-restaurants around the area selected as case study sites are Delgado 112, Limbaga 77, and Pio's Kitchen.

After completing the list of old houses-turned-restaurants, the researcher contacted the owners of the restaurants via mobile number or email. Two restaurant owners were interviewed online, while one was interviewed face-to-face. The interview with the cultural heritage expert was conducted face-to-face. After the interviews, the researcher visited the old houses to document their important architectural and cultural features or designs.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the interview transcripts, narratives, and field visit notes were organized and coded into themes before they were analyzed. The data gathered from the interviews and field visits were used to create case studies about the old houses-turned-restaurants in the area and to find out the significance of adaptive reuse of old houses into commercial spaces in terms of sustainability, use or functionality, and architectural and cultural design.

## Description and Discussion of Findings

### *Description of Case Study Site*



**Fig. 2. Map of Old Houses in Tomas Morato Avenue**

Tomas Morato Avenue (see Fig. 2), formerly known as Sampaloc Avenue, is a 1.6-kilometer-long avenue in Quezon City. The avenue is known for its rows of restaurants and as a hub for entertainment, which shapes its unique culture and identity as the City's "Restaurant Row" and "Entertainment Hub."<sup>24</sup> Although Tomas Morato Avenue's reputation as a "Restaurant Row" did not begin until the 1980s, its humble beginnings can be traced back to 1946 when Maximo Gimenez opened a family restaurant in the area, today known as Max's Restaurant, to cater to the American soldiers based in Quezon City, and to the City government offices that were moved to the area. The success of Max's Restaurant in a purely residential area put forward the prospect of opening more restaurants in the area and the sprawl of other kinds of businesses such as clubs, comedy bars, spas, hotels and inns, banks, and the like, which established Tomas Morato Avenue as an "Entertainment Hub."

However, before the influx of businesses and offices around and along Tomas Morato Avenue, the avenue was primarily a residential community with houses dating back to the 1940s—some refurbished. In contrast, others were demolished to give way to new structures, such as multi-storey apartments and high-rise buildings that now dominate the area.<sup>24</sup> The rapid development along and around Tomas Morato Avenue resulted in a loss of space, triggering the expansion of commercial and business establishments, most of which are restaurants, into the Scout Area, a series of residential streets perpendicular to the avenue (see Fig. 2). These 24 streets

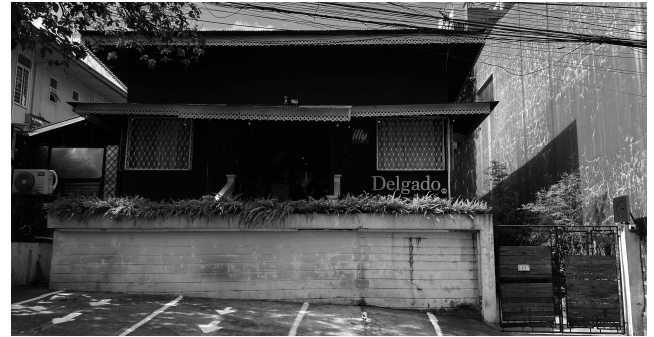
branching out from Tomas Morato Avenue and Timog Avenue—a long avenue bisecting Tomas Morato Avenue—were renamed in 1964 as a tribute to the Filipino scouts who died in a plane crash on their way to an international event.<sup>24</sup>

When restaurants first started to pop up around the Tomas Morato Avenue-Scout Area, it was a welcomed change by the residents who did not need to travel far to try new food. The residents had a sense of ownership over these “neighborhood eateries,” which they considered part of their residential community.<sup>24</sup> These small establishments, in between houses, blended well with the residential environment and were not imposing, unlike the big eateries in tall buildings today or the al fresco umbrella tables that invaded the sidewalks and pedestrian walks.

