DELHI



STUDYING THE MORPHOLOGY OF DELHI

The map of delhi showing the boundaries, internal localities,yamuna river, famous landmarks and neighborhood states of delhi

Delhi is the capital of india located in northern india, along the banks of the Yamuna River and at the edge of the Aravali ridge.Its location between the river and ridge has influenced the city’s settlement patterns, movement networks, and urban expansion over time.

1639 Shahjahanabad was founded

1803 Invasion by british east india company

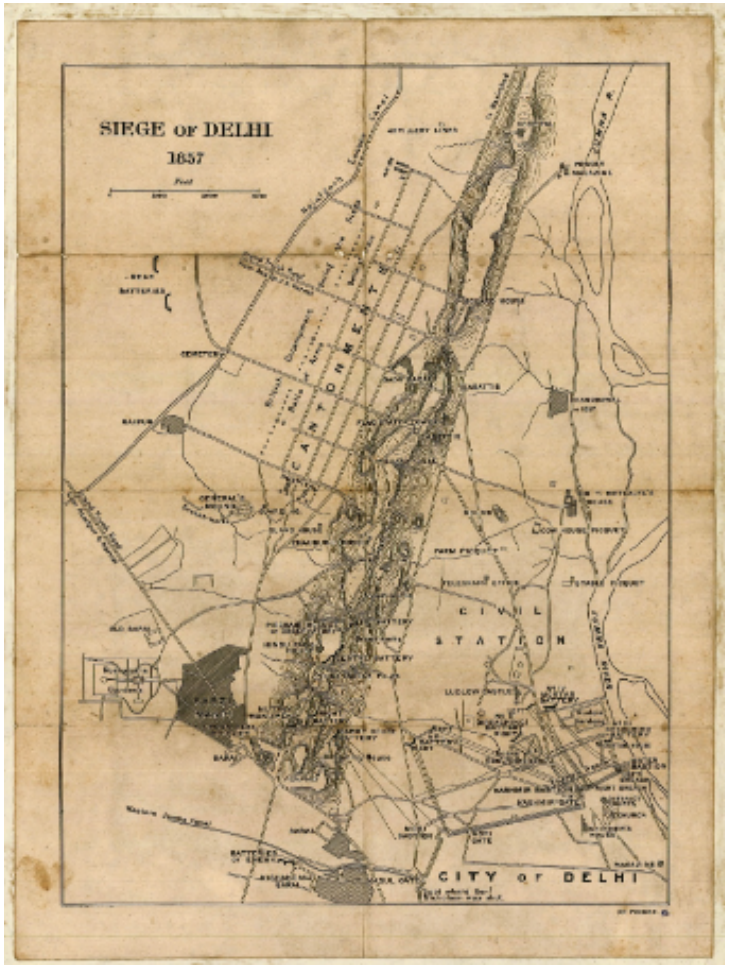
1927 New Delhi founded

1931 Inaugeration of New Delhi by Edward Lutyens

1947 Independence and Partition

History of Delhi

The history of Delhi traces back to the 16th century when Shahjahanabad was founded by Shahjahan in the year 1639. Delhi is an ancient city with rich historical milestones and heritage. Historically Delhi has been a capital city for many dynasties and rulers. Each ruler and dynasty left its impression and footprints in the form of monuments, heritage buildings, and capital complexes.



The 1857 map shows Delhi as a compact fortified urban core surrounded by a much larger and more dispersed landscape. The fine-grained City of Delhi at the bottom-right contrasts with the coarse-grained Civil Station, military areas and gardens visible around the Ridge and the western and northern sides. The Yamuna on the eastern side and the Ridge running through the centre act as major natural structures, while the city wall and gates control movement between the dense core and its surroundings. Regional roads such as the Grand Trunk Road connect the city to villages, markets and sarais, while canals and gardens form larger landscape systems. Thus, Delhi's morphology was shaped by the interaction of geography, defence, political power, movement, commerce and landscape.



