

## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL VISTA GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Central Vista forms the core of the capital city of New Delhi. It gains its significance not only from its importance as the seat of the Government of India and other essential national institutions, but also as an icon of architecture, urban planning and design. Its expansive scale was designed to invoke a grandeur suited to the capital of a vast country, while its style and layout drew on the traditions of an ancient civilization. The latter was expressed most clearly through the architecture of the iconic buildings, e.g. the Sanchi Stupa dome of Rashtrapati Bhavan, and the chhatris of the Secretariat; and also through the precise alignment of the Central avenue, from Raisina Hill to Purana Qila. An exponent of the Grand Manner Planning, it becomes a matter of pride for India to possess this precious example and that alone implies tremendous responsibility on us for its protection and perpetuation. There are only a handful of significant urban, public expanses of such magnificent heritage value in the world that can stitch across the story of iconicity with egalitarianism as the Central Vista in Delhi.

From the perspective of history and conservation, the Central Vista has been recognized as a heritage precinct. It becomes imperative that all development within and around this space takes into cognisance its overarching worth and therefore any interventions that take place here must take special care to respect its essential heritage character and strive to retain the values it stands for. The proposed development, by adhering to certain basic guidelines, would not only be compatible with, but would reinforce the heritage character of this historic precinct.

### GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN AND AROUND THE CENTRAL VISTA

Establishment of the Ecological significance (green area vs built, lungs of city, water recharging etc,...) / Historical significance (how these elements are an integral and important part of the original planning scheme); / Socio-cultural significance (how the area is a major public green space of the city);, and Aesthetic significance (how these elements contribute to the scale, proportion and experience of the site) of the site, and identification of what needs to be preserved, is the first step in the establishment of any development controls or Guidelines. As no Guidelines for 'Development or Re-development around the Central Vista' have ever been ratified, IUDI (**Institute of Urban Designers - India**), INTACH Delhi Chapter and ISOLA (**Indian Society of Landscape Architects**) have deliberated on the same and the following document has been collated to guide any development or redevelopment that is to take place along the Central Vista.

The information has been classified under three broad categories – **Urban Design**, **Built Heritage** and **Landscape**. Within each of the disciplines, in order to make each point coherent, the significance has been first defined, which establishes its uniqueness, following which, in bold font, is presented for consideration, the recommendation to guide any development or redevelopment that is to take place along the Central Vista.

### URBAN DESIGN OF THE CENTRAL VISTA

1. The Central Vista precinct is a unique example of landscape urbanism, connecting the Ridge to the River through a series of urban design and landscape strategies resulting in the consequent form-space configurations that we find today. A designed sequence of open spaces from the wilderness of the Ridge, to the gardens of Rashtrapati Bhavan, formal lawns of Central Vista, through the National Stadium and Purana Qila, finally to the riverine landscape of the Yamuna, forms the primary spatial organization of this precinct. Buildings and structures were strategically located in this organization as focal objects in space (Rashtrapati Bhavan and India Gate), as space-defining envelopes (North and South Blocks) or as a string of built units along movement paths (Bhavans around the C-hexagon).

This principle of collective assembly of built-form and landscape needs to be recognized, preserved and enhanced. The focal objects (Rashtrapati Bhavan and India Gate), space-defining envelopes (North and South Blocks) and built form along movement paths (Bhavans around C-hexagon) should remain as such. Any future planning/design move/s should, in no way violate such an urban gesture at the macro level and no structures, buildings, markers, towers or infrastructural elements should obstruct or destroy the existing visual quality of this composition along its entire expanse from the Ridge and Raisina Hill to the River Yamuna.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL VISTA  
GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The urban structure of Delhi has the Central Vista at its core with axial lines of physical and visual connections laid out in a geometric configuration forming the foundation of such a structure. The urban experience of the whole of New Delhi revolves around this axial and geometric layout, both in terms of its horizontal spread across the landscape and also in its three dimensional manifestations. The provision of tree-lined boulevards and vistas with soft-edges along individual plots, low boundary walls and adequate 'setbacks' from adjoining road/s as well as from the lawns of Central Vista create the "Garden City" experience of New Delhi with which it is identified worldwide.

