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Revitalization of Commercial Hub: A Case Study of New Market, Bhopal

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Abstract

New Market, a community level commercial centre planned during 1960's to cater to the development demands of Bhopal - the capital of Madhya Pradesh, presently serves as a central business district. The commercial pressure on this area due to its surrounding, guided its gradual growth to the extent that today, it is facing infrastructural deficiencies thereby creating congestion and conflicts between spaces and activities. While restructuring of the market needs to be taken in to consideration towards its deeply linked social and financial implications underlying user-centric approach, with minimal disturbance to the existing occupational characteristics of the study area, the redevelopment should be taken up in independent parts which ultimately will have a broader impact as a whole. The challenge is to justify the provisions for the users, enhancing the functionality and coping with the progressing alterations within the precinct.



1. INTRODUCTION

Bhopal, state capital of Madhya Pradesh bestowed with scenic beauty, historicity and modern urban planning, is situated on the site of an 11th century city, Bhojpal, founded by Raja Bhoj (ESICON, 2013). Bhopal, is also known as the 'City of Lakes', is divided into two major parts, the old city and the new city. The new city area was developed after Bhopal became a State Capital of Madhya Pradesh in 1956. In the old city most of the residents are muslim, where as, the new city is dominated by hindus.

Bhopal has various institutions of national importance. Some of these include ISRO's Master Control Facility, AIIMS Bhopal, National Institute of Fashion Technology, Advanced Materials and Processes Institute, Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research, School of Planning and Architecture, Indian Institute of Forest Management, and National Law University. As a result large number of young population migrates to Bhopal from the different states of India.

2. LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREA

The study is limited to the New Market Commercial Area of Bhopal. New Market is a city level landmark centrally located in the new city and easily accessible

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Fig. 1: Location of Bhopal



Fig. 2: Location of New Market, Bhopal



to the major parts of the city. It was planned in 1970's and during the last 40 years it has seen various development and expansion due to the growing need for commercial spaces. Its location is such that it acts as a link between the new and old parts of the city. The surroundings consist of government quarters, TT Nagar Stadium, Kamla Nehru School and public and semi public offices.

3. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

The city enjoys a moderate climate. Normally temperature ranges between 50° F and 104° F although highest temperature occasionally rises to 110° F. The rainy season lasts from mid June to September, the winter from November to February, and summer from March to June. The average annual rainfall is about 1200 mm, predominantly during the month of July and August. Winds are predominant from the west and southwest during the monsoon. The presence of the lakes and hillocks create its own microclimate.

4. TOPOGRAPHY

Bhopal city nestles in a hilly terrain, which slopes towards north and southeast. Hillocks of different altitudes are situated along the southwest and northwest part of the city, these hillocks form a continuous belt from Singarcholi up to Vindhyaachal Ranges. The height of Singarcholi near Lalghati is 625 m, which is highest in the area. The general ground level is however, nearly 460 m along the southeastern and northeastern portion of the city. The unique topography of the city provides enchanting and panoramic views of the city and of natural scenic beauty. There are immense possibilities for landscaping and waterfront development for recreation facilities. However, it is unsuitable for continuous urban development. It also creates physical barriers owing to which interlinks

between various parts of the city are often inconvenient. Large portion of the city areas are separated by hillocks and lakes, which act as a barrier in social and cultural integration of the city. The present city stands segregated distinctly in three parts. The TT Nagar and its extensions being developed on the southern side is separated by the old city by two lakes - upper lake and lower lake, B.H.E.L. township is separated from the new city as well as the old city by Railway line.

5. DEMOGRAPHY

According to the 2011 census the population of the Bhopal is 1,795,648 persons residing in a total area of 837.24 sq km.