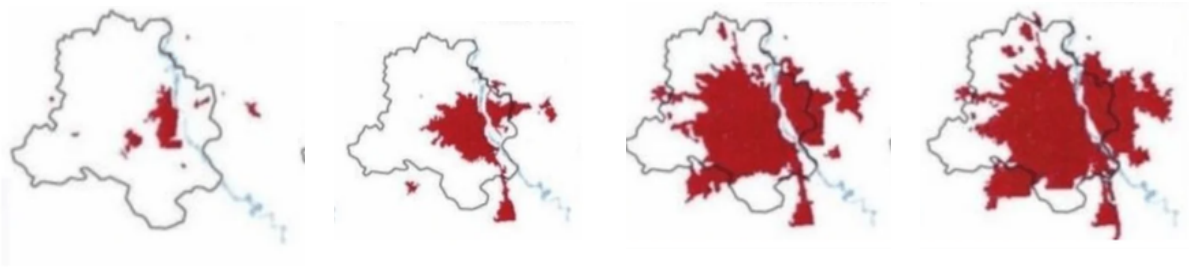
The pre-1930 New Delhi plan shows a shift towards a planned, spacious and hierarchical urban form. Radial and axial roads connect major administrative areas through large roundabouts. Large institutional plots, landscaped open spaces and wide avenues create a coarse-grained morphology, contrasting with the dense, irregular fabric of Old Delhi. Political planning, movement and administration strongly shaped this form.

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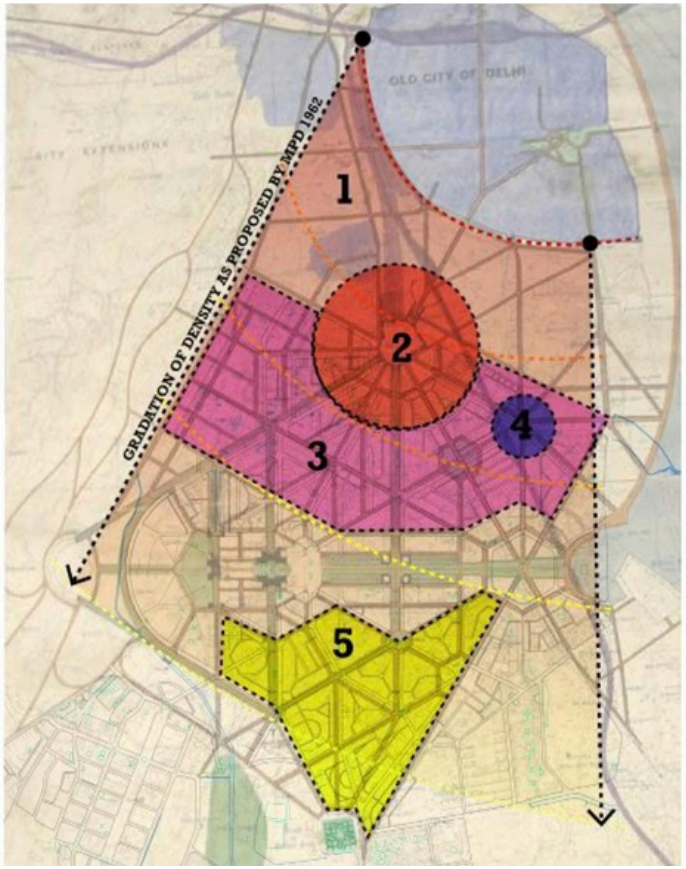
Overview of the City

