



Udaipur – An **Urban95** City

## Activating an informal public space at Nayion Ki Talai Chowk



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Activating an informal public space for infant, toddler and care giver group

**Project** –Urban95 Program, Udaipur

**City Partner** –Udaipur Municipal Corporation (UMC)

**Funder cum Supporting Partner** –Bernard Van Leer Foundation (BvLF).

**Technical Partner** – ICLEI- South Asia

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# 1. Urban95 in Udaipur

Udaipur city signed up to become an Infant, Toddler and Caregiver (ITC) friendly city by associating with the Urban95 Program of the Bernard Van Leer Foundation (BvLF). The Udaipur Municipal Corporation (UMC) joined the global Urban95 program in early 2019, becoming the third Indian city to do so. ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, South Asia is providing technical support to the on-ground implementation of this program.

Under the Program, a series of tactical and pilot interventions were planned in identified pilot demonstration wards. The interventions aimed to apply ideas on ground in Udaipur to generate interest and showcase impact to the citizens.

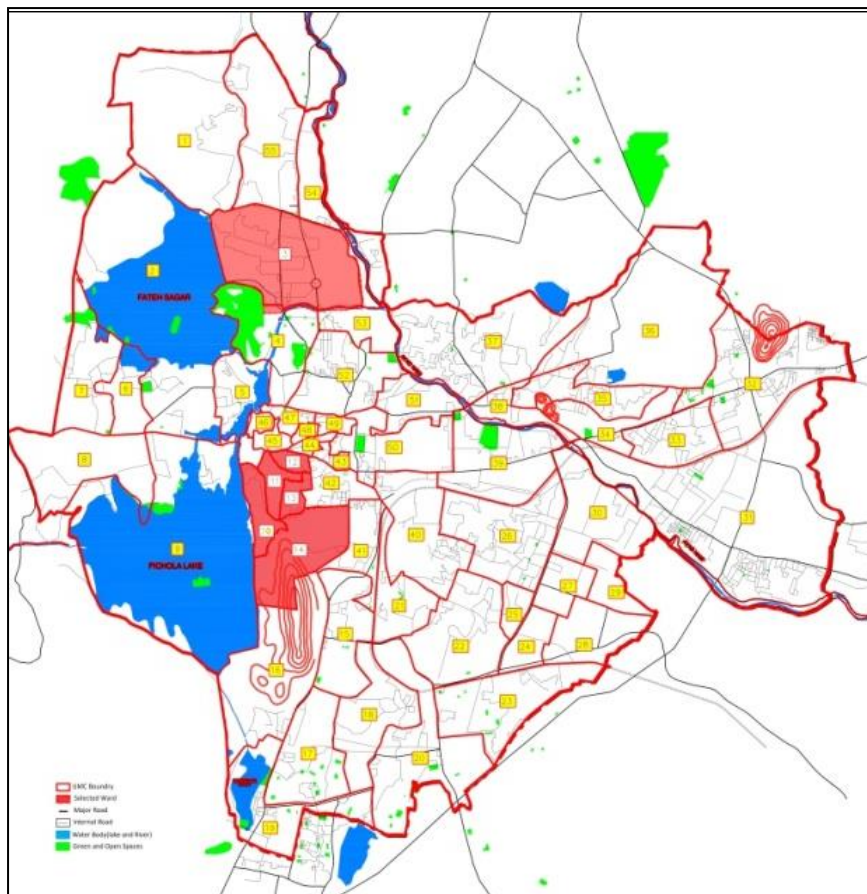


Figure 1: Municipal Boundary and Pilot Demonstration Wards, Udaipur



## 1.1. Tactical Intervention within the Walled City

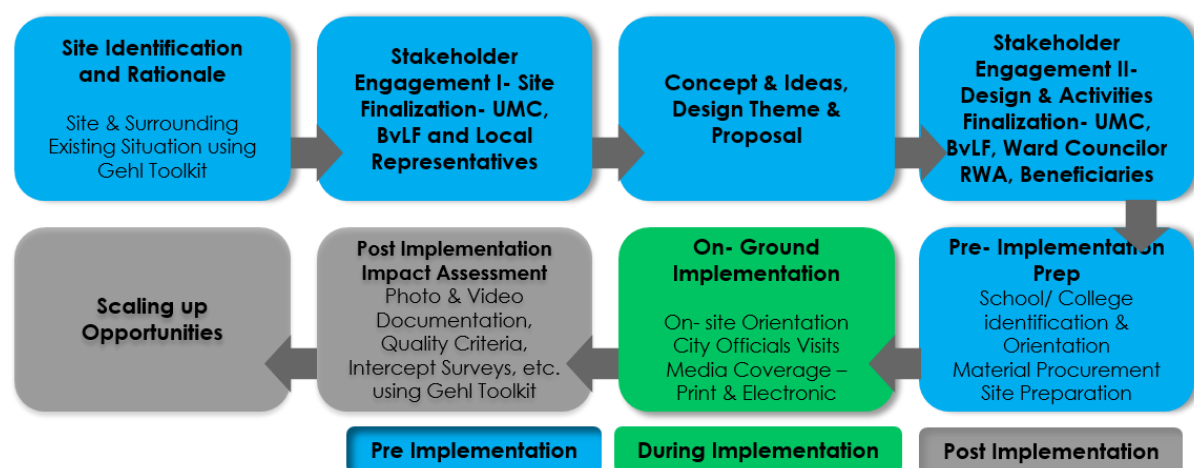
The walled city of Udaipur, like any historic city, has dense residential and commercial settlements and offers very little green or recreational spaces to young kids. It becomes even more challenging due to unsafe urban environments, involving heavy traffic movement, and non- demarcation of children's zones or spaces, which prevent young kids from stepping out of the safety of their homes.

It is in the above-mentioned context that it was decided to implement a tactical intervention to:

- Showcase the carving out of safe, playful, vibrant, interactive and engaging spaces for young kids and their caregivers, while managing additional uses, such as providing access, parking and seating facilities and areas where other resident groups can congregate at the same or different times.
- Create color-coordinated, visually compelling and psychologically impactful urban streetscape and spaces, which not only provide opportunities to young children and their caregivers to engage in colorful surroundings - a break from colorless or monochrome environments - but also illustrate the opportunity to transform similar spaces;
- Revive traditional games involving learning while playing, within the traditional yet urban setting of the walled city;

## 1.2. Approach & Methodology

The following methodology was adopted for implementing tactical on the ground:



**Figure 2: Methodology adopted for activating the public space at Naiyon ki Talai Chowk**

## 2. Nayion Ki Talai Chowk as the Site

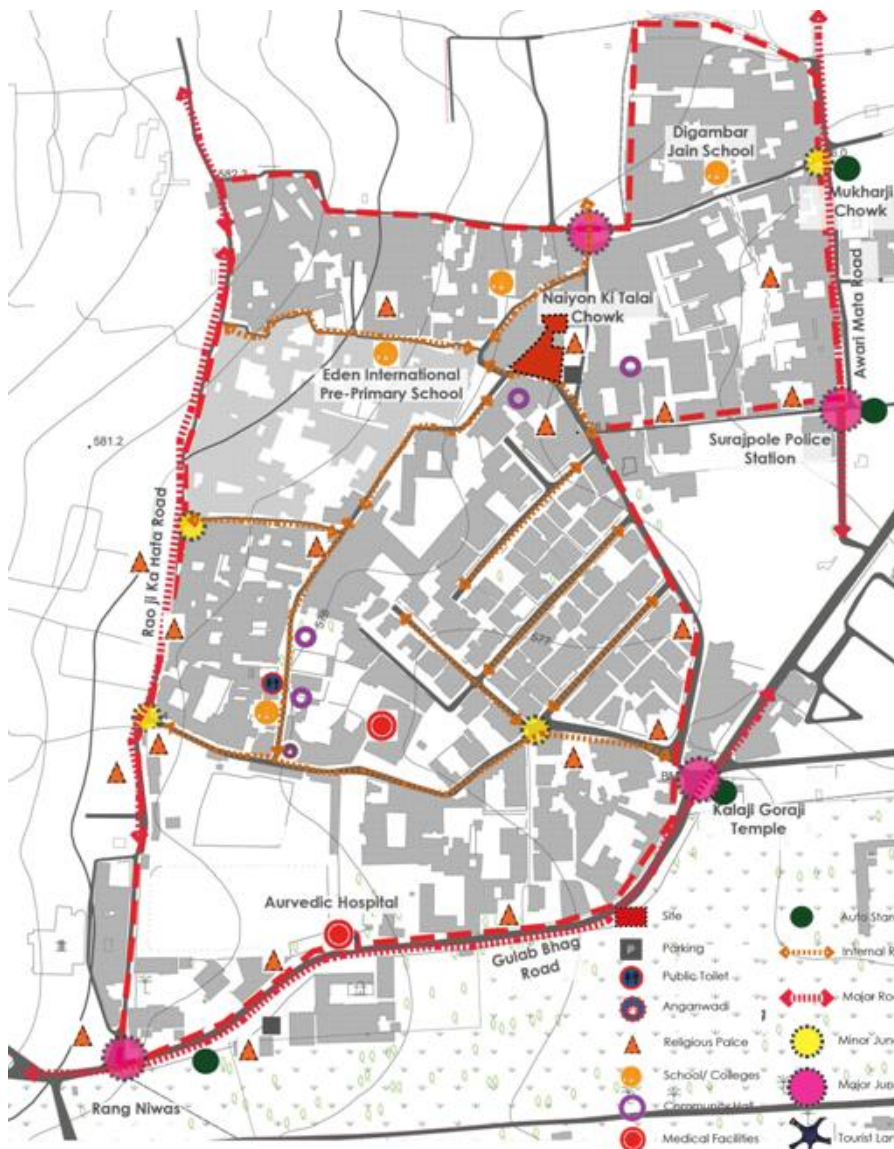


Figure 3: Layout, Nayion ki Talai Chowk

Nayion ki Talai Chowk (public square) at Kala ji Gora ji area in Ward no. 13 was identified as the site for implementing a tactical intervention, with the objective of transforming a 'dead' public space into a safe, playful, vibrant, interactive and engaging space for young kids and their caregivers.



**Figure 4: Activity Mapping, Ward No. 13**

The chowk - a traditional type of 'chowk' within the walled city area - is an amalgamation of two triangular chowks, one bigger than the other, and is surrounded by G+2 residential buildings. The chowk has a temple, a non-functional 'pyau' or a municipal corporation-operated potable water point for public use, a defunct 'mahila snan ghar' or public bathing house, a few trees with low and poorly maintained seating platforms around them, a public hand- pump and an electric pole in middle of the chowk with electric cables spanning out in all directions. The electric pole is a blessing in disguise, as it prevents four-wheelers from proceeding beyond that point.

The 'chowk' was being used as a parking space for two-wheelers and four-wheelers mostly, preventing any play or other engaging uses by young kids and other user groups. Construction debris covered a part of the open space. The bathing house's walls were dilapidated. The street corners were being used as garbage dumps and an electric transformer nearby posed a risk to children. This underutilized chowk was also frequented by stray animals, raising more safety and hygiene concerns.

The 'chowk' has anganwadi centres, playschools, pre- primary and primary schools in and around it, along with a few places of religious importance. The chowk is easily accessible from multiple sides and is located near tourist landmarks such as Gulab Bagh, Doodh Talai and Jagdish Temple.





**Figure 5: The situation at Naiyon Ki Talai Chowk before the intervention**

### 2.1. Mapping the Existing Situation

The identified site was mapped and studied to gauge its status with regard to the ITCN indicators and userbase, using accepted approaches such as quality-based criteria, intercept surveys, stakeholder and user interviews, which were conducted to document current use case, needs and aspirations.

Based on the surveys and interactions, it was envisaged to use this chowk to demonstrate how multiple uses can co-exist within the same space with careful planning and thoughtfully designed ideas. It is in this context that a concept design was conceived with multi-use of the same chowk - as a space to engage children during the daytime and as an organized parking space for vehicles at night.



