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# Impact Assessment of Public Area Improvement of Dhal ni Pol, Ahmedabad

April 2023

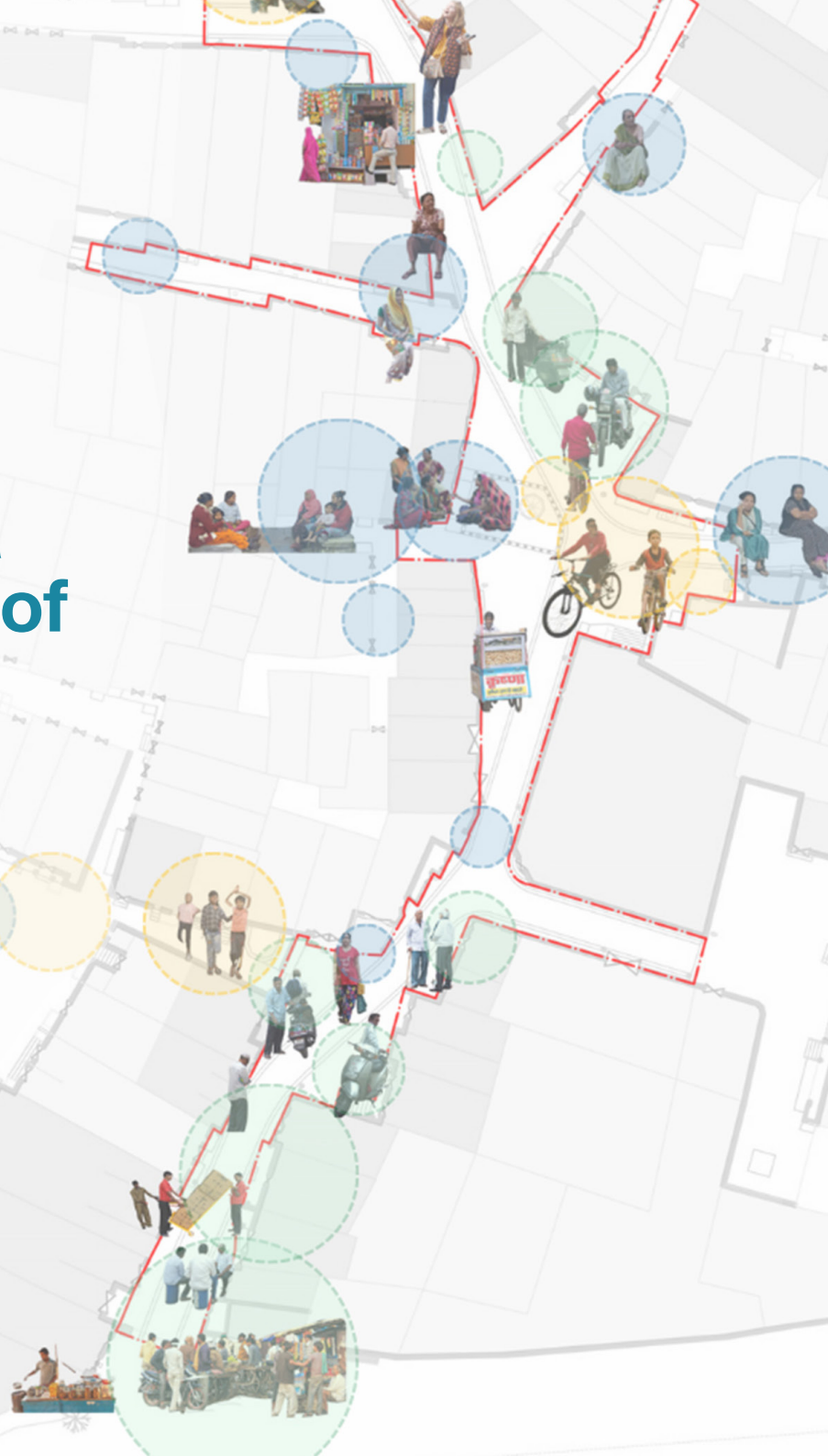
Prepared by

**CITYCOLLAB**

Prepared for



WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH





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An improved street in Dhal ni Pol, Source: MHT



## The Dhal ni Pol Revitalization Project, supported by HDFC is a remarkable example of community-led preservation of heritage and enhancement of public spaces and infrastructure.

Indian cities typically have a historic core characterized by dense networks of streets, traditional houses, markets, living communities, and associated traditional livelihoods and social practices. These historic precincts are often the identity and image of a city. However, many of these areas face neglect and severe urban development challenges, including dilapidating structures, poor housing conditions, deteriorating physical infrastructure, increased congestion and pollution, and an overall loss of heritage value. As a result, revitalization of historic precincts has become crucial to restore the cultural and architectural richness of the cities while also making these “living heritages” more habitable for residents.

The “Revitalization of Dhal ni Pol” was a unique initiative led by the Mahila Housing SEWA Trust (MHT) aimed at improving the physical public area environment and quality of life in a heritage precinct. This initiative serves as an interesting case study in community-led heritage preservation that leveraged Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding and critical support from local government in upgrading infrastructure. HDFC Ltd, through its CSR initiatives, played a crucial role in the project’s success by contributing Rs. 1.25 Cr towards the effort. The project was completed in September 2021 and garnered widespread recognition, inspiring not only other heritage precincts in Ahmedabad but also cities across India. In December 2022, HDFC engaged City Collab to conduct an independent impact assessment study of the project and produce a forward-looking report outlining lessons learned for both monitoring and informing such future initiatives.

## The Walled City of Ahmedabad is of national historical significance with Sultanate period monuments with their multicultural character and traditional urban fabric around main residential streets (pols).

The city of Ahmedabad, commonly known as the 'walled city', is of immense national historical importance. It boasts of Sultanate period monuments, a unique human settlement, and a distinctive land use pattern. The architectural heritage of the historic city is defined by its pur (neighborhoods), pol (residential main streets), and khadki (inner entrances to the pol). The Pols of the walled city are home to a myriad of classic courtyard homes, Havelis, Chabutaras (bird feeders), and other structures showcasing traditional craftsmanship. Majority of the buildings in the Pols are over 100 years old, some even 300 years old. The city's historic urban structure is a perfect example of multicultural co-existence as it houses institutions belonging to different religions.

This blend of cultures along with the city's rich architectural heritage led to its selection on UNESCO's World Heritage City list in 2017. Along with the nomination dossier, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation presented a Heritage Management Plan for the Historic City of Ahmedabad that envisages a holistic conservation approach for the enhancement of the site's Outstanding Universal Value, preservation of its integrity, improved quality of life, and sustainable economic development. The Dhal ni Pol project serves as a prime example of how the Heritage Management Plan can be effectively implemented within a heritage precinct emphasizing following key aspects:







Built Fabric of Dhal ni Pol, Source: Rahul Singhvi





A map of Dhal ni Pol, with the identified area for revitalization project.

