

Written by Administrator

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## Redevelopment and Designing of Traditional Residential Districts of Walled City- Sri Amritsar

RAWAL AULAKH

TIME BRINGS upon its innumerable scars and as far as the urban fabric is concerned, these scars are most prominent upon the fabrics of the city. In order to infuse vibrancy and new life into these parts of the city. In order to undergo 'redevelopment' – which means 'renovate'.

The present article discusses this aspect of 'redevelopment' of the area called 'Katra Dulo' in the walled city of Amritsar.

The walled city planned on the pattern of medieval town planning has resulted in extreme congestion, over crowding, mixed land uses, defective circulation and traffic, sluggish drainage and poor sanitation, inadequate public amenities and services thereby deteriorating the healthy living environment of the area.

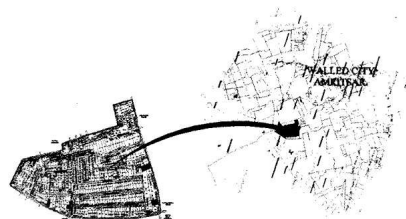
All these problems led to the need of redevelopment in the area. The city as it aims at enhancing the environment of the physical, social and economic activities of the area for better living keeping the existing character of the area in mind.

It was founded by S. Karam Singh Bhangi in 1756 A.D. The structure that came up was Temple- Mandir Sh. Teja Singh Thind. This was just parallel to *Jamadar Di Haveli* that was gifted to Khanda Singh who was one amongst the many courtiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The growth extended up to Lohgarh gate and bazaar Chaurasti. The route was followed up from Gobind Garh Fort to Golden Temple. The northern side of Katra Dulo was segregated from its area and was called the Katra Lohgarh in 1850's when new road was intercepted from Gate to Chaurasti Atari. The area was initially divided into eight lanes.

The area was demarcated for specific uses. The area or the lanes were named after the features of very specific nature e.g. three wells in a single land. In Persian language, the wells were known as 'Chah' so the lane nomenclature CHAH Wali gali was applicable. Similarly, under royal kings/ rulers/ chief were named after their names as Gali, Jaswant Wali Gali, etc. (Source: Oral recitation by Parveen Bhatia).

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Ward No. 7). In 1850 the population of Katra Dulo was around 12,000.

### LAND USE

The land use of the area is mainly residential commercial activity mostly located on the periphery of the roads.

TABLE 1 LANDUSE- 2008 (UPDATED)

Land use	Area (In Acres)	Percentage
Residential	9.61	61.9
Resi-cum commercial	0.25	20.64
Commercial	3.21	1.29
Public/Semi public	0.75	4.78
Vacant	0.20	1.16
Circulation	1.50	9.68

SOURCE: GRSP\_REDEVELOPMENT OF KATRA DULO

### Residential

It is the main landuse of the area. The total area under residential landuse is 9.61 acre, which is about 61.9 per cent of the total area of Katra Dulo. The raw housing, placed back to back, can be seen in the Katra. The plots of irregular shapes and sizes varying from 10 sqm to 200 sq mts are noticed. The height varies from ground floor to 9+5. Likewise in the other Katras of the walled city of Amritsar, Katra Dulo too have the zigzag street/ lane pattern, the width of the approaching roads to the residential plots varies

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from 1m – 5m. So the problem of traffic, light and ventilation of the streets is also there.

The most important features of the residential areas are the designed *thadas* (seating) outside the house at the doorstep, the central courtyard/ cutout popularly called as *Mugh*. The wooden partitions, and intricately designed doors.

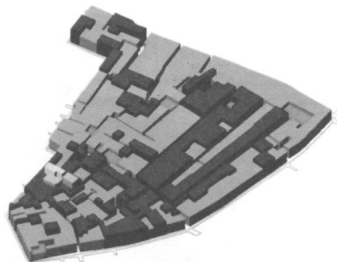
Around 65 per cent of the total houses have been modified or repaired during last few years, but due to lack of light and ventilation, there is the dampness to such an extent that the modifications/repairs are too affected by that. As per the conservationist the cement layer put on the both sides of the wall casted in brick lime, acts as the layer that will not allow, the internal water present in form of moisture, to evaporate and will act as sandwich for the structure. So the top layer in cement causes much harm to the buildings whose load bearing wall is made up of brick lime.

