

# URBAN95

Udaipur – An **Urban95** City

## Rejuvenation of Meera Park, Bhatiyani Chohatta



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Rejuvenation of Meera Park, Bhatiyani Chohatta, into a lively and an interactive space for young kids and their caregivers

**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 associated with the Urban95 Program of the Bernard Van Leer Foundation (BvLF) to become an Infant, Toddler and Caregiver (ITC) friendly city. 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 for the on-ground implementation of this program.

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

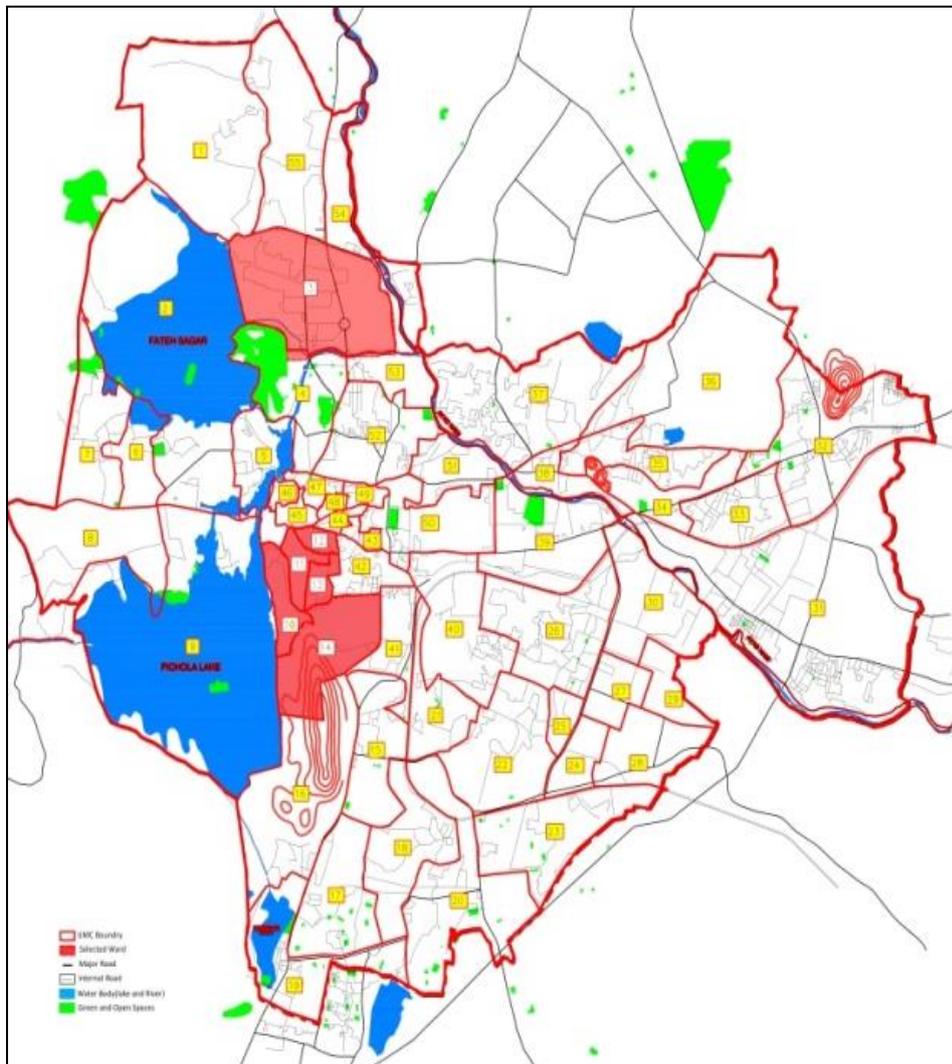


Figure 1: Municipal Boundary and Pilot Demonstration Wards, Udaipur

### 1.1. Parks in Udaipur

Udaipur has many city and area-level parks and gardens, which attract both the local people and tourists. The city has about 200 gardens and open spaces of different sizes. Gulab Bagh, Saheliyo ki Baadi, Nehru Park in Fatehsagar Lake, Moti Magri Park, Town Hall Garden, Sukhadiya Circle Garden, Manikyalal Verma Garden, Dindayal Upadhyay



Garden, Sanjay Park and Aravalli Vatika are a few of the large gardens that act as the city's green lungs and recreational areas for its residents. Most of the parks have facilities such as seating and shaded areas, toilets, drinking water, lighting and play equipment for children. However, these are not in good condition and need maintenance at regular intervals. Though the city recently adopted the Urban95 approach, there's almost no space that caters to the needs of children between the ages of 0-5 years.

