



# RESTORATION OF THE SURROUNDINGS OF LA CORIA TRUJILLO, CÁCERES

*Trujillo has been chosen, not only for the scenic beauty of the proposed area, Puerta de La Coria, but for its potential in the development of architectural proposals capable of recovering its deteriorated urban structure. Also doing so without ceasing to satisfy the present needs of the municipality and, taking the rich architectural and constructive tradition as reference of such a remarkable historical context.*

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## TRUJILLO

Trujillo and its natural environment compose one of the most representative landscapes and historical-artistic spaces of Extremadura and the western Iberian Peninsula. Located to the east of the province of Cáceres, on the axis of the main route from Madrid-Lisbon (A-5), it is founded on a characteristic granite batholith that emerges in the middle of the Cáceres plain. It constitutes a privileged hillock which dominates a landscape full of granite berrocals, meadows of oak trees, river beds and pseudosteppe.

The configuration of this promontory, dominating all its surrounding space, was surely crucial for its formation as an inhabited enclave since prehistoric times, and it continued to be in its process of consolidation and historical evolution, both in Roman and medieval times.

The Historical Complex of Trujillo, formed by the enclosure and expanded by the Wall and extensions from the Late Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Era, was declared an Asset of Cultural Interest in 1962. It is a site that extends over the southern outskirts of the hill on which the Castle, formerly the Alcazaba, stands. It is made up of a network of narrow streets irregular in design, adapted to the topography. The town is organized around the Plaza Mayor, a large civic space, representative of the town's golden era. It stands out both for its size and for the presence of important architectural pieces, such as the Church of San Martín or the palaces of San Carlos, the Toledo Orellana or the Marqués de la Conquista.

In addition to its Historic Site, Trujillo has another 8 items which have also been declared of Cultural Interest, among which the Castle or Alcazaba, the Church of Santa María la Mayor, the Plaza Mayor and its main palaces and manor houses stand out. It also houses an extensive group of buildings included in the inventory of the Historical Heritage of Extremadura.

### History of the Place

With the name of Turgalium in Roman times, it represented an important milestone on the road that linked Emerita Augusta with Caesaraugusta, later becoming an important Spanish-Roman enclave of the Visigothic Kingdom. In the Caliphate era, the Turyila medina would be configured as a solidly fortified and relatively prosperous military bastion, as proved by testimonies from the time.

Incorporated once and for all in the Kingdom of Castile by Fernando III the Saint in 1232, it would be consolidated as a town in 1260 by the charter granted by Alfonso X the Wise. In 1430 it received the title of City from Juan II "Very Noble, Very Loyal, Notable and Very Heroic". The weekly free market, granted by Enrique IV in 1465, marked the beginning of a period of greater prosperity in Trujillo, which lasted throughout the 15th and 16th centuries. In the first years of the latter its population exceeded 5,000 inhabitants, a figure that increased as the century progressed. This prosperity was reflected not only in the appearance of numerous convents, monasteries and churches and in the configuration of the Plaza Mayor, with its stately palaces, but also in the construction of hydraulic infrastructures (fountains, reservoirs and pools), cobbled streets and new doors in the old city wall, which was now no longer defensive.



The history of the conquest and colonisation of America is of great importance to Trujillo, the birthplace of prominent figures of that period; such as the conqueror of Peru, Francisco Pizarro and his brothers, or Francisco de Orellana, discoverer of the Amazon. The flow of new richness into Trujillo was felt in the city, hand in hand with these personalities, serving to finance the construction of remarkable places and manor houses that characterise its historical context.

Under the reigns of Carlos I and Felipe II, Trujillo suffered the loss of a part of its vast outlying rural territory as a result of the State's economic problems. The land's main villages bought the Crown its independence between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, beginning an urban and economic decline that would continue into the next two centuries. Its population fell and its estates drowned under the expenses of the defence of its territorial patrimony from the wars with Portugal (1640-1668) and that of Spanish Succession (1714).

During the War of Independence (1808), large areas of the city were raised, lengthening the process of reconstruction throughout the nineteenth century, and in some places well into the twentieth century. In 1834, the city of Trujillo became the head of a judicial district, as a result of the new Bourbon political-administrative organisation, with which it recovered its pulse as a regional head. However, it lost its importance to other populations that achieved a greater institutional and political weight after the configuration of the provincial structure in 1833 and the installation of the railway route that left Trujillo on the margin of the new communication axes.

Today Trujillo has a population of 9,436 inhabitants, it continues to be a regional head, with an important commercial dynamic, and represents one of the most outstanding enclaves of tourist interest in Extremadura for the uniqueness and conservation of its landscape and architectural heritage.

