



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage & Archaeological Sites in Saudi Arabia



## Thee Ain Heritage Village \_ Al Baha Region



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia..

## Introduction

Urban heritage is a vessel and an extension of civilization. It preserves the essential characteristics of each nation, distinguishing it from others, embodying its authenticity, recording its history, preserving its identity, and representing its cultural, urban, and social values.



Conserving urban heritage has become a feature of developed countries. The more culturally and economically advanced and civilized the country is, the more it preserves, protects, rehabilitates, develops its urban heritage and invests in it economically.

Given the heritage sites and buildings the Kingdom abounds with, the Heritage Commission took the initiative to preserve, restore, maintain, rehabilitate, and invest in this national wealth. It has developed plans and successfully implemented projects according to specific time frames.



## Introduction

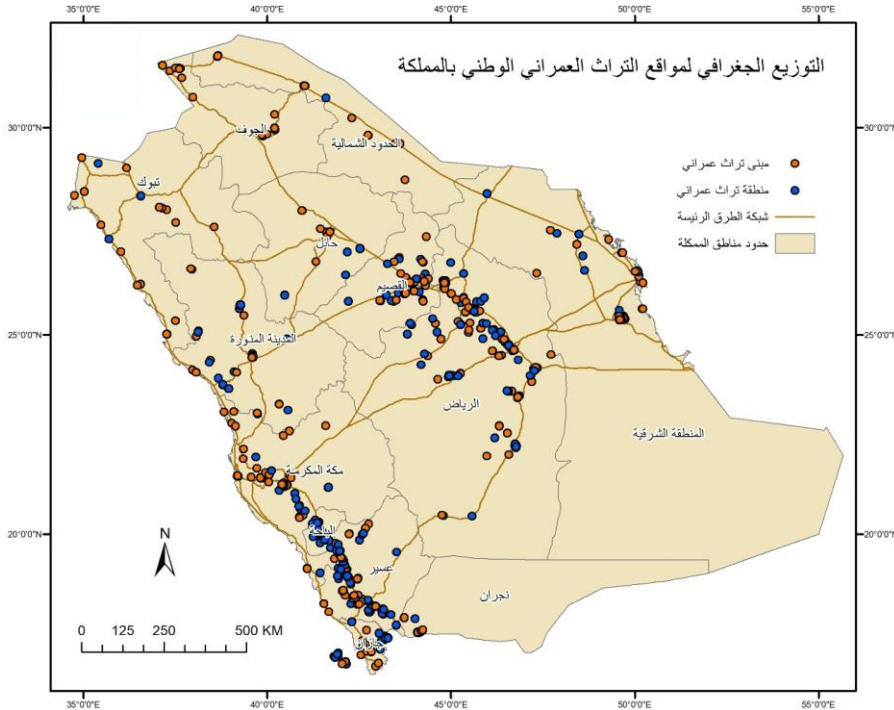


The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a treasure trove of authentic urban heritage. Preserving and utilizing this wealth are among the main goals laid out in Saudi Vision 2030. Urban heritage is an essential economic tributary, being one of the sustainable resources and a means to provide more job opportunities and revive traditional professions and crafts.

Some of the commission's efforts to preserve Saudi urban heritage for future generations as a witness to the prosperous historical eras of our human history include:

1  
2  
Inventorying urban heritage sites and restricting indiscriminate removal.

Developing a system for the protection of urban heritage as well as recording and classifying it.





# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Vision towards preserving urban heritage



Ushaiger Heritage Village \_  
Riyadh Region

Urban heritage is a masterpiece embodying the unique artistic and aesthetic achievement of human creative genius. It carries a spiritual message about the past, hence must be handled in a manner that preserves its original meanings.

The purpose of preserving and restoring antiquities is not limited to protecting the artwork but also holding it as historical evidence by harnessing state-of-the-art sciences and technologies in the process.

Urban heritage, in its various manifestations, is the mirror of past societies and environments through its countless buildings and architectural styles that reflect Artistry and innovation in addressing multiple environmental, construction, and urban problems.



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Vision towards preserving urban heritage



AlUla Old Town \_ Medina  
Region

Traditional architecture is the product of successive experiences over the years, adopted and developed by previous generations without civilizational separation. Instead, it has remained steadfast in many cases, despite what comes readily to mind that these monumental buildings are weak and worn out over time due to exposure to damaging factors.

The real secret behind architecture's resilience is being cohesive with the environment and suited to serve functionality. Hence, all architectural patterns and styles were incorporated in a balanced rhythm, a comfortable and compatible shape to allow this connection.



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Vision towards preserving urban heritage



Since lack of knowledge about the properties of materials, structural behavior of buildings, and the societal rejection of urban heritage are among the main reasons for the emergence of modern architecture, we must revive these heritage buildings to meet the consumer's current requirements.

It is necessary to develop approaches, standards, and systems for urban heritage by defining how to manage each building according to its structural and architectural nature, and of course, its value since it is a national treasure worth preserving.



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Importance of urban heritage



Saudi Arabia is rich in authentic urban heritage reflecting civilized aspects of the nation's history. This heritage can be found throughout the Kingdom, embodying the character of each region under local urbanism. The importance of urban heritage in general, and in the Kingdom in particular, lies in a set of values and aspects, the most important of which are:

This abundance of heritage sites provides the opportunity to diversify and sustain investment resources. The multiple options allow the investor to choose the preferred site in terms of its importance level, and they are available to local communities and institutions.



Economic value

First

1- Urban heritage as a sustainable resource

The commission has kept inventory of some of these sites starting from 2002 AD/1422 AH and registered more than 2000 sites. Preliminary studies indicated that about 800 of these sites are investable in the meantime. Subsequent studies confirm that the heritage wealth built in the Kingdom exceeds 10,000 documented sites dating back from prehistoric times until the end of the Islamic eras.