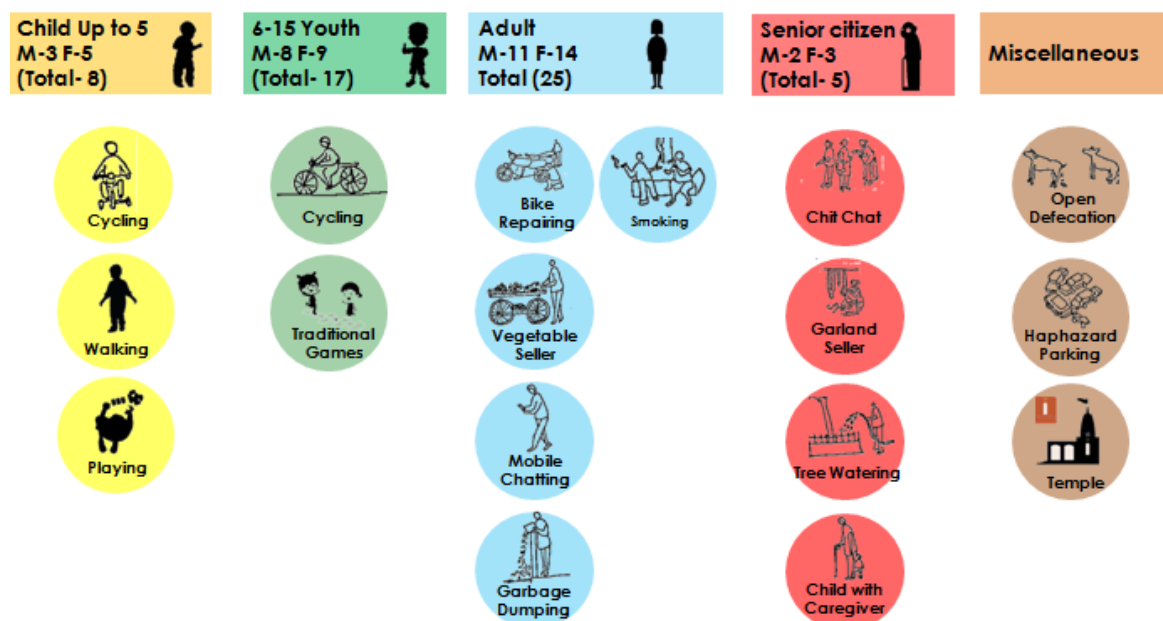


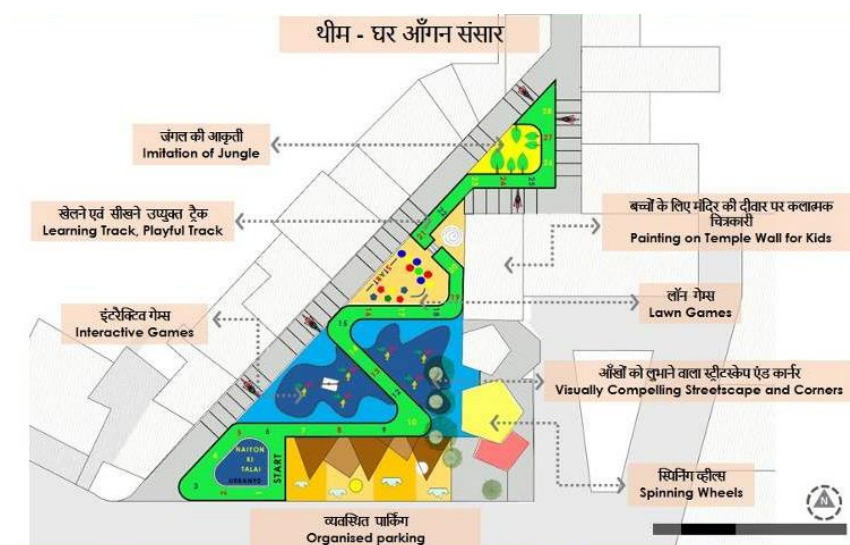
Figure 6: Activity Mapping at Nayion Ki Talai Chowk.

Table 1: Available and Missing ITCN Indicators, Nayion Ki Talai Chowk.

