

Planning Strategies to Revitalize Sadar Bazar: A Planning-Based Research Paper on Market Renewal, Mobility Management and Urban Public Realm Improvement

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Abstract

Traditional urban markets are important economic, social and cultural components of Indian cities. They function not only as places of trade, but also as active public spaces, employment generators and identity markers of the city. However, many traditional markets are facing increasing pressure due to congestion, encroachment, poor pedestrian infrastructure, lack of parking management, inadequate sanitation, weak public realm quality and unorganized vending activities. Sadar Bazar, located within the urban structure of Meerut, represents such a market area where commercial activity, pedestrian movement, informal vending, mixed traffic and parking demand overlap within a limited spatial setting. This research paper examines the need for revitalizing Sadar Bazar through integrated planning strategies that combine mobility management, public realm improvement, vending regulation, heritage-sensitive renewal, parking organization and local economic strengthening.

The aim of the study is to identify key issues affecting the functional efficiency and urban character of Sadar Bazar and to propose planning strategies for its revitalization. The research follows a qualitative and planning-oriented methodology based on secondary literature review, field observation framework, spatial interpretation and market-area analysis. The study focuses on aspects such as market accessibility, pedestrian movement, traffic circulation, parking pressure, vending activity, streetscape quality, public facilities and economic vitality. The paper argues that revitalization should not be limited to beautification or façade treatment. Instead, it should address the deeper relationship between land use, movement, public space and market economy.

The findings indicate that the major challenges in traditional market areas include traffic congestion, pedestrian-vehicle conflict, unorganized parking, encroachments, weak pedestrian comfort, inadequate signage, limited sitting space, poor waste management and lack of structured vending zones. The study proposes a multi-level revitalization framework including pedestrian-priority streets, traffic calming, organized vending zones, parking management, façade and signage control, improved sanitation, shaded walking spaces, universal accessibility, digital wayfinding and stakeholder-led management. The paper concludes that Sadar Bazar can be revitalized as a vibrant, inclusive and economically resilient market district if planning interventions are implemented through a phased and participatory approach.

Keywords: Sadar Bazar, Market Revitalization, Urban Renewal, Public Realm, Pedestrianization, Traffic Management, Traditional Market, Urban Design, Meerut, Planning Strategies

Introduction

Traditional bazaars form the economic and social backbone of Indian cities. They are not merely commercial spaces but living urban environments where trade, social interaction, culture, movement and public life come together. Markets such as Sadar Bazar usually develop over time through organic growth, mixed land use, informal economic activity and dense pedestrian movement. Their economic importance is high because they support small traders, vendors, service workers, daily shoppers and local employment. At the same time, these areas often face severe planning and management challenges due to intense activity concentration within limited road space.

Sadar Bazar in Meerut represents a typical traditional commercial area where mobility, trade and public space overlap. The market functions as an important shopping and service destination for local residents, visitors and traders. It includes retail shops, informal vending, food outlets, small commercial establishments, service activities and pedestrian movement. However, the pressure of increasing traffic, unregulated parking, encroachments, lack of organized vending space, inadequate pedestrian infrastructure and poor public realm quality affects the overall functioning of the market.

The problem of market decline in traditional bazaars is not always caused by loss of commercial activity. In many cases, the market remains economically active but becomes physically and functionally stressed. Streets become congested, pedestrians face inconvenience, emergency access becomes difficult, public spaces are occupied informally, waste management becomes inefficient and visual clutter reduces the quality of the urban environment. As a result, the market continues to function, but with reduced comfort, safety and long-term sustainability.

Urban revitalization of traditional markets requires a balanced approach. Excessive modernization may harm the traditional character and local economy, while no intervention may allow congestion and deterioration to continue. Therefore, planning strategies must be sensitive to the existing market structure, trader requirements, pedestrian needs, vending activity, access patterns and local identity. The objective should be to make the market more accessible, walkable, organized, clean, safe and economically vibrant without displacing existing livelihoods.

This research paper focuses on planning strategies to revitalize Sadar Bazar through an integrated framework combining transportation planning, urban design, public realm improvement, market management and stakeholder participation. The study views Sadar Bazar not only as a commercial area but as an urban public space that requires structured planning intervention.

Need for the Study

The need for this study arises from the increasing pressure on traditional markets in Indian cities. Sadar Bazar experiences a combination of commercial intensity, pedestrian movement, vehicular access, informal vending and parking demand. These activities generate economic vitality but also create spatial and functional conflicts. Without planned management, such markets can become congested, unsafe and uncomfortable for users.

The study is important for several reasons. First, traditional markets support local economies and small businesses. Their revitalization can strengthen employment and commercial activity. Second, market streets are important public spaces. Improving their walkability, comfort and safety can enhance the quality of urban life. Third, market congestion affects mobility not only within the market but also on surrounding roads. Fourth, unorganized parking and encroachments reduce the efficiency of road space and create conflict among pedestrians, vendors and vehicles. Fifth, traditional markets often have cultural and identity value, which should be protected through sensitive urban renewal.

