


Chapter 12

Towards Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Streetscapes: Lessons From Chandni Chowk's Revitalization

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ABSTRACT

Streets are vital to a city's social, cultural, and economic life, serving as public spaces that enable movement and interaction. However, in many cities, including Delhi, streets have been overtaken by vehicular traffic, losing their public and social function. Chandni Chowk, once a vibrant heritage street, is now facing congestion, overcrowding, and a decline in its historic character. Increased commercial activity has further worsened traffic issues and reduced pedestrian safety. This study investigates the challenges faced by Chandni Chowk's streetscape and explores what urban streets should ideally offer. Using 25 evaluation parameters, supported by literature on street design and standards, the research involves on-site observations, interviews, and the application of design guidelines. The study concludes with an analysis of potential design benefits and offers recommendations to revive the street's livability and heritage value.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-2555-2.ch012

INTRODUCTION

A livable urban environment encompasses access to green spaces like parks, gardens, and open areas that provide opportunities for relaxation, recreation, and connecting with nature. Streets are considered important public spaces for people-environment interactions (Liu et al., 2021). It emphasizes safe, affordable, and socially cohesive communities, supported by pedestrian and cyclist-friendly infrastructure, including well-designed walkways, bike lanes, and safe crossings. Additionally, access to essential amenities such as schools, healthcare facilities, and cultural institutions plays a vital role in enhancing urban living (Lee, 2023). The streets of cities are the connecting elements that make urban life possible (Chauhan, 2022). Streetscapes should be designed as a series of orchestrated visual events, guiding (Cullen, 1961). Many cities have employed livability-enhancing urban planning methods and policies, such as mixed-use development, compact city design, and regeneration of underutilized spaces. These initiatives aim to promote lively, inclusive, and sustainable urban environments that satisfy the different needs and ambitions of their residents (Mouratidis, 2017). In terms of livable urban space, attempts have been made in Chandni Chowk to increase people's quality of life while maintaining the area's legacy. The attempts were to improve Chandni Chowk as a living urban space focus on building a more structured, pedestrian-friendly, and culturally rich environment that benefits both inhabitants and visitors (Kamal, 2024).

Every city in the past had a tiny beginning as a colony near or around a body of water and increased in population and wealth through time. It then continued to grow until it became a distinct neighborhood rich in customs and culture. Similar changes have occurred in Delhi with its comparable progression all throughout its development. According to the evidence, seven historical cities have combined to eventually create the megalopolis that is today known as Delhi. Shahjahanabad is one such Delhi city that has withstood the test of time and prosperity. A diverse population and a vibrant economy are still found there. One can see a change in the land's usage from mostly residential to commercial, making Old Delhi one of Asia's biggest wholesale marketplaces, increasing population and poor infrastructure have made the city feel like a slum (Dupont, 2004).

Chandni Chowk, considered as one of the oldest and widely known streets in Shahjahanabad, is renowned for its commercial activities and has long been a popular travel destination for tourists. It is a lane to several significant structures and highlights the historical elements and the distinctive architectural features of the past. Both tourists and residents are drawn to Chandni Chowk by its inherent attractiveness and appeal of the streets, the buildings, and the place (Sarkar, 2022). Figure 1 and Figure 2 elaborates the same.

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