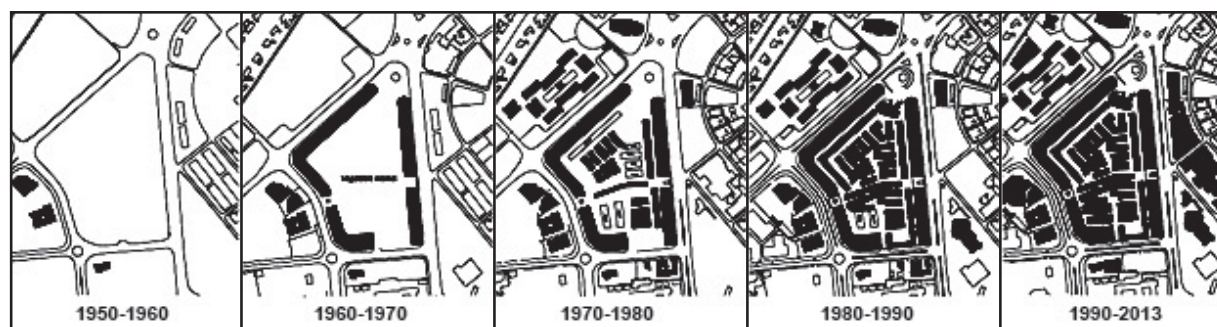
6. CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT

In 1956, Bhopal was identified as the capital of newly formed State of Madhya Pradesh. In order to facilitate planned development, beautification and conservation of environment of the state capital, the Capital Project Administration (CPA) was set up under the Housing and Environment Department on 1st October 1960 by the approval of Planning Commission, Government of India. New market was planned in the 1960s to cater the Capital Township Project of TT Nagar and to serve as a commercial centre for the government housing.

1960-1970: Peripheral arcade style shopping complex with corridors on the exteriors were built on the site. In these buildings, the ground floor was planned to cater the commercial activities while the upper floors had residential use. The central inner area of the site was occupied by informal market.

1970-1980: The central area started developing into a more formal market and construction of single-storied shops was carried out by the government in two phases. 152 shops were built in the first phase and 168 in the next. Each of these shops were rented out at Rs. 100 per month. The informal market areas were provided with raised platforms. Another shopping cum office complex (GTB Complex) was constructed across the Jawahar Chowk Road to cater to the increasing demand of this area.

Fig. 3: Chronology of Development of New Market, Bhopal (1950 - 2013)



1980-1990: Gradually, the raised platforms for the open informal market were converted into shops with temporary partitions.

1990-2013: The areas around New Market have witnessed gradual conversion from residential use to commercial use because of the prime location of the market and rising pressure on space due to ever increasing demand of commercial activities.

Current Scenario: Today, New Market and its adjoining areas serve as a major Commercial Centre for people from all parts of the city, owing to its central location. The commercial activities cater to all social and economical class and attract versatile crowd. It was converted into a pedestrian friendly zone by prohibiting vehicles to enter into the market in 2004.

The market has, developed specialized type of shops selling similar range of goods. This feature reflect the particular pedestrian movement pattern and dynamics. However, this commercial centre is losing its charm due to lack of infrastructure, services and maintenance, hence, losing its clientele to newly developed shopping malls in the city.

7. CONTEXTUAL LAND USE

The surrounding areas comprise of low-rise residential land-use, designed and developed under the Capital Township Project. In the present context it is a prime land in the heart of the city and occupied by government housing complex with un-organized open spaces, which can only encourage encroachment or un-authorized garbage dumping site (Singh, 1997). The peripheral areas across the main roads of the New Market are developed as commercial, along with public and semi-public offices. Also located in this area is the TT Nagar Stadium and Sports Training Centre.

8. ACTIVITY PATTERN

Observations and studies indicate that two major linking corridors provide access to the interior and transitional areas of the market and witness the highest amount of crowd. These congested areas of the market also support informal activities in the form of temporary kiosks, pushcarts and moving vendors. Type and character of the commercial activities change with the seasons and festivals, especially around the temple plaza.

As per the analysis, the area away from the main principal axis and junctions are less frequently visited by the public. Consequentially, unequal distribution of crowd in

Fig. 4: Landuse of Surrounding Areas of New Market, Bhopal



**Fig. 5: Use of New Market Complex (Ground Floor)**

the market affects its economy. Thus, It is required that every unit area of the existing prime location be utilized in the best possible manner.

9. TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

New Market forms an island of commercial activities surrounded by roads on all sides. It serves as a link between the new and old parts of the city of Bhopal. It is easily accessible through public transport systems- buses and tempos. Also, the recently formed BRTS corridor passes directly through the access routes of the New Market.

