

Regeneration of the Urban Core: Public Realm and Urban Attractiveness Towards Local Area Planning in Old Town Visakhapatnam

PROJECT SUMMARY 2026



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1 BACKGROUND & CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

1.1 Background of the study

Old Towns: the historic cores found across most cities are commonly among the first areas to experience urban decay, as commercial and administrative activity shifts outward and investment moves toward newer parts of the city. This decline manifests through the loss of historical and cultural value, a fragmented urban fabric, disconnected public spaces, and a weakening of everyday economic and social life within these precincts. In response, cities have adopted a range of regeneration approaches tactical urbanism, economic regeneration, physical regeneration, and heritage-led regeneration among them each addressing different dimensions of urban decline.

Visakhapatnam's Old Town is one such core, carrying over three hundred years of urban history from its origins under Dutch trading influence to its later role as the principal commercial and administrative centre of the former Vizagapatam District. Despite housing landmarks such as the Dutch Cemetery, St. John's Church, and the Municipal Office, it faces the same pattern of decline seen in historic cores elsewhere fragmented streets, disconnected public spaces, and landmarks surviving in isolation rather than as part of a connected precinct (Mahammood, 2011). Within this range of approaches, heritage-led regeneration functions as a catalyst: it leverages Old Town's historic character not merely to preserve it, but to trigger wider revival of the surrounding streets, spaces, and everyday urban life (Tiesdell et al., 1996; Garg & Raotole, 2024).

1.2 Need for the Study

Urban decay is a recurring condition in ageing city cores, driven by shifting land-use patterns, selective infrastructure investment, and outward movement of economic activity toward newer parts of a city. In declining urban cores that carry historic or cultural value, this decline compounds: structural fabric deteriorates alongside a loss of the living cultural functions that once animated the area, leaving landmarks physically present but disconnected from everyday use or visitor experience.

Within Old Town, this takes the form of unplanned land-use change driving deterioration of historic buildings, visual clutter, and encroachment of public space, weakening the precinct's aesthetic and spatial quality. Poor linkages between individual landmarks compound the problem visitors experience a set of disconnected stops rather than a single walkable historic quarter, a gap made worse by the same encroached, cluttered streets, which leave any attempt to link the precinct's heritage stock inheriting an already compromised street network.

This is paired with a limited understanding of how visitors actually engage with the precinct: travellers today seek layered, explorable, story-driven experiences, but Old Town offers little in the way of interpretation, wayfinding, or visible narrative to support this. Beyond daytime use, the precinct also suffers from dark spots and inactive streetscapes after dusk, leaving evenings feeling unsafe and discouraging sustained public life.

Despite these challenges, Old Town holds considerable untapped potential a high concentration of heritage landmarks within a compact, walkable area, and a legacy tied to one of the region's oldest ports. With visitor interest in such destinations expected to grow rather than fade, this combination of concentrated heritage value and unrealised potential makes a strong case for heritage-led urban regeneration in Old Town.

1.3 Global and National Context: Key Challenges

Globally, historic urban cores face a consistent set of interlinked problems as they age, rooted in a common condition of urban decay that sets in once investment, footfall, and institutional attention shift away from these precincts toward newer parts of the city. This decay does not remain confined to individual structures it spreads across the surrounding public realm, weakening the streets, spaces, and everyday functions that once sustained the precinct as a whole.

Land use shifts from residential and institutional to commercial use, incentivising plot owners to maximise built coverage rather than sustain the low-density, individually-set-back building form these precincts were originally built with a shift shown to disconnect new development from the surrounding historic fabric in both form and function (Mehanna & Mehanna, 2019). This consumption of space

extends to the public realm too, as vendors and vehicles increasingly encroach onto pedestrian paths and squares, narrowing the shared civic space precincts depend on (Chandan & Kumar, 2019). Compounding this, unplanned growth fragments the pedestrian network linking heritage landmarks, leaving once-compact historic layouts disconnected rather than walkable as a single quarter (Rai, 2013). Historic Cairo also shows the same land-use and public-space pressures documented globally: plot-level commercial conversion has steadily eaten into the low-rise historic fabric of its old quarters, while unregulated vending and parking have narrowed streets and squares despite repeated municipal refurbishment schemes (Elshimy, 2014; Kafafy, 2014).

Even where heritage is well documented, interpretation for visitors frequently falls short: an assessment of interpretive panels across eleven UNESCO Global Geoparks found nearly 60% of visitors who engaged with them still reported a dissatisfying experience, a gap linked to absent planning behind the content rather than the heritage itself (Štrba & Palgutová, 2024), while a study of Zhangzhou's historic district recorded landmark-visibility and pedestrian-engagement scores of just 0.58 and 0.25 respectively, with only a weak measured link between built-environment quality and actual walking behaviour (Zeng & Shen, 2020). Safety, too, shifts through the day: research on public space lighting consistently finds inadequate illumination after dark weakens pedestrians' sense of safety and reassurance, discouraging use of streets that may be busy only hours earlier (Portnov et al., 2020; Kim & Noh, 2018).



Figure 1-1 Closed historical places in Zhangzhou

In the Indian context, these same problems appear with greater intensity. Extreme density and unregulated development in India's historic cores drive rapid deterioration of both structures and the public spaces around them, with public squares progressively reduced in size and civic function as informal activity consumes them (Chandan & Kumar, 2019). This fragmentation of public space compounds connectivity gaps between landmarks, while India's limited tracking of visitor behaviour within historic precincts beyond footfall counts at a handful of protected monuments leaves planners with little evidence of how tourists actually move through and experience these areas, mirroring the interpretive and behavioural gaps documented internationally.



Figure 1-2 Uncontrolled hoardings in Dastur Khan's Mosque & Jhoolta Minara in Ahmedabad



Figure 1-3 Polluted riverfront and unregulated vehicles in riverfront corridor - Varanasi

These patterns are visible at the precinct scale as well. In India, Ahmedabad's Walled City, despite its World Heritage City status, continues to face encroachment, illegal construction, and unregulated hawking across its lanes and public spaces due to overlapping institutional responsibilities (The Quint, 2018), while Varanasi's ghats and lanes remain so overwhelmed by pedestrians, cycles, and unregulated vehicles that the city has resorted to ad hoc fixes such as painted wayfinding and vehicle-free zones rather than a planned public realm strategy (Down To Earth, 2025).

1.4 Key Practices for Effective Heritage Management

Historic urban cores worldwide converge on a few recurring practices for reversing decline. Chief among these is making heritage places more visual and experiential rather than leaving them as static backdrops precincts that structure their historical narrative through planned, evaluated placemaking genuinely engage visitors, while those that simply display heritage without this structuring behind it consistently fall short of visitor expectations (Štrba & Palgutová, 2024).