### **Local Architectural Tradition**

The architecture of Trujillo is characterized mainly by buildings with one and two floors, although there are some large palaces and manor houses where up to four floors can be seen, there being only a few of the latter examples.

The most commonly used materials in the walls of the Historical District of Trujillo are stone in its various forms of masonry or in the form of ashlar masonry, and occasionally brick. The later treatment of these materials is diverse, but the most frequent is the rendering of the masonry with lime mortars, especially if it shows irregular bonds. Most of the time the walls are made of masonry and mortar, although sometimes and for some walls enclosing the properties, dry masonry is used. The brick, much more scarce, is never seen except sometimes in the framing of alcoves and corners, dressing the rest of the wall.

Within the local constructive patterns, one of the most important ones is the use of a type of groin vault made without formwork which is known as Extremeña vault. In regard to the building blocks of Trujillo, within them, depending on the depth of the plot, the buildings have two, three or even more bays. These types of vaults may be used to cover all of them, so the buildings interior divisions are based on load-bearing walls, as they need to counteract and absorb the weight of the vaults.



The façades show a massif character which prevails over the openings. They usually have a masonry base. In the openings, the vertical dominates over the horizontal dimension. The alcoves in Trujillo are framed in well-carved stone, which usually granite. On any balconies, stone slabs often make up the floor. The woodwork is usually made of painted or exposed wood. The access doors to the buildings are also made of wood.

The Trujillan roof structures are mostly inclined and with traditional curved ceramic tile as a covering material. The structure is usually made of wood and in many cases the space under the roof, known locally as “troje”, is used for storage. The number of slopes varies greatly depending on the floor plan of the building. The slope of the roof is between 22° and 35°. The eaves vary depending on the material of the wall, and can be made of carved stone or brick.

The chimneys are the formal expression of a sociological aspect of life in Extremadura: the kitchen and what it represents in the family is an important part of the house. They are large, and usually attached to one of the building's side walls.

There are two predominant colours in the Historical District of Trujillo: the light brown colour of the buildings' exposed stone and the white of the rendered walls.

## **PROPOSAL OF INTERVENTION**

The current physical configuration of Trujillo's urban centre, overflowing from the walled enclosure towards the East and the South, makes the handling of the landscape on the northwestern slope, where the wall continues to embrace the urban centre, constitute a unique opportunity to reinforce the relationship of the historical city with the landscape and the territory. The topography and the conditions of sunlight in this area have favoured its maintenance in original natural conditions, with roads embedded between walls and terraces, granite boluses and abundant trees. In addition, the area located within the walls is in this very abandoned area, barely travelled and little used by locals and visitors alike. Recovering part of the ruined farmhouse, improving connectivity between existing public spaces and providing both new uses would revitalize this neighbourhood.

In this framework, the purpose of the competition is the development of a project that would enhance and revalue the two areas mentioned. On the one hand, the layout and design of the area outside the walls, "Parque de la Coria", a strip of public space along the stretch of wall between the gates of La Coria and the Arco del Triunfo. On the other hand, the treatment of other architectural elements and nearby public spaces.

They want to propose a series of actions aimed at promoting the dissemination and promotion of this area, as part of both the local activity and the tourist circuits of the town. This would encourage visits, which today are very limited to the surroundings of the Plaza Mayor, to this northwestern slope of the walled enclosure. Thus, the solutions must be in any case aimed at facilitating better use and enjoyment of these areas by the local population and visitors, taking into account the landscape, environmental and cultural values and respecting and enhancing the traditional identity of the place.



Therefore, the scope of activity includes:

Firstly, plots 1 and 2 make up the so-called Parque de La Coria, which forms the immediate visual and environmental area of the wall between the gates of La Coria and the Arco del Triunfo, on the western slope. It is proposed to carry out within them an intervention project that, without altering neither the landscape of this area nor the perception of the wall and the silhouette of Trujillo from its surroundings, will improve the conditions of the existing walks. The project will have to reconfigure its layout, where deemed necessary, and propose a new design for the elements that define it and for its lighting, which must be adequate in preserving the rural character of the area. The proposals will also have to contemplate an improvement in the connections with the proposed area concerning the roads that lead from La Coria to the surrounding countryside, and enhance the enjoyment of the landscape views offered from this site. In general, they must configure a topography that makes this area as accessible and safe as possible, generating a circulation that facilitates the use of space but at the same time assumes the particularities of the enclave and its natural features. Thus, integrating itself into the vegetation and the existing stone elements, enhancing them as much as possible, and thus maintaining its unique character.

