

# Redevelopment of Chandni Chowk, Shahjahanabad, Delhi

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The Chandni Chowk, one of the largest and oldest markets of the Walled City in Delhi is currently being remodelled by the Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation (SRDC), the nodal agency executing the Chandni Chowk pedestrianisation and redevelopment project. Structure of this column flows from Shahjahanabad's evolution from Mughal Empire to current Master Plan for Delhi-2021, constitution of SRDC and the status of Chandni Chowk pedestrianisation and redevelopment project.

## Shahjahanabad's Evolution

Old Delhi / Purani Dilli / Shahjahanabad, the Seventh City of Delhi was founded by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, who laid its foundation in 1639 and it was completed in 1648. Shah Jahan located on the western bank of the River Yamuna and it was near Silk Road. The city became a self-contained walled city with mansions of nobles and members of the royal court, common people, along with markets, religious buildings and magnificent gardens. Shahjahanabad remained the capital of the Mughal Empire until its fall in 1857, when the Britishers took over as supreme power in India. Its condition deteriorated, and quality of life also degenerated, and Britishers started developing new habitats further south-west. Old Delhi still has magnificent built heritage with splendour architecture, rich cultural heritage, traditional art, craft, bazars, cuisines, etc. All these contribute to area's potential as a tourist destination of national and international tourists.

The main axes of Shahjahanabad were the two major boulevards connecting the fort to the city gates, important one was Chandni Chowk/'Moonlit Square' running from the Lahori Gate of the Fort to the Fatehpuri Masjid (mosque) (Map 1). Chandni Chowk road was forty yards wide and contained 1500 shops of a uniform design. Second major boulevard was Faiz Bazaar running north-south from the Akbarbadi gate of the Fort to Delhi gate. These two main axes had well stocked shops of even imported goods. Many other markets flourishing since the time of Shah Jahan are Khari Baoli, Dariba Kalan,

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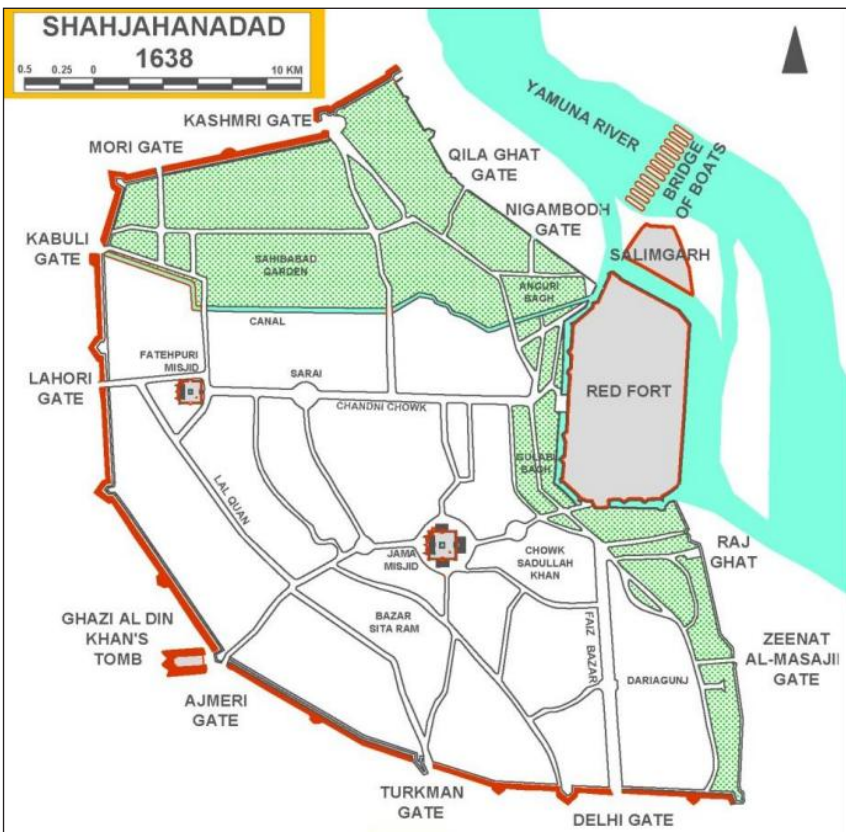
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Chawri Bazar, Daryaganj, Urdu Bazar, Nai Sarak, Churi Walan, Sadar Bazar, Ghantelwala street etc. A few wholesale markets which opened in Colonial time period were the hardware market in Chawri Bazar in 1840; dry fruits, spices and herbs market at Khari Baoli, in 1850; Phool Mandi (Flower Market) of Daryaganj in 1869.