Current Situation and Primary Observation	
Available ITCN Indicators	Missing ITCN Indicators
A safe, secure enclosed space- surrounded by residential buildings, temple and bathing house	Government building walls in dilapidated condition
Shaded areas - trees and G+2 buildings	Kids' play activities and equipment
Traditional/ heritage elements- Chabutras- low seating platform outside houses; Chajjas- overhanging projections that provide shade	Building façade presents a dull, boring and mundane urban environment
Low/ medium traffic	Unorganized and haphazard parking (two-wheeler and four-wheeler)
Shaded space under trees with low seating platforms	Platforms in dilapidated condition
Street lighting	Transformer and electrical lines on the chowk
Surrounded by residential buildings- acting as 'eyes on the street'	Stray animals occupy most of the space, making it more unhygienic for young kids and other users (defecation)

### 3. Design Concept - 'Ghar, Aangan Sansaar'

A draft proposal was developed for the chowk based on the '**Ghar, Aangan, Sansaar**' theme, which roughly translates into 'World of the Household courtyard,' which herein refers to the 'chowk' or central courtyard/ plaza surrounded by houses, and 'Sansaar,' meaning world, herein refers to the 'world of kids'.



**Figure 7 Proposed Concept and Theme for Naiyon ki Talai Chowk**

The theme reflects the idea of a community-level interactive space that helps in the physical and mental growth of young kids by engaging them in various activities within the safety net of their house; provides opportunities for community engagement at a wider scale; and also helps in developing social networks for young kids (outside the members of his/ her household) and their caregivers.

As part of the overall design, a learning-cum-play track was proposed to formalize the most engaging activity i.e., cycling for young kids, along with a few traditional floor games, besides an imprint of a scenic landscape showing the sun, hills, a pond with fish in playful formations and a jungle in bright and primary colors to create an attractive and engaging space for young kids, and also to create visually compelling streetscape. Graffiti showing the animated younger 'avataar' of the temple deity was made on the temple wall. The bathing house walls were painted in bright shades, and spinning wheels of different sizes were installed under the trees for the children. The tree trunks were wrapped in colorful threads and the planter beds were repaired to make low seating areas for young kids and their caregivers.

The design also showcased the efficient manner in which multiple use of the same space was possible, minimizing the need for additional space. This was done by

organizing parking for two-wheelers and four-wheelers within the intervention zone, by merging them with the proposed design elements. Thus, the chowk can be become a space for children during the daytime and also offer organized parking space for vehicles at night.

### 3.1. Stakeholder Engagement – Design Concept, Site Finalization and Site Preparation & Cleaning

The design concept was shared and discussed with the project partners and the hosts for their approval and support for the implementation of this intervention in the way it was envisaged. The proposal was also presented to the concerned Ward Councilor (Deputy Mayor, UMC) and the residents of the chowk for their approval and support.

The discussions were complemented with on-site visits by UMC officials to understand the plan of the activities, and also for the necessary repair and maintenance needed there.



**Figure 8: Meetings, discussions and on-site visits with UMC officials**



## 4. On - Ground Implementation

The tactical intervention at 'Naiyon ki Talai Chowk' was implemented from the 11th to the 13th of December 2019, and the entire space was opened to the public on the morning of the 14th of December 2019.

As a part of the on-ground implementation and for creating a sense of ownership and belonging among the local people and the immediate beneficiaries of the project, the residents and the students of a city-based college were approached. They agreed to be part of the on-ground implementation. The student volunteers added energy and life to the implementation activities. They were provided with refreshments and lunch and were presented appreciation certificates from the UMC.

Pre- primary students from a nearby school were also invited to experience the event and they readily engaged in various activities and games.



