

Pune's footpaths get a welcome makeover

Following the guidelines of Urban Street Design, PMC has taken up projects to provide wider footpaths, cycle tracks and walkways in the city with JM road as the first in the plan.

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The renovated footpath of Jungli Maharaj road in Pune sees residents from all walks of life using the place for relaxation. (HT PHOTO)

PUNE: Under a new approach to improve the transportation and mobility in the city, the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has decided to pay greater emphasis on footpaths, cycle tracks and walkways in the city.

After launching the work of redesigning the Jungli Maharaj (JM) road as per the guidelines of the Urban Street Design, the civic administration plans to replicate the model in other areas.

The redesign plan includes providing facilities like benches, cycle tracks and landscaped areas, besides widening the road from Jungli Maharaj Mandir to Deccan Gymkhana bus stop.

Speaking to Hindustan Times, Rajendra Raut, head of PMC road department, said, "Earlier, there was opposing from residents and traders over the footpath widening issue. PMC first completed the stretch between Balgandharva Rang Mandir and mechanised parking in front of Sambhaji garden. Later, when residents started using this widened footpath, the opposing has gone down and demands have come from residents of other areas to replicate the model at their locations."

Raut said that PMC did not use any existing vehicle lane but converted the unused fringe lane to widen footpath and parking space.



Pune Municipal Corporation plans to add more facilities on Satara road footpath. (HT PHOTO)

PMC did not just widen footpaths but created seating areas and spaces having games on the roadside for kids. Ample spaces have also been provided for walking on footpath.

The civic body is spending almost ₹8 crore for the beautification of footpaths on JM road. PMC plans to replicate the model on Fergusson College (FC) road and the stretch between Jhansi Rani Statue (JM road) and PMC main building.

“As PMC’s new main building entrance is on the stretch between Jhansi Rani chowk and PMC building, the civic administration is planning to turn this stretch into a model road for pedestrians. The design for this lane will be finalised soon,” said Raut.

The JM road project will be followed on Satara road, mainly between Swargate and Panchami Hotel and the work has already begun. PMC is doing the work under the Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS) plan. After finishing this work, PMC plans to cover the stretch between Swargate and Hadapsar.

As residents can see the visible change on JM road, many elected members are making demands to replicate the model in their areas. It is not possible to beautify all the roads by considering the space available in those areas but wherever possible PMC will try to execute the same, said Raut.

Even PMC road department said that while carrying out the footpath beautification and widening works, the civic administration is ensuring that the existing footpath works would become part of it as it should not be the waste of money.

Pune Street Programme on right track

Pune Street Programme (PSP) of Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has given the Jungli Maharaj (JM) road a better look especially with wide footpaths which have slowly turned into a haven for many weary travellers and students alike. Footpaths are the areas that get people together, it gives them a space for relaxing and waiting in between their errands.

JM road is now bustling with more people and activity and can be termed as a vibrant street, thanks to the designs of PSP. "Complete streets are those that cater to all user groups and are designed with wide and continuous footpaths, safe pedestrian crossings, separate cycle tracks where applicable, conveniently placed bus stops, clearly designated on-street parking, organised street vending and properly-scaled carriageways," said Pranjali Deshpande, programme manager, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP).

With the Smart Cities Mission encouraging the improvement of non-motorised and public transport infrastructure, Pune is part of the networks of complete streets. PMC has empanelled four nationally acclaimed architecture and urban design firms – IBI Group Inc, HCP Design, Planning and Management Pvt Ltd, and Oasis Designs Inc and Design & Planning Counsel towards redesigning the 100km network. Each firm has got a 'package' of streets, ensuring uniformity in design language and better integration on ground.

Even the Pune Smart City Development Corporation Ltd (PSCDCL) has allotted 9km of streets of DP Road in Aundh, and is under contract to the IBI Group in partnership with Prasanna Desai Architects. The 1.5km stretch has been remodelled by the designers and 3.5m wide footpath on either side of the street has been streamlined to dedicate spaces for different users.