### 1.2. Why Meera Park?

The densely populated walled city of Udaipur has very limited green or open spaces. The residents have to either stay indoors or use the city-level parks in the vicinity of the walled city. Meera Park, located in ward 53 of the walled city, is an area-level park owned by the Udaipur Municipal Corporation (UMC). Located on a slope, the park is spread across three levels: the upper level has a community hall and open green areas with walking tracks and seating; the middle level comprises a recently added open air gym; and the lower level consists of a park for toddlers. Though strategically located in the walled city, Meera Park had fallen into disuse due to lack of maintenance and upkeep. The park was identified for an intervention by the city team in consultation with the BvLF team. In order to rejuvenate it for the benefit of young children and their caregivers, the lower level of Meera Park was selected as the venue for the tactical intervention.

The tactical intervention at Meera Park aimed to:

- Demonstrate how underutilized parks/ spaces of the city have the potential to be transformed into usable spaces for young children and their caregivers.
- Develop engaging areas for young children, which offering play and sensory-motor learning spaces by introducing simple elements like sand pits, gravel pits and wooden logs.
- Revive traditional games based on learning while playing, to help in the overall growth and development of the target age group.

### 1.3. Process of Rejuvenating Meera Park as a tactical measure

The process adopted by the technical team for implementing the tactical intervention at Meera Park is briefly presented below.

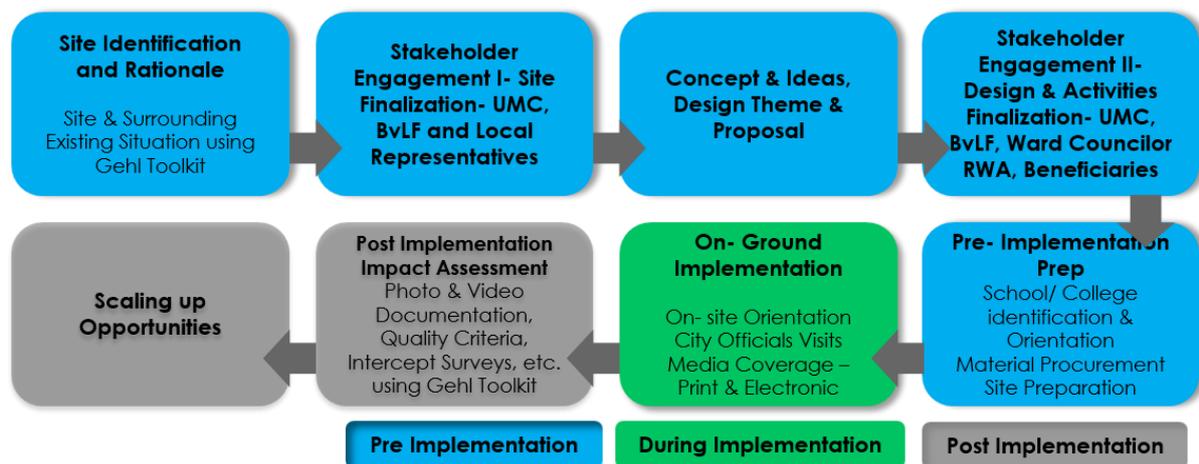


Figure 2: Methodology Adopted for On-ground Implementation of Tactical Intervention

## 2. Mapping the Existing Situation

Prior to the implementation of the tactical intervention on the ground, the on-site situation was mapped to capture the number of target user groups at different intervals.

The number of target users was documented through a survey done at 15-minute intervals on weekdays and weekends. The behaviour and use patterns of the target groups in the immediate urban environment was documented (Refer figure 2). The missing and available ITCN indicators at the site were also mapped, as shown in table 1.