In time, the residents lost ownership over the residential community as the area rapidly developed into a commercial district sprawling with restaurants, entertainment hubs, high-rise real estate, and offices. Faced with the drastic change happening to their once residential community, the residents strategically adapted to the shift towards commercial development by converting their residential properties into business establishments or offices—either running their own business or leasing the property for rent.<sup>24</sup> Others sold their residential properties and moved out of the area due to rising real estate tax rates and the loss of privacy, safety, and peace. Eventually, even families who lived in the area for several generations sold or leased their houses to business owners and entrepreneurs who were keeping up the trend of adaptively reusing old houses as restaurants or other commercial uses or functions.<sup>24</sup>

## Case Studies

### Delgado 112



**Fig. 3. Front of Delgado 112**

Delgado 112 (see Fig. 3) is named after the street the restaurant is located on, 112 Scout Delgado Street, Tomas Morato Avenue (see Fig. 2). The house remained residential until the original owners sold the house and moved to the United States (US). The current owner has rented the house for different uses or functions. The house used to be a fabric store, and before that, the family who rented the house at that time used the basement to sell antique items. In 2017, the owners of Delgado rented the house and converted it into a restaurant.



**Fig. 4. Repurposed Capiz Shell Windows**

Although the house was built in the 1950s, the style of architecture is Antillean, which was brought to the Philippines by the Spanish and was the typical design of Filipino houses built during the Spanish colonial period. This European architecture was not suited for the

tropical climate of the country, so the Filipinos adapted by adding their style to the house, creating the quintessential Filipino colonial house called the “*bahay na bato*” (stone house) which is a combination of European and native Filipino architecture. This house is a modern interpretation of the traditional stone house with a one-storey and a basement instead of two-stories, concrete basement walls, an overhanging wooden first-storey floor supported by four wooden posts, a wooden flooring, and a tiled roof. This one-story house may be likened to the traditional *bahay kubo* (nipa hut) instead of the traditional two-storey stone house. Inspired by the stone house, this house has a large front door called the *entrada principal*, a large open layout, a high-pitched or vaulted ceiling, and repurposed *capiz* shell windows made into wall decorations (see Fig. 4). The high-pitched ceiling allows warm air to rise and cool the rest of the house. The house is adorned with decorative wooden panels or *calado*. However, unlike the traditional stone house, which typically uses warm and light colors, e.g., brown, this house is painted black with white wooden *calado* finishes.

In an interview with one of the restaurant’s owners, she shared that they made very few changes to the house because it was in good condition despite being over 50 years old. They kept the original structure of the house, as well as the tree planted by the original owners in the al fresco area. They preserved the *capiz* shell windows, wooden flooring, and wooden *calado* wall accents. Recently, they made significant repairs to the ceiling in the basement because the wood was already rotten, which is to be expected in an old house. Overall, the house is in good condition and is kept in good condition through gradual repairs and regular consultations with architects and engineers to maintain the structural integrity of the old house.

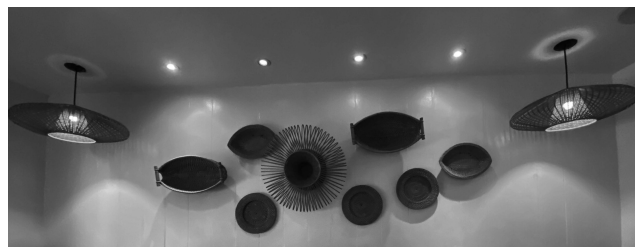
Delgado withstood the COVID-19 pandemic by boosting its online presence and improving its delivery services. Today, Delgado is one of the landmarks of Scout Delgado Street and Tomas Morato Avenue at large, and people from all over the country travel to it just to experience, as the owner shared, “the warm service, good food, and charm of the old house.”

### Limbaga 77



**Fig. 5. Front of Limbaga 77**

Like Delgado, Limbaga 77 (see Fig. 5) is named after the restaurant’s location, 77 Scout Limbaga Street, Tomas Morato Avenue (see Fig. 2). The house was built in the 1960s and was bought by the current owner in 2014 when the original owners sold the house and moved out of the area. It remained residential until the owners of Limbaga rented the house in 2015 to turn it into a restaurant. The first and second floors of the house, as well as the garden, are turned into an al fresco dining area and bar, which are used for commercial use, while the restaurant staff’s basement of this two-storey house is used as lodging. Although the original owners moved out of the Scout Area, they frequently dine in the restaurant, reminiscing about the house and sharing their memories with the staff. One of the owners of Limbaga shared in an interview that the last time the original owners of the house visited, they told stories about planting the mango trees at the back of the restaurant.