Al Musawkaf Market\_ Al  
Qassim region



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Importance of urban heritage



### 2- Urban heritage generates more jobs

Indeed, investing in urban heritage sites brings considerable economic, social, and cultural benefits generated by rehabilitation projects undertaken in many historic villages, city centers, markets, castles and palaces around the Kingdom, which are still in good condition and can be revitalized to be suited for investment opportunities.

The rehabilitation and investment of urban heritage help create new job opportunities for local communities and reduce population migration, hence ensuring stability as a result of sustainable employment generated by investing in urban heritage sites.







# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Importance of urban heritage



### 3- Urban heritage revives traditional professions & crafts

Urban heritage sites are the perfect location to practice and display handicraft products. These invested sites help encourage and revive traditional professions and crafts that are nearly disappearing due to technological advances.

However, by their nature, people yearn to witness, manufacture, and acquire everything made and used by their ancestors to learn about their living conditions and creativity in adapting to their environment.



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Importance of urban heritage



Adjacent to the invested site, small workshops and factories are established for manufacturing mats, carpets, kilims, baskets, traditional costumes, as well as any product identical or even similar to what is old and traditional, such as: weapons, ornaments, accessories, and handicrafts made of metal, pottery and glass, leather goods, and woodwork.

Employing artisans in these sites also helps them revive ancient and traditional crafts still in use today, making a good source of income for them and their families, providing many job opportunities, and achieving comprehensive social benefits at all levels.



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Importance of urban heritage

Cultural and urban value



### 1- Historical & civilizational connotations

Urban heritage is a witness to successive civilizations. It reflects the culture of nations and their adaptation to the environment, being a symbol of human evolution throughout history and tangible evidence of people's achievements given their surrounding environment.

It also highlights the sequence of inter-generational urban experiences, their values, and urban identities.

Urban heritage is the reference model for every nation wishing to preserve its civilizational identity among other nations. Countries with an endeavor to preserve their urban identity have control over the physical change of their heritage.

The physical change affects the tangible and visible characteristics of the built environment. In contrast, non-physical change includes everything related to people's activities and how they adapt to the environment.



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Importance of urban heritage

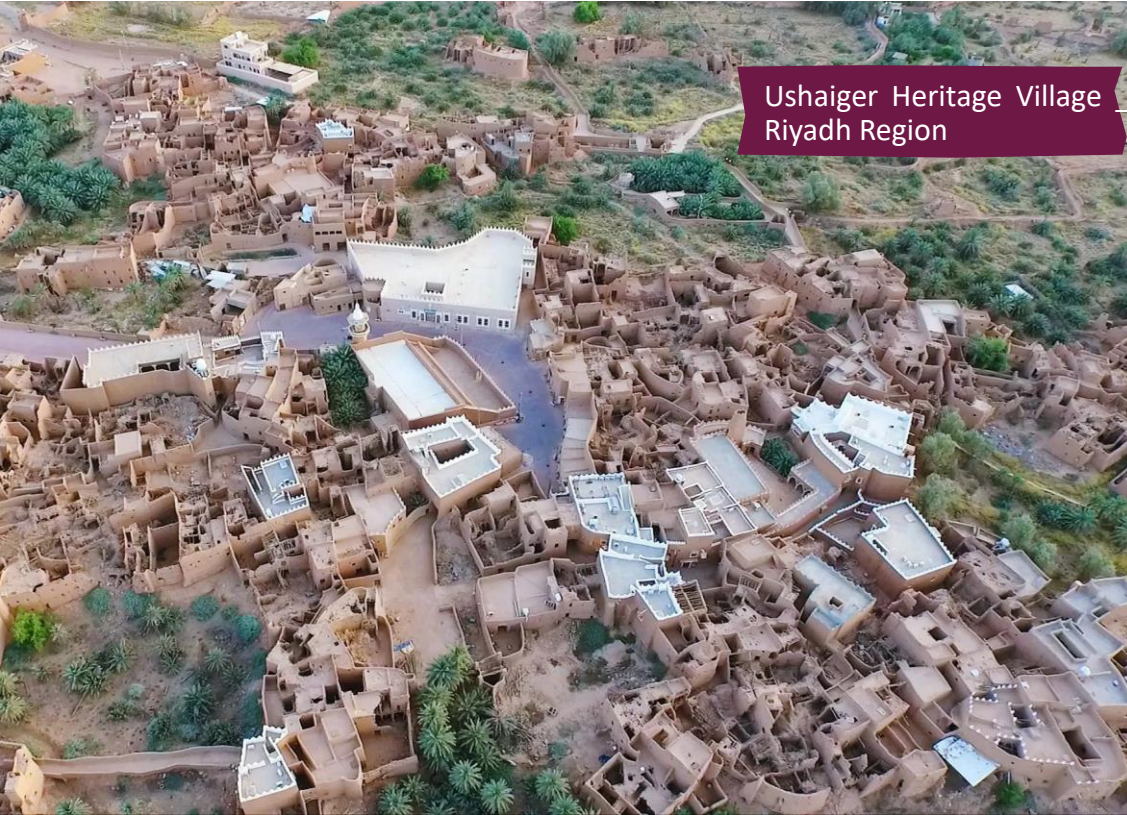


### 2- Architectural & artistic connotations

There is no doubt that urban heritage in the Kingdom is closely linked to Islamic heritage, from the dawn of Islam until this day, as it is located at the heart of the Islamic civilization and sequentially connected to it.

Looking closely at the characteristics and features of our Saudi national heritage, we find them deeply rooted in the foundations of Islamic teachings on which this heritage is built, whether tangible or intangible.

Simplicity is manifested in the form and design of the materials built and made without compromising their assigned functions and uses. Building and manufacturing materials are obtained from what the local environment has to offer, attempting to utilize these raw materials according to the capabilities and desires of consumers.





# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Importance of urban heritage



Urban heritage includes many foundations, principles, and lessons to be learned, identified, and measured; to help develop our urban environments at the level of cities and urban planning as well as villages, mosques, houses, roads, markets, etc. .

Mosques were an accurate representation of this simplicity, later transmitted to houses. The mosque and the house are similar in their horizontal position; each contains an internal void and an external space of multi-sized courtyards.

Based on these three main pillars: design, raw materials, and aesthetic elements, we find close links between the Islamic heritage and our national heritage in various resources and components.



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Importance of urban heritage



Princes School \_ Eastern Province



Al-Khabra Old Village \_ Qassim Region

Social value



3rd

Urban heritage development contributes to raising the awareness of the local community through programs and events held in urban heritage sites, communicating with visitors, and acquiring new knowledge and professions.

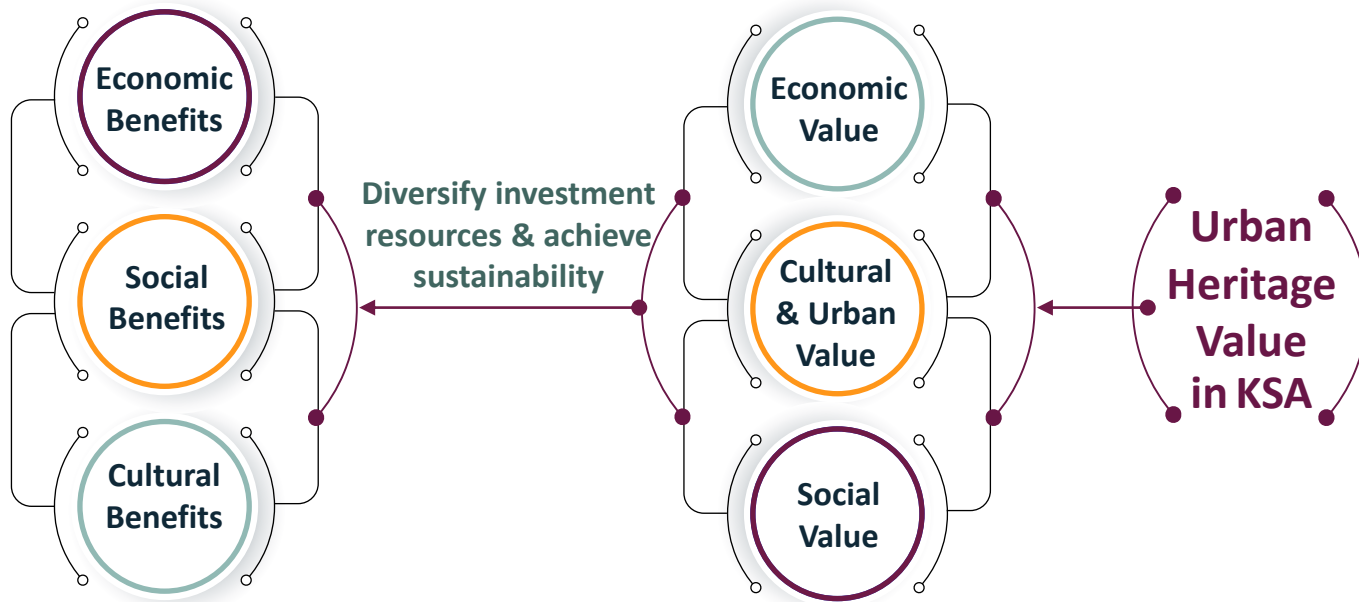
The services, facilities, and training courses established to support investment in urban heritage sites contribute enormously to local community development and improve the income of its members. Moreover, investment in urban heritage sites contributes to achieving a regional balance.

Most regions of the Kingdom are homes to several historic villages, heritage cities, markets, and buildings. These sites can be rehabilitated and invested in, limiting migration from rural areas and towns to large cities, which causes imbalance to the demographic structure. The residents' stability due to their association with their jobs was one of the beneficial impacts of these revitalization projects.



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Importance of urban heritage





# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Initiatives and efforts

Organizing a survey program on remarkable global experiences in the field of urban heritage preservation **5**

Holding seminars, conferences, and cooperation agreements related to heritage protection between the commission and many government/non-government bodies in KSA **6**

Drafting agreements with Arab and Islamic countries on urban heritage **7**

Restricting indiscriminate removal of urban heritage buildings **1**

Creating a system for the protection, conservation, & development of urban heritage **2**

Inventorying urban heritage sites suitable for tourism development **3**

Classifying and registering national urban heritage **4**

Given the importance of urban heritage, the Heritage Commission has adopted several initiatives to protect and preserve national urban heritage, then rehabilitate, develop, and benefit from it economically.

The following explains these initiatives:

### Urban heritage conservation initiative **First**

The commission's pursuit in this regard has taken many directions, including the following:





# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Initiatives and efforts

6  
Rehabilitation and Investment Program for Distinctive Citizen-Owned Urban Heritage Buildings

7  
Establishing a company for investing owned urban heritage buildings

8  
Establishing a company to restore urban heritage buildings

3  
Rehabilitation & Development Program for Historic Markets

4  
Rehabilitation Program for Historic Buildings in the reign of King Abdulaziz

5  
Rehabilitation Program for Urban Heritage in the Red Sea Ports

### The commission's initiatives in rehabilitation and development

Second

The commission has set its operational plans and programs for the conservation and development of urban heritage as follows:

1  
Heritage Villages Program

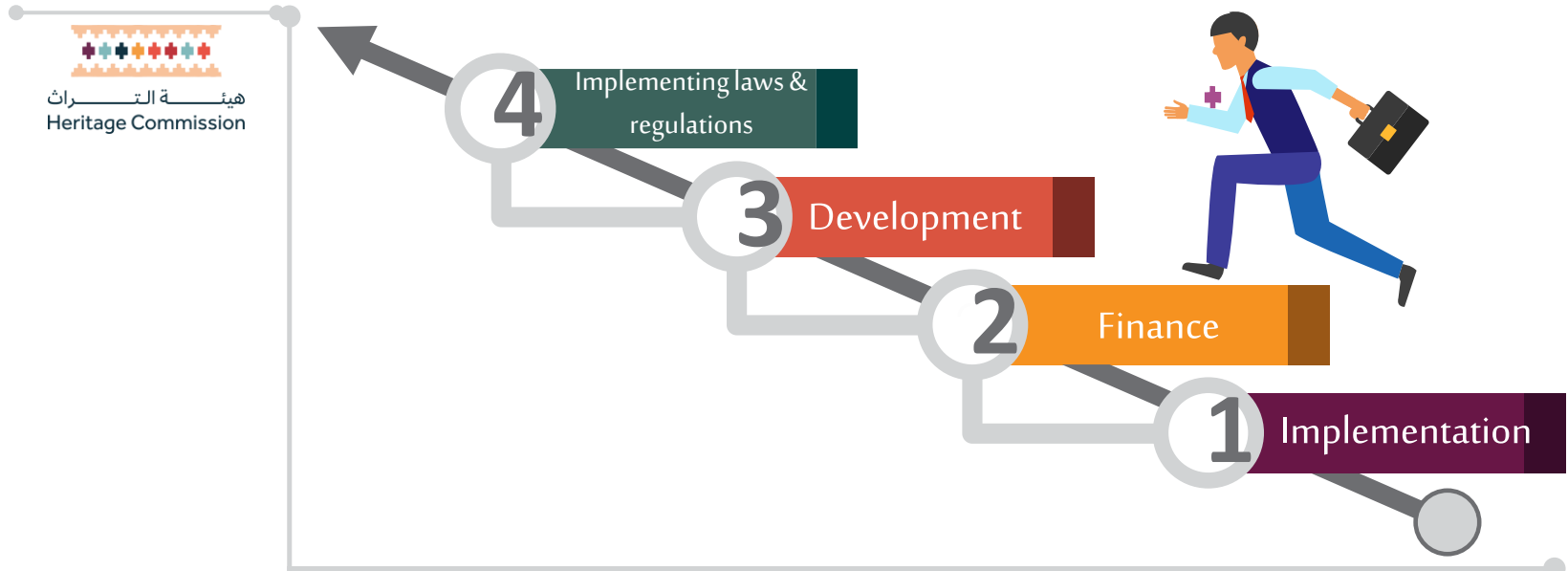
2  
Historic City Centers Rehabilitation Program



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Heritage Commission

### Heritage Commission role





# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Heritage Commission



### The commission's main sectors

هيئة التراث  
Heritage Commission



Intangible Heritage



Handicrafts



Urban Heritage



Antiquities





# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Heritage Commission

### The commission's scope of work

2

Suggesting draft laws and regulations required by the nature of its work, proposing amendments to the applicable ones, and submitting them to the Ministry to complete the statutory procedures.

1

The commission aims to organize and develop the heritage sector in the Kingdom, advance its components, support and encourage its practitioners. To achieve its goals, it must implement the following tasks and responsibilities:

7

Approving professional training programs and certification bodies specialized in field-related training.

6

Organizing and promoting training courses in related fields.



5

Suggesting standards and measures for the heritage sector and submitting them to the Ministry for approval.

4

Encouraging individuals, institutions and companies to produce and develop content in the heritage sector.

3

Fostering funding and investment opportunities in sector-related areas.



### The commission's scope of work

12

Creating a database for the heritage sector.

11

Licensing sector-related activities.

10

Supporting efforts to develop, protect, generate interest in, and raise awareness of national heritage.

9

Cooperating and coordinating with relevant authorities to support the protection of intellectual property rights in sector-related fields.

8

Developing sector-related educational programs and providing scholarships for talented people in coordination with the relevant authorities.

17

Cooperating and coordinating with relevant authorities to support the protection of intellectual property rights in sector-related fields.

16

Cooperating and coordinating with relevant authorities to support the protection of intellectual property rights in sector-related fields.

15

Cooperating and coordinating with relevant authorities to support the protection of intellectual property rights in sector-related fields.

14

Cooperating and coordinating with relevant authorities to support the protection of intellectual property rights in sector-related fields.

13

Cooperating and coordinating with relevant authorities to support the protection of intellectual property rights in sector-related fields.



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Initiatives and Efforts Results



7

Centers

Handicraft centers around several regions of the Kingdom



4493

Individuals

Artisans registered in the National Register of Craftsmen



28000

Artifacts

Artifacts registered in the National Antiquities Register



1000

Heritage sites

Sites registered in the National Heritage List



5

Historic sites

Sites registered in the World Heritage List



8,268

National heritage

Archaeological sites registered in the National Antiquities Register



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Developing the work environment



Revitalizing and rehabilitating urban heritage is an urgent requirement for countries pursuing to actively contribute to humanity at the cultural and historical levels in a manner that reflects their privacy and identity among other nations.

This process requires the knowledge of accumulated experiences in this vein and professional controls in construction, besides the social, economic, and environmental beliefs and conditions that have prevailed, as these factors directly impact ancient architecture.







# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Developing the work environment



The commission has adopted a training program entitled “Qualifying Personnel in the Field of Urban Heritage Conservation,” which introduces methods of restoration and conservation. This program aims to achieve broad participation of local communities in all areas related to urban heritage, enable these communities to play pivotal roles and share social, aesthetic, technical, and functional knowledge related to urban heritage. Furthermore, it also endeavors to build partners' capacities in this field and train national cadres and competencies to preserve and develop urban heritage.