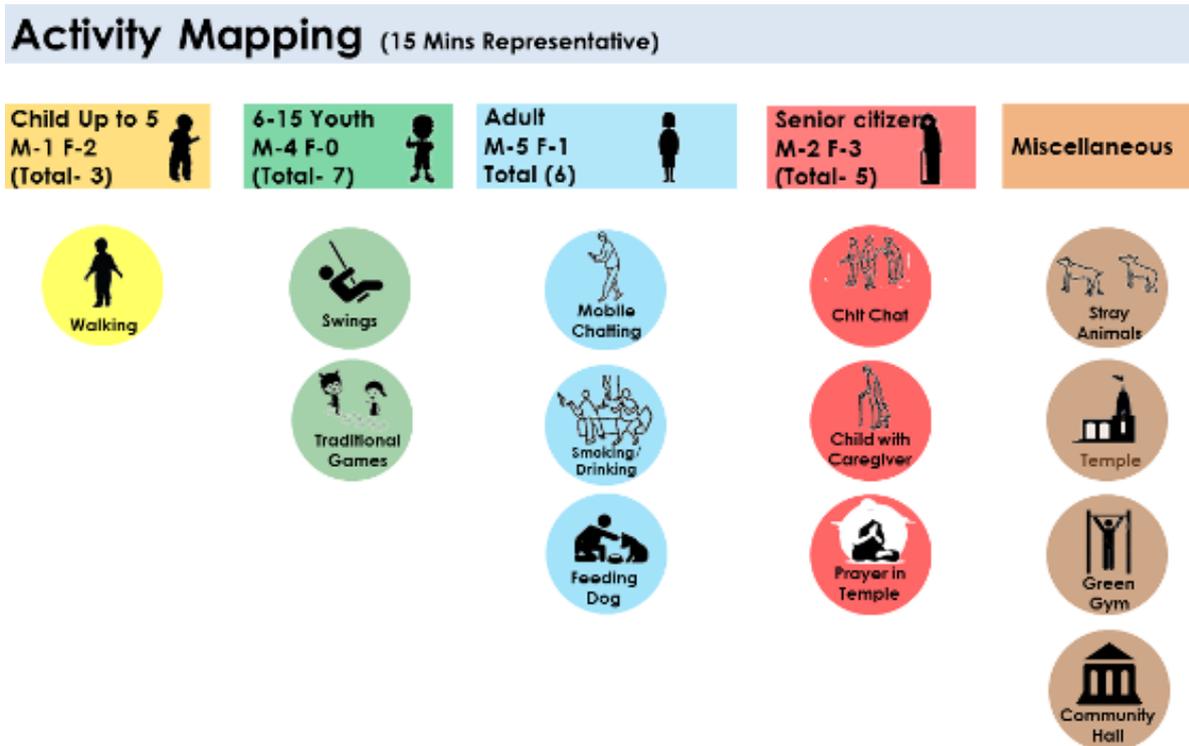


Figure 3: Activity Mapping at Meera Park

Table 1: Available and Missing ITCN Indicators, Meera Park.

| Available ITCN Indicators   | Missing ITCN Indicators  |
|---|--|
| Location - within the dense residential setting of the walled city; acting as 'eyes on the street' and near tourist hotspots - City Palace, Jagdish Temple etc. | Park in disuse due to lack of maintenance and upkeep, garbage dumping, presence of stray animals, especially street dogs (Eight approx.)   |
| Shade - Natural shaded areas due to the presence of trees and nearby buildings  | -  |
| Access – the entrance to the park is located away from the main road, and within accessible distance from surrounding residential colonies                      | Absence of ramp makes it inaccessible to strollers and prams<br>Access is via very steep road, which might deter some groups (elderly and caregivers with physical disability) from accessing the park |
| Availability of play equipment for children   | The play equipment is in dilapidated condition   |

| Available ITCN Indicators                                     | Missing ITCN Indicators                                   |
|---|---|
| Availability of hard as well as soft landscape                | Park is full of wild bushes and unwanted shrubs           |
| Benches and steps are available as seating and resting spaces | Benches were in poor condition due to lack of maintenance |
| Street lighting and lighting within the park                  | Some of the lamp posts in the park were not working       |

### 3. Conceptualizing Rejuvenation of Meera Park

The rejuvenation of Meera Park was conceptualized with the aim of revitalizing it for the target user group i.e. young children (0-5 years old) and their caregivers. It was envisaged to be developed using low-cost material, including waste material, in order to present it as an example for the UMC and other government departments involved in developing parks/ gardens and open spaces. The objective was also to showcase the reuse of discarded materials in revitalizing the park at a low cost.



Figure 4: Proposed Design for Rejuvenation of Meera Park

The concept emphasized the repair of the dilapidated play equipment, which would be repainted with bright colors to attract young children. Additionally, the benches and lamp posts in the park were proposed to be repaired to make use of the existing infrastructure. The lowest level space in the park was visualized to be divided into various zones, using child-friendly material such as sand, gravel and grass. This also helped in breaking the monotony of a long space, with the introduction of other locally available materials such as wooden logs, and used and painted tyres. The surrounding walls were transformed by painting them in colours. The envisaged activities aimed to develop the motor skills of young children by engaging them in safe playful activities. Figure 4 illustrates the design for rejuvenating Meera Park.

## 4. Stakeholder Engagement

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To achieve the desired results, various stakeholders were consulted at different stages, which included site selection, concept design finalization, pre-implementation and post-implementation. After the design was finalized, it was shared with UMC officials, including the Deputy Mayor, Municipal Commissioner, Additional Chief Engineer, Superintending Engineer, Executive Engineer, other officials, and representatives from the Project Management Consulting Team for Smart City Udaipur for their feedback and approval.