**Fig. 6. Decorative Rattan Baskets and Light Shades**

Limbaga is another modern take on the traditional stone house, characterized by a concrete first floor,



overhanging wooden second floor, wooden flooring, and tiled roof. While the facade of the house does not conspicuously resemble the traditional stone house, with its white walls and black accents on the doors, windows, and railings, there are features of the stone house that are discernible, such as the *entrada principal*, wide grilled windows, vertical wooden posts, a large open layout, and a high-pitched ceiling. The restaurant's second floor is reminiscent of the traditional nipa hut, with decorative wooden ceiling beams. Additionally, the interior of the restaurant is filled with native Filipino furniture, such as rattan baskets, rattan chairs, and rattan light shades (see Fig. 6).

In an interview, one of the restaurant owners shared that they only made minor renovations and repairs to the house because its structure was in good condition before turning it into a restaurant. They kept the house's original structure and preserved the original materials, including the wooden flooring and tiled roof. They also kept the bedrooms of the house and turned them into private rooms for parties and hosting many guests. The changes to the house were only minor, including repainting the walls, polishing the floors, and converting the garden into an al fresco dining area. While the house is in good condition, maintaining structures over 50 years old is expensive and time-consuming because although the original materials are durable, they are also vulnerable to decay and deterioration over time, and maintaining them might not be sustainable in the long term.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the owners of Limbaga strive to preserve the old house to retain its cultural uniqueness and identity amidst towering high-rise buildings and structures whose style is contemporary architecture.

### **Pio's Kitchen**



**Fig. 7. Front of Pio's Kitchen**

Source: Pio's Kitchen Facebook Page

Pio's Kitchen (see Fig. 7) is at the corner of Scout Fuentebella and Scout Reyes streets (see Fig. 2). The house was built in 1956 and abandoned when the owners moved to the US. Unlike the owners of Delgado and Limbaga, who are not related to the owners of the house, the owner of Pio's Kitchen is the granddaughter of the owners of the house. In 2014, when her grandparents passed away, her relatives offered the family house to her and her husband. Instead of renting it out to others, they turned it into a restaurant named after their favorite saint, Padre Pio.



**Fig. 8. Old Family Cabinet**

Source: Pio's Kitchen Facebook Page

At first glance, Pio's Kitchen is not reminiscent of traditional Filipino houses, with its white concrete walls and rustic European interior, i.e., antique lamps, chandeliers, and marble floors. However, the house's features distinctly resemble the traditional stone house and nipa hut. The house incorporates contemporary architecture with the traditional stone house design through wide grilled windows on all sides, a wooden *entrada principal*, original *narra* floorings, a high-pitched ceiling, and a large open layout. The interior of the house is also adorned with intricate *calado* designs on the shelves and cabinets (see Fig. 8), *Burda* (native Filipino hand embroidery) designs on the tablecloths, rattan chairs, rattan baskets, rattan tables, and *banig* (native Filipino hand-woven mat). The house also resembles the traditional nipa hut with a one-storey floor, a large open layout, and decorative wooden ceiling beams on one side of the pitched ceiling.

The house was in poor condition – but livable, the granddaughter mentioned – before it was turned into a restaurant because the family, who now lived in the US, did not maintain the house. Although there were significant changes made to the house, including breaking down the bedroom walls to create an open layout,

repainting the walls to white, and replacing some of the original *narra* floorings with marble tiles in some parts of the house, they kept the original structure of the house, particularly the original *narra* flooring and the decorative wooden ceiling beams. They also preserved the old furniture in the house, e.g., the cabinet, repainting them white to fit the clean white look of the house. In an interview with the granddaughter about the house, she shared her memories of it and her grandparents: “My grandparents, when they were alive, would always have parties and get-togethers here. Coming from a Kapampangan [an ethnolinguistic group in the Philippines] family, my *Lolo* (grandfather) and *Lola* (grandmother) loved cooking and eating. My family and I would come for special occasions.”