**Dhal Ni Pol is a dynamic lived-in community with rich architectural and cultural heritage. It is facing severe challenges of congestion, deteriorating infrastructure, poor housing conditions, and a loss of heritage value.**

Dhal ni Pol as reflected in its name is ‘settlement on a slope.’ It is historically significant as it is located on a mound that is considered the genesis of Ahmedabad. Exhibiting different architectural styles of various eras, it has approximately 81 heritage listed residential structures as identified in the 2014 listing done by Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) with French Haveli, SEWA ni Haveli and Baghban Haveli being some of the prominent ones. Defined by its physical character; it gets its essence from the size, scale, and the intricate details of the buildings that line them. The grand street avenues like Rasik *Chowk* and Fadiya no Chokthu and intimate pedestrian alleyways like Haldar valo khancho, together create an incredible network of street hierarchy. Apart from heritage structures, the living heritage elements like *Otla*, *Chabutara*, *Kunvo*, *Deri*, *Chowkdis*, and paving patterns of streets are also valuable for the overall heritage character of Dhal ni Pol. These elements are the major magnets of public activities throughout the day.

Despite the changes that have occurred in the neighboring areas, it is significant that Dhal ni Pol, unlike a few other pols, has managed to retain its true essence. Yet the challenges of poor housing conditions, deteriorating physical infrastructure and an overall loss of heritage value are apparent. The increasing congestion and lack of modern services has also led to the out migration of families with higher incomes and means and resulting in a large and poor population in the historic core. With the goal of enhancing the quality of life, raising awareness about heritage conservation, and improving women’s leadership skills and socio-economic conditions, the ‘Revitalization of Dhal ni Pol’ initiative was launched by MHT in 2016 in collaboration with the women members of Dhal ni Pol.

# The Public Area Improvement project focused on enhancing public infrastructure and public realm\*, generating awareness on heritage conservation, and improving women's participation and leadership.

\* Public Realm refers to any publicly owned streets, pathways, sidewalks, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities where the public has access.

**250 m**

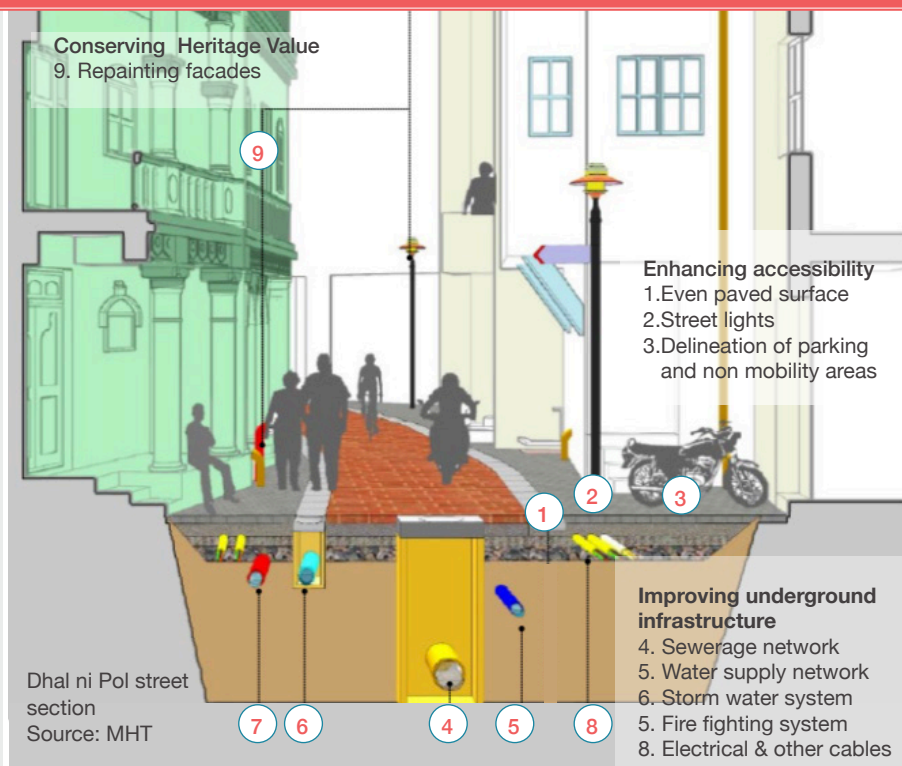
The total length of streets and chowks developed as a model stretch with upgraded infrastructure.

**INR 3.25 cr**

Total project cost incurred by MHT for funding physical improvements, community mobilization, workshops and trainings.

**INR 1.25 cr**

Funding by HDFC towards paving, lighting, facade painting and community meetings.





## 04/ THE PROJECT , ITS APPROACH AND PROCESS

Dhal ni Pol covers an area of about 3 Hectares with numerous *sheris*, *khanchas*, and *Khadkis*. For the purpose of this pilot project, a smaller yet significant section of the pol was selected to improve the public domain. The revitalization initiative aimed to enhance the streets, *chowks*, and the surrounding areas from the entrance gate of Dhal ni Pol to Rasik Chowk, from Rasik Chowk to Jagabhai Chowk, and from Rasik Chowk to Balaji Mandir on the opposite side. This pilot area covered approximately 250m in length, including streets, *chowks*, and *chabutaras*. The primary focus of the public area improvement was on:

### **Improving underground infrastructure**

The underground infrastructure in Dhal Ni Pol was in dire need of improvement, as the existing sewage and water supply pipelines were old and deteriorating. The network had not been replaced since it was first laid in 1921, leading to frequent complaints from residents about issues such as sewage backflow, waterline leaks, and contamination.

Ensuring access to reliable and safe water supply, sewage disposal, and stormwater management systems was a fundamental aspect of the project. MHT collaborated with the AMC's engineering department to lay new sewage, water supply, and stormwater networks using public funds of INR 70 Lakh. The new system was designed to ensure that wet services were laid on one side of the street, with cross-over pipes added to allow for easy replacement or addition of services in the future. A new fire-fighting system was also installed to enhance the safety of the residents. In addition to the wet services, the dry services, including electrical cables for Torrent, telecommunication, and street lights, were laid on the other side of the street. This segregation of wet and dry services will make it easier to maintain and upgrade the underground infrastructure in the future, without disrupting the existing services.

### **Enhancing accessibility and pedestrian friendliness of public realm**

The roads in the Pol have been resurfaced many times leading to them becoming elevated above the level of nearby houses, creating issues with access and water ingress. To address these problems, the first step towards street improvement was the excavation of the road surface to re-level it and bring it down to the level of entrances. The second crucial aspect of the project involved delineating movement and non-movement areas using distinct paving patterns and managing parking to enhance pedestrian safety.