**This essential urban structure and character of Lutyens' Delhi needs to be protected/ preserved especially along the primary corridors of movement parallel to the Central Vista precinct (along Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Azad roads).**

3. New Delhi reflects on a grand scale, hitherto unequalled, the fusion of two dominant themes of early twentieth century city planning: the City Beautiful movement (vistas) and the Garden City (verdure). These were combined with a conscious attempt to create a capital that would draw inspiration from the traditions of India. The Central Vista, a broad ceremonial avenue, anchored by grand buildings, is expressive of pomp and grandeur. An effective use was made of the natural rise in the ground to the west – Raisina Hill. This provided a setting for the RashtrapatiBhawan and the Secretariat buildings, behind which the Ridge formed a green backdrop. The grouping of the palaces of the Princely estates around the hexagon at the end of the Central Vista, provides variety of form and design.

**Proposed constructions should not overpower the grandeur of the RashtrapatiBhawan and North South Block ensemble. The areas to the north and south of these two blocks in proximity to this ensemble as well as around the Parliament Building need to have stringent urban design guidelines for any kind of addition or alteration to the present situation. Any proposed building or cluster of buildings are to be planned according to these guidelines and as per building byelaws especially with regard to building setbacks, built envelopes, height restrictions and architectural vocabulary.**

4. Since Independence, the meaning and usage of the Central Vista precinct has transitioned from its Baroque, colonial imprint of the British Empire to the democratic, everyday space of free India. The precinct today expresses both – its ceremonial grandeur of national significance and its daily association as the most popular public space of this capital city. The princely estates, though originally a political construct of colonial rule, have now been re-inscribed with institutional and public use, suited to an independent nation.

**High Security areas like the RashtrapatiBhawan and Secretariat offices as well as public functions like museums and open, green public spaces are to be zoned accordingly. The publicness of the Central Vista with unfettered freedom of access to all citizens (including vendors) and visitors to the entire area of the central vista needs to be ensured/restored without any form of fencing, gates or barrier through the total length and breadth of the central open space. High security zones are to be planned and located with caution and under no circumstances should the freedom of access and public engagement within the entire central open space be constrained due to new functional insertions and connected security reasons. In fact, functions needing high security need to be zoned away from high visitor footfall domains. Adequate visitor amenities are to be incorporated inclusive of public parking, police booths, drinking water facilities, toilets which are to be appropriately and conveniently located.**

5. Built forms within plots that adjoin the central open space accentuate the linear spatial arrangement of the Central Vista on both sides of Rajpath and are vital to the experiential unity of the precinct.

**Alterations or replacement of this built form within individual plots should ensure continuity of the built edge overlooking the Central Vista as well as adjoining transportation corridors. This continuity of form should be ensured, at both the ground plane and skyline as visible from Rajpath and adjoining roads. Under no circumstances, should there be sudden departures or sharp disconnect to this linear volumetric composition**

formed out of the buildings in individual plots. While these plots could be interconnected with free movement across them, they are not to be amalgamated for FAR and building bulk calculations for generating built units.

6. The geometric layout of New Delhi stems from a clever integration of grand boulevards lined by particularly large and fast growing native trees and roundabouts each with a unique character. Even along the central vista, each of the two crossings have a unique character. The cross axis where Janpath meets the Rajpath was designed to have a group of four important public buildings mark the crossing where today the National Archives, the National Museum, Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts (IGNCA) and the Ministry of External Affairs stand. These functions, specially the National Archives and National Museum orient themselves to Janpath with their primary facades aligning towards this cross axis. In this manner, the buildings in these four plots break away from the linear formation of the remaining buildings that line both sides of the vista and thereby accentuating this formative dual axes structure of the precinct.

The overall morphology of the streets and plots of this precinct should be retained. Under no circumstances should plots be amalgamated and dividing roads in between them, obliterated to create larger parcels either for built or open use. Apart from breaking the continuous boulevard experience of the precinct, such moves will compromise traffic movement and smooth operation of the roundabouts. As mentioned above, plots around Rajpath-Janpath crossing that extend beyond the other plots along Rajpath and resultant variety of urban characters should be retained.