#### Residential cum Commercial

Around 20.64 per cent of area includes the shops in the periphery and some in the control spine of the Katra, Gali Kasturian. The ground floor is used for commercial use and all the upper floors are occupied by residential use. This character is similar to the medieval dwellings.

#### Commercial

Only 1.29 per cent of the total area is occupied by commercial setup;



THE FIGURE SHOWING VARIED BUILDING HEIGHTS IN KATRA DULO

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independent shops are constructed in new material over the older one only. Around 80 per cent of the total shops are in retail business and rest of the 20 per cent is used for wholesale business.

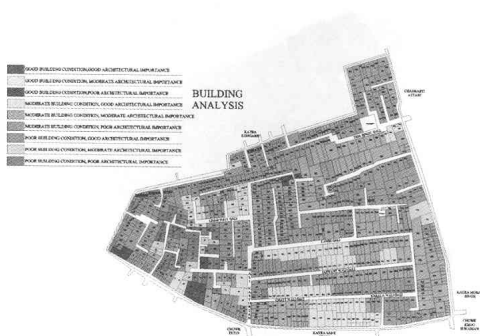
The shops are of very small sizes varying from 25 sq. mts. to 57 sq. mt. Most of the shops are meant to fulfill the need of the residents of the area that is why most of the shops cater to their daily needs and are retail in nature.

## Public/Semi Public

Only 4.78 per cent of the total area is covered under the land use. It includes six temples, one dispensary, one Sr. Sec. School and an ayurvedic centre. The dispensary is basically used for medicine and dentistry purposes. It is the charitable homeopathic dispensary which serves the needs of the area to the fullest. There is a 200 year old temple in the name of Shri Teja Singh Thakur Dwara. This temple also depicts the architectural and structural details of its construction. The old structure is being super imposed with Bathroom tiles, which are destroying the character of the structure completely.

## Vacant/Open space

There are no parks/ playground in the area that could be used as the areas of breathing spaces in the Katra. This aspect covers 1.16 per cent of the total area of the Katra. There is an open space in the west of the area.



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## Circulation

- Around 9.68 per cent of the total area is covered under this land use. The streets are very narrow; the width ranges from 1m-5m which shows that the circulation pattern is meant for pedestrian traffic. The outer street in the west direction is of irregular width, i.e. narrow widening in nature. There is encroachment of *rehries*, scooters and cycles along the street due to commercial activity which results in the reduction of road width. There are 36 dead ends that enhance the security of residents. Katra Dulo consists of typical features :
  - ▶ Streets with dead ends
  - ▶ Single main entrance
  - ▶ Height of structures along the streets is 10-15 times the width of the streets.
  - ▶ Irregular street pattern with narrow zig-zag streets and 36 dead ends.
- The oldest architectural features are being replaced by the new materials, destroying the character of the residential area.
- Due to lack of urban design and conservation guidelines, the oldest structure of Sh. Teja Singh Thakur Dwara, is losing its originality.

**Development of Damaged Areas Act, 1949:** Walled city has been declared as damaged area under this Act. According to this Act, the improvement trust may take up six types of schemes .

- A scheme under this Act may provide any of the following matters:
- Acquisition under land Acquisition Act, 1894.
- Acquisition by purchase, leased, exchange or otherwise of such land.
- Demolition of building or part of building, obstructing light beyond building line.
- Redistribution of sites belonging to the owners of property.
- Laying out and attention of streets.
- Provision of open spaces.
- Enlargement of attraction of existing open spaces.
- Raising, lowering or reclamation of land.
- The water supply, lighting of street altered or constructed.
- Provision of drains and sewers for improvement of ill drained and unsanitary

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- localities.
- Implementation of all these acts intended to promote health of residents.

**Policies and Strategies:** All the new structures, to come up in the Katra, the character shall conform to the already existing area character.

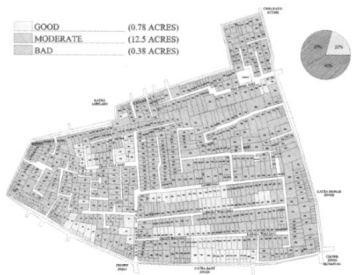
**Residential**

As total number of houses that are identified in poor building condition and poor architectural importance, i.e. without any architectural features is 51, plotting can be made into various categories as up to 25 sqm. 25-40, 40-55, 55 sqm.