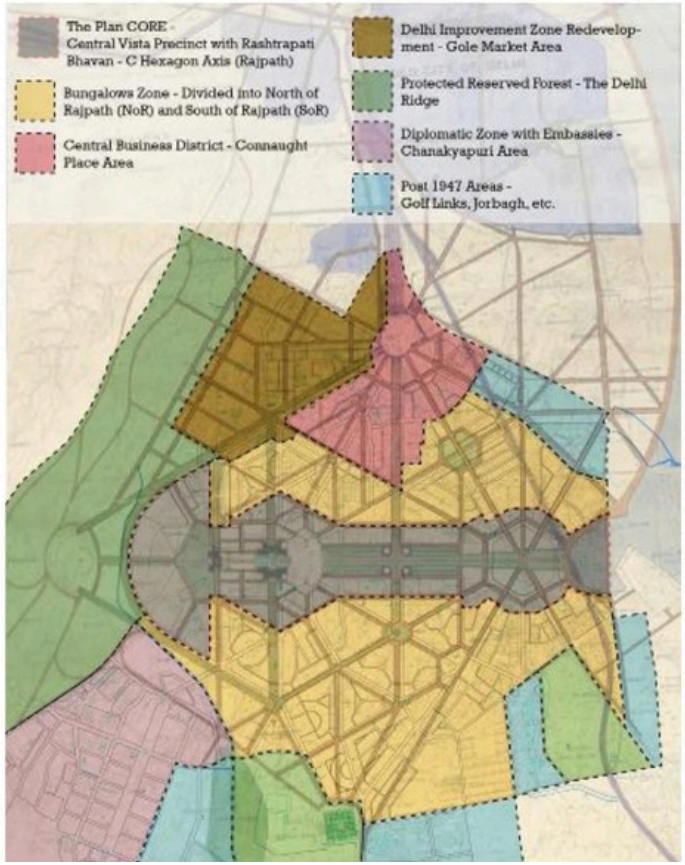
The national capital territory of Delhi is one of the most populated metropolitan cities. Delhi's urban area is considered to extend beyond the NCT boundaries. According to the census 2011, The city is distributed as three-quarters urban (75%) and a quarter rural (25%). Most of the expansion in Delhi has occurred on the peripheries of New Delhi, as rural areas have become more urban. The presence of multiple industrial and commercial nodes is a job-generating factor.