7. Built forms around the C-Hexagon are uniquely disposed within individual plots. The individual buildings are oriented towards both the central focal element of the C-Hexagon (the Canopy) as well as the adjacent roads that abut them.

This disposition should to be maintained for any change that is imagined in this special formation within the precinct. It is important that the string of buildings along the C-Hexagon though separate from each other, form a collective sequence of unified experience along the hexagon and encounters each form as they unfold.

8. The Central Vista precinct today houses a wide range of functions that have been retrofitted into past buildings which were originally created for other uses. This range of adaptations of erstwhile stately buildings is specifically highlighted through the new uses that have been incorporated in the Prince's Park or C-Hexagon area. Not only does this depict the sensibility of continuing existing built resource without unnecessarily demolishing them but also the prioritization of continuity of heritage values rather than abrupt change. Such an approach is visible in other parts of this precinct too, and in different parts of New Delhi. Additionally, the new range of functions have ushered in a higher degree of vitality through the diversity of uses and activities that this precinct offers.

New functions proposed for this precinct should therefore use detailed analysis of adaptive re-use and retrofitting possibilities with respect to individual building types and arrive at the most appropriate usage that could be incorporated in each of these buildings. Functional distribution across the precinct, should be proposed to promote diversity and robust place-making rather than mono-functional zones or areas.

9. Edge conditions between the built and the open are an extremely important design element for appropriate user experience as well as overall character of the precinct.

No plots in this precinct are to be bounded by high, opaque or semi-opaque surfaces that inhibit visual permeability between the public domain outside the plots and the development within. Plot edges that align with the Central Vista are to retain their soft qualities with low boundary walls and vegetative cover with active frontages as determined by respective functional content within the plots. Built edges have to be adequately set back (minimum 9m) to allow the retention of existing trees as well as the possibility of a green corridor along the entire length of the central space. These edges need to have pedestrian amenities and utilities apart from vending kiosks and information booths to provide a live interface between the central vista greens and the plots abutting them.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL VISTA  
GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS

**BUILT HERITAGE ALONG THE CENTRAL VISTA**

1. New Delhi was conceived as a means of bringing earlier Delhis and historic monuments into its ambit. **Along the Central Vista is a direct visual link from RashtrapatiBhavan to Purana Qila. This important view corridor should be retained at all costs with no structure disturbing the visual connectivity**
2. The architectural style of the key buildings in New Delhi, is an excellent example of an eclectic style that developed during the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries that drew inspiration from traditional Indian architecture. This eclecticism was a carefully wrought combination of cherished mainstream ideals, the Classical canon and the European Renaissance with a very traditional Indian architectural vocabulary-such as *chattris*, *chajjas*, and *jaalis*. Forms and symbols of the Indian subcontinent that are both Hindu and Buddhist in origin, like elephants, nagas and lotuses were also liberally used. In recognition of the significance of these buildings, the Department of Urban Development, Government of Delhi, vide Gazette Notification dated October 1, 2009, notified the key buildings as heritage. The following is a list of the notified buildings in this precinct. (to be read along with Fig 1 opposite page)

No in Gazette Notification	Name of the Building	Location
<b>Grade I</b>		
3	India Gate	LBZ, Central Vista
4	India Gate Canopy	LBZ, Central Vista
5	Building within President's Estate	President Estate
6	Jaipur Column	In front of RashtrapathiBhawan
7	North Block and South Block	LBZ, Central Vista
8	Parliament House and Campus	LBZ, Central Vista
9	Central Vista Precincts	LBZ, Central Vista at Rajpath
10	Hyderabad House and Campus	Near India Gate Circle
11	Baroda House and Campus	Near India Gate Circle
12	Dominion Columns	Near South Block
13	National Archives and Campus	Janpath
14	Cathedral Church of Redemption and Campus	Church Road
31	Tomb	National Stadium, Opposite High Court
40	Mosque	South of Central Vista in the green area joining Rajpath
<b>Grade II</b>		
3	Jaipur House	Near India Gate Circle
4	Bikaner House	Near India Gate Circle
7	Tomb	East of N. Stadium near Gate No.5
30	National Stadium and Campus	LBZ Central Vista
54.	Patiala House and Campus	North-West India Gate
<b>Grade III</b>		
3	Grave Platform	North of Central Vista