This is closely tied to how landmarks are woven into a single connected experience: precinct-level design that prioritises landmark visibility and pedestrian-friendly built form has been shown to meaningfully increase how much residents and visitors walk between heritage sites, reinforcing that connectivity is itself a design outcome rather than something incidental (Zeng & Shen, 2020). Keeping residents active within the historic core, rather than displacing them through unchecked commercial or tourism pressure, has also proven critical to sustaining informal surveillance and night-time vitality, since occupied upper floors keep "eyes on the street" long after ground-floor shops close (Malay Mail, 2014).



Figure 1-4 Image of including cultural activities

Activating heritage precincts with vibrant, well-used public squares similar to urban squares in Chennai extends their vitality into the evening, reducing the sense of unsafety that typically accompanies empty streets after dark. Together, these practices show that heritage urban core management works best when visual and experiential placemaking, connectivity, community presence, and visitor insight are treated as interdependent, activating the surrounding streets and public life around heritage rather than addressing the precinct in isolated fragments.



Figure 1-5 Kathipara urban square - Chennai



02

2 INTRODUCTION OF THE CITY & STUDY AREA

2.1 Introduction of the city profile

Visakhapatnam, popularly known as 'Vizag' and referred to as the 'City of Destiny', is the largest city and principal port town of Andhra Pradesh, located on the east coast of India along the Bay of Bengal at approximately 17°41'N and 83°13'E. Positioned almost midway between the metropolitan cities of Kolkata to the north and Chennai to the south, the city occupies a distinctive geographical setting where the Eastern Ghats meet the coastline, producing an undulating terrain of hillocks, valleys and a natural harbour - the only one of its kind on India's east coast.

2.1.1 Demographic Profile

The city is administered by the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) and falls under the planning jurisdiction of the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA), which superseded the earlier Visakhapatnam Urban Development Authority (VUDA). As per Census 2011, GVMC recorded a population of approximately 17.28 lakh (1,728,128 persons) at a density of around 3,191 persons per sq.km over expanded from approximately 111 sq.km to about 681.96 sq.km, reflecting the city's rapid urban growth and metropolitan expansion. The wider Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region, spanning parts of Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Anakapalli districts, houses a population exceeding 60 lakh. Subsequent decades of in-migration driven by port, industrial and IT-sector employment have pushed the current population considerably higher than the last available census figures, a trend that is expected to continue under the 2021 Revised Master Plan (RMPVMR-2021) horizon and beyond.

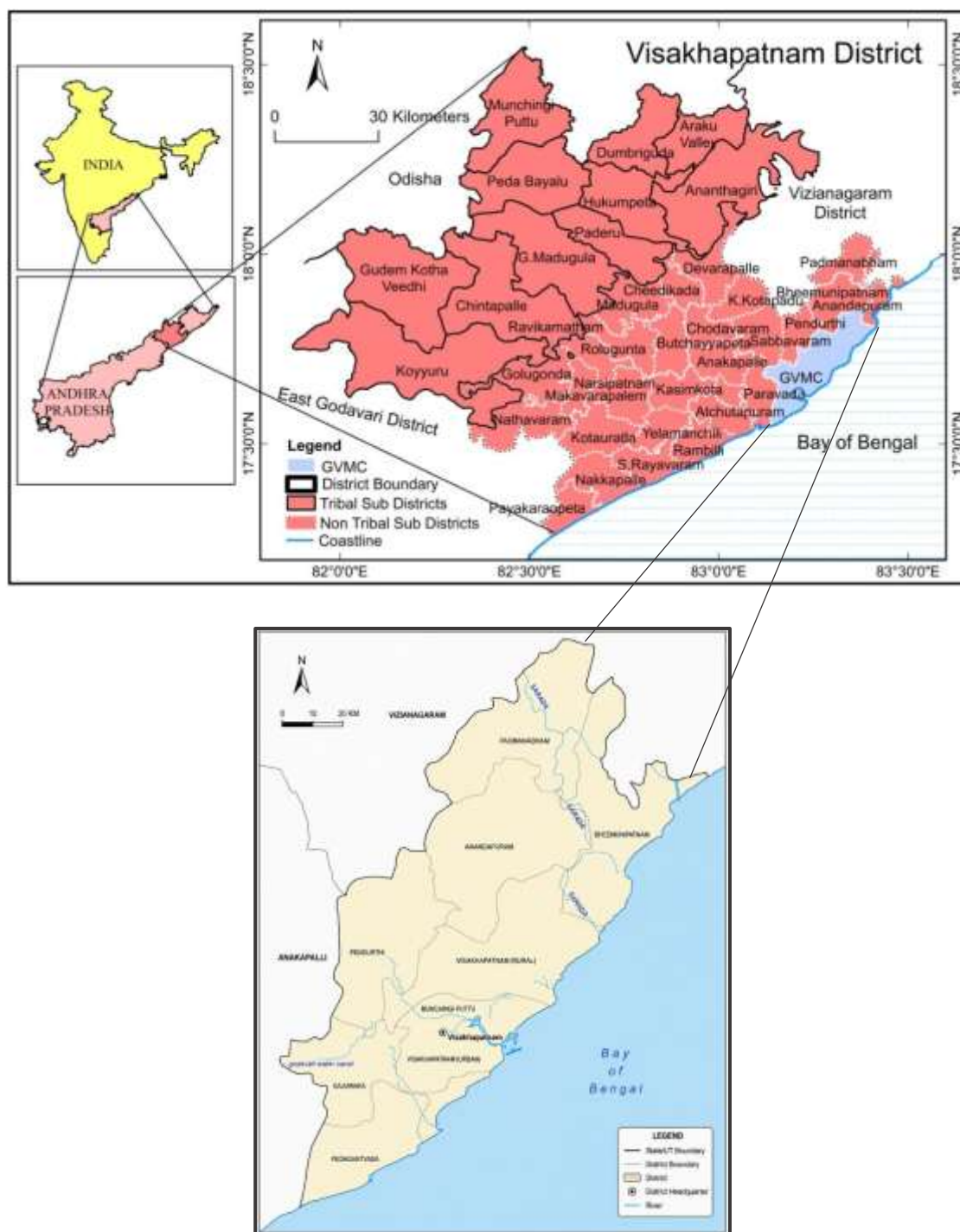


Figure 2-1 Location map -of GVMC

2.1.2 Socio economic profile

Economically, Visakhapatnam is anchored by four broad pillars: (i) the Visakhapatnam Port, one of India's largest major ports by cargo tonnage, handling bulk cargo, containers and petroleum products; (ii) heavy and process industries, most notably the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (RINL), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) refinery, and a cluster of pharmaceutical, fertiliser and ship-building units; (iii) an expanding Information Technology and ITES sector concentrated around the Rushikonda IT hub and adjoining Special Economic Zones, positioning the city as an emerging

secondary IT destination after Hyderabad; and (iv) tourism and services, supported by the city's beaches, hill parks, naval and maritime heritage, and its role as the headquarters of the Eastern Naval Command.