Sadar Bazar requires a planning-based approach that goes beyond beautification. The market needs integrated strategies for traffic circulation, pedestrian movement, vending organization, parking management, signage control, public amenities and maintenance. The study is therefore relevant for planners, urban local bodies, market associations, transport agencies and urban designers.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to propose integrated planning strategies for the revitalization of Sadar Bazar by improving mobility, public realm quality, market organization and urban management.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To study the existing physical, functional and mobility characteristics of Sadar Bazar.
2. To identify major issues related to traffic congestion, pedestrian movement, parking, vending, encroachment and public facilities.
3. To examine the role of market streets as public spaces and economic activity zones.
4. To develop planning strategies for market revitalization through pedestrian improvement, traffic management, vending organization and public realm enhancement.
5. To propose a phased implementation framework for sustainable and inclusive revitalization of Sadar Bazar.

Research Questions

The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the major physical and functional issues affecting Sadar Bazar?
 2. How do traffic, parking and pedestrian movement influence the functioning of the market?
 3. What role does informal vending play in the market economy and public space use?
 4. How can Sadar Bazar be revitalized without displacing existing economic activities?
 5. What planning strategies can improve accessibility, safety, comfort and market identity?
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Study Area

The study area is Sadar Bazar in Meerut. It is considered as a traditional market area with high commercial activity, mixed pedestrian and vehicular movement and strong local economic importance. The market includes permanent shops, street vending, informal commercial activity, service establishments, food-related activities and local shopping functions. The surrounding road network supports access by pedestrians, two-wheelers, cars, cycle-rickshaws, e-rickshaws and other intermediate public transport modes.

For planning analysis, the study area may be divided into three zones. The first is the core market street zone, where commercial intensity and pedestrian movement are highest. The second is the transition zone, where movement from surrounding roads enters the market area. The third is the support zone, where parking, loading-unloading, public facilities and feeder access can be organized. This zoning approach helps in preparing location-specific revitalization strategies.

The study focuses on the relationship between commercial activity, mobility and public space. It does not treat the market only as a traffic problem or only as a beautification project. Instead, it understands Sadar Bazar as an active urban place that requires integrated planning intervention.

Review of Literature

Urban revitalization is a planning approach that seeks to improve declining or stressed urban areas through physical, economic, social and environmental interventions. In traditional market areas, revitalization must balance economic activity with mobility, public space quality and local identity. Jacobs (1961) emphasized the importance of active streets, mixed uses and human-scale public environments in maintaining urban vitality. Traditional bazaars already possess many of these qualities, but require better management to remain functional and inclusive.

Gehl (2010) highlighted the importance of pedestrian-friendly streets and public spaces in improving city life. According to this approach, streets should not be seen only as movement corridors for vehicles but as places for walking, sitting, social interaction and commerce. This idea is particularly relevant to Sadar Bazar, where pedestrian activity is central to the market experience.

Market revitalization also requires attention to informal economic activity. Street vendors and small traders contribute to affordability, employment and street vitality. However, unmanaged vending can create pedestrian obstruction and traffic conflict. Therefore, vending should be organized rather than removed. The Street Vendors Act, 2014 recognizes vending as a legitimate urban livelihood and emphasizes planned vending zones, town vending committees and protection of vendor rights.

Transport planning literature also highlights the importance of access management in dense commercial areas. Parking demand, loading-unloading activity, pedestrian movement and public transport access must be managed together. Pedestrianization, shared streets, traffic calming, time-based vehicle restriction and peripheral parking are commonly used strategies in market renewal projects. However, these strategies must be adapted to local conditions and stakeholder needs.

The literature suggests that traditional market revitalization should be based on five principles: accessibility, inclusiveness, economic continuity, public realm quality and management. These principles form the basis of the proposed planning framework for Sadar Bazar.

Methodology

The research adopts a planning-oriented qualitative methodology supported by spatial and functional analysis. The methodology includes the following stages:

The first stage is a literature review of traditional market revitalization, pedestrianization, street design, vending management, parking organization and public realm improvement. This helps establish the theoretical and policy basis of the study.

The second stage is study area identification and zoning. Sadar Bazar is divided into market core, transition zone and support zone to understand different types of planning interventions.

The third stage is existing condition assessment. This includes observation of pedestrian movement, vehicular circulation, vending activity, parking behavior, encroachments, signage, street furniture, waste management and public facilities.

The fourth stage is issue identification. Problems are categorized under mobility issues, public realm issues, economic management issues, environmental issues and governance issues.