## 04/ THE PROJECT , ITS APPROACH AND PROCESS

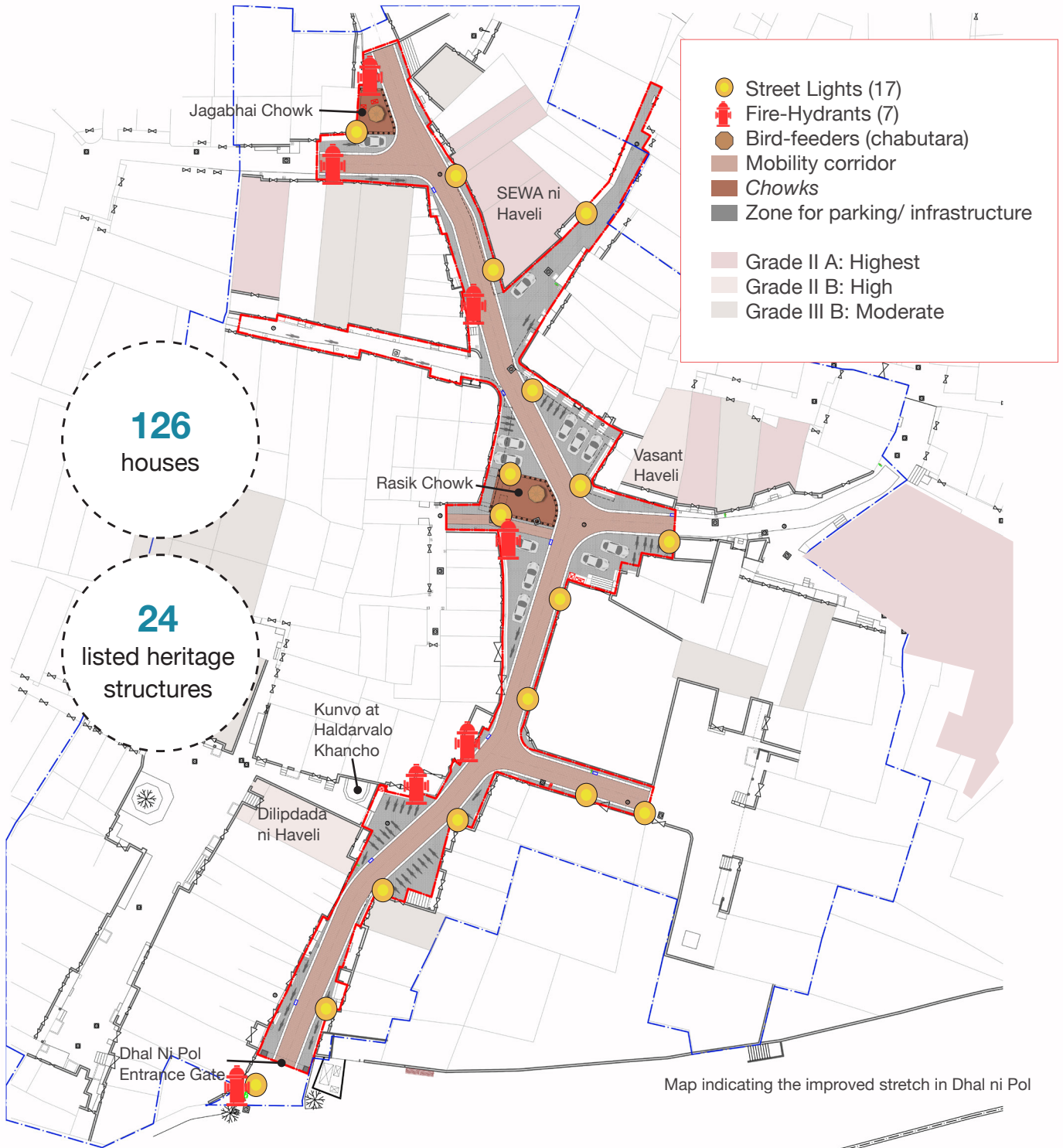
The community was provided with parking stickers for their own use, as well as for their visitors. This helped to create dedicated parking spots throughout the area. The plans also included installation of street lights, benches, fire hydrants, and vending areas in public *chowks* and plazas to improve the functionality and attractiveness of these shared spaces.

### Conserving Heritage Value of the Pol

MHT restored traditional elements, such as the *Chabutara* (bird feeder) and *Kunvo* (well), in order to preserve the identity of the *chowks* in the Pol. The 200-year-old *Kunvo* at Hardarwalo Khancho is a community asset that had gone dry a few years prior. It was restored and refurbished with concrete shoring for structural stability. Percolation pipes were inserted at the bottom of the well, converting it into a ground water recharge well. Additionally, in order to enhance the heritage character of the area, MHT conserved and repainted the street facades around the improved stretch according to conservation guidelines. MHT also conducted several workshops with the community on the government's Heritage Tradable Development Rights (HTDR) policy, which incentivises the conservation of private heritage structures.



*Kunvo* at Hardarwalo Khancho, before and after restoration, Source: MHT



- Street Lights (17)
- 🚒 Fire-Hydrants (7)
- Bird-feeders (chabutara)
- Mobility corridor
- Chowks
- Zone for parking/ infrastructure
- Grade II A: Highest
- Grade II B: High
- Grade III B: Moderate

**126**  
houses

**24**  
listed heritage  
structures

Map indicating the improved stretch in Dhal ni Pol



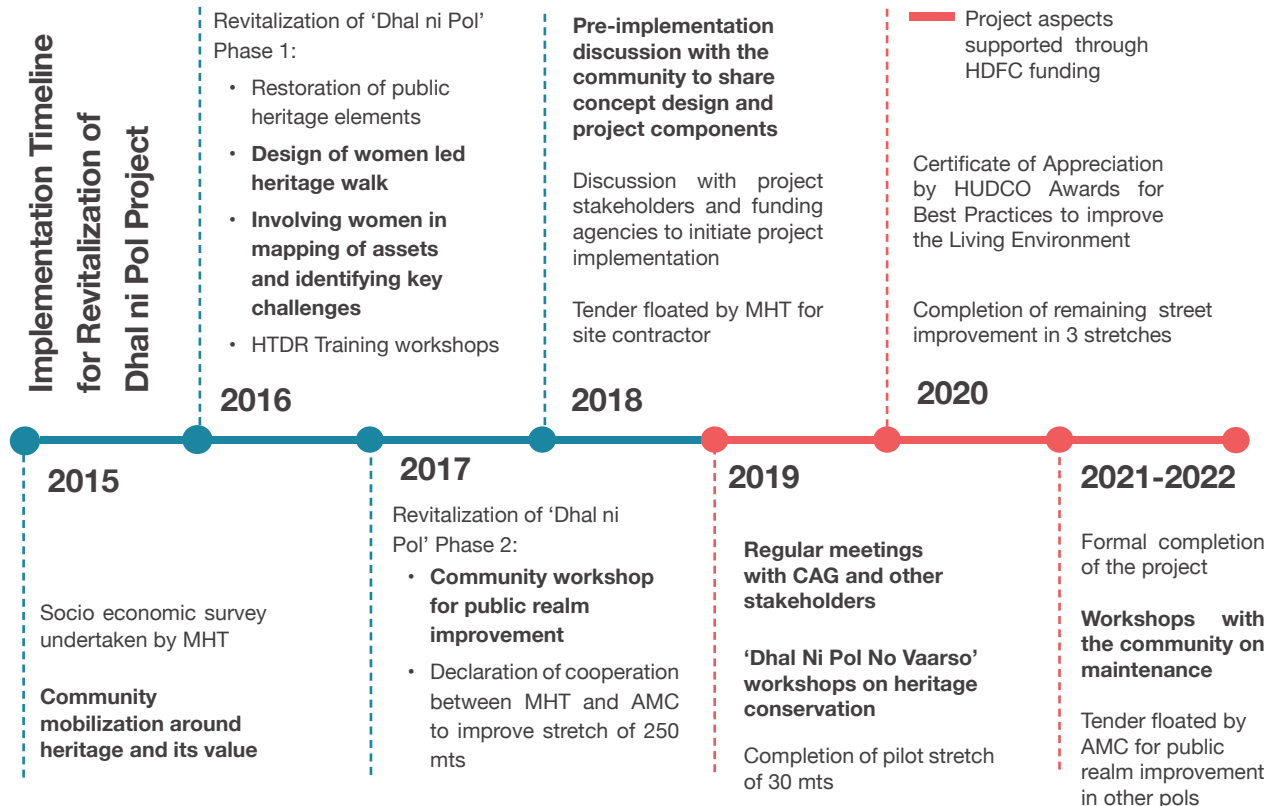
04/ THE PROJECT , ITS APPROACH AND PROCESS