The city is well connected by the Visakhapatnam International Airport, an important railway junction on the Howrah-Chennai trunk line, and National Highways 16 and 26, reinforcing its role as a regional gateway for trade, industry and tourism.

2.1.3 Heritage and landmarks

Despite this economic dynamism, Visakhapatnam's historic core - popularly known as "Old Town" or "One Town" has not kept pace with the city's modern expansion.

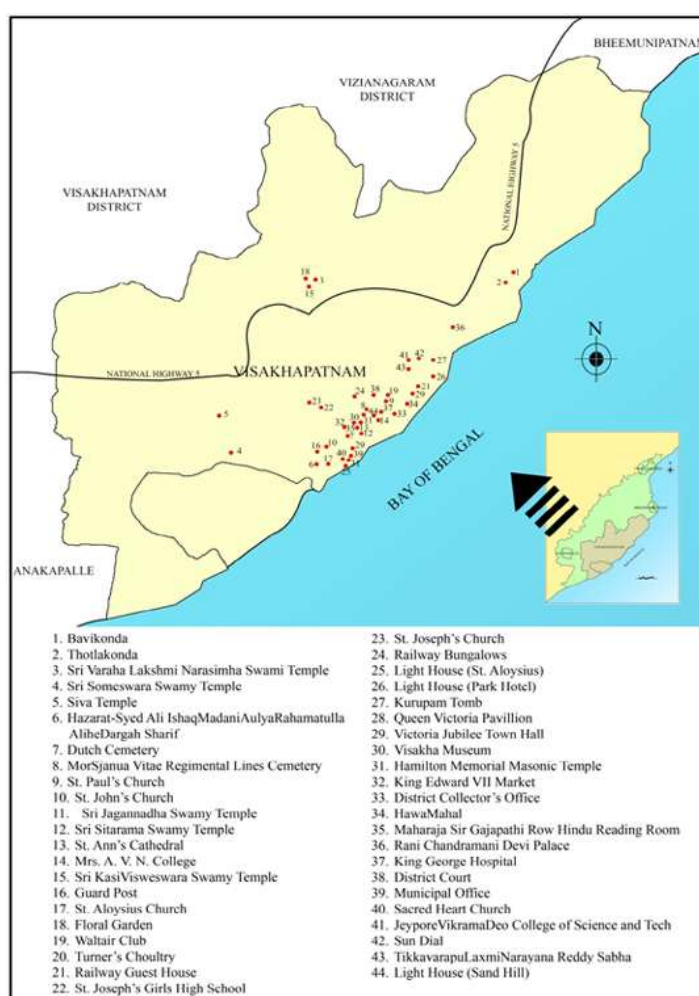


Figure 2-2 Important Heritage and historical site's location map

A published inventory of the city's heritage resources identified forty-four significant heritage sites spanning Hindu-Buddhist, Mughal, Native-Colonial and British-era affiliations, the majority of which are concentrated in and around this historic core (Giduthuri, 2013). These sites, though individually documented, have so far been treated as isolated monuments rather than as a connected precinct, underscoring the need for the area-based approach that this project undertakes.

Overall, 44 heritage sites were identified in Visakhapatnam, ranging from 2 sites dating to the Mughal period to 21 sites from the British era, reflecting the city's historical evolution across different periods.

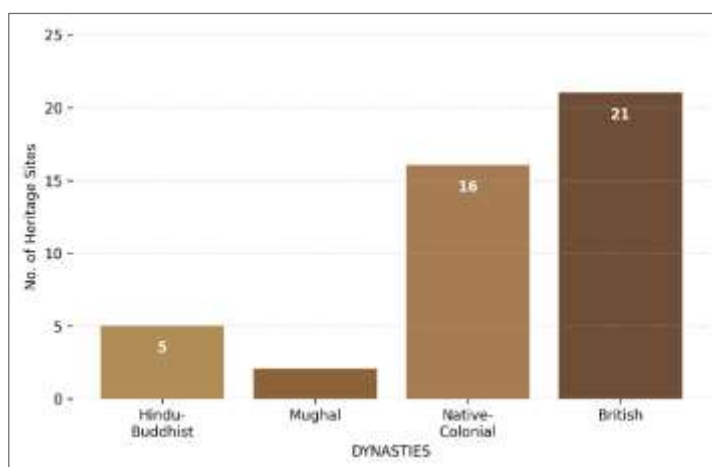


Figure 2-3 List of historical sites - Evolution period

The 44 identified heritage sites in Visakhapatnam were classified into 17 heritage typologies. Among these, religious architecture forms the largest category with 14 sites, followed by public buildings and residences with 4 sites each.

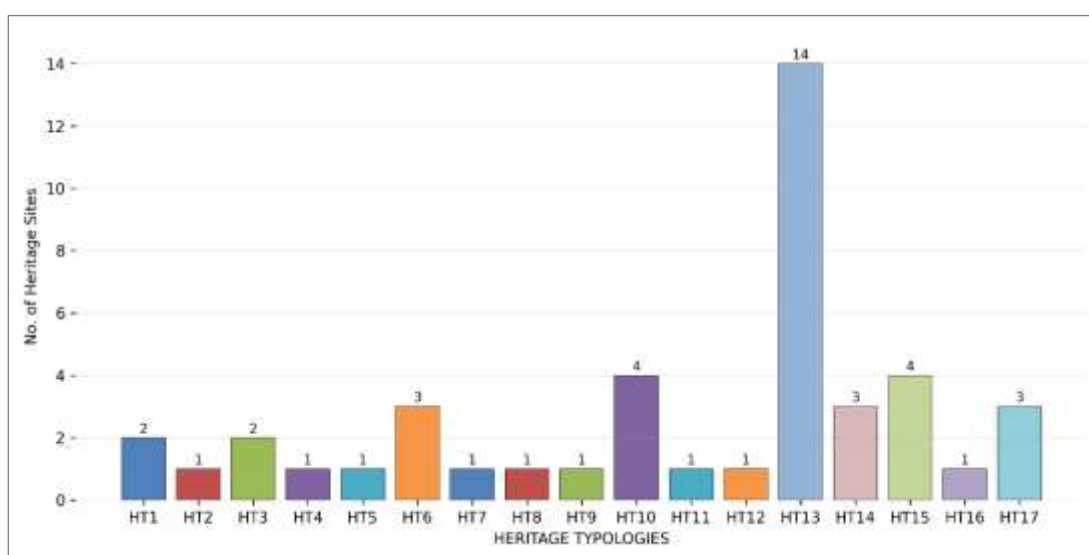


Figure 2-4 List of Historical sites - Heritage typology

Educational institutions, religious-cum-commemorative architecture, and transport systems comprise 3 sites each, while the remaining typologies including commemorative architecture, cultural associations, developing technologies, domestic habitat, gardens, military architecture, palaces, public-cum-recreational buildings, recreational architecture, and trade are represented by one or two sites. This distribution highlights the predominance of religious architecture while reflecting the city's diverse historical and cultural heritage.