Spatial growth of Delhi



Before 1950 | 1950 - 1975 | 1975-1997 | 1997-2000

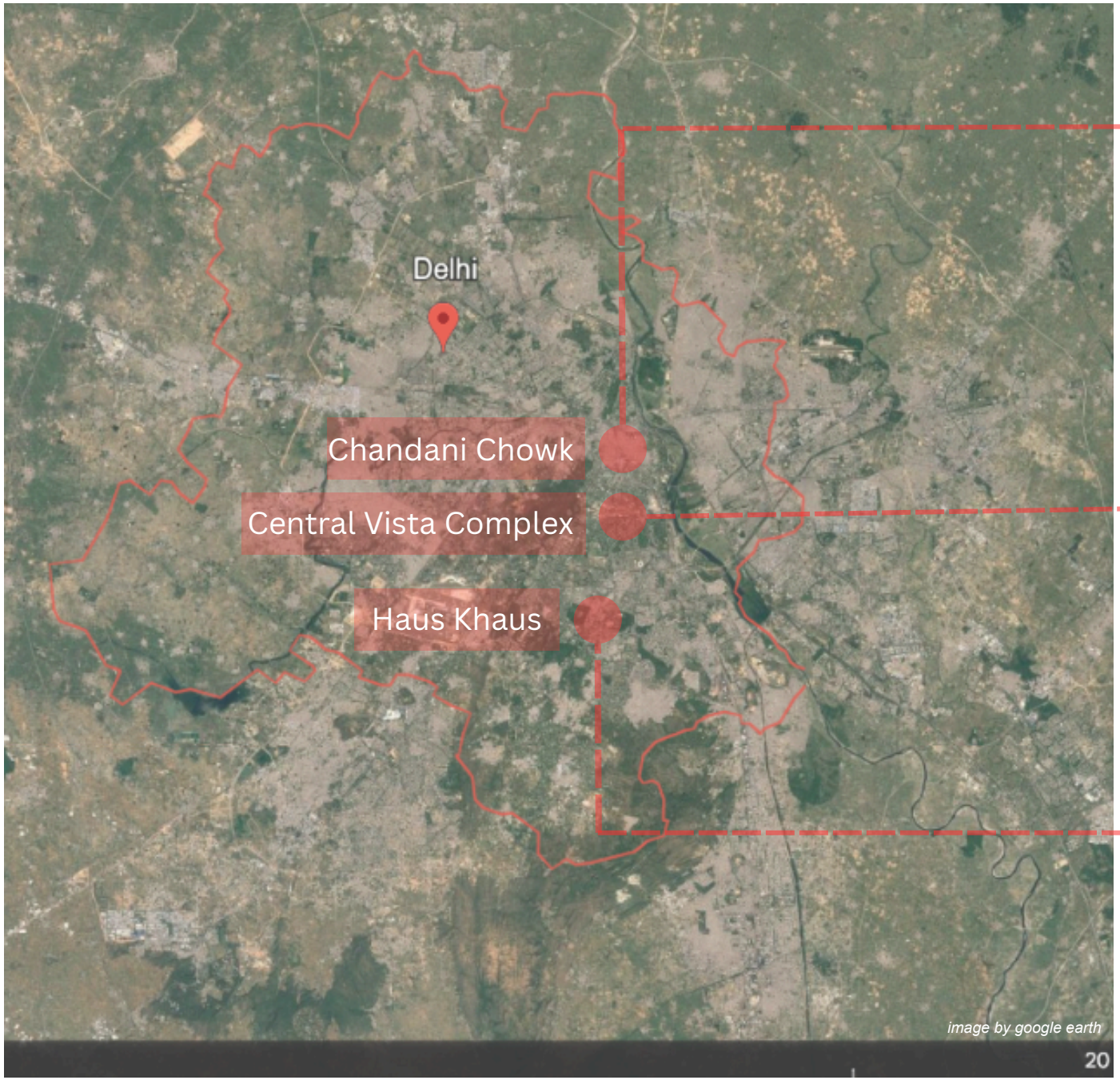




Transformation of Delhi Post Independence

Post-independence Delhi expanded rapidly due to refugee influx, migration and increasing employment opportunities, creating pressure for housing and infrastructure. Farmlands were acquired for planned expansion, while institutions such as AIIMS on Aurobindo Marg strengthened connections between Lutyens' Delhi and Mehrauli. These forces contributed to new residential, institutional and commercial zones, transforming Delhi beyond its colonial core.

Studying Different Areas of Delhi









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Haus Khaus

Hauz Khas is located in the heart of South Delhi, i.e. at Aurobindo Marg. It was established in the 1980s by Delhi Land Finance(DLF) along the ring road and is well connected through Metro and road networks. The surrounding urban areas have important institutions like the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, National Institute of Fashion Technology, and AIIMS Hospital which aided further growth of commercial activity. The study area also includes built heritage in the precinct mainly covering remains of tombs and mosques. This provides a perfect context for a discussion on the co-existence of urban heritage and modern urbanization.

2004

Change in the real estate market, and upcoming projects by DLF, led to an increase in residential bungalows and the monuments were conserved and protected under ASI guidelines. Development of Khasra urban village also began as migrants started to settle in search of work.

2008

-Rapid urbanization led to the construction of a metro station in the area that brought about various changes in built form as well as widening of the road to cater to the increased footfall.

2012

- Construction of underground car parking in Hauz Khas main market under parking policy (2012).
- Conversion of a three-arm junction into a roundabout to reduce congestion.
- Upcoming row houses in Kharera urban village and apartments in Mayfair colony.

2020

From 2012 a 2020, new construction technologies and building materials were introduced which influence the transformation. Hence, there can be a change observed in building heights and facades.





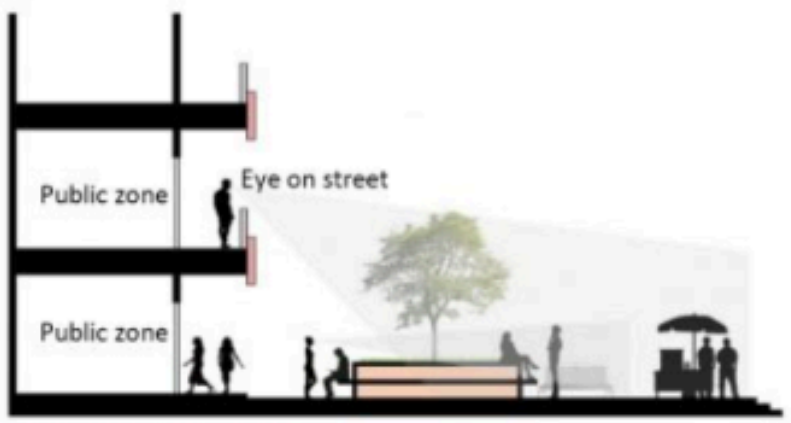


Land Use Map