Rasik Chowk and the main street leading to it, before and after restoration, Source: MHT



From its inception, the project was centered around and led by the community. Community members were engaged in key stages of the process; from identifying assets and challenges, to design and construction.







Asset mapping workshop with residents of Dhal ni Pol | Source: MHT



Stakeholder engagement workshop 2 with the residents of Dhal ni Pol | Source: MHT



Residents of Dhal Ni Pol, officials from AMC Heritage Department and consultants of MHT selecting paver design at stakeholder engagement workshop 3 | Source: MHT



The project involved engaging multiple stakeholders who had different levels of influence and interest, and obtaining approvals from various public agencies to build support for its implementation.

The improvements in our community, such as better infrastructure, upgraded roads, and effective parking solutions, are because of our collective action. Project like this requires the cooperation and unity of all residents. Educating and engaging with all members of the community is a crucial role of the Community Action group (CAG).

Preeti ben  
CAG member, Leads the heritage walk in the Pol

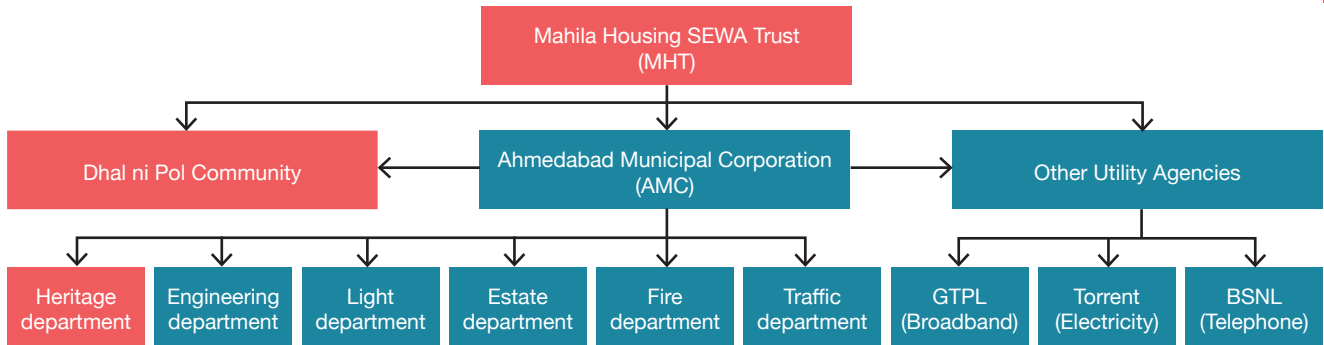
We were skeptical earlier. But now we see the project realized with a lot of tangible benefits. I hope that the momentum is not lost and we are able to replicate it in the entire pol. Currently residents of the unimproved stretch are waiting in anticipation. It will be challenging but we are willing to work together to improve the entire pol.

Purnima ben  
CAG member, Chairman of the CAG

'Dhal ni Pol' showcases how sensitive design interventions can upgrade the conditions in heritage neighborhoods. These are special places and the design and choice of materials needs to reflect the area's historical significance. But in all our efforts, fulfilling the requirements of the local community is critical.

Jignesh Mehta  
Design Consultant, MHT





The project faced initial resistance, but MHT was able to establish trust with community members and implement the pilot stretch improvement. Now with the success of the pilot project, we can secure additional funding for the entire pol and for other similar projects aimed at enhancing the living heritage precincts of Ahmedabad.

Mayur Dave  
Local Counselor,  
Khadia Ward, Ahmedabad

This was a much needed pilot to demonstrate how living conditions can be improved in the old city. But we must recognize the efforts that go into building support of community. Coordination with multiple agencies including the AMC, GTPL, BSNL and Torrent Power was also quite challenging and tedious.

Bijal Brahmhatt  
Director, MHT

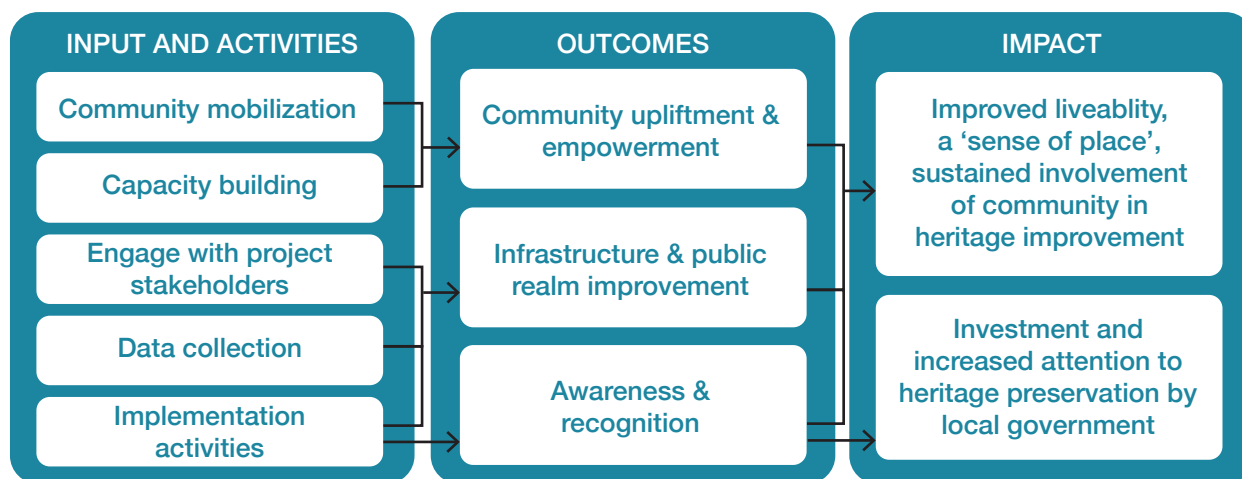
Having a holistic approach to Heritage improvement is important, especially in Ahmedabad which is a World Heritage city now. The old city is complex and requires cooperation of multiple agencies and departments for preservation. The success of the project gives us an impetus to take on the challenge of improving other pols in the city.