(HT1 - Commemorative Architecture, HT2 - Cultural Associations, HT3 - Developing Knowledge, HT4 - Developing Technologies, HT5 - Domestic Habitat, HT6 - Educational Institutions, HT7 - Gardens,

HT8 - Military Architecture, HT9 - Palaces, HT10 - Public Buildings, HT11 - Public-cum-Recreational buildings, HT12 - Recreational Buildings, HT13 - Religious Buildings, HT14 - Religious-cum-Commemorative Architecture, HT15 - Residences, HT16 - Trade, HT17 - Transport Systems)

Source: Heritage Sites In Visakhapatnam City: Typologies, Architectural Styles And Status Viswanadha Kumar Giduthuri, M. Arch.

Furthermore, the Simhachalam Temple precinct has undergone tourism-oriented interventions that have, in several instances, overlooked its architectural, aesthetic, cultural, historical, religious, and heritage significance (Giduthuri & Mahmood, 2011).

2.1.4 Key challenges in Vishakhapatnam

In Visakhapatnam, the district known as 'Old Town' (One Town area) was once the city's principal centre of administration, trade, and civic life, its urban fabric shaped across multiple historical eras from native rule through the Dutch and British colonial periods. That layered history has left the area with a dense concentration of administrative, institutional, educational, and religious buildings, but the district as a whole has not kept pace with the growth, investment, and infrastructure upgrades seen elsewhere in the city.

- **Physical Decline and Loss of the Historic Building Stock:** Thirty of the forty-four documented heritage sites in Visakhapatnam carry no protection from any authority despite being listed in the Revised Master Plan, and heritage assets of clear historical significance including the residence of a former Indian President have already been demolished in the absence of an enforceable precinct-level policy (Giduthuri, 2013).
- **Unregulated Informal Economy and Vendor Congestion:** Old Town's traditional markets host continuous informal vending activity that remains unmapped and unregulated, producing conflict between pedestrian movement, vehicular access, and trading space - the exact condition the Street Vendors Act, 2014 was intended to resolve through demarcated "natural market" vending zones, but which has not yet been implemented at the precinct level in Visakhapatnam (Government of India, 2014).



Figure 2-5 Informal Street vending - Visakhapatnam

- **Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Conflict:** The area experiences heavy footfall from commercial markets and religious institutions, yet footpaths are missing, obstructed, or encroached upon, forcing pedestrians onto narrow roadways.



Figure 2-6 Do Minaar heritage archway- Visakhapatnam

- **Evening Safety and a Dead Public Realm:** Poor or missing street lighting, blank perimeter walls, and inactive ground frontages along the district's principal streets create dark spots and reduce natural surveillance after dusk, discouraging pedestrian use of the area in the evening, the core concern the project's CPTED-based interventions are designed to address (Jeffery, 1971; Newman, 1972).
- **Visual Clutter and Uncontrolled Signage:** Unregulated hoardings, oversized shopfront signage, and ad hoc commercial advertising along Old Town's heritage corridors obscure historic façades and erode the precinct's visual identity, the project identifies as requiring a no-hoarding protection zone and shopfront standardisation around designated heritage assets.

Taken together, these challenges show that Old Town's difficulties are not isolated incidents but a connected pattern of physical decline, public realm disorder, and fragmented institutional response, concentrated in the single oldest and most layered part of the city. Left unaddressed, this pattern will continue to erode a district that is simultaneously a historic core, one of the city's busiest markets, and home to a settled residential population.

2.2 Study area profile

Old Town, locally referred to as One Town is the historic core of Visakhapatnam, situated adjacent to the natural harbour and Visakhapatnam Port, roughly between coordinates 17°41'44"N and 83°17'38"E, under the jurisdiction of the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC).

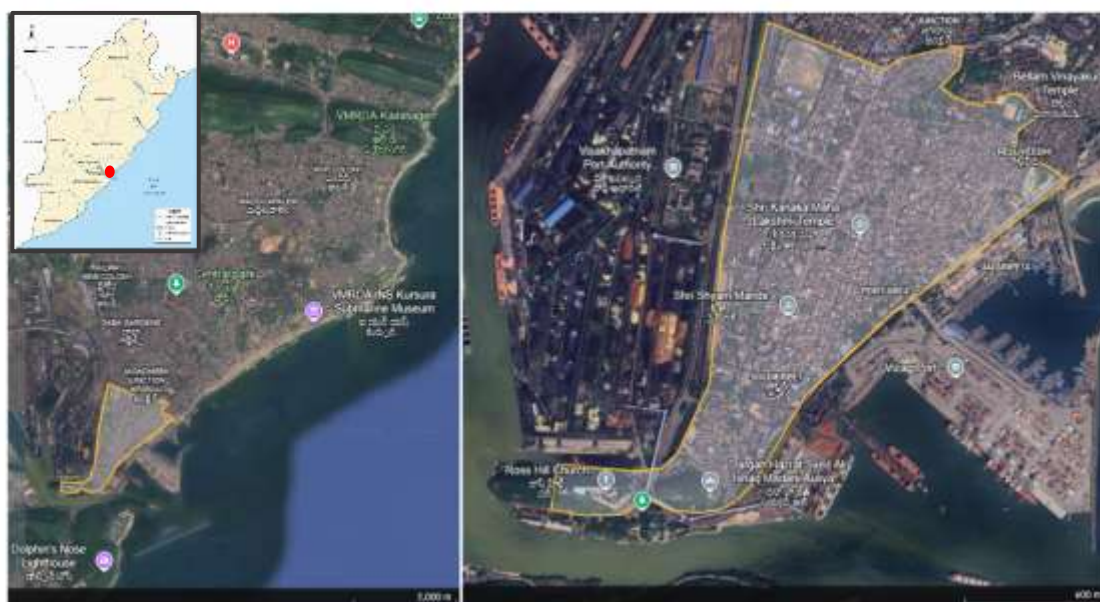


Figure 2-7 Study area - One town, Visakhapatnam

The precinct is generally described as running from Turner's Choultry to the edge of the Port an extent broadly consistent with the approximately 1.5 km² target precinct defined for this project analysis.