Plot 1 is clearly composed of two zones. In one, which is a steep slope, oaks and large almond trees are found. In the other, flatter terrain, a pasture of grasses predominates with numerous scattered olive trees and voluminous bushes of brambles. The northwest enclosure of the plot consists of 253 metres of stone walls, although a good part of them are not visible, being hidden under the vegetation. The southeast limit is defined by a wall, which is close to the path that leads from the Puerta de Coria to the foot of the wall bastion. There are two lines of interior walls that divide the plot into three parts, although they have largely collapsed. It is also possible to find in this plot the walls of an old pastoral building or storehouse with a ground space of approximately 12 square metres.

Plot 2 is limited to the east by the border of the wall, it has hardly any gradient and is totally devoid of arboreal vegetation and shrubs, except for some cork trees and hackberry trees that have been planted recently. It is therefore necessary to pay special attention to this aspect. Throughout the years, from usage a path has been configured that crosses the plot and communicates the Arco del Triunfo with the foot of the wall bastion.

Secondly, the area located inside the walls adjacent to the Puerta de Coria, in the vicinity of the Convent of San Francisco el Real and la Puerta de la Coria, there are several plots in ruin that have façades facing the Crossing of Santa María and the Plaza de the Moritos. In addition, adjoining the southern façade of the convent is an unused plot adjacent to the convent garden. These plots are the property of the Xavier de Salas Foundation. In this area, it is proposed that the urban structure be redesigned. To this end, building on the plots that are now ruined will be considered, as well as opening up new road connections within them to achieve a better relationship between the existing open spaces. In addition, it is proposed that the entire area of the Plaza de Moritos and the Municipal Water Deposit be redesigned, including the configuration of the various levels in which these public spaces are structured, the connections between them, and the pavement treatments and trees to be found within complex. All this must be done with an architectural proposal in keeping with the traditional identity of the Historical Ensemble of Trujillo.

The shared intention of the City Council and the Foundation is to revitalize the area with a set of cultural activities that are expected to be launched during the next few years. Therefore, the functions that can be proposed for the projected buildings are: student or researchers' residence, classrooms and multi-purpose rooms (for conferences, workshops, etc.), cafeteria or dining room. In any case, the programme to be accommodated in them will be at the discretion of the competition contestants. The



intention is to complement the activity carried out by the Foundation in the nearby convent, where it already has several spaces to this end, and to revitalize the neighbourhood at the same time.

### **Basic Conditions for the Proposal Based on the Municipal Regulation of Application in the Area of Intervention**

In regard to intramural constructions, the heights of new buildings proposed will be a maximum of ground floor plus one or ground floor plus two.

For its wall structure the finishing and framing of alcoves and highlighting of corners with stone material, preferably in granite, are recommended. The external treatment of façades must be a base of granite stone or lime plaster that respects the tonalities of the coatings of the historical centre of Trujillo. Regarding the use of materials, criterion as unifying as possible will be followed for each building, so that the mixtures of qualities and textures are reduced to the indispensable minimum. The use of exposed brick in any quality, texture and colour or any type of "monolayer" finishing is prohibited. The ground floor will have a similar treatment to the rest of the building, with the hollows and massifs that compose expressed clearly and precisely, its treatment defined in the building project. The roofs will be made based on inclined slopes and traditional curved ceramic tiles. The maximum height of the roof ridge, at any point, shall not exceed the height of 4m. Measured from the upper face of the last slab. The inclination of the roof slopes will not exceed, in any case, the 30° slope. Openings will not be allowed on the roofs, nor mansard roofs, nor "velux" inclined windows.

Only overhangs corresponding to balconies, cornices or eaves will be allowed. The balconies will have a maximum overhang of 50 cm and granite stone brackets with a "pigeon breast" outline or similar solutions are recommended for supporting the floors. Terraces of any kind will not be allowed.

In all the alcoves, the vertical dimension vis-à-vis the horizontal will predominate. The carpentry of these openings will be made in wood. The ironworks will be made from wrought iron in every case.

As for the space outside the walls, the vegetation must be maintained and acknowledged as a base for existing species. It is a degraded holm oak forest in which pyruétanos and cork oaks are interspersed with some hackberries (*Celtis australis*), wild olives (*Olea Europaea sylvestris*), and elms (*Ulmus minor*). Among the cultivated arboreal species, it is possible to find numerous almond trees (*Prunus dulcis*), olive trees (*Olea europea*), fig trees (*Ficus carica*) and some pomegranates (*Punica granatum*) and quince (*Cydonia oblonga*).