Ashish Trambadia  
Director  
Ahmedabad World Heritage  
City Trust, AMC



The evaluation aimed to measure the outcomes and **impact of the project** and **examine the collaboration between the community, NGO, and public agencies that contributed to its success.**

The impact pathway lays out the input, processes and output relationships, objectives, outcomes and targets that were set out and breaks down the resources and processes that went into the project. The study methodology is derived from this impact pathway diagram to evaluate the outcomes and impact of the project and examine the dynamics of the community, implementing actors and city actors and their interactions, in response to the interventions associated with the project. A mixed methods approach was used to qualitatively and quantitatively assess the outcomes and impact of the project. The tools included field research, surveys and discussions with pol residents, as well as in-depth meetings and interviews with implementing partners and key officials at the state and city level.







**A comprehensive review of available documents** was the starting point for the evaluation research. The aim was to gather existing knowledge and insights on project operationalization and processes, as well as outcomes and impact.

**A structured questionnaire captured information including impacts of physical improvements,** maintenance and management, perceptions about heritage and its conservation and, most importantly, the extent and nature of civic participation.

**Visitor interviews are helpful for gathering perceptions and feedback from nonresidents** and business owners who spend time in or pass through a public space. Interviews were constructed with tourists and workers.

**Focus Group Discussions with women leaders** from the community allowed for a deeper understanding of the improvement process, impact of the project on their lives, and more importantly on their leadership skills, voice and agency.

**Interviews were conducted with key people who were involved in the conceptualization and implementation** of the project or had vested interest in the outcomes. They offered valuable insights on the project's success and challenges.

**The goal of mapping-based surveys was to better understand what's happening in the place and the impact of the local area improvement** on pedestrian and vehicular movement, and staying and social activities.

## 01. Accessibility within the precinct has greatly improved. The evenly paved surface and delineation of parking zones have contributed to a more walkable and connected public realm\*.

\* Public Realm refers to any publicly owned streets, pathways, sidewalks, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities where the public has access.

Ranked **1<sup>st</sup>**

Maximum respondents ranked proper alignment of road level and paving as first in all infrastructure improvements.

**92%**

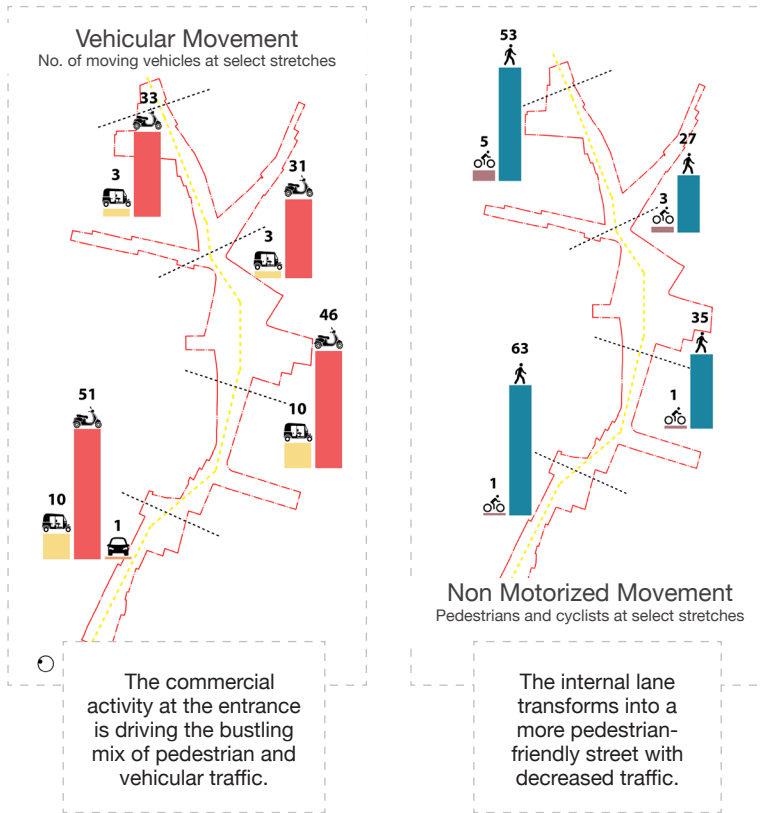
Respondents feel resurfacing the street has achieved ease of pedestrian movement.

**78%**

Respondents feel resurfacing of the street has achieved ease of vehicular movement.



Evenly paved surface and delineation of parking zones at Dhal ni Pol |Source: MHT



**250+**

Pedestrians per hour  
at the entrance stretch  
during evening peak hour  
of 5.00-6.00 PM.

“ Heritage precincts need to be approached as special places. The decision to use paver blocks was guided by the intention to prioritize pedestrians. The paved path indicates that its a ‘shared, slow street’ This is different to the traditional approach of using asphalt or concrete.

Jignesh Mehta  
Design Consultant, MHT

”

“ When parking was haphazard, the pedestrians and vehicles were constantly clashing. Now there is a clear path for movement. For senior citizens, this is so convenient!

Sakshi, 16  
Resident, Dhal ni Pol

”

Changing road levels resulting in sunken access to homes is a big concern in old city areas. The proper alignment of road level, creating a clear movement path and delineating spaces for parking and ancillary activities have contributed significantly to improving the quality of public realm. The high volume of pedestrian traffic (250+) demanded a pedestrian oriented approach to street design. The use of paver blocks in design prioritizes non-motorized movement. At the same time, access to emergency vehicles has improved. Community public spaces like *Chowks* and *Khancho*, that were earlier encroached by parked vehicles have opened up for social activities.



## 02. The integrated approach to upgrading underground infrastructure has resulted in better access and quality of services, improved public health. It will also allow for managing utilities more efficiently.

**INR 70 L**

Worth of investment by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation in upgradation of underground services.

**68.3%**

Respondents feel tangible improvement in drainage related issues .

**61%**

Respondents feel tangible improvement in issues related to water-logging.

A critical component of the project was holistically upgrading underground infrastructure (storm water and sewage lines, water supply, fire-fighting network/fire hydrants), crossover pipes for future connections, and organized conduits for cables – electrical, TV, broadband, telephone etc. Typically, the infrastructure is improved on an ‘as-need’ basis by different agencies, often resulting in frequent disruptions to the street along with time and cost inefficiencies. The project demonstrated a comprehensive approach to public realm improvement, a first in the context of the old city.

“

There is significant improvement in our water quality. The infrastructure was old with corroded pipes. It caused leakages and water contamination. Water logging was also a concern. New pipes and proper networking has solved this major issue.

Narmada ben  
CAG Member, Dhal ni Pol

“

The old city context is very complex with multiple layers of services, each with a different coordinating agency. One of the most important aspect of this initiative was the holistic and integrated approach to area development. It demonstrated that inter-agency coordination is tedious, but possible!

Ashish Trambadia  
Director, World Heritage City  
Trust, AMC

”

### 03. While people recognize the importance of the Pol's heritage and its conservation, **improved living experience and quality of environment is a greater concern for residents.**

## 78%

Respondents mentioned that the project has led to greater pride in their neighborhood

## 63%

Respondents have mentioned that they recognize the importance of heritage and its preservation.