### ***Sustainability***

In the Philippines, abandoned old structures are demolished over reused because of the preference for modern or contemporary structures, such as high-rise buildings, in the urban areas.<sup>2,10</sup> However, Dr. Fernando N. Zialcita, the cultural heritage expert interviewed and consulted in this study, discourages the demolition of old structures due to the carbon dioxide emissions associated with such actions. Instead, he advocates for adaptive reuse, which is a more environmentally sustainable approach. Adaptive reuse is a sustainable approach to revitalize and make old structures functional again.<sup>16</sup> The old houses studied are in good condition and only require minor renovations and repairs, which have minimal environmental impact. Notably, the owners of Delgado and Limbaga consult with architects and engineers to ensure that the changes made to the old houses are sustainable and will improve their architectural integrity.

Additionally, Dr. Zialcita shared that owners of old houses demolish their homes due to high maintenance costs, which is becoming prevalent in the Philippines today. For instance, the owner of Limbaga acknowledged that while the original materials of these old houses are durable, they are vulnerable to decay and deterioration over time, and maintaining them might not be sustainable in the long term.<sup>8</sup> Hence, Dr. Zialcita

emphasized the importance of introducing commercial uses to old structures to sustain them financially – otherwise, their restoration will become a substantial financial burden. Indeed, literature shows that when repurposing old structures, the new use or function should be economically viable to sustain its maintenance and preservation.<sup>13,14,15,17,18,20</sup> The restaurant owners interviewed shared that while they experience difficulties in maintaining the houses because these structures are over 50 years old, they can finance the maintenance through the daily operations of the restaurants.

### ***Use or Functionality***

In terms of use and functionality, adaptive reuse maximizes underutilized old structures that have lost their original function or outlived their original use or purpose due to abandonment and deterioration.<sup>7,11,13,14,19</sup> According to Dr. Zialcita, the rise in adaptively reused old houses for commercial use is due to the original owners abandoning them because they have migrated out of Metro Manila or the country. Likewise, in Luna's study about the Tomas Morato Avenue-Scout Area, he mentioned that families who have lived there for several generations have started to move out and have either converted their residential houses into commercial establishments or rented, leased or sold them to businesses owners and entrepreneurs.<sup>24</sup> In the case of the three old houses studied, the original owners abandoned their homes because they moved out of the area, opting to live in the US and outside of Quezon City.

Adaptive reuse breathes new life into old structures to accommodate new and future uses and circumstances and to meet the needs and requirements of new and future users.<sup>3,11,14,15,16,17,18</sup> Dr. Zialcita adds that the new use or function introduced to an old structure should be relevant to the community's context and compatible with its original use or function. In this case, the adaptive reuse of old houses as restaurants is relevant to the development of the area from a residential zone to a commercialized district and compatible with their original use or function as houses. The owner of Limbaga shared that preserving the facade and interior of the old house as a traditional Filipino house was a deliberate

choice because he wanted to recreate the experience of eating *lutong-bahay* (home-cooked) food together with family at their grandparent's house in the province. Their vision is conveyed in the restaurant's tagline: "Come home to a good Filipino home." In the same vein, Delgado's tagline is "Our home is your home," maximizing the old charm of the old house to make the guests feel like they are dining out but in a different home where the "service is warm, food is good, and ambiance is homey." Likewise, Pio's Kitchen's tagline is "This is our home and your home, too," sharing her ancestral home with other families and making them feel like they are at home.

### ***Culture***

In the Philippines, heritage is not the priority in government projects over development projects.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Zialcita stressed that many old structures in Metro Manila are being demolished today, which is unfortunate when many old structures are still in good condition. He attributes this problem to the government's lack of appreciation for old structures as cultural assets and resources.

