

CP pedestrianisation should be replicated by civic bodies

When the Master Plan of Delhi 2021 was promulgated in February 2007, a planning tool called the local area plan (LAP) was introduced in the planning lexicon of the city. Defined as a plan for a ward or a sub-zone of the city, it was meant to be an enabler for a fourth level of planning — after the master, zonal and layout plans — which empowered the local bodies to make and implement improvements in the local area, particularly in each ward and sub-zone or colony with participation of residents and their RWAs.

But during the past 12 years, very little has been done either RWAs or the three corporations for implementing improvements using the LAP planning tool.

Creating proper pedestrian pathways connecting local shopping centres within colonies is one such need. As old, single-family homes are rapidly giving way to stilt-plus-four floors — a practice which

became popular after the stilt parking concept was allowed in this master plan — traffic and on-street parking issues have begun to plague most Delhi colonies. There is now a need to rework the pedestrian walkways within the colony, recreate cycle tracks and find ways to eliminate the conflict between people and vehicles.

Even within the local shopping centres and colony markets, increasing pedestrian space is now more important than ever before. Attempts made by the municipal bodies and councillors to improve the pedestrian's experience have been limited to using concrete pavers and planters. Very little work has been done on the drawing board to achieve proper pedestrianisation.

Lessons can be drawn from the Connaught Place experiment (post construction of the Delhi Metro station at Rajiv Chowk that replaced the old central lawn of CP).

At CP, NDMC increased the area meant for pedestrian traffic in the inner ring around the CP shopping area, introduced better planned parking spaces, increased the green cover with hardy trees and bushes and segregated the walking areas from vehi-



cular traffic spaces with green cover and bollards. Elsewhere — particularly on the roads leading to the shopping areas — the pedestrian pathways were segregated from the road tops with hardy hedges fed with drip irrigation and table-top speed breakers to

slow down the vehicular traffic.

Learnings from the CP experience were then used in other markets like Khan Market, Bengali Market and Malcha Market. In some shopping districts, the open pathways in front of the shops were widened to give way to more pedestrians.

popular e-rickshaws also needs to be incorporated in LAP.

The LAP process has, perhaps, been ignored because the three municipal bodies lack professional in-house capacity to engage with the stakeholder residents, draw up plans, discuss them with RWAs, seek and get consensus and take the all other steps which LAP mandated in MPD 2021.

LAP is a participatory process and cannot succeed without the involvement of residents. It needs ideas, discussing them in depth in stakeholder consultations, making detailed drawings and illustrating them with examples on the ground.

This is not a new planning tool. It existed in Europe and UK around a century ago when it was realised that a democratic and participatory approach to the local area's planning needs are the only way forward to satisfying the needs and aspirations of the community.

For the three corporations, this is perhaps the only way forward to improve the quality of life in the residential areas

(Sudhir Vohra is an architect and urban planner)



AT CP, NDMC increased the area meant for pedestrian traffic in Inner Circle, introduced better planned parking spaces as well as increased the green cover, a few lessons other corporations must learn

rian walkways and seating in stone and steel were added.

But somehow the CP experience was not replicated by the three municipal corporations which administer a large area of Delhi — not many MCD markets have looked at pedestrianisation the way NDMC did — both within the market areas and on the roads leading to them. While this is

indeed a pity — especially in a city which has a pleasant weather for seven months — there is still time to implement the LAP system. Action must start now before our colonies end up like Karol Bagh.

It is time we looked at pedestrianisation and connectivity in the wards and colonies seriously. The last-mile connectivity provided by the now

Photos: Rajesh Mehta