The residents of Dhal Ni Pol not only acknowledge and value the architectural heritage of their community, but also recognize the immense cultural significance of the stories, memories, and traditions that are interwoven into the fabric of their neighborhood. While the recognition of the importance of heritage preservation by residents is a positive sign, daily concerns often take precedence over preserving the area's heritage character. This is particularly true for those in lower income brackets, who may have more pressing needs to attend to. In living heritage areas upgrades to water and sanitation are critical for maintaining the quality of life for residents and preserving the heritage value of the area. This approach acknowledges that heritage areas are not just tourist attractions, but also places where people live and work.

“

After attending 'Dhal ni Pol no Vaarso' session, I have a greater understanding and appreciation of the history and value of my pol, and take pride in being part of this community.

Pushpa ben  
Resident, Dhal ni Pol

“

People care about tangible benefits like improvements to infrastructure. We have to recognize that maintaining heritage properties is cost intensive. We have to provide much greater incentives for people to start taking action.

Bijal Brahmabhatt  
Director, MHT

”

04. The project has **enhanced the social and economic value of the community.** It has attracted more visitors. Women and children feel safer to spend more time in public areas.

**43.9%**

Respondents feel overall safety in the pol has increased. The prime reason cited was street lighting.

**75%**

Respondents reported an increase in visitors and tourist driven activities.

**42.5%**

Respondents reported more children playing in the public spaces.



Women congregating in the improved chowk. Source: City Collab





children

women

men

“

We now feel safe even at midnight when we are standing out, no one feels scared. There is a very significant difference compared to earlier and it looks better now!

Narmada ben  
Resident, Dhal ni Pol

”

“

Earlier I used to hesitate even to enter the pol because of traffic and poor sanitation. And now our pol has become a new hot-spot for wedding shoots!

Jethi ben  
Resident, Dhal ni Pol

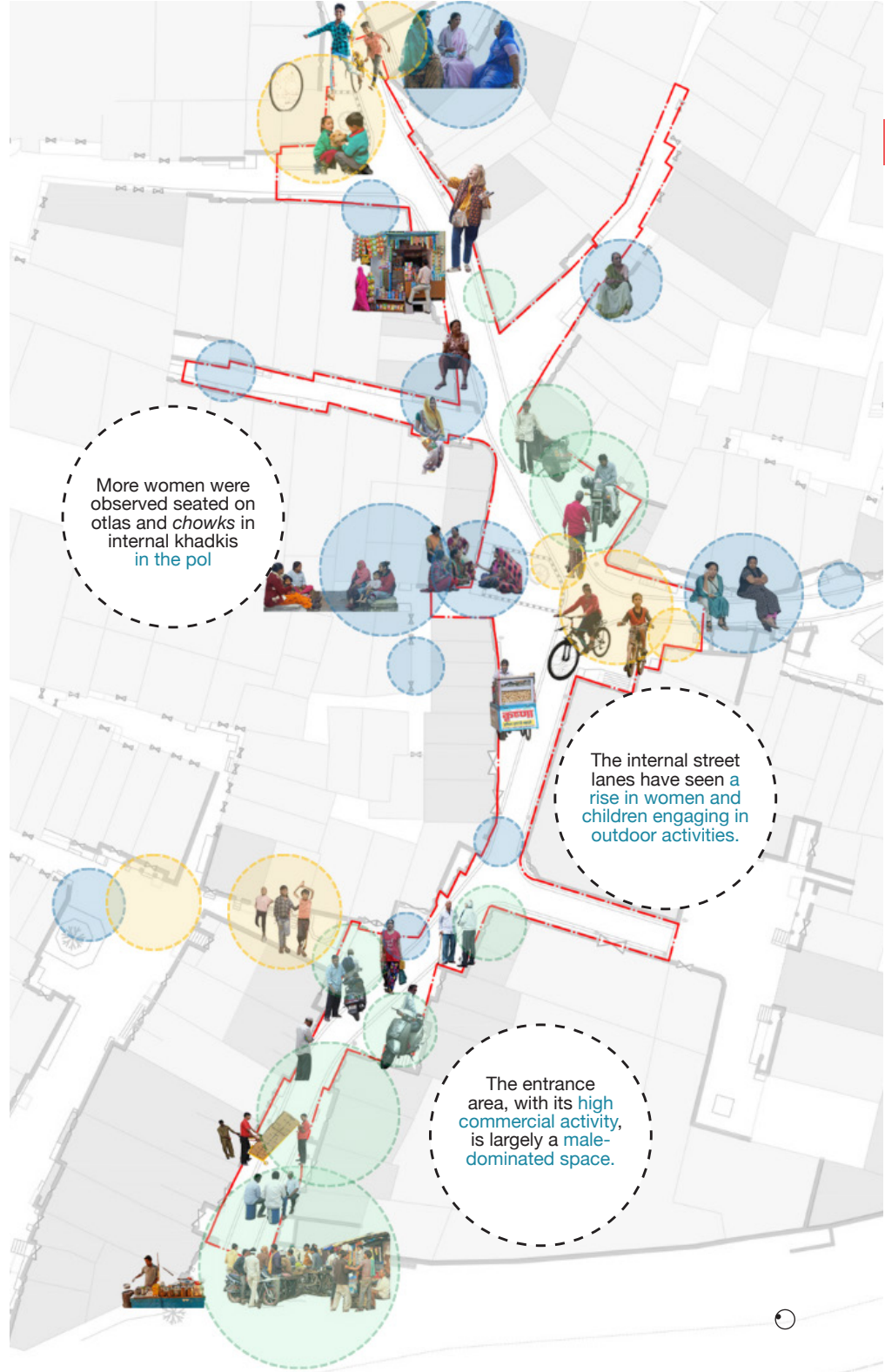
”

“

I like how even at night I feel safe walking in the because there is always activity on the street. People are very welcoming and friendly. Even if someone is giving misdirections or misbehaving, women of the pol come to help.

Olga,  
Tourist from Russia

”



## 05. Women becoming active change agents and asserting their agency to contribute to matters related to community and management of public realm has emerged as one of the biggest impacts of the project.

Women often encounter structural barriers and capacity gaps that limit their participation in local governance activities. Lack of education, networks, and resources impede their ability to become effective leaders. To address this issue, MHT has prioritized the formation of Community Action Groups (CAGs) and the training of women to advocate for better services and assert their collective voice in negotiations with the government. In Dhal Ni Pol, MHT enhanced the capacities of a 15-member group by involving them in asset mapping and workshops, and engaging them in the planning and design process. These women took charge of the entire process of implementing this project, from generating support from community, getting involved in design, to monitoring quality of construction.

“

We were always concerned about gambling and other illicit activities in the pol, but didn't know we can have a voice and change that! I keep an eye on all the activities in the public space now. If I see people engaging in gambling, I confidently ask them to leave.