2.2.1 Demography details of the study area

One Town has no dedicated census enumeration and falls under GVMC Ward 39, which recorded a population of 29,287 in the 2011 Census a density reflecting the precinct's compact, port-adjacent urban fabric (Census of India, 2011). The population mirrors the city's broader profile: over 92% Telugu-speaking, with Hindus forming roughly 92%, Muslims around 4%, and Christians around 3%, a mix shaped by landmarks such as the Basha Peer Dargah and the precinct's colonial-era churches. Livelihoods are largely port-linked, with literacy close to the city average of 81.79%, alongside pockets of lower-income slum settlement consistent with Visakhapatnam's citywide urban slum share of 44.1% (2011 census data).

2.2.2 Landmarks & Historical sites

The area carries more than three hundred years of continuous urban history. It developed first under Dutch trading influence in the seventeenth century and subsequently as the principal commercial and administrative centre of the former Vizagapatam District under British rule, with warehouses, customs offices, and residential quarters built up around the harbour (The Coastal Times, 2025; One Town (Visakhapatnam)).



Figure 2-8 Evolution of One town, 6th century to post independence

The precinct also carries an early anti-colonial history, with a locally documented account placing the first mutiny of Indian sepoys against the British in this area in 1788, well before the more widely known events of 1857 (The News Minute, 2021). This history is reflected in a dense concentration of built heritage. Landmarks within or immediately bordering the precinct include

1. Dargah- Hazrat Syed Ali Ishaq Madani Auliya
2. Government Queen Marys Girls High School
3. St Aloysius' Anglo-Indian High School
4. Queen Victoria Pavilion
5. European Cemetery
6. Kurupam Market
7. Old Municipal Office, Town hall
8. Port Area
9. Mrs.A.V.N.College
10. St. Aloysios school

2.3 Key challenges & problems - Study area

Heritage-led urban regeneration in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities has typically focused on water supply, pedestrian infrastructure, cleanliness, traffic, and open space. This study takes a complementary angle: rather than re-diagnosing infrastructural baselines, it identifies the experiential, perceptual, and behavioural conditions that determine whether an urban heritage-rich precinct can attract, engage, and retain visitors once basic infrastructure is in place. Five such challenges follow.

A) Physical Deterioration Across Buildings and Public Space

Land Use Change and Building-Level Deterioration in Old Town

- Old Town originally developed as a mixed quarter of civic, religious, and residential use, anchored by structures such as the Municipal Office, St John's Church, and the Dutch Cemetery (Giduturi & Mahmood, 2011). Commercial activity has since expanded well beyond its original footprint, most visibly along the Kurupam Market and Poorna Market corridors, converting former residential and institutional plots into shopfronts and trade space.



Figure 2-9 Present and old image of St.john's church and poorna market - Visakhapatnam

- This shift has proceeded largely unchecked, since thirty of the precinct's forty-four documented heritage sites carry no statutory protection despite being listed in the city's Revised Master Plan (Giduthuri, 2013). Without this protection, owners face no formal constraint against converting heritage structures to commercial use leaving a land-use pattern that no longer matches Old Town's historic layout.



Figure 2-10 Town hall road - Commercial development near old heritage buildings



Figure 2-11 Image of old buildings, town hall & light house in damaged condition

- Kurupam Market's Tudor-arch gateway shows this directly: rather than being restored, the structure including a clock imported from England in 1902 was left to decay and then demolished by GVMC itself in 2013 to free the plot for market use (Hatangadi, 2013).



Figure 2-12 Image of kurupam market tower on before and after condition , Visaz tajmahal - Kurupam tomb which is surrounded by residential and commercial development without proper setbacks and public spaces

- Colonial buildings relied on clear street setbacks and internal courtyards for visibility, light, and cross-ventilation through windows and verandahs. As neighbouring plots have been built up to their boundaries for more commercial floor area, these gaps have been progressively closed off shopfronts, signage, and storage additions now push to the street edge and abut directly onto neighbouring structures, a pattern of unregulated infill that has eroded both the architectural legibility and the natural ventilation the original built form depended on that leads to problems. (Hatangadi, 2013; Larkham, 2010).





Figure 2-13 Image i. Recent fire accident in Poorna market shows the congested space for not even rescue process, Image ii . Historical old building does not have proper maintenance and setbacks the residential development was happened

- The Dutch Cemetery, St John's Church, the Municipal Office, and buildings listed in RMPVMR-2021 remain concentrated in the precinct without formal conservation status or an area-level revitalisation strategy to hold them together (Giduturi & Mahmood, 2011).



Figure 2-14 Dutch Cemetery - Visakhapatnam



Figure 2-15 Queen Victoria Pavilion - encroached by street vendors and parking reduce the aesthetic and historical value

- A separate proposal to have the European Cemetery declared a protected monument made no progress for more than two years after it was submitted to the state archaeology department (Deccan Chronicle, 2016).



Figure 2-16 European Cemetery - Visakhapatnam

- As individual buildings lose upkeep and formal protection, signage and ad hoc additions fill the resulting gap, so the precinct's aesthetic and historic identity erodes through the accumulation of many small, unregulated changes rather than any single event.

Loss of Public Space & Encroachment

Uncontrolled development has steadily eaten into Old Town's shared public space through encroachment by street vendors and vehicles onto pedestrian paths, branching into several compounding problems

- **Loss of pedestrian space:** Footpaths along Old Town's core commercial stretches, including Poorna Market and Jagadamba, have become vending sites, pushing pedestrians onto the carriageway and obstructing traffic (Deccan Chronicle, 2025). A citywide survey found 50% of the city's footpaths discontinuous and 20% encroached, with none disabled-friendly conditions especially acute in Old Town's narrow, colonial-era streets.



Figure 2-17 Poorna market in old town - Visakhapatnam

- **Road accident:** Vehicles and displaced pedestrians share the same narrow lanes as parking spills onto Old Town's roads and footpaths stay encroached.



Figure 2-18 Image i. Road near Poorna market, Image ii. route of reaching Dargah- Hazrat Syed Ali Ishaq Madani Auliya occupied by vehicles , Image iii. Kurupam market

- **Hygiene and pollution:** Garbage left behind by vendors and customers, worsened by footpaths too narrow for regular cleaning, leads to unhygienic conditions and pollution across Old Town (Bromley, 2000).



Figure 2-19 Image i. regular street vending zone in south part of old town, Image ii. Poorna market - garbage filled without proper places

- **Noise and visual clutter:** Vendor solicitation and informal stalls add to street-level noise and clutter, layering onto the facade signage and wiring already degrading Old Town's streetscape, leading to a cluttered and chaotic public realm (Bromley, 2000).