Area existing	No. of plots	Area provided
Upto 25 sq.m	09	20 sq. m.
Upto 25-40 sq.m.	22	30 sq. m.
40-55 sq. m.	15	50 sq. m.
55 and above	09	70 sq. m.

Out of these only nine plots of 20 sq. m., 15 plots of 50 sq. m. nine plots of 75 sq. m. and 12 plots of 30 sq. m. are reconstructed on the same site. Other houses are being shifted onto the vacant plots and other some houses that will suitably absorb the rest of the population.

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BUILDING CONDITION BASED ON AGE  
SOURCE- GRSP\_REDEVELOPMENT OF KATRA DULO



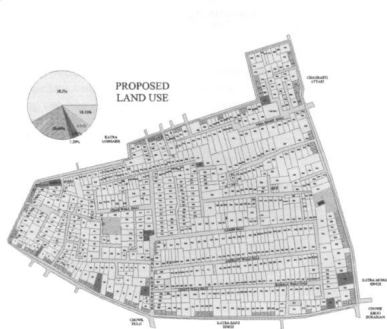
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The courtyard is must in any upcoming structure due to following areas:

- As there is limitation of the front and side setbacks because the front setbacks may cause an obstruction in the continuity of the visual panoramic view through the street.
- For better ventilation within the house.
- The maximum height may go up to G+3 (16 Mts) in all the upcoming constructions.
- The pocket containing the houses in poor building condition and having poor architectural importance shall be demolished, and the inhabitants shall be shifted to the houses constructed before; on the vacant plots (existing).
- The constructions to be made on vacant sites shall be of precast units (walls, roofing, flooring etc.)
- No residential units shall be converted to commercial activity in the Katra, except from those in peripheral areas.
- Basements can be constructed on if proper light and ventilation is provided.
- Residential areas divided in zones shall be treated as per the design features present earlier.



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- Specific conservation strategies shall be applied to demarcated zones.
- Plot with I.D. no. 111 is to be demolished to make a congregation space in the central area of Katra.

## Commercial

Permanent parking shall be allowed in front of the commercial area.

- The signage's displaying the names of the shops shall be of equal/ proportionate sizes, so that there must be some hierarchy/ harmony among all. The signage's shall be in proportion of 1:1.618.
- The signages shall form a part of the architectural feature if any present.
- The commercial area can be transformed on ground floor (only), on the peripheral areas.
- The precast panels can be used to face over the walls, shall be used to give unified character to the Katra.

## Public/ semi public

- The religious temples shall be preserved by using traditional materials like lime, Nanakshahi bricks etc.
- The paintings (Tempra) in the temple (with plot I.D. no 68) shall be preserved with suitable technique.
- The dispensary, among the latest constructions, shall be faced with existing architectural features of the surrounding structures.

## Infrastructure

- The areas with dead slope shall be dealt with.
- The places where anti-siphonage takes place shall be replaced by some other activity.
- In the residential areas the electric cables shall be re- aligned.
- An open area for parks and open spaces within the Katra shall also be reserved.

## Circulation

- The streets shall be maintained by the similar material existing before.
- The streetscapes, forming the most important feature of the Katra, shall be designed and maintained by using elements of similar nature as existing ones.

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- The advertising boards, signage, banners, name plates, etc. shall be uniform or proportionate sizes and shapes and shall not cover the architectural elements such as, sconce, bay windows, etc. which highlight the façade.
- As the elements on the facades form the visual character of the area, each lane shall be maintained with its original architectural character.
- The surprising open spaces shall be introduced in form of parks.
- Dead ends shall be removed wherever necessary.

CONCLUSION

The area with rich architecture is to be identified as heritage zone. The buildings in this zone are to be conserved through measures like facade control, use of traditional building materials for repair and by maintaining the old architecture of the area like arches, engravings, wood carving & Jaratkari etc.

The buildings with poor structure and poor architecture are to be demolished and rebuild by maintaining the old character of the Katra.

The zigzag narrow streets and the number of dead ends depict the medieval character and need to be maintained.

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The problem of water accumulation at one place is to be addressed by provision of cross-drainages.

The area totally lacks the lung spaces and places for social interaction and gatherings need to be introduced.

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