Narmada ben  
CAG Member, Dhal ni Pol

”

“

I could not speak up in front of strangers, let alone AMC officials. Becoming a member of the CAG has been life changing. I confidently share concerns and issues related to maintenance with AMC officials now.

Preeti ben  
CAG Member, Dhal ni Pol

”

“

It is heartening to see such high participation and engagement of women in the project and in other public matters. The CAG members approached me during COVID to discuss how the government can support the community, after which we initiated the free ration scheme.

Mayur Dave  
Councilor, Khadia Ward, AMC

”

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Women to manage parking in their pols

TNN | Oct 20, 2016, 06:45 AM IST



AHMEDABAD: Parking is a major problem of the city and frequently leads to traffic congestion and conflicts. No wonder, women of the Walled City, one of the city's most congested areas, have decided to manage parking within their pols.

In the run up to the heritage week celebrations in November, women of Dhal ni Pol will regulate and ensure efficient parking in their pol. They will be guided in their endeavour by Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Mahila Housing Trust (MHT) and Centre for Environment Education (CEE).

MHT has created a map of the existing parking scenario in Dhal ni Pol. Around 15 women from the pol have been roped in for the project. They have helped highlight problems related to vehicular congestion in their area.

"Various commercial activities are carried out in the pol," said Ruchi Mehta, a city-based architect and a consultant to MHT.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Pol women restore legacy connect to Ahmedabad kids

TNN | Nov 26, 2017, 11:02 AM IST



AHMEDABAD: Celebrating their own abode – their pol's heritage – women at Dhal ni Pol, took an initiative to not just restore but even promote the heritage sites of their pol. As part of their initiative, 'Dhal ni Pol no Vaarso' meaning the 'Heritage of Dhal ni Pol', a group of women from the pol organized a heritage walk for kids, where women – pol residents – took the kids around the myriad lanes, giving them glimpses of heritage architecture and monuments in their pols. The initiative was facilitated by Mahila Housing Trust (MHT) and Centre for Environment Education (CEE).

"Women of the pol have been involved in conservation of these sites over a three-year period. A century-old tank for rainwater harvesting was recently restored in the Pana Nagar ni Khadki at the pol. That apart, a 'chabutro' – a pigeon tower – was also recently restored by women. The idea behind facilitating this heritage walk is to encourage women to delve into and connect with the heritage of their own abode," said Ruchi Mehta, a city-based architect.

## 06. The design approach of the project aimed to strike a balance between context-sensitive design, community behavior and long-term maintenance, with an emphasis on scalability and replicability.

Designing streets in a complex and densely populated setting is a challenging task. The Dhal ni Pol project was successful in balancing aspects of street geometry, the placement of services, and incorporating sensitive interventions around heritage elements, while also taking into account the concerns of the local community. Locally available pavers were used, which could be replicated throughout the entire pol and other areas, ensuring a consistent look and feel. It was recommended that custom-designed elements, such as light poles and manhole covers, be incorporated into heritage design guidelines to guide future projects and maintain the aesthetic integrity of the area.

“

Certain design decisions like seating areas in *chowks*, waste bins at proper intervals that were part of the plan, were not agreeable to the residents around the improved stretch. They believed that in the absence of a Pol-wide system of waste management, these will become nuisance points.

Jignesh Mehta  
Design Consultant, MHT

”



Street elements that have been incorporated in design guidelines for all pols. Source: MHT





Improved Street in Dhal ni Pol with mobility area parking zone, and interventions around the chabutra and street lights. Source: MHT



## 07. The community is invested in the upkeep and maintenance of the public realm. The women leaders of the CAG, have been specially trained to advocate for and address issues with the local government.

15

Women members of the Community Action Group trained on maintenance and heritage management

80.5%

Respondents noted that overall cleanliness and waste management in the area has improved.

57.1%

Respondents feel MHT has empowered women to lead matters related to improvement and up-keeping the neighborhood.

After one year of implementation, the area that has undergone improvements in Dhal Ni Pol has shown significant progress compared to other areas in the Pol. The precinct is now better maintained and cleaner, with regular waste collection and street cleaning by the AMC. The local community is particularly vigilant about littering and illicit activities in public spaces. CAG members approach the AMC's solid waste and electricity departments from time to time for issues concerning waste management and non-functional street lights. However, community action towards the upkeep of restored public heritage structures has remained minimal.

Additionally, there are signs of damage to street infrastructure in a few places, particularly sunken paving because of uneven soil drainage, damaged bollards and fire hydrants. MHT recognizes these concerns and is working to address them. To ensure long-term maintenance and management, MHT will also initiate a dialogue with AMC to establish systems in place. Overall, the improvements in the Dhal Ni Pol project have been significant, with the community taking ownership. Nevertheless, there is a need for more sustained community action to maintain the public assets.

## 07/ KEY LEARNING AND INSIGHTS



Maintenance issues like sunken paving and damaged bollards observed at some places

“

I received training from MHT about waste management, on importance of heritage structures and how to register complaints with different agencies and departments of AMC regarding maintenance issues. Recently when two streetlights were not working, we brought it to MHT's attention.

PunimaBen  
CAG member

“

We strongly believe in engaging the community in the maintenance of public spaces. The CAGs in several low-income communities where we worked still remain active towards continually improving their communities. However, due to the different demographics of Dhal Ni Pol, it was more challenging to mobilize women in the area and keep them involved.

Bijal Brahmabhatt  
MHT

”

08. The pilot demonstration has provided an **impetus to future heritage improvement projects** in the city. The project has also garnered interest from other City and State Governments.

**INR 10 cr**

Budget dedicated towards Ahmedabad World Heritage City Trust in 2022-2023.

**INR 400 cr**

Worth of new public realm improvement projects in Ahmedabad's walled city in the pipeline (as reported by local Councilor).

**10+**

State and Local Govt. bodies that have demonstrated interest in the project and approach.

The Dhal Ni Pol revitalization project was designed as a pilot to serve as a model for other heritage improvements in the walled city. Following its completion, the AMC has invited contractors to bid on similar projects in other pols. In addition, three heritage municipal schools will be renovated using funds from the School Board. National and state-level bodies, including Niti Ayog, Tamil Nadu Urban Development Department, and Gujarat Institute of Civil Engineers and Architects, have visited the project and learned from its successes. The project and its lessons have also been presented at various high-level committee meetings, conclaves in Kochi and Lucknow, and to senior planners from Uttar Pradesh.

“

The project is a demonstration of a more holistic, community centric approach to revitalization of pols. It has led to a lot of enthusiasm and awareness. In many pols the community has come together to make some regulations for public spaces. There are organizing committees being formed. And future projects to improve public spaces in the pol are definitely in the pipeline. We have floated tenders to invite contractors to carry on similar improvement works in other pols.