The fifth stage is strategy formulation. Planning strategies are prepared for traffic circulation, pedestrian movement, vending zones, parking management, façade improvement, signage control, public facilities and phased implementation.

The sixth stage is preparation of a revitalization framework. This framework identifies immediate, short-term, medium-term and long-term actions for Sadar Bazar.

Existing Condition and Issues

Sadar Bazar has strong commercial vitality, but its physical environment faces several challenges. The first major issue is traffic congestion. Market roads are used by pedestrians, two-wheelers, cars, loading vehicles, e-rickshaws and other informal modes. The absence of clear movement hierarchy creates conflict and reduces movement efficiency.

The second issue is pedestrian discomfort. Footpaths are either inadequate, discontinuous or occupied by spillover activities. Pedestrians are often forced to walk on carriageways, increasing conflict with vehicles. In a market area, pedestrian movement should be prioritized, but the current street environment often gives more space to vehicles and informal parking.

The third issue is unorganized vending and encroachment. Informal vending contributes to market vitality and livelihood generation, but unmanaged vending can obstruct movement and create congestion. Therefore, the issue is not vending itself, but the absence of planned vending space and management.

The fourth issue is parking pressure. Visitors often park close to shops, reducing available road width and creating bottlenecks. Lack of designated short-term parking, two-wheeler parking and loading-unloading zones leads to random stopping and traffic conflict.

The fifth issue is visual clutter and weak signage management. Uncontrolled signboards, overhead wires, temporary structures and inconsistent shopfronts reduce visual quality and weaken the identity of the market. Better signage guidelines can improve legibility without damaging the local commercial character.

The sixth issue is inadequate public amenities. Market users require toilets, drinking water, seating, shade, dustbins, lighting, safety measures and wayfinding. The absence of these amenities reduces comfort, especially for elderly users, women, children and persons with disabilities.

Analysis of Market Functioning

The functioning of Sadar Bazar depends on the interaction of three systems: movement system, commercial system and public space system. The movement system includes pedestrians, vehicles, IPT, loading-unloading and parking. The commercial system includes permanent shops, street vendors, hawkers, services and small businesses. The public space system includes streets, corners, intersections, open spaces, pedestrian edges and waiting areas.

At present, these systems overlap without sufficient regulation. For example, commercial spillover occupies pedestrian space, parking reduces carriageway width, and informal stopping blocks movement. However, these activities are part of the market's economic life. Therefore, planning should organize and manage them rather than remove them completely.

The market core should be treated as a pedestrian-priority zone. Vehicular access can be regulated through time-based restrictions and service access windows. The transition zone should manage entry, exit, parking and IPT movement. The support zone should accommodate

parking, loading-unloading, public toilets and utility services. This spatial restructuring can improve market function without harming commercial activity.

Planning Strategies for Revitalization

1. Pedestrian-Priority Market Streets

The most important strategy is to prioritize pedestrian movement in the core market area. This can be achieved through wider walking zones, continuous footpaths, safe crossings, textured paving, removal of unnecessary obstructions and universal access. In narrow market streets, a shared street approach can be adopted where vehicles are allowed at slow speeds and pedestrians receive priority.

Pedestrian-priority design should include shaded walking routes, resting points, lighting and clear wayfinding. The goal should be to make the market comfortable for walking rather than only improving vehicular movement.

2. Traffic Circulation and Access Management

Traffic movement should be reorganized to reduce conflict inside the market core. One-way circulation, time-based entry restrictions, designated entry-exit points and traffic calming measures can be introduced. Heavy vehicles and loading activity should be restricted during peak shopping hours. Emergency access routes must be kept clear at all times.

A circulation plan should separate through traffic from market-bound traffic. Vehicles that do not need to enter the market should be diverted to surrounding roads, while market access should be controlled and managed.

3. Parking Management

Parking should be managed through designated zones rather than random street parking. Two-wheeler parking, short-term car parking, loading-unloading bays and e-rickshaw stands should be clearly marked. Peripheral parking should be encouraged so that the core market area remains pedestrian-friendly.

Parking management should also include pricing, time limits and enforcement. Short-duration parking may be allowed at specific points, while long-duration parking should be shifted away from the core market streets.

4. Organized Vending Zones

Street vending should be integrated into the market plan. Vendors should be classified according to type, space requirement and time of operation. Designated vending zones, movable vending stalls and vending streets can be introduced without blocking pedestrian movement.

The strategy should follow the principle of inclusion. Vendors should not be displaced without alternatives. Instead, vending should be organized through marked spaces, standard stall dimensions, waste bins, lighting and periodic management.

5. Public Realm Improvement

The public realm of Sadar Bazar should be improved through paving, lighting, seating, shade, dustbins, signage, public toilets and drinking water facilities. Street furniture should be simple, durable and easy to maintain. Public spaces at intersections and corners can be redesigned as pause points.