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Work environment development



The commission believes that a contractor is one of the pillars to achieve successful conservation projects through meeting the highest quality standards in implementation. Accordingly, efforts have been made with the competent local authorities in the Kingdom to include the field of urban heritage as one of the classified fields, which allows improving the quality in the implementation of restoration and rehabilitation works and expanding the scope of participation of local professional competencies. This initiative aims to qualify contractors to work in urban heritage conservation as per local and international standards by classifying them in this field. This initiative intends to achieve the following objectives:

- Evaluating and classifying working contractors.
- Introducing contractors to the important role of urban heritage in preserving cultural heritage and promoting economic development.
- Developing the human and material capabilities of contractors in the field of urban heritage conservation.
- Increasing the number of classified contractors through the initiative to qualify them to work in the field of urban heritage.



# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

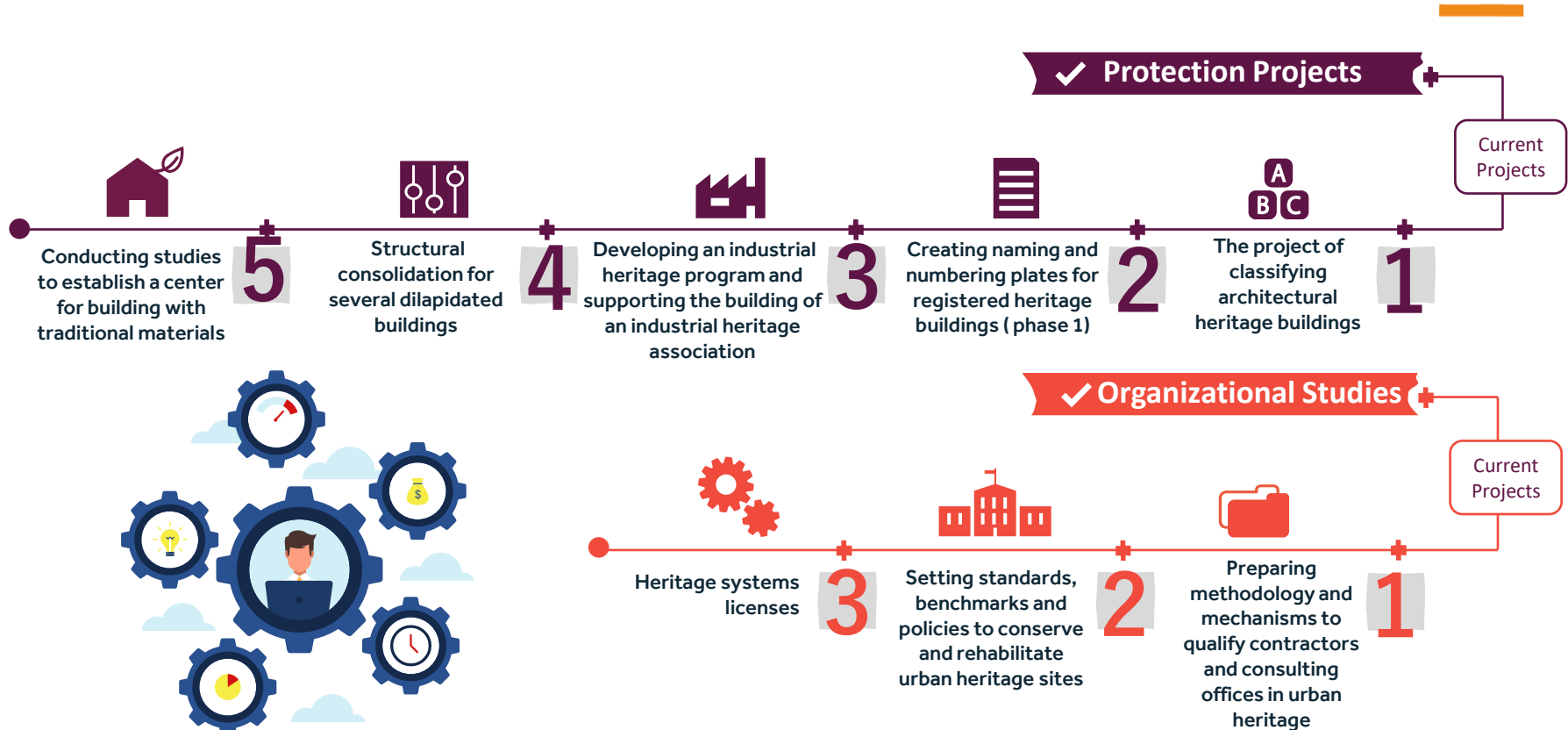
## Projects





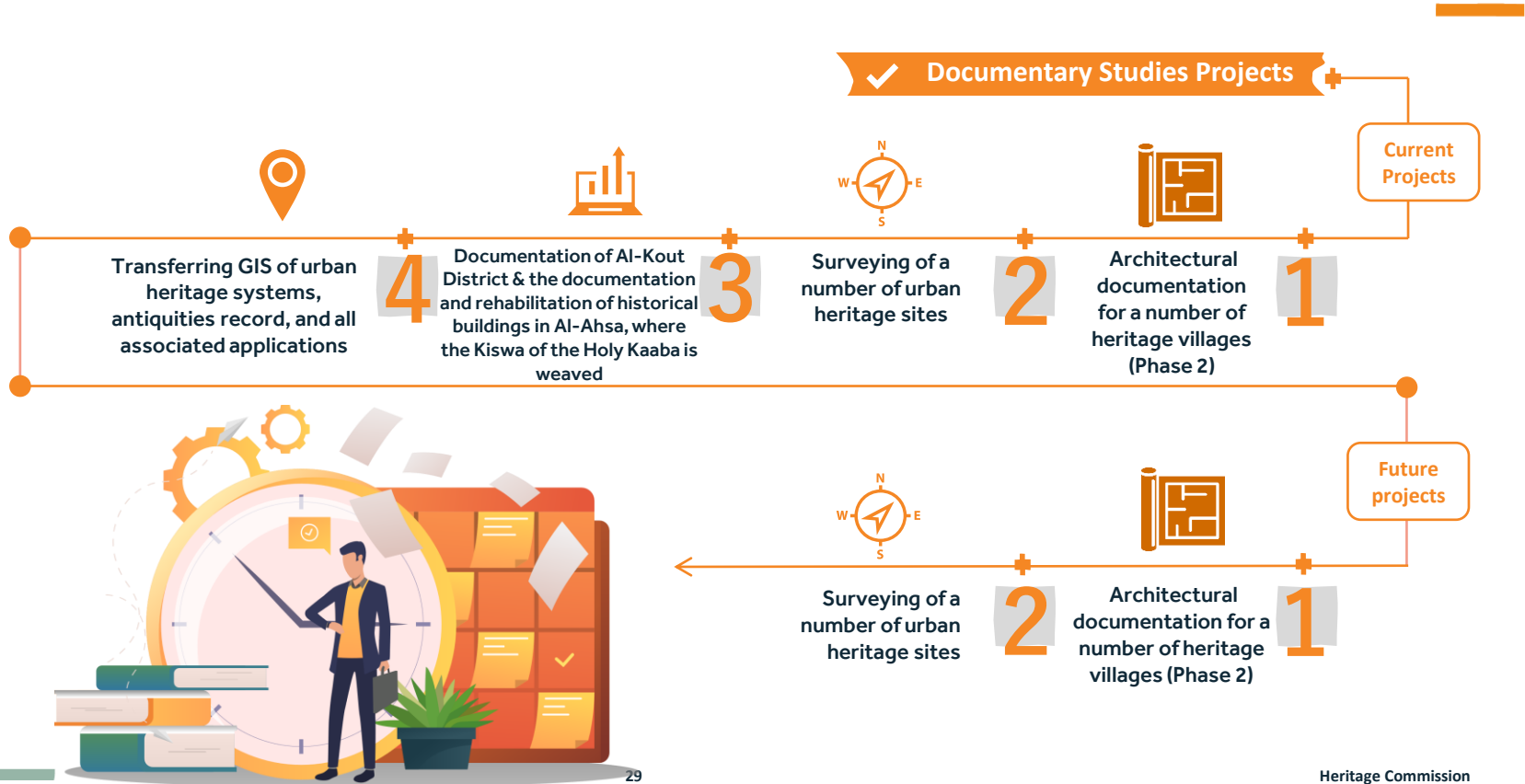
# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Projects





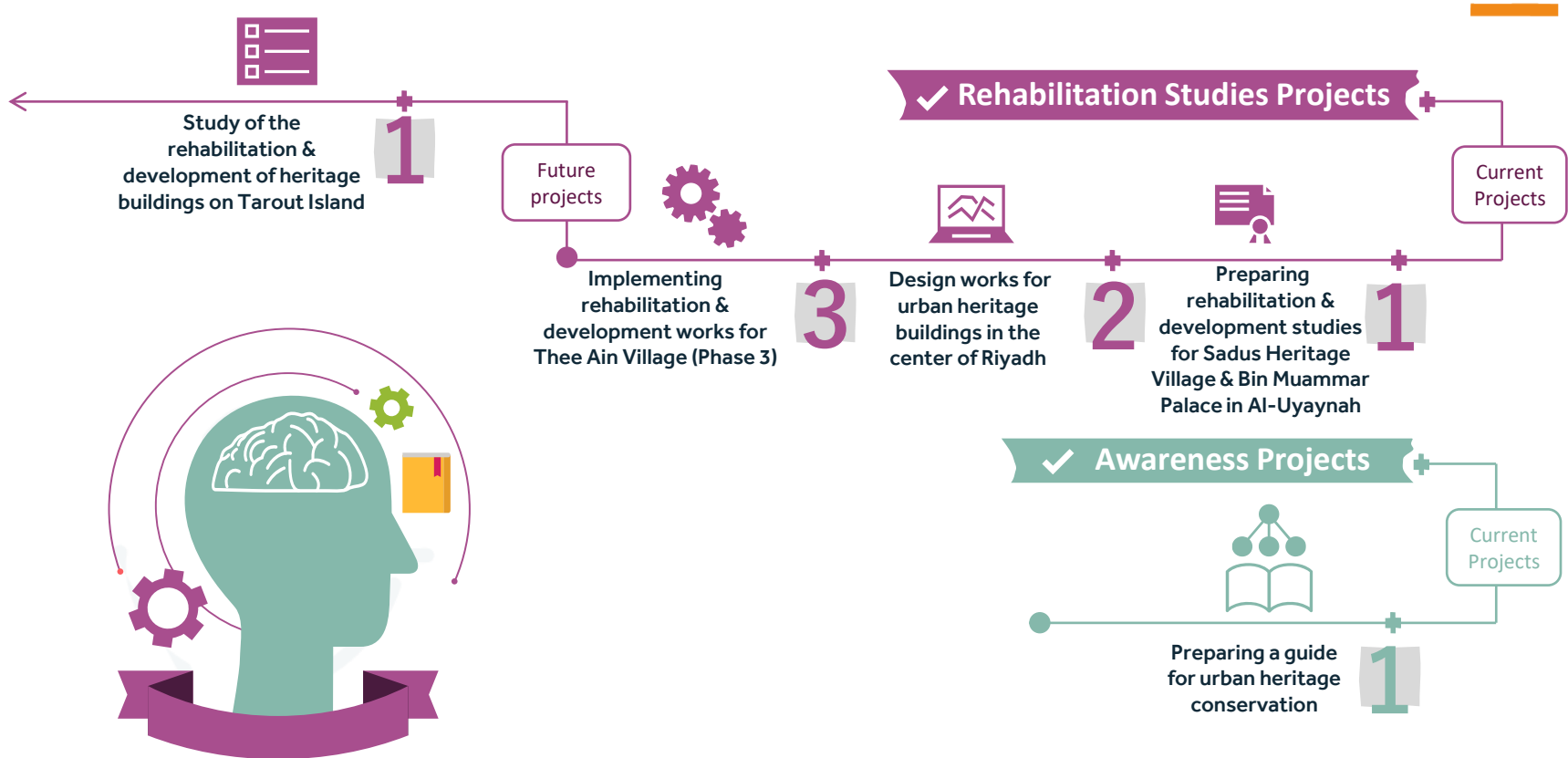
# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia Projects





# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

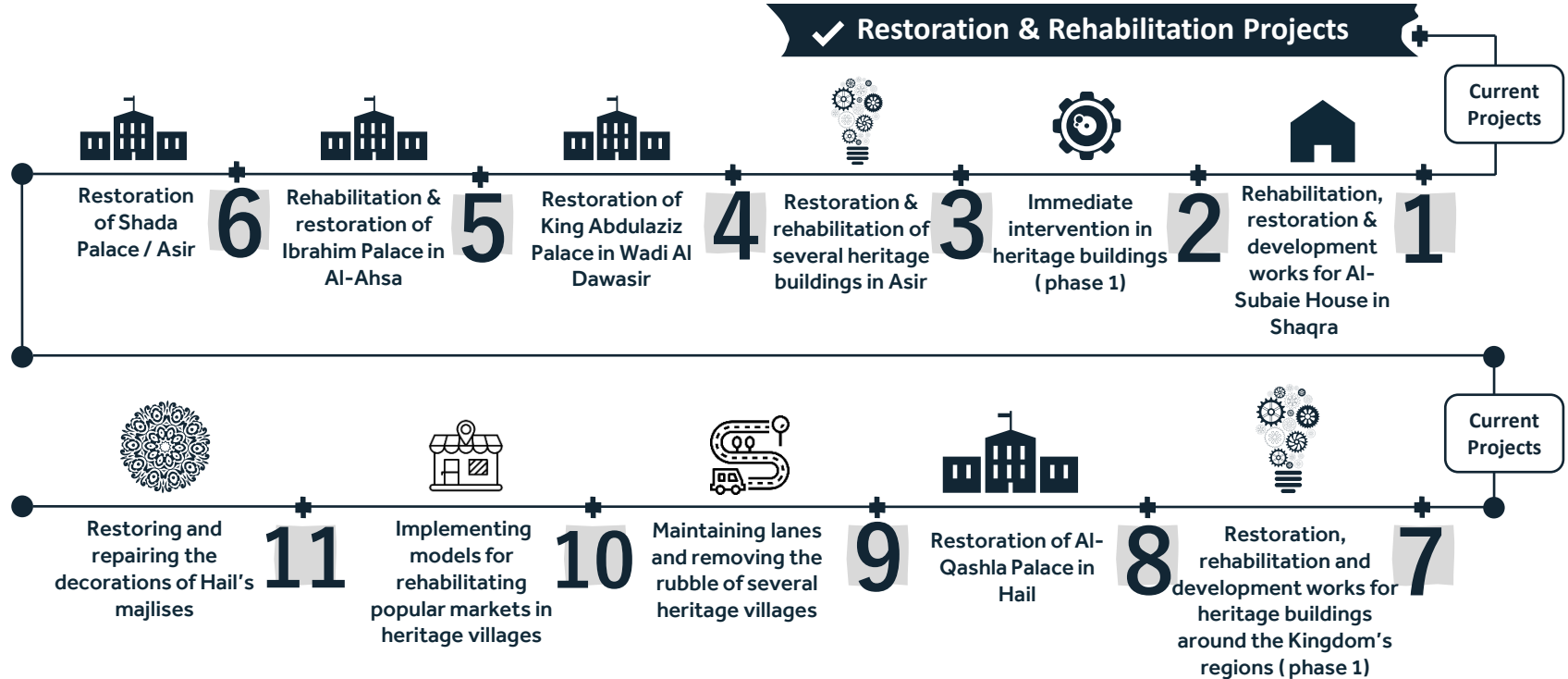
## Projects





# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

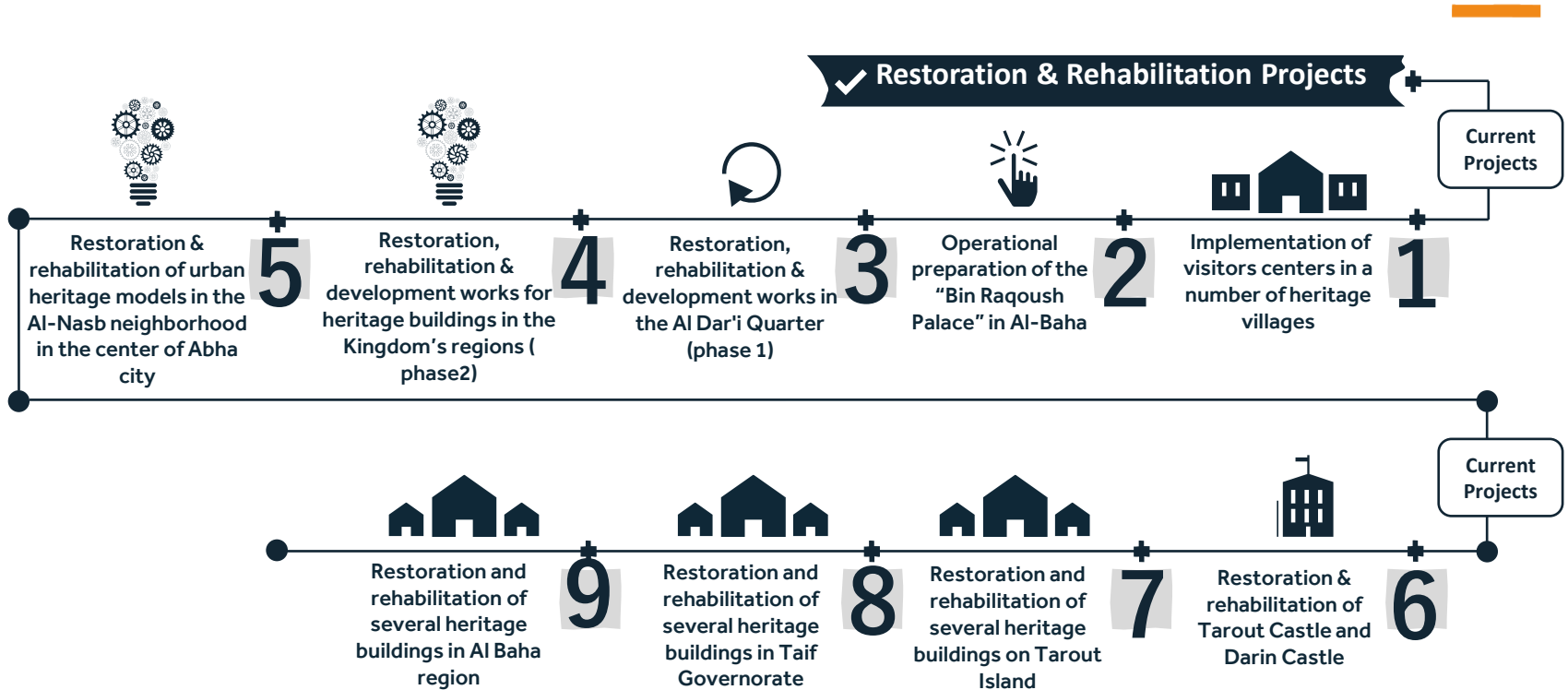
## Projects





# Efforts to Preserve Urban Heritage in Saudi Arabia

## Projects







# Conservation Efforts to Restore Archaeological Sites

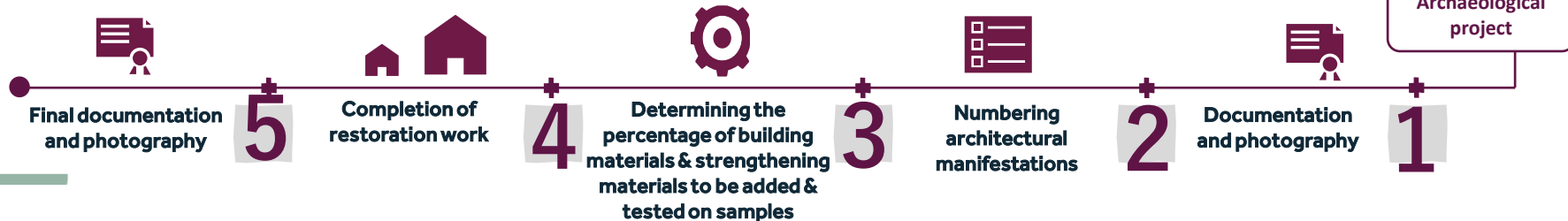
## First: Repair and restoration of archaeological sites



### Restoration of archaeological sites & buildings

Several archaeological excavation projects are implemented in cooperation with a number of local and international scientific institutions, which reveal archaeological architectural manifestations that require repair and restoration, taking into account the scientific principles and standards of restoration and carrying out preventive maintenance of archaeological manifestations and periodic follow-up on their status.

### ✓ Scientific Principles of Conservation





# Conservation Efforts to Restore Archaeological Sites

## Examples of restored archaeological sites

### Fayd Archeological Site - Hail region

This is one of the projects of the Heritage Commission in cooperation with the Department of Archeology at the University of Hail, in which archeology students are trained in the field. Strengthening and restoration works have been carried out on some of the discovered architectural structures, such as housing units, columns and the mosque.

### Al-Bidaa Archaeological Pond - Tabuk Region

It is one of the archaeological ponds supplying pilgrims with water on the Egyptian pilgrimage route in the northwest of the Kingdom. Its collapsed parts, represented by some walls and stairs leading to the bottom of the pond, have undergone restoration works.