10. OBSERVATIONS

From the last four decades, New Market has been serving as a prime

market area for the city. Though, its location allows easy access to people from all parts of the city, its deteriorating condition and the prevalent mall - culture make people seek other alternatives.

The growing commercial pressure in the existing New Market area has guided its gradual growth to the extent that it exist today, but it is facing infrastructural

Fig. 6: Transport Network

shortage, creating congestion and conflicts between spaces and activities. Also, unplanned growth within the market along with time and need based development of peripheral infrastructure has lead to unequal utilisation of the areas. The upcoming CBD by Gammon will further affect the business of New Market.

Some of the major issues affecting the functioning of New Market commercial area are:

- Due unequal distribution of people, density of crowd is not uniform in various part of the New Market
- Due to zoning, segregation of various types of shops and activities in specific pockets within the market, is taking place.
- Popularity of shops and landmarks attract the public and confine them in only their specific influence zones.

- Unhygienic conditions of streets and lack of planned services cause people to avoid roaming around in the market and thus, it receives only focused customers looking for only a specific type of shop.
- Decrease in footfall due to inadequate parking:
 - * Total number of 855 shops;
 - * Total number of 2000 two-wheeler parking; and
 - * Total number of 425 four-wheeler parking.
- Off street parking reduces effective road width for traffic movement.
 - * Excessive parking on weekends.
- Ill-maintained buildings due to persistence of Rent Control Act:
 - * Structural integrity of the buildings is a safety concern;
 - * Visual appearance has deteriorated; and
 - * Increase in quantity of unused spaces.
- Location of parking lots leads to conflict between pedestrian and traffic movement.
 - * Unsafe for people to cross access roads to reach market; and
 - * Traffic movement is hampered.
- Inadequate size of plazas.
 - * Due to increase in informal activities;
 - * Seasonal activities encroach and use plaza space; and
 - * Extension of subway construction has further reduced the main temple plaza inside the market.
- Informal, seasonal and other activities lead to encroachments and thereby congestion on roads and pathways.
- Decrease in parking spaces due to:
 - * Encroachment by informal activities; and

Fig. 7: Commercial Bifurcation - Land Use of New Market (Ground Floor)