Figure 2-20 King George hospital front occupied by street vendors reduce the aesthetic view and making noise in that area

- **Crime and unsafety:** Encroached, disordered streets are consistently read as sites of "blight" (Bromley, 2000) a perception that erodes safety in Old Town and gives opportunistic crime more cover.

B) Lack of Connectivity and Fragmentation Between Heritage Landmarks

- 1) Old Town's heritage landmarks lack a coherent pedestrian network, so visitors experience a set of disconnected stops rather than a single walkable historic quarter a gap made worse by the same encroached, cluttered streets described above, which leave any attempt to link the precinct's heritage stock inheriting an already compromised street network.
- 2) The precinct's landmarks Poorna Market, the Queen Victoria Pavilion, St John's Church, St Aloysius School, the European Cemetery, the Hindu Reading Room, and the Old Post Office among them sit close enough to be joined by a single continuous stretch, yet GVMC approved the first dedicated pedestrian heritage track linking them only in January 2026; no purpose-built walking connection existed between these sites for over a century after most of them were built (YoVizag, 2026)
- 3) The approved route concedes its own limits: GVMC's own description notes that while some heritage structures sit directly on the 1.6 km track between Poorna Market and the Old Post Office, others including the hillock shrines at Sringamani, Ross Hill, and Dargah Konda lie "slightly away from it," so a portion of the heritage stock will remain outside the one connected route even after construction (YoVizag, 2026).
- 4) Because these sites sit within walking distance of one another inside a roughly 1.5 km² precinct, this is a planning gap rather than a distance problem: proximity alone has not translated into an integrated visitor circuit for over a century.



1. Dargah- Hazrat Syed Ali Ishaq Madani Auliya
2. Government Queen Marys Girls High School
3. St Aloysius' Anglo-Indian High School
4. Queen Victoria Pavilion
5. European Cemetery
6. Kurupam Market
7. Old Municipal Office, Town hall
8. Port Area
9. Mrs.A.V.N.College

Figure 2-21 Important Historical place of old town without proper linkage

The outcome is that a visitor drawn to one landmark has little reason, or means, to discover the others, so the precinct's cumulative heritage value is experienced only in fragments rather than as a single, legible historic quarter.

c) Lack of Collective Memory and Understanding of Visitor Behaviour

- Old Town's heritage is thoroughly documented but poorly understood the precinct offers no narrative or interpretive experience for visitors, and no evidence exists of how they actually behave once they arrive. The most complete academic record of the precinct, a survey of forty-four sites, documents each structure's age, style, and ownership in detail, but contains no interpretive content aimed at a visiting public (Giduthuri, 2013).



Figure 2-22 Government queen merry's high secondary school - one of oldest school in Visakhapatnam without any boards and paintings

- Research on contemporary heritage tourism shows that visitors increasingly expect a destination to actively narrate its history and culture, through interpretation, storytelling, or associated cultural activity, rather than simply preserve its physical fabric (Smith, 2015), and where heritage carries conflicting or layered meanings, as many of the precinct's colonial-era structures do, failing to interpret that history for a contemporary audience risks the site being seen but not understood (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996).
- This gap between documentation and lived experience is visible on the ground: a heritage-walk signboard erected by GVMC at the Town Hall, meant to guide visitors through the precinct's history, was found standing neglected during a 2021 survey (The News Minute, 2021)



Figure 2-23 Road in front of Old municipal office and Town hall without any activities paintings, signages which tell the value of the place

- Without interpretation, a visitor has little reason to linger or return; without visitor data, planners have no evidence of how people already move through the precinct to design that interpretation around. As currently presented, its heritage stock is more likely to be photographed than remembered.

D) Safety and Crime Concerns Across Day and Night

- Old Town's safety problem is not constant through the day it takes two distinct forms, one produced by overcrowding in daylight hours and the other by abandonment after dark, and both trace back to how the precinct's streets and shopfronts are used.
- During the day, congestion at Poorna Market and Kurupam Market already established as encroached and forcing pedestrians into mixed traffic concentrates crowds, vehicles, and unregulated stalls into the same narrow lanes, the exact combination of disorder and density that the literature links to heightened fear of crime, independent of actual crime rates (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). The traffic congestion severe enough to have driven a decade-long public demand for the

Lepakshi Junction to Old Post Office Junction Road extension is itself evidence of how overloaded these daytime corridors already are (The Hindu, 2024).



Figure 2-24 Day crowded area in markets and tourist places - Visakhapatnam

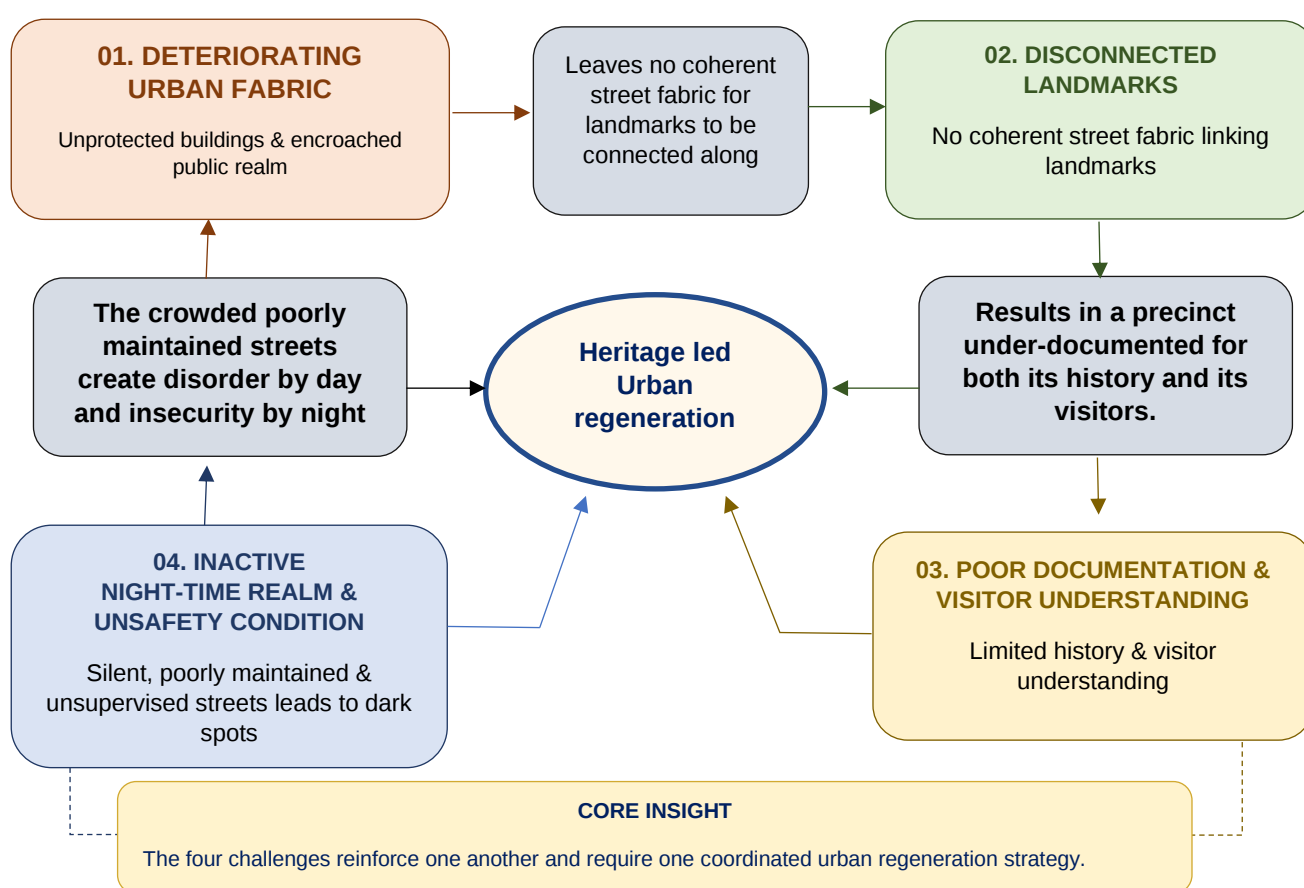
- At night, the mechanism reverses, insufficient lighting and inactive ground-floor frontages reduce natural surveillance and after-dark activity in historic districts (Jeffery, 1971; Newman, 1972), and Jane Jacobs' "eyes on the street" from active frontages applies directly to a precinct whose shops close early (Jacobs, 1961).
- This plays out across Old Town: Kurupam Market's 200-plus stores, the shopfronts around Poorna Market, and the frontages near the Old Post Office and Town Hall all operate as day-only businesses, leaving these streets dark and inactive by early evening and with Visakhapatnam's nightlife centred on Beach Road and Rushikonda instead, Old Town is left exposed exactly where Jacobs' and Newman's frameworks predict it matters most.