Ashish Trambadiya  
Director, World Heritage Trust, AMC

”



## Include Dhal ni Pol in heritage walk: Mahila Housing Trust

TNN / Updated: Nov 19, 2021, 09:28 IST



## Ahmedabad: 3 heritage municipal schools to be renovated

JIGNESH PARMAR / TNN / Updated: Oct 4, 2022, 09:50 IST



## Puducherry learns from Ahmedabad, in bid to get UNESCO World Heritage City tag

CCO CIT cityc

Delegations from Puducherry have visited Ahmedabad twice, to learn about the process of securing a 'World Heritage City' tag; at present Ahmedabad and Jaipur are the only cities in India to make it to the UNESCO list

Close to 40 delegates visit the World Heritage walled city of Ahmedabad on 2nd day of City Sherpa Meeting

Areas of convergence between other engagement groups of the G20 and the priorities of U20 were explored on 2nd Day of the event

Posted On: 10 FEB 2023 7:05PM by PIB Delhi

## Role of MHT was critical to the success of the project. They brought critical skills of community mobilization, navigating local power dynamics and coordinating with multiple design & technical agencies.

71%

Respondents reported MHT played a critical role in building awareness on heritage.

65%

Respondents reported MHT played a critical role in consensus building and conflict resolution.

The unique socio-technical skills that MHT brought to the project were critical. They built knowledge and capacities of local women to engage with decision-making. They led the complex community process of consensus building, of hearing and acknowledging both interested and dissenting voices and keep building support towards implementing the project on ground. They also brought their technical expertise in planning and civil construction to lead project planning, design and costing and coordinate with multiple technical agencies.

“

MHT's role was critical! First, to conceive an integrated project like this and then to secure funding and execute it with complete people's participation at all stages, to explain the project, to hear and address dissenting voices and to garner consensus in favor of the project. Their committed efforts must be applauded.

Ashish Trambadiya, Director  
World Heritage Trust, AMC

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“

Other than the continuous process of building trust between the community and the government, and getting residents' support for the project, the project required us to have a solid technical understanding of materials and construction processes. We also led coordination between multiple agencies and departments to ensure timely execution which was very challenging

Bharti Bhonsale  
Programme Manager, MHT

”

## Dhal ni Pol springs back to life

City NGO Mahila Housing Trust successfully concluded the public realm improvement project at Dhal ni Pol to better the living conditions of the residents and trained them to be the caretakers of city's living heritage

**BEFORE**

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The true heritage of a place survives within its people. This is the message Mahila Housing Trust (MHT) sent across as it successfully spearheaded the revitalisation of Dhal ni Pol, a living heritage of Ahmedabad, declared India's first UNESCO World Heritage City.

As part of the community-centric pilot project, MHT helped restore a 250-metre stretch in the pol as it restored bird feeders, repaired building facades and heritage structures, public toilet, precipitation well, installed firefighting system, stormwater collection system, streetlight network and organised parking spaces, said Lalita Krishnaswami, Trustee, Mahila Housing Trust.

**MHT helped revamp a 250-metre stretch in the pol as it restored bird feeders, streetlight network and organised parking spaces**

—Lalita Krishnaswami, Trustee, Mahila Housing Trust

The technical support was provided by Jignesh Mehta, adjunct professor at CEPT.

The MHT had signed an MOU with Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. The trust has started communication with the AMC to add it in the list of sites to be listed under its heritage walk.

The public realm improvement project of Dhal ni Pol is part of bigger initiative that MHT took up with an aim to improve the living conditions within this pol, because it consists of low-income housing stock.

The pilot project, Public Area Enhancement in the Heritage Precinct of Dhal ni Pol was conceptualised in 2015, together with experts from CEPT university and launched in 2016 after MoU with AMC.

To instil a sense of belonging and pride among residents, MHT also trained women and children of the pol to conduct heritage walk every year through the World Heritage Walk.

"During these heritage walks, the residents themselves would take people around their neighbourhood, explain details about the different structures, the culture in the pol and will gain of heritage."

"In the longer run, the idea behind this project is to incentivise residents for their involvement in restoration and conservation of private structures with heritage value and help generate livelihood opportunities for the community women, by leveraging the heritage value of the pol.

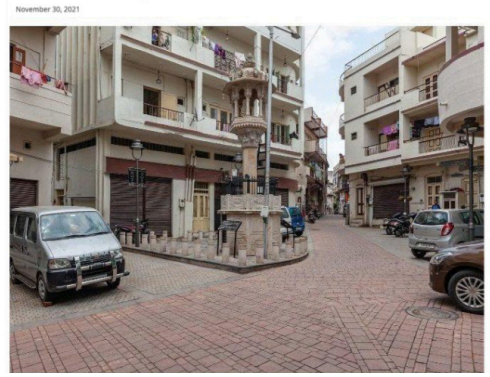
Similar initiatives can be taken up at various pols of Ahmedabad to help revive heritage structures through public, private and community participation," said Bijal Babubhai, Director, MHT.

**AFTER**

The MHT repaired building facades and heritage structures and modernised primary amenities for the residents here

The trust also organised parking spaces in the designated area and instilled a sense of belonging and pride among the residents.

## MHT Demonstrates the Way Forward to Make Living Heritage Liveable Through Revitalisation Project in the Walled City of Ahmedabad



GUJARAT TOP STORIES

## MHT Demonstrates The Way Forward To Make Living Heritage Liveable Through Revitalisation Project At Dhal Ni Pol In Ahmedabad

November 18, 2021 Nichetech Solutions Comment(0)

- Project involved community participation, involvement of municipal, private players to help enhance public spaces in the pol
- It is a step towards reviving heritage value of the pol through participation of women as agents of change

Ahmedabad, November 18, 2021:

Community participation in heritage conservation is the key to keeping the living heritage of country's first world heritage city of Ahmedabad, alive and relevant to the younger generation and to the people at large. Taking this idea forward, Ahmedabad-based Mahila Housing Trust (MHT) demonstrated the way forward to make living heritage – the pols of Ahmedabad – more liveable by spearheading a heritage revitalisation project at Dhal ni Pol.

## Allocating funds to MHT for mobilization and training, and not just infrastructure upgrades, was crucial for building trust with the community and creating a long-term sustainable, positive impact.

Infrastructure upgrades such as restoring buildings, improving public spaces, and enhancing accessibility are undoubtedly important for preserving heritage precincts. However, because of the funding support towards mobilization and training, MHT could involve community in the preservation process. This involvement included education and training for the community on heritage preservation, waste management, advocating with the government, and taking benefit of AMC's Tradable Development Rights (TDR) program to upgrade and restore properties. MHT also involved local artisans and craftspeople in restoration work, and supported community-led initiatives like heritage walks, traditional foods and catering businesses, that promote the preservation of cultural heritage.





**An active involvement of local government is vital for the long term management and preservation of the heritage precinct and the public spaces and public assets that have been created.**

Preserving heritage is not a one-time project. Ongoing efforts and resources are required to ensure that the Dhal Ni Pol precinct remains livable and continues to contribute to the cultural and social identity of the community. To achieve effective long-term maintenance and management, a collaborative effort between AMC and the local community is necessary. Without AMC's participation, it would be challenging to ensure that the public resources and assets created are preserved and utilized effectively for the benefit of the community. To ensure sustained community engagement, continued collaboration with MHT is critical. This collaboration will facilitate regular monitoring and assessment of the precinct's maintenance needs, including repairing damaged infrastructure, cleaning, and waste management.





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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