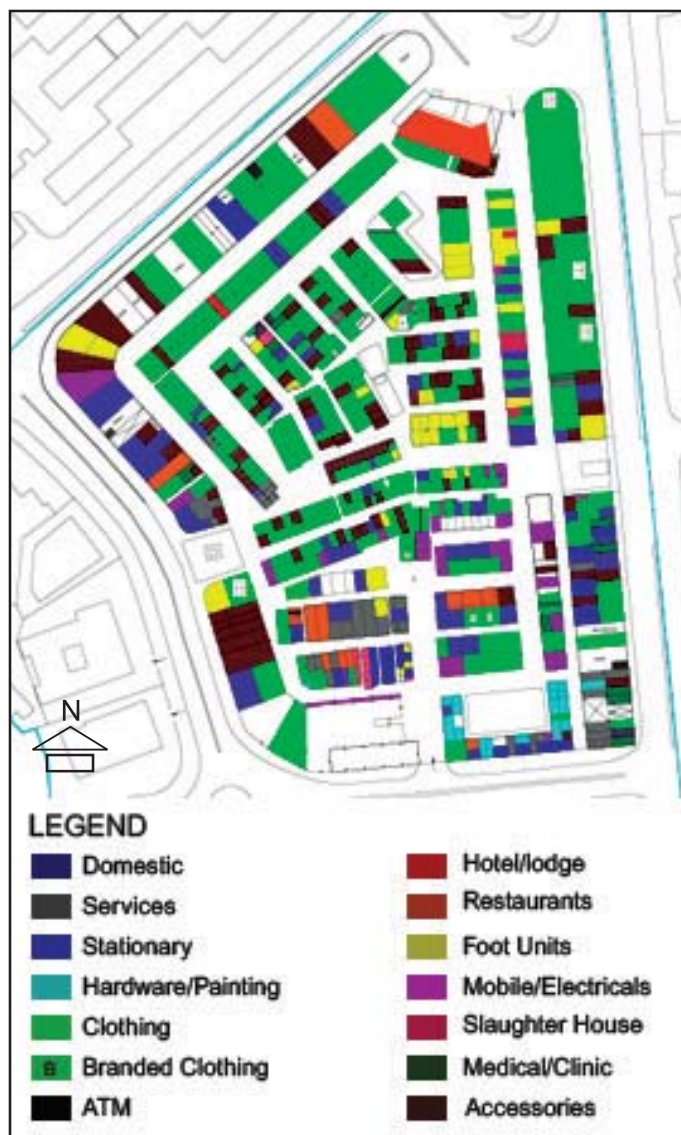


Fig. 8: Activity Pattern of New Market



- * Encroachment by seasonal activities like festivals and political gatherings.
- Small-scale food stalls have negative impact on the other surrounding activities.
 - * They cause pedestrian congestion; and
 - * Littering around such food stalls is also a concern.
- Lack of public toilets triggers insanitary conditions.



- Inadequate waste disposal management system. In fact 24-hour cycle of waste collection is not enough.
- Low sense of security in inactive areas. Because inactive areas develop due to lack of infrastructure (dead spaces).
- Fire safety issues
 - * Access routes for fire fighting vehicles are not defined and Interior area have road-widths less than that required by fire-engines; and
 - * The market is deficient in services and equipment necessary for combating fire emergencies.
- Impact of religious places on the market. In fact excessive informal and seasonal activities cause overcrowding which require larger open spaces.
- No provision for resting or shaded seating arrangements.
- Parking should be classified according to the building use (residential/ offices/ commercial)

11. VISION

After understanding the site, context and their issues, a concept is designed for revitalization of the commercial hub. Restructuring of the market by considering social and financial implications, is the basic underlying user-centric approach. With minimal disturbance to the existing occupational characteristics of the study area, the redevelopment needs to be implemented in the independent parts, which ultimately will have a broader impact as a whole. The challenge is to justify the provisions for the users, enhancing the functionality coping with the progressing alterations within the precinct. Hence, it needs to develop and improve its charm as a street market without compromising on public facilities and conveniences, so that it can effectively serve as a commercial centre.

12. STRATEGIES

Some of the strategies and guidelines which can resolve many of the issues being faced by New Market area are:

Redensification : New Market has a high potential owing to its strategic location in the city, however, it appears that the activities in the market are mainly confined to the ground floor. The upper floor should be utilized more extensively so as to harness the full potential of this centrally located Market. Densification will also create more open spaces inside the market and give better visual linkages.

Improving recreational capacity of the market : Developing safe and hygienic pockets as recreational open spaces would help not only to improve the quality of market as a public space but further enhance the economy of the region, since people would prefer to stay for longer time.

Pedestrian Safety and Convenience : New market needs to be converted into a pedestrian zone in order to avoid the vehicular traffic and thereby avoiding



congestion. Thus, the major roads are wider as per the requirement for the pedestrians and do not have shaded or seating spaces, because the extent of the market and its spread-out activities cause inconvenience to the pedestrian. Thus, the market can be integrated and interspersed with resting spaces to create a sense of security and comfort. The pedestrian network currently is restricted only to the ground floor. Through design interventions, various layers of horizontal and vertical pedestrian corridors may be added to make provision for vertical development / growth.

Maximizing Parking Space : There is a gap between the parking space available and actual parking space required to cater to the visitors. In the current situation, people think twice before planning a visit to New Market because of lack of appropriate parking spaces, hence, such spaces need to be maximized.

Traffic Movement Bifurcation : Traffic movement can be bifurcated as through traffic and traffic destined for New Market, so that they do not mix with each other. Accordingly, road widths be used for parking or secondary lanes be dedicated for New Market.

The above strategies should be implemented in a phased manner because of the complexity of inter-dependence of activities.

13. CONCLUSIONS

As a commercial precinct, New Market has a tremendous scope due to its location and popularity. However, its lopsided infrastructure is hampering its growth and vitality. In order to match with the pace of developments of the Bhopal city, New Market area is required to be renewed by preserving quality of its street market and also providing a wholesome and comfortable experience to its visitors by incorporating the characteristics of safety, leisure and universality. This will not only enhance its commercial value but establish its identity as a recreational centre as well.

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