A joint presentation was also made to the ward councilor along with a few former ward councilors and residents of ward 53 (where Meera Park is located). This was done to explain the design concept to the residents before the on-ground implementation.

Multiple on-site meetings were conducted with the ward councilor and the UMC engineers to decide the civil works, which included: site cleaning, preparation, repair and painting of play equipment, benches and lamp posts, and excavation for creating the gravel pit, sand pits and lawn area in line with the proposed design. The collage of photos below show the stakeholder meetings.



Figure 5: Meetings, discussions and on-site visits with UMC Officials

## 5. On-ground Implementation

The tactical intervention at Meera Park was implemented on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2019, and it was opened to the public on the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2019. In order to create a sense of ownership among the immediate beneficiaries, some student volunteers and faculty members of Rajasthan Mahila Teachers Training College helped with the activities under the guidance of the technical team.

A number of UMC officials, including the Municipal Commissioner and the Ward Councilor, visited the site to oversee the project implementation. Representatives from BvLF, including the Programme Director, Country Representative, Programme Support Officer and City Coordinator also visited the site on the day of the project implementation. Representatives from the ICLEI South Asia technical team were present throughout the implementation of activities on the site, as well as during the pre- and post-implementation phases.



Figure 6: On-site implementation at Meera Park



## 6. Impact Assessment

The impact assessment of the tactical intervention at Meera Park involved conducting one-to-one interviews with the people. About 89% of the people interviewed agreed on the usefulness of transforming a defunct park into an interactive playful area for young children; about 82% said that the rejuvenation of the park created a learning as well as playful experience for young children; 92% believed that the park now had safe, playful spaces that were attractive to young children; and 95% said that Meera Park now offered a sensory experience that would help in the children's overall growth and development.

The abstracts given below describe the interactions with the users.

| Transformation of Park  | Learning while Playing  | Sensory Experience  |
|---|---|---|
|   |    |   |
| <p><b>Hemendar ji (Grand Father of Kulwant)</b></p> <p><i>'Earlier this park was defunct and very few kids used to come here; after the transformation kids from adjacent houses and from nearby neighbourhood are visiting the park. The park now is more lively and active for kids and for people like us'</i></p> | <p><b>Premkumari ji (Grand Mother of Renu)</b></p> <p><i>'Earlier this park was having no activities due to dilapidated condition of swings; now this park is visually attractive and options of learning and playing such as graffiti on wall gives important messages of swatch bharat, snake and ladder, and colours etc.'</i></p> | <p><b>Chaya ji (Mother of Renu &amp; Jyoti)</b></p> <p><i>Vibrant colors and more sitting options like wooden logs and tyre sitting, tyre climbing wall for physical strength along with sand pit and gravel pit for the safety of kids are one of the best thing that this park is having. None other park must be having this kind of facilities in Udaipur we are blessed with this park</i></p> |

Sensory mapping was also carried out to evaluate impact through touch, eyes, ears, nose and balance, as shown in the following illustration:

|  | <b>Before</b>  | <b>After</b>  |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Touch</p>      | <p>Play Equipment in defunct condition- Not Used</p>                         | <p>Usable play equipment - wooden logs, tyre installations, spinning wheel</p>    |
| <p>See</p>        | <p>Debris, Garbage, Stray Animals, Dung</p>                                  | <p>Vibrant colours, paintings on the wall</p>                                     |
| <p>Hear</p>     | <p>Chanting of Mantra in Temple &amp; chirping of birds</p>                  | <p>Chanting of Mantra in Temple &amp; chirping of birds continues</p>             |
| <p>Smell</p>    | <p>Foul smell of garbage, animal dung that were being dumped in the park</p> | <p>No garbage anymore</p>   |
| <p>Balance</p>  | <p>Play equipment used for balancing, but in defunct condition- Not Used</p> | <p>Usable Play Equipment, tyre installations, wooden logs, Snake &amp; Ladder</p> |



Figure 7: Before after images

## 7. Takeaways

- The success of any project depends on its acceptance by the users. The technical team learnt the importance of consulting each and every stakeholder in the vicinity of the park, which was well received by all.
- It is very valuable to involve local students in project implementation, as it becomes a learning exercise and also creates a sense of ownership among them towards the public spaces in their city.
- It is very important to create awareness among caregivers regarding delineated areas for young children in all parks and open spaces.
- Wise planning and reuse of discarded materials can help save the financial resources of any city.



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