There is an alarming need to protect old structures because they are critical to the identity of cities. They are mirrors of the past and markers of collective memory, identity, and nostalgia that shape the local community's shared sense of identity, place, and belonging.<sup>4,12,13,14,15,17</sup> Luna stated in his study that the commercialization of the Tomas Morato Avenue-Scout Area contributed to its unique culture and identity as Quezon City's "Restaurant Row" and "Entertainment Hub."<sup>24</sup> Despite the high cost of maintaining old houses, the restaurant owners preserved the old facade and interior of the traditional Filipino houses to retain their old charm and unique architectural and cultural features and designs. The owner of Delgado, for example, kept the original structure of the house and restored the old furniture, repurposing the *capiz* shell windows into wall decorations. Likewise, the owner of Pio's Kitchen emphasized the need to "respect era homes" because these old structures have unique architectural and cultural designs and are built with durable materials that can last long. For

example, she kept the original *narra* flooring of her ancestral house and the original furniture, i.e., a cabinet with wooden *calado* accents, because they are still in good condition despite being over 50 years old. These restaurants have become landmarks in the Tomas Morato Avenue-Scout Area, contributing to the avenue's unique identity as a "Restaurant Row" through old houses-turned- restaurants with unique traditional architecture amidst high-rise buildings with more modern or contemporary architecture.

Additionally, through adaptive reuse, these old houses have become functional public cultural spaces, allowing new users, i.e., guests, to experience tangible (e.g., traditional architecture) and intangible (e.g., food) forms of heritage.<sup>5</sup> Limbaga, in particular, prepares traditional Filipino food reminiscent of *Lola's* (grandmother's) home cooking, which guests can enjoy authentically in a traditional Filipino home setting.

## Conclusion

The research aimed to look at old houses in the Tomas Morato Avenue-Scout Area that have been repurposed into restaurants and find out the significance of adaptive reuse of old houses into commercial spaces in terms of sustainability, use or functionality, and architectural and cultural design. Through interviews and field visits, the findings highlight the significance of adaptive reuse in improving the sustainability and the use or functionality of old houses while maintaining their architectural and cultural design. Ultimately, the study shows that the adaptive reuse of old houses as restaurants contributes to sustainable growth and development in the city by turning underutilized heritage resources into functional economic and cultural spaces.

First, introducing commercial use to the old house, which otherwise would have been abandoned, is pivotal to its maintenance and, consequently, preservation.

Second, turning old houses into family restaurants is relevant and compatible with their original use or function as houses where families eat and get together. Third, turning these old residential homes into public cultural spaces allows others to experience an authentic Filipino home.

Lastly, the traditional design of these old houses stands out against more modern restaurants, whose style is contemporary architecture. This contributes to the avenue's unique identity as a "Restaurant Row" through old houses that are adaptively reused as restaurants.

This study contributes to the need for studies in the Philippines about adaptively reused old houses and, the need for the documentation of old houses in the country. Further, the study's results contribute to the growing pool of knowledge about the adaptive reuse of old structures in the Southeast Asian context and its role in revitalizing urban communities and contributing to SDG 11.

For future studies, the researcher recommends including more old houses and comparing their successful practices, challenges, and failures. Further, since the existing literature on adaptive reuse discusses the importance of the local community's perspective and involvement in the adaptive reuse process, the researcher recommends inviting representatives from the local community to find out their perception of these old houses-turned-restaurants. The researcher also recommends inviting representatives from the local government to gain a better understanding of existing policies on the preservation and protection of old structures, particularly of old houses, and to discuss policy interventions to improve their current practices to preserve and protect old structures from deterioration, abandonment, and demolition.

In consideration of Republic Act No. 11961, or "An Act Strengthening the Conservation and Protection of Philippine Cultural Heritage Through Cultural Mapping and An Enhanced Cultural Heritage Education Program, Amending for the Purpose Republic Act No. 10066, Otherwise Known as the "National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009"" signed last year, the researcher urges for the immediate documentation of houses over 50 years old. The lack of documentation of old houses suggests that these old structures are not recognized as cultural assets and, thus, are not utilized suitably and appropriately as functional economic and cultural spaces.

Old houses are full of potential. Adaptive reuse is a creative way to revitalize old houses, transforming them into sustainable, economically viable spaces that contrib-

ute to the sustainable growth of cities and communities.

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