Interventions to these Heritage Buildings is to be governed by Annexure II of the Unified Building Byelaws 2016. In addition, space within the notified heritage compounds, Annexure II, Item 1.12: (page 418) 'Grading of the Listed Buildings/Listed Precincts' of the Unified Building Byelaws 2016, indicates the Scope of Change, Procedure and Permissible Development in and around the Heritage Buildings for each category of building. These are to be adhered to.

3. The Government of India had submitted a dossier to UNESCO in 2013, to nominate the Mughal walled city of Shahjahanabad and New Delhi to the list of World Heritage Cities. **The Government of Delhi has requested the Government of India to revive the nomination process. The proposed development, by adhering to these basic guidelines, will not only be compatible with this nomination, but will reinforce the claims of India to have its capital on the list.**

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL VISTA  
GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS

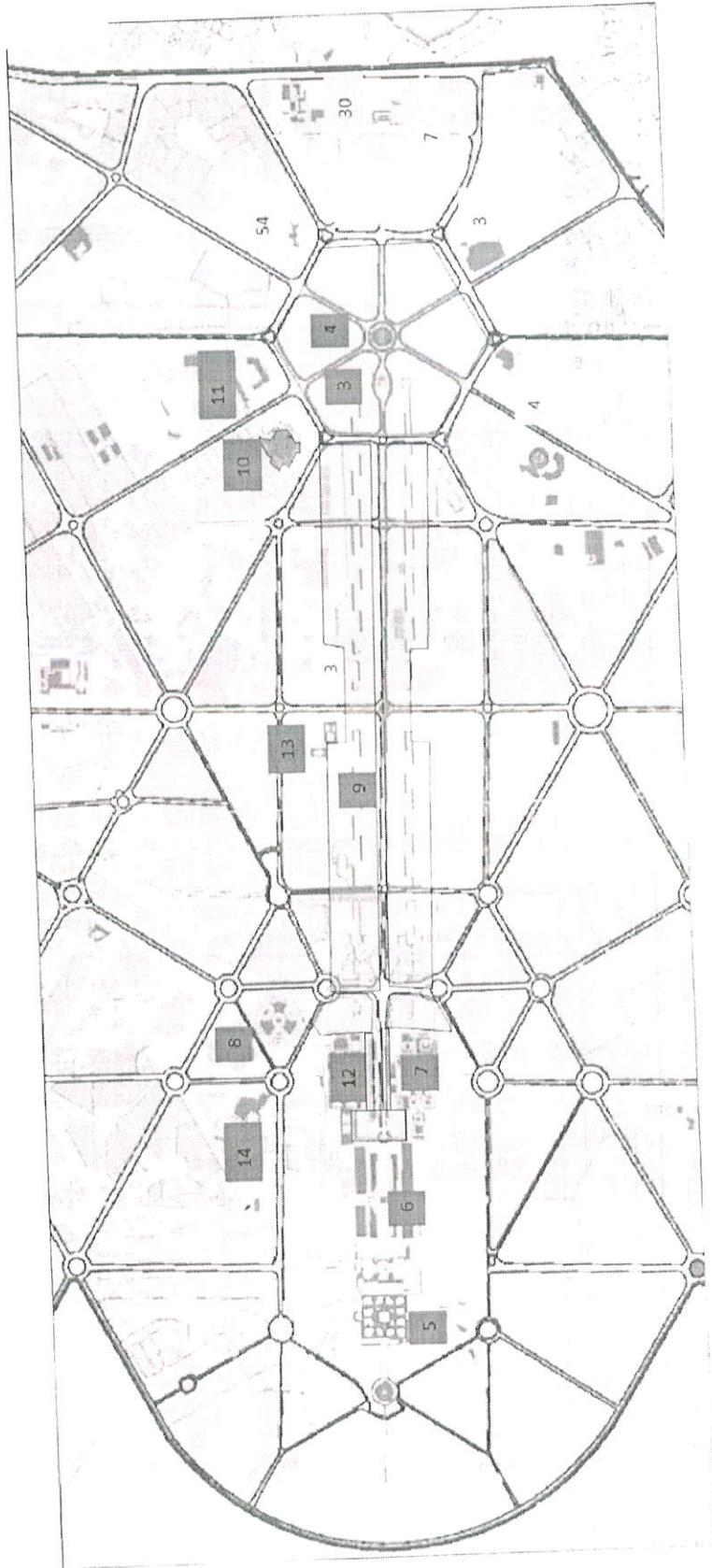
Figure I



GRADE I

GRADE II

GRADE III



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL VISTA  
GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS

**LANDSCAPE OF THE CENTRAL VISTA**

1. In the design of the Central vista, the landscape was an integral component. Incorporation and preservation of natural features was given high priority— ridge, indigenous trees and water were all incorporated into the layout and design.

All elements of the hard and soft landscape (delineated as the area between the boundary walls of the building complexes on either side of the axis)- water channels, trees, street furniture like chain bollards, light posts, gate posts, etc. of the original scheme, though small are a very important part of the larger ensemble/experience along the Central Axis need to be preserved.

2. The uniqueness of the landscape of New Delhi lies in the fact that it is the ultimate expression of the **Garden City Concept**. As much time and attention was devoted to the detail of the tree planting of the city, as was done to its city planning and architecture.

The principles on which the choice of trees for the new city was made were as follows:

- Planting for unity - to create a visual impression of spaciousness, the planting along each road was devoted to a single species.
- Planting for shade- the overwhelming majority of trees species chosen were evergreen or semi-evergreen for shade