Havelis reproduced a scaled down version of the Palace complex and were self-contained. These Havelis with their spill-over dependants building around them formed the nucleus of the residential areas. Several locality names (Teliwara, Malliwara, Katra Nil, Farash khana, Ballimaran, Khari Baoli, etc) have survived till date.

Shahjahanabad is fast changing its residential character to non-residential use, but still has a residential component. The non-residential uses of varying degrees have developed with time depending on their location, related with accessibility and the established trade.

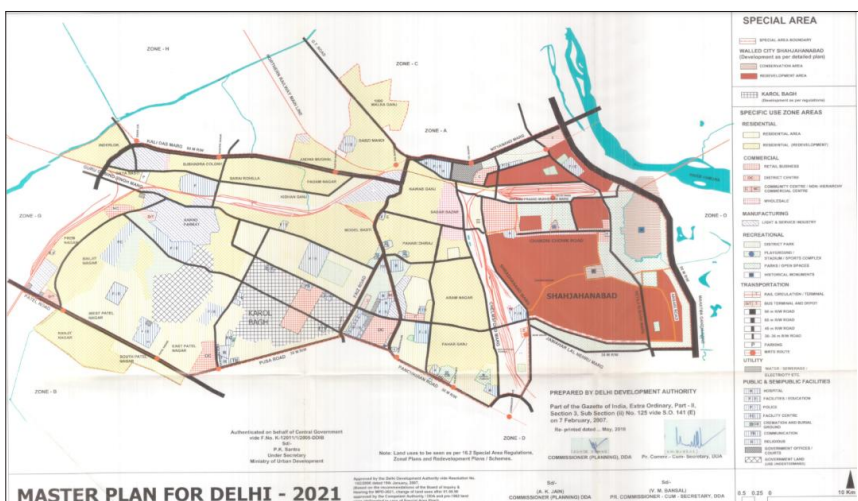
Map 1. Shahjahanabad



Source: [http://www.kamit.jp/02\\_unesco/20\\_delhi/xcityp\\_eng.htm](http://www.kamit.jp/02_unesco/20_delhi/xcityp_eng.htm)

Vision of the Master Plan for Delhi (MPD)-2021, approved and notified by the Central Government on 7th February 2007, is to make Delhi a global metropolis and a world-class city, where all the people would be engaged in productive work with a better quality of life, living in a sustainable environment. Of the 8 objectives formulated two most relevant to Old Delhi are to preserve Delhi’s heritage and blending it with the new and complex modern patterns of development; and doing all this within a framework of sustainable development, public-private and community participation and a spirit of ownership and a sense of belonging among its citizens. The Plan will continue till the MPD-2041 is notified. MPD-2021 recognizes Shahjahanabad as a component of Special Area comprising of Zone-A (Walled city) consisting of Sub-Zones A-13 to A-26, A-28 (i.e. part of Railway Station and Railway Yard) and Sub-Zones C-1 (Map 2.). The Special area is usually characterized by a mix of different land uses and have similarities in compact built form, narrow circulation space and low-rise high-density developments, mainly accommodating residential, commercial – both retail or wholesale and industrial uses. The plan proposes that ‘Special Development Plans’ be formulated for these notified buildings and precincts, by the agencies concerned with the protection of Delhi’s built heritage such as the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD), Department of Archaeology, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), Cantonment Board and Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

**Map 2. Special Area having Shahjahanabad as Redevelopment Area**



Source : SRDC, GNCTD 2015, Revitalization of Shahjahanabad =Project Concept Proposal

The Zonal Plan A and Part C identified Areas of Conservation i.e. for conservation of monuments/buildings within the Walled City of Shahjahanabad. The population of the walled city declined steadily from 0.42 million in 1961 to 0.25 million in 2001 (MPD-2001) to 0.16 million in 2011. This has been mainly due to movement of people away from the central core. This was, however, accompanied by a reverse process of increase in the other activities and working population, which had further put pressure on civic amenities and cultural heritage of walled city. In absence of heritage bye-laws or Conservation Management Plan (CMP), various old Havelis have been turned into workshops or manufacturing industries for various products, like legalized handicraft industries, as well as dangerous chemical which can cause fires and accidents in the dense settlement. With improved accessibility of MRTS, this area has become more prone to commercialization.