The streetscape should respect the traditional character of the market. Materials and colors should be selected to create visual harmony without making the market look artificial or overly modernized.

6. Façade and Signage Control

Shopfront improvement should be encouraged through simple façade guidelines. Signage should be standardized in size, placement and height while allowing traders to retain their identity. Visual clutter can be reduced by regulating signboards, temporary banners, wires and projections.

Façade improvement should not impose high costs on traders. A low-cost improvement toolkit can be developed, including signage format, color palette, awning design and shopfront alignment.

7. Waste Management and Sanitation

Market revitalization must include improved sanitation. Dustbins, waste collection points, public toilets and daily cleaning schedules are necessary. Food-related areas require special attention to hygiene and waste disposal. Waste management should be coordinated with shopkeepers, vendors and municipal agencies.

8. Safety and Universal Accessibility

The market should be safe and accessible for all users. This includes proper lighting, CCTV where necessary, safe pedestrian crossings, barrier-free access, tactile paving at important locations and emergency access. Women, elderly users, children and persons with disabilities should be considered in the design.

9. Stakeholder Participation and Market Management

Revitalization cannot succeed without participation of traders, vendors, residents, visitors, local authorities and traffic police. A market management committee can be formed to coordinate maintenance, vending, parking, signage and cleaning. Regular stakeholder meetings can help resolve conflicts and improve implementation.

Proposed Revitalization Framework

The revitalization framework for Sadar Bazar can be structured into four levels.

The first level is mobility improvement. This includes pedestrian-priority streets, traffic circulation, parking management, IPT stands and loading-unloading control.

The second level is public realm improvement. This includes paving, lighting, shade, seating, toilets, dustbins, signage, universal access and street furniture.

The third level is economic strengthening. This includes support for small traders, organized vending, shopfront improvement, night-time activity management and local identity enhancement.

The fourth level is governance and maintenance. This includes stakeholder committees, maintenance contracts, enforcement mechanisms, monitoring indicators and periodic review.

Phasing of Implementation

The implementation should be phased to reduce disruption to traders and market users.

Immediate Phase: 0–1 Year

The immediate phase should include cleaning drives, encroachment mapping, parking regulation, signage audit, vending survey, pedestrian safety measures and temporary traffic management. Low-cost interventions such as paint-based pedestrian zones, temporary bollards, dustbins and lighting improvements can be implemented quickly.

Short-Term Phase: 1–3 Years

The short-term phase should include permanent pedestrian improvements, organized vending zones, designated parking areas, IPT stands, shop signage guidelines, public toilet improvement and waste management systems. Traffic circulation changes should be tested through pilot projects before permanent implementation.

Medium-Term Phase: 3–5 Years

The medium-term phase should include streetscape redesign, façade improvement, utility management, structured parking, public space development and integration with city-level mobility plans. Loading-unloading and service access should be formally regulated.

Long-Term Phase: 5+ Years

The long-term phase should focus on market district management, heritage-sensitive renewal, digital wayfinding, smart parking, economic branding and continuous monitoring. The aim should be to make Sadar Bazar a model traditional market revitalization project.

Discussion

The revitalization of Sadar Bazar should not be understood as a beautification project alone. A market is a complex urban system where economy, movement and public life are interconnected. If only façades are improved without solving pedestrian, parking and vending issues, the market will continue to face congestion and discomfort. Similarly, if traffic management is done without considering traders and vendors, the intervention may harm livelihoods.

The success of revitalization depends on balance. Pedestrians need safe and comfortable movement. Traders need visibility and customer access. Vendors need livelihood space. Vehicles require managed access and parking. Municipal agencies need maintenance and enforcement mechanisms. Therefore, a collaborative planning approach is necessary.

Sadar Bazar has the potential to become a more attractive and functional market district if its existing vitality is supported through better organization. The market already has commercial energy; planning must improve its physical and operational environment. The focus should be on improving access, comfort, safety, cleanliness, identity and economic resilience.

Conclusion

Sadar Bazar is an important traditional market area that requires integrated planning intervention for revitalization. The major issues affecting the market include traffic congestion, pedestrian-vehicle conflict, unorganized vending, parking pressure, encroachment, visual clutter and inadequate public amenities. These issues reduce comfort, safety and efficiency but can be addressed through structured planning strategies.

The study concludes that revitalization should be based on pedestrian priority, traffic management, organized vending, parking control, public realm improvement, sanitation, signage regulation and stakeholder participation. The aim should not be to remove the traditional character of the market but to strengthen it through better planning and management.

A phased implementation approach is recommended, beginning with low-cost tactical interventions and moving toward long-term market district management. If implemented sensitively, Sadar Bazar can be transformed into a more accessible, inclusive, vibrant and economically resilient urban market while retaining its local identity.

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