

ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: The Role of Geoparks in Expanding Cities: A Protection Model for Hyderabad's Endangered Rockscapes

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This creative project proposes India's first Geopark in Hyderabad, with the aim of protecting the city's Archaean-era geologic heritage. The landscape intervention will contribute to Hyderabadis' increased physical and emotional engagement with the city's Genius Loci. The intent is to inspire environmental stewardship through a greater literacy of Hyderabad's granitic landscape and unique rock-ecosystem. These goals are aligned with the UNESCO-supported Global Network of National Geoparks' emphasis on Conservation, Sustainable Development and Community Involvement.

To achieve these goals, the work on this project consisted of researching geology, geomorphology and ecosystems of Hyderabad, urban spatial growth trends impacting loss of the city's rocky landscape, and the city's cultural integration with the natural environment. Design frameworks are provided by investigations of notable landscape architecture precedents, conserved natural heritage in various countries and unique granitic landscapes worldwide.

The site was selected through a rigorous process informed by three criteria: recommendations of a non-profit organization, the Society to Save Rocks; Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority's 2031 Master Plan for Greater Hyderabad; and a critical analysis of the urgent urban threat to select boulder sites in Hyderabad. The originally selected 400-hectare Venkateshwaragutta site was expanded to 600 hectares to encompass natural systems in the vicinity that include a stream corridor, natural lake, and municipally conserved forest areas.

The challenge in designing this Geopark was to successfully integrate the site's existing dichotomous land uses – a religious temple and a master-balancing reservoir located on its tallest hill. The proposed solution achieves this project's goals through an interpretive center communicating best practices in geology-ecosystem conservation, a spiritual complex with a temple flower garden, and recreational trails. The Geopark promotes scientific scholarship and conservation of Hyderabad's distinctive rock landscape and habitat.