- Planting for Symmetry- Matching tree species flank RashtrapatiBhavan, the Secretariats and the Law Courts and so provide them with a discipline frame.
- Planting for Hierarchy
- Planting for Integrated Design- The principal planting of jamun trees along the Rajpath was accompanied by a converging plantings of jamun trees along Raisina Road and Motilal Nehru Marg. The view from India Gate up the Rajpath is accompanied by radiating views up Akbar Road and Ashoka Road with matching plantations of Arjun trees and up Prithviraj Road and Curzon Road with matching plantations of Neem Trees.
- Planting for Background- planting of the ridge in order to give the new city a wooded background

These concepts of Planting for 'Unity', 'Shade', 'Symmetry', 'Hierarchy', 'Integrated design' and 'Background' are to be retained. As the trees are nearing a 100 years in age, some trees are dying, replacements should be of the same species.

**GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR DEVELOPMENT- A RECOMMENDED WAY FORWARD**

1. A physical audit of Heritage Structures and landscape elements is required to establish the state of conservation and determine their strategies of intervention. This is to be followed by a detailed Heritage Impact Assessment Report when the proposal to construct new buildings is approved.
2. Any further development envisaged in the Central Vista precinct should be **subject to detailed pre-design studies of carrying capacity and impact assessment with respect to environment, energy, physical infrastructure, transportation, etc.** Such studies should form the basis for determining the limits of additional floor space, uses and population that the proposed development could incorporate and corresponding strategies are to be evolved. No designs are to be approved nor should any part of the project/s be executed without full compliance of study findings. Delhi is clearly not geared to take in more people or for this area to be densified.
3. **Detailed Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines** for overall development as well as individual plots and spaces are to be formulated prior to the preparation of DPR and all design approvals are to be processed in strict accordance to the same.
4. Given the environmental crisis that the city faces today, **guidelines and norms to achieve a net-zero, green development program have to be put in place** and strictly enforced. A strategic Action Plan to mitigate adverse environmental conditions and urban operations during the time of construction are to be drawn up and approved prior to the commencement of execution.