

“HAKODATE★monozukuri Forum” Architectural Competition 2014

< OBJECTIVE >

Centennial Inquiry

This is the 3rd Architectural ideas competition organized by **HAKODATE★monozukuri Forum**. The subject is the renovation of the Old Russian Consulate including its building site, which is located at Funami-cho, Hakodate City. And we invite ideas for utilization to maintain the building.

In 1855, the Shogunate opened Hakodate Port to foreign ships. After Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Japan and Russia was signed, the first Russian Consulate was established here in Hakodate. The site of the consulate changed several times in this city and, in 1906, the present building has built on the top of a steep slope named Saiwai-zaka overlooking the Hakodate harbor.

The construction of the consulate was interrupted by the Russo-Japanese War, and the Great Fire of Hakodate burnt it down only a year after its completion. But it survived and continued its consular functions through the Russian Revolution, engaging in the Japanese-Soviet relations until it was finally closed down in 1944, for 38 years. After it was closed down, the building and its site were placed under the jurisdiction of Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1952. 12 years after that, Hakodate City Government purchased the building and its site in 1964. From the following year until 1996, for about 30 years, the former consulate was used as a seminar house for young people.

The selection of the architect to design the consulate was started in 1902. The candidates were Josiah Condor from Great Britain, Richard Seel from Germany, and Captain Yazykov from Russia. These three architects presented their own designs. The results of the consideration the Seel's design was selected as best plan. His design was based on a northern Europe style known as half-timbering, but also incorporated elements of the early Art Nouveau with a hint of jugendstil style. It was an innovative design.

Although the original building was lost unfortunately due to a fire a year after its completion, a Japanese master carpenter Makoto Sato faithfully reconstructed it to its original form within just 1 year. Since its reconstruction in 1908, this building has watched over the history of this city from same place for more than a century.

The design of exterior walls shows not only solid half-timbering style with heavy wood frame and brick, but also delicate decoration of Art Deco. In addition to this, the oriental canopy at main entrance was designed by Japanese artisans. The design combining other different styles like this is very unique and valuable. It is something that Hakodate can be proud of as a world-class architectural masterpiece.

This historical building that went through the tempestuous era of the early 20th century ended its role altogether in 1996. It has been closed for 17 years till now except for occasional observation tours. Hakodate City Government repaired the exterior walls in 2001. However, the long period of disuse caused serious damage to this building.

Many other historical Buildings in our city are also facing the similar problem of deterioration and urgent need of repairs. Although some effective methods for their operation and maintenance have been discussed by both the public and private sectors, drastic and practicable solutions are yet not be found.

With these considerations in mind, we Executive Committee would like to state the objective of this competition as **Proposals for effective way to utilize, preserve and maintain the Former Russia consulate**. And we invite the ideas from all over the world.

This Former Russia consulate was built to be a stage for diplomatic activities and promoting friendly relations between Japan and Russia. And it has become an important monument has watched over the varied scenes of both countries as a spokesperson of history.

How can we preserve the Old Russian Consulate, one of the most important historical sites of Hakodate, and pass its valuable heritage to the next generation until 100 years furthermore?

In your answer to this question, please explain the best way to preserve it by architectural method.

We are looking forward to receiving answers from all-around designers and architects of the world.