Figure 2-25 Inactive places - Near Old municipal and town hall , Major beach road , Dargah - Hazrat Syed Ali Ishaq Madani Auliya



Figure 2-26 Frame work of linkages within the challenges - Old town , Visakhapatnam



These four problems reinforce one another rather than standing apart: unprotected, deteriorating buildings and an encroached public realm (1) leave no coherent street fabric for landmarks to be connected along (2); the resulting precinct is under-documented for both its history and its visitors (3); and the same crowded, poorly maintained streets that feel disorderly by day fall silent and unsurveilled by night (4). Addressing them therefore requires a single, coordinated regeneration strategy rather than four separate interventions.



3 SCOPE AND OUTCOME OF THE PROJECT

3.1 Vision of the project

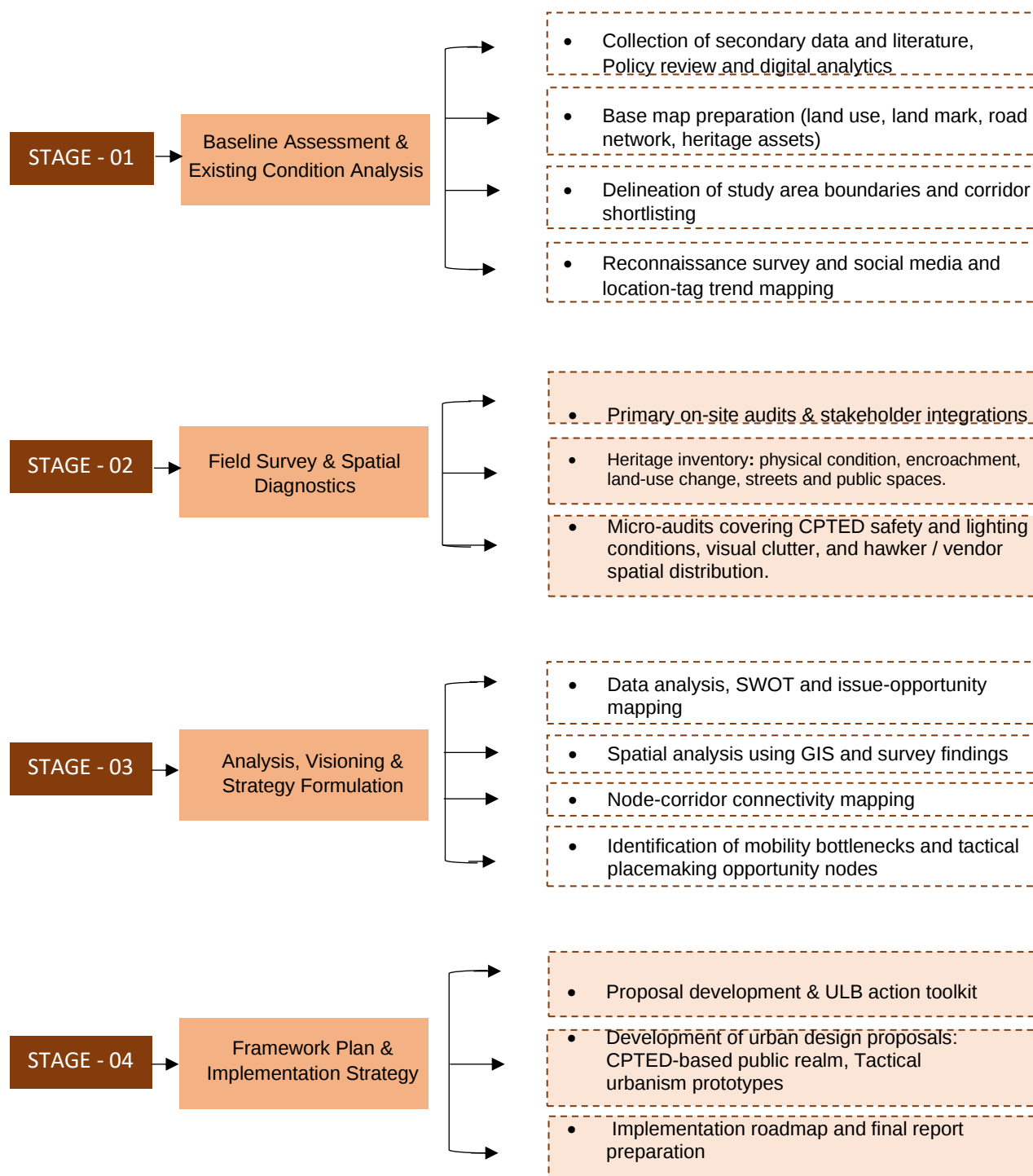
To develop an integrated urban regeneration and Local Area Planning framework for Old Town Visakhapatnam that improves public-realm quality, integrates its heritage and cultural assets, enhances visitor and community experience, strengthens local identity and collective memory, and promotes safer and more active streets and public spaces.