Figure 9: On- Ground Implementation- Local Residents and Students

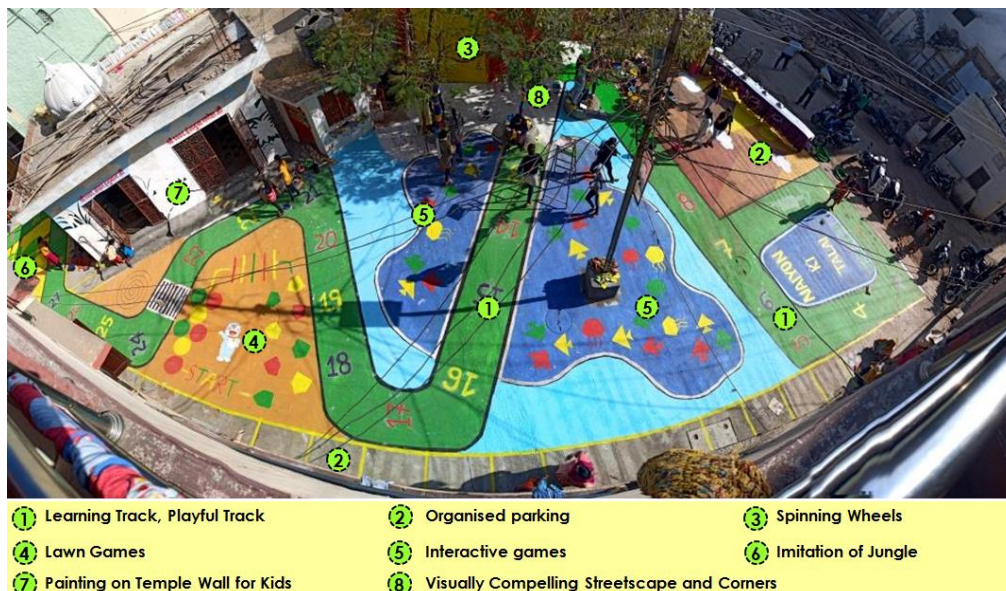


Various UMC officials visited the site to observe and appreciate the event. Representatives from BvLF and ICLEI- South Asia were also present to oversee the implementation activities.



**Figure 10: (Clockwise from top left) UMC officials, representatives from BvLF and ICLEI South Asia, pre-primary students of a nearby school and passers-by at the implementation**

Curious passers-by stopped to see the activities and appreciated the idea and efforts involved in transforming this chowk into a child-friendly area, and even suggested that the city needed more efforts like this.



After the entire space was opened to the public on the 14th of December, the UMC started receiving requests and applications from citizens to transform similar spaces in their localities as well. The chowk, in its new 'avataar,' started receiving 'users' from its immediate and nearby areas.





Figure 11: Tactical Intervention implemented at Nayion ki Talai Chowk



#### 4.1. Media Coverage

Since its opening, the intervention has made quite a buzz and has been widely covered in print and electronic media.

रंगों से सजाई गली... बच्चों के लिए खनाया कलरफुल घर-आंगन-संसार

Udaipur News - उदयपुर, नया विभाग के अर्बन 95 प्रोजेक्ट के तहत रूढ़ी के नदियों की तलहटी में रेलों से बरतों के लिए घर आगल सोडर वीम पर..

Dec 19, 2019: 11:41 AM EDT

[illegible]

बच्चों के खेल में रुचि बढ़ाने के लिए रंग से बनाया टैक

[illegible]

नगर निगम उठा रहा है  
बच्चों के लिए अनूठे कदम

[illegible]

### Figure 12: Print Media Coverage of the intervention

## 5. Post-Implementation Impact Assessment

The impact of this intervention has been documented, based on comparative sample user counts, photo documentation and surveys on regular weekends, in relation to post-implementation weekend days.

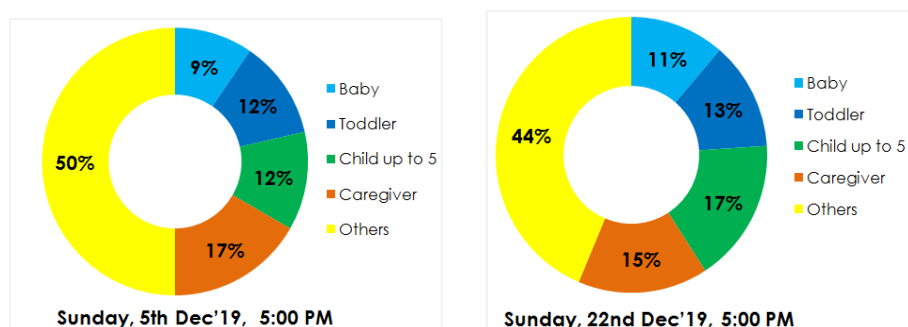


Figure 13: Footfall- Before and After the Implementation

The collected evidence shows an increase in footfall of the primary target audience, i.e. young kids and their caregivers, before and after the implementation. Comparative activity mapping also shows an increase in the number of activities the users engage in. several round of interviews were conducted with residents, parents, teachers from schools in the area during and after implementation on the transformed chowk and their experience.