# Conservation Efforts to Restore Archaeological Sites

## Second: Repair and restoration of archaeological findings and artifacts



### Restoration of archaeological artifacts

- The archaeological findings undergo preliminary procedures of treatment and repair in the site or the underwater cultural heritage site after sorting, classifying, documenting and recording their initial information.
- Findings are then transferred to the main laboratories to complete the process of mechanical treatment, chemical solution cleaning, numbering, restoration and strengthening.
- The status of antiquities is constantly monitored through periodic and preventive maintenance of artifacts displayed in museums or kept in warehouses designated for preserving artifacts.



## Examples of Restored Artifacts

### Shuaiba Treasure- Red Sea Coast

A collection of Islamic coins dating back to the period 1235-1250 AD, extracted from a shipwreck near the Shuaiba port in the Makkah region, and they have undergone repair and restoration processes.

### Restored pottery jars - Ras Al-Sheikh Hameed site

A spherical piece of pottery covered with coral reefs and salts, found in a marine area and has been repaired, restored and maintained.





وزارة الثقافة  
Ministry of Culture



## Diverse models

The archaeological excavation projects are hardly devoid of pottery, metal and other finds that are repaired, restored and later studied and published in scientific research in order to become suitable for museum display.

In general, the restoration process carried out using natural materials and ones that have properties close to the antiquity's original materials aims primarily at treatment and maintenance so that the sites or artifacts do not lose their archaeological nature, with the need to distinguish between the added and original parts.



وزارة الثقافة  
Ministry of Culture

هيئة التراث  
Heritage Commission



Thanks