3.2 Core objectives

The project is organised around few core objectives that together move the precinct from fragmented heritage recognition towards an integrated, safe and active public realm.

- To review relevant literature, policies, planning frameworks and Indian/international case studies related to urban regeneration, public realm, heritage integration, urban attractiveness, collective memory and CPTED.
- To delineate and characterise the Old Town study area and identify key nodes, corridors and priority areas for detailed investigation.
- To assess urban decay, public-realm conditions and the integration of heritage and cultural assets within the Old Town urban fabric.
- To understand the perceptions and expectations of residents, youth, visitors and tourists, including collective memory, identity and contemporary urban/tourism experience.
- To assess evening public-realm conditions and perceived safety using CPTED principles and identify opportunities for safer and more active streets and public spaces.
- To develop an integrated Local Area Planning Framework with priority, implementable interventions for urban regeneration, cultural integration, urban attractiveness and public safety.

3.3 Phased Research & Design Methodology



3.4 Scope of the Project

The study will focus on the Old Town urban core of Visakhapatnam and examine its existing physical, cultural, social and experiential conditions through four interconnected dimensions:

1. Urban Decay and Public Realm - assessment of deteriorating urban fabric, changing land uses, encroachments, poor pedestrian infrastructure, inactive/underused spaces, visual clutter and deficiencies in the quality of streets and public spaces.
2. Heritage and Cultural Integration - assessment of existing heritage and cultural assets, their present use and relationship with surrounding streets, markets, public spaces and activities, with emphasis on integrating them into the functioning urban precinct rather than treating them as isolated monuments.
3. Visitor Experience, Collective Memory and Urban Attractiveness – understanding how residents, youth/Gen Z, domestic visitors and tourists perceive Old Town, what contemporary visitors expect from urban/tourism experiences, and how local history, culture and collective memory can be translated into meaningful contemporary urban experiences.
4. Evening Public Realm, Safety and Activity - assessment of perceived safety, inactive edges, visibility, lighting, pedestrian activity and street conditions during evening hours using CPTED principles, with a focus on improving natural surveillance and active public interfaces.

The findings from the four components will be integrated into a Local Area Planning framework identifying priority areas and implementable public-realm and urban-regeneration interventions.

3.5 Key Strategic Interventions

A. Urban Core & Public Realm Regeneration

- Identification of priority streets, junctions and public spaces
- Pedestrian-priority improvements
- Footpath and crossing improvements
- Micro-plazas and activity spaces
- Removal/organisation of encroachments and visual clutter
- Street furniture, shade and landscape interventions
- Improved active street edges

B. Heritage & Cultural Integration

- Heritage/cultural asset network

- Improved public-realm interfaces around significant assets
- Cultural/experience nodes
- Heritage interpretation and storytelling
- Wayfinding and visitor orientation
- Identification of suitable adaptive-reuse opportunities
- Integration of markets, religious/cultural places and everyday activities

C. Urban Attractiveness & Experience

- Visitor-oriented experience nodes
- Youth-oriented placemaking opportunities
- Local food, craft and cultural activity integration
- Collective-memory interpretation
- Public art/cultural activation opportunities
- Digital/interactive interpretation where appropriate
- Experience-based pedestrian connections

D. Evening Safety & CPTED

- Identification of unsafe/inactive locations
- Improved natural surveillance
- Active frontage recommendations
- Lighting and visibility improvements
- Treatment of blank/dead edges
- Improved pedestrian routes
- Appropriate evening activity/support spaces
- Safer junctions and public spaces

E. Local Area Planning & Implementation

- Priority intervention zones
- Implementation agencies/stakeholders
- Planning/design guidelines

3.6 Deliverables

A. Urban Diagnostic & Public Realm Atlas

A GIS-based diagnostic covering urban decay, land use/activity, public realm, pedestrian conditions, accessibility, encroachments, visual character, cultural assets and priority regeneration areas.

B. Heritage, Cultural & Urban Experience Framework

A spatial framework identifying significant heritage/cultural assets, their relationships with the surrounding urban fabric, cultural/experience nodes, interpretation opportunities, visitor connections and potential adaptive-reuse opportunities.

C. Urban Attractiveness & CPTED-Based Public Realm Strategy

An evidence-based strategy derived from resident, youth, visitor/tourist and stakeholder perceptions, collective-memory assessment, digital/social-media analysis and evening safety/CPTED assessment, translating these findings into urban-attractiveness and safer-public-realm recommendations.

D. Integrated Local Area Planning Framework & Priority Interventions

Integration of the four components into a spatial planning framework identifying priority nodes, corridors, regeneration areas and intervention zones, supported by selected junction, street, micro-plaza, cultural-interface and evening-safety proposals, and implementation priorities.

3.7 Project Constraints & Limitations

The following constraints and limitations may influence the scope, depth and interpretation of the study:

1. **Availability of Secondary Data:** Availability and accessibility of updated spatial, demographic, tourism, heritage and infrastructure data from relevant agencies may be limited. The study will therefore supplement available secondary data through primary field surveys and publicly accessible sources.

2. **Limited Institutional Coordination:** The extent of support and access to information from municipal, tourism, heritage and other concerned agencies may vary. Wherever official data or stakeholder inputs are unavailable, the study will rely on field observations, interviews and secondary sources.
3. **Ownership and Access to Heritage Properties:** Several heritage and culturally significant properties may be privately or institutionally owned or actively used. Detailed assessment or intervention proposals for such properties will therefore be limited to publicly observable conditions and feasible planning-level recommendations.
4. **Time Constraints:** The study is undertaken within a defined project period. Therefore, detailed investigations of every heritage property, street, building or infrastructure component within the wider Old Town area will not be feasible. Detailed analysis will be concentrated on selected priority nodes, corridors and intervention areas.
5. **Survey and Sample Limitations:** Perception and stakeholder surveys will be based on a defined sample of residents, youth, visitors, tourists, businesses and other stakeholders. The findings will therefore represent observed patterns and perceptions within the study period and should not be interpreted as a comprehensive statistical representation of all users.
6. **Implementation Limitations:** The proposed interventions will be developed at a planning and conceptual level with prioritisation and implementation recommendations. Detailed engineering design, structural assessment, statutory approvals, land acquisition and execution are outside the scope of the study.

TEAM

- 1.Ar.Madhava Rao Talabathula – Principal Investigator
- 2.Dr. Ramesh Srikonda – Co- Principal Investigator
- 3.Ar. Apuroopasvi – Team member

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