"The numerous existing trees that line the stretch have been fundamentally incorporated in the design, with care taken to demarcate soft areas around them to allow for growth, and the perimeter forming seating. In addition, benches have also been provided along the footpath, complementing the shops and making the stretch more vibrant. Art installations, including the attractive casing that has been used to cover up the junction boxes, spruce up the space," said Prassana Desai of Prassana Desai Architects.



ITI road in Aundh has wide footpath and dedicated seating areas. (HT PHOTO)

The JM road is being revamped by Oasis Designs Inc. and it has been working on a 300m stretch as part of the first phase. It involves streamlining the haphazard parking, and reclaim space for the people, enabling a wider footpath and cycle track.

"Green spaces serve as buffers to segregate the two speeds of walking and cycling. Bus stops have been located so as to allow for smooth flow of pedestrians and cyclists," said Sujata Hingorani, architect and designer.

Frontage of shops spills over to the wide footpath, adding life to the street. Better signage, street lighting and seating are other features that collectively make JM Road a stellar example of street design in the country.

A dedicated street design cell has been set up with professionals such as urban designers and urban planners to oversee general maintenance of streets and work done by design consultants and contractors, in addition to designing neighbourhood streets. PMC has also developed a unique set of Urban Street Design Guidelines (USDG) which give clear priority to walking and cycling.

"Streets are vital public spaces which go beyond serving as mere channels for the movement of vehicles, but are crucial to the very identity of a city. Pune is remodelling its streets to respond to the multitude of activities and functions they host," said Deshpande.

Urban Street Design Guidelines (USDG)

Pune Municipal Corporation has laid out Urban Street Design Guidelines to ensure that appropriate street types and design elements are implemented to create better streets. Its aim is to design streets making them universally accessible and provide standard templates for different sizes and uses of streets to support transportation objectives for the city considering the present and future needs.

It's a good place to stop awhile and relax

The newly renovated Jungli Maharaj (JM) road footpath attracts residents from all walks of life. For many of the employees of the nearby offices, it is a place to sit, eat their lunch from their tiffins, or chat with their colleagues. Some even bring their work with them, either finishing pending files or finishing a project on a laptop.

Under the new Pune Street Programme (PSP), the new design has given residents a place to relax. Wide, spacious, punctured with pergolas and space for young students to swirl on small merry-go-round that even tempts the college students to give it a try are the attractive features of the stretch.

Sales person Rahul Jadhav, who lives in Moshi and works with food firm Danone office on JM road, said. "Once a week, I sit here and enjoy eating my lunch and relax after making several calls on phone. Before the renovation we could only see couples sitting at the 'Katta' waiting for the Sambhaji park to open but now it has become a hub for conducting meetings or meeting clients also."

Garware college student Pratiksha Salunkhe, a resident of Pimpri, often sits with her friend to study. "It is a very quiet and good place to study. We often come here after college. The seats made of stone are cozy."

Arun Vaidya, who is visiting his relatives in Pune, said "I find walking on this footpath easy and safe. Wish they could make these kinds of footpaths in Mumbai too."

Hawaladar Rajendra Patole of Balgandharva park police chowky observed that the redesigned footpaths have seen increase of pedestrians. "Now we have a lot of young students coming here in groups. Senior citizens come for

walk from 6 am to 10 am and then post 11 am. Students and couples also hang around here. But my duty is to ensure there are no harmful intents and by 11 am we request many to vacate this place,"Patole said.

Sarika Ghadge of Sinhagad road who works in a petrol pump on JM road said. "It is a nice place to relax during our break. We like sitting under the trees, especially in the cool weather."

Snehal Gadkine, who is preparing for MPSC exams said, "Sometimes you want to hang out in an open place where there are no restrictions, and it is here for free. If you were to sit in a café, you will have to spend money to eat and drink. Here you can meet your friends and simply enjoy a day out."

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