### **Constitution of Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation**

The idea of revamping Chandni Chowk first came up in 2004 and after four years, in 2008, the then Hon'ble Chief Minister of Delhi, Mrs. Sheila Dikshit, constituted a special purpose vehicle, Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation (SRDC).

The initial mega facelift project was to be built across 550,000 sq.ft comprising of 24 buildings that include an emporium, a museum, a sacred kitchen, a Vedic library, a centre to store ancient scriptures, a city gallery, and a food court – all built around the temple that is visited by about seven million pilgrims annually. Phase I of the project comprising of facelift of Chandni Chowk, Phase II of the project involves façade improvement of buildings along the 1.5km-long Chandni Chowk main market and the improvement of six adjoining roads namely Nai Sarak, Bali Maran Road, Gali Qasim Jan Road, Rodgran Road, Farash Khana, and Lal Kuan Main Road.

Chandni Chowk redevelopment project, was approved in August 2018 and work commenced in December 2018 with completion target of March 2020. The project got delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic, and its deadline was extended twice - December 2020, April 2021. Finally on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Delhi, Sh. Arvind Kejriwal, dedicated the revamped stretch to the public, and announced that the entire area will be transformed into a tourist hub and street food joints will be allowed to operate till midnight.

### **Status of Chandni Chowk pedestrianisation and redevelopment project**

In the Phase I of the project 1.4 km stretch of the Chandni Chowk market has been redeveloped with following features :

- “no traffic zone” for motorised vehicles between 9 am and 9 pm,
- pedestrian-friendly corridor with 2.5 metre wide footpath,
- dangling wires have gone underground
- 197 electric poles and 124 CCTV cameras installed
- facilities like unisex toilets, water ATMs and dustbins for pedestrians to walk without inconvenience
- ramps for people with disabilities, also has tactile flooring to make it ‘divyang’ friendly
- red granite stone, decorative lights, plants and street furniture makes it beautiful and aesthetically appealing
- Four earthen and sandstone signages have been installed on which information has been given in Hindi, English, Urdu and Punjabi.

In addition to redevelopment of the Chandni Chowk stretch, the transformation of the whole area to a tourist hub for tourists coming for heritage shopping, food and tourism destination. The parking project was conceived in 2013, and in 2018 City court pulled the North Delhi Municipal Corporation for the project’s delay. NDMC floated the multi-level parking project on PPP mode and Omax Ltd was awarded the project. Chandni Chowk, being one of Asia’s largest and busiest wholesale and retail hubs, had insufficient parking in the form of Gandhi Maidan parking, situated adjacent to the Chandni Chowk Metro Station, which could accommodate only 650 cars. The multi-level parking cum commercial project spread over 4.5 acres will accommodate 2100+ cars and 81 tourist buses in five floors of parking – 3 underground and 2 over-ground and three floors dedicated for retail spaces and a food court. The corporation gave September 2021 as the deadline but there has been a delay as construction work halted due to Covid and further deadline extended to January 2022. The facility will benefit traders in nearby markets such as Chawri Bazar, Kinari Bazar, Khari Baoli, Nai Sarak and Dariba Kalan.

After the completion of Phase I of the project, PWD was scheduled

to begin the work for the Phase II in December 2021 but, got delayed due to lack of funds. In Phase II, all buildings on the 1.4-km Chandni Chowk stretch will get a facade uplift. Further, apart from the restoration of facades of the aged buildings on the boulevard, the internal lanes in the areas like Ballimaran, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Road, Netaji Subhash Road and the precincts of Jama Masjid will be restored. (Oct 23, 2021,

In 2020, PWD had proposed to make the Chandni Chowk stretch greener having only 90 trees, by planting 150 native ornamental trees. In August 2021, Hon'ble Minister for Urban Development, Sh. Satyendar Jain, approved the ITC group proposal of plantation in the Chandni Chowk stretch under CSR initiative.

A recent memorandum submitted to Hon'ble LG of Delhi, Sh. V.K. Saxena, by the residents and shopkeepers of Chandni Chowk, requests for construction of a dedicated fire station; at entry points installation of boom barriers, as per the original redevelopment plan, instead of boulder barricades that obstruct the entry of emergency vehicles; measures to prevent waterlogging; dedicated rickshaw stands; more public toilets for women; and extension of timings for commercial vehicles to load and unload goods. Various stakeholders - government, public and private need to work together to maintain the features of the revamped Chandni Chowk intact.

This article is based on Revitalization of Shahjahanabad = Project Concept Proposal of GNCTD, 2015, MPD-2021 and articles from various e-newspapers.