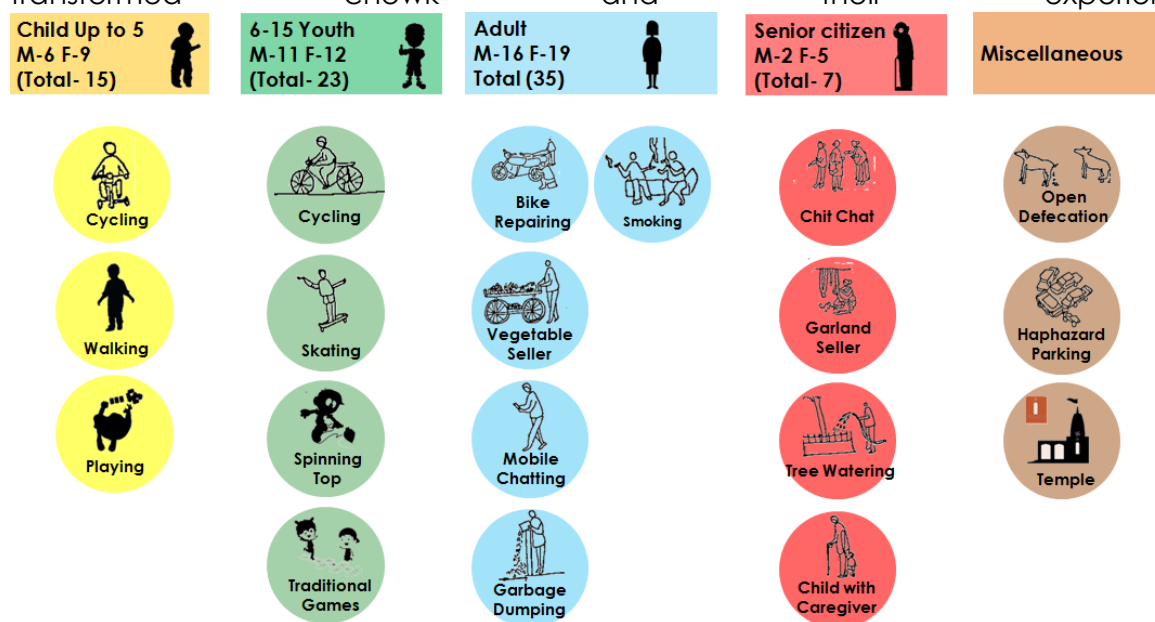


Figure 14: Activity mapping at the Chowk shows an increase in the number of activities and the footfall engaged in different activities



<p>'Beautiful, vibrant and lively transformation of this chowk, which has everything young kids need nowadays- a learning cum play track, touch and play elements, traditional street games, low seating spaces under trees and more; This shall open up more opportunities for us now in the walled city, where this kind of low-cost solutions can bring alive an otherwise dull and boring built environment'</p>	<p>'Before this transformation, our kids use to play at home or in the neighbour's house, but now with this beautiful transformation, I let my kids spend as much time as possible outside the house. This not only has helped them in learning in innovative ways, but is also useful for their physical and motor development. I have also started spending time in the chowk since this transformation'</p>	<p>'Earlier kids here were playing aimlessly. Now they have a target. Children of all age groups have their games, such as spinning wheel, cycle track, numbers on track, traditional games. There are also lots of opportunities for my kid to play with new people'</p>
<p>Kudos to the team and special thanks to RMV students for their voluntarily support in the on- ground implementation!</p>	<p><b>Sarla ji, local resident, and mother of two young children</b></p>	<p><b>Rakeh ji, Resident of this Chowk and Father of a young kid</b></p>
<p><b>Mr. Ankit Kumar Singh, Commissioner, Udaipur Municipal Corporation (UMC)</b></p>		

Figure 15: Stakeholders and User Interviews

Touch		See		Hear		Smell		Balance	
Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Nil	Spinning wheel	Nil	Vibrant colours	Temple bell	Continue	Foul smell of garbage	No garbage any more	Nil	Dummy cycle track
	Tree trunk		Kids painting on temple wall	Chanting of mantra in temple	Continue	Cooking	Continue		

Figure 16: Sensory Mapping, Nayion Ki Talai Chowk, After Implementation

## 6. Takeaways

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The key takeaway from activating the public space at Nayion ki Talai Chowk is that the transformation of any ill-utilized space is possible with the willingness and support of city authorities and community participation. Additionally:

- 1) Rejuvenation of urban spaces like this chowk is possible to not only make it an active, ITC-responsive and friendly zone, but also a community space by introducing activities and improving the built environment.
- 2) The importance of such streetscape from the perspective of young children should be noted, and also how user behavior changes within the immediate built environment with the right kind of activities.
- 3) In an area with high population density, where open spaces are scarce, multiple and shared use of spaces with innovative designs is the way to optimize usage, so as to not compromise on the needs of any user group.

## Annexure I – Urban95 Quality Criteria

Table 2: Urban 95 Quality Criteria, Nayion ki Talai Chowk (Observations and User Interviews)

S/n		Indicator	Before	After
1	Protection	Protection from crime and violence	Not safe at night	Safe at night as citizens use the chowk till late evening
		Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences	Debris dumped on site; Dead and dirty walls	No debris on site; Sensory activities like spinning wheels and interactive games on walls and floor
2	Basic Needs	Feeling of comfort	Corners were used to dump garbage	Planters put on corners and the walls are now used by kids for sensory learning
		Leisure activities	Chowk is used by adults for their leisure activities	Chowk is used by kids of adjacent neighbourhood for play and sensory activities
3	Comfort	Opportunities to walk and cycle	Haphazard parking of vehicles prevented children from playing	Organised parking; more space and potential for play and other activities
		Opportunities to stop & stay	Seating spaces like chabutra (unfinished steps)	Mix of seating typologies like chabutra, raised planter seating and finished temple steps, which are used by kids and their caregivers
		Visually appealing experience	Nil	Rich sensory experiences like use of colours and spinning wheel on the walls.
4	Interaction	Interaction with the environment	Trees protected by high tree guards which made them inaccessible to kids	Tree guards have been replaced with low enclosures, allowing kids to water the trees and understand the life cycle
5	Connection	Parking facilities vs play area	Haphazard parking occupying large space	Use of space as a play area when parking of vehicles is not required.

## Annexure II – Intercept Survey

Table 3 Intercept Survey, Nayion ki Talai Chowk (Observations and User Interviews)

S/n	Category	Before	After
1	<b>Safety</b>	Residents did not feel safe in late evenings at the Chowk; it was not well-lit and was filled with anti-social people.	The chowk has various activities for kids that makes the place come alive and active till late evening hours
2	<b>Leisure activities</b>	No engaging activities	Various activities like learning track, spinning wheels, seating spaces allow kids to spend more time there.
3	<b>Meeting New People</b>	Kids went to friends' houses or area level spaces like Gulab Bagh	Kids from nearby neighbourhood are coming here in huge numbers; and even ask for such intervention in their chowks.
4	<b>Quality of the place as a play area</b>	Kids use to play here aimlessly; no resting place for caregivers	Sensory activities, interactive games, organised parking , seating along the planter beds have improved this place
5	<b>Ease of movement</b>	Children could not move around with ease because of unorganised parking.	Organised parking, cleaning of debris and creating an interactive area for kids allow for more open space in the chowk
6	<b>Seating comfort for caregivers</b>	The chabutra (raised platform along walls of houses) was the only resting place for kids and their caregivers	Finished temple steps and retrofitted raised planter seating provide parents ample space to relax



## Annexure III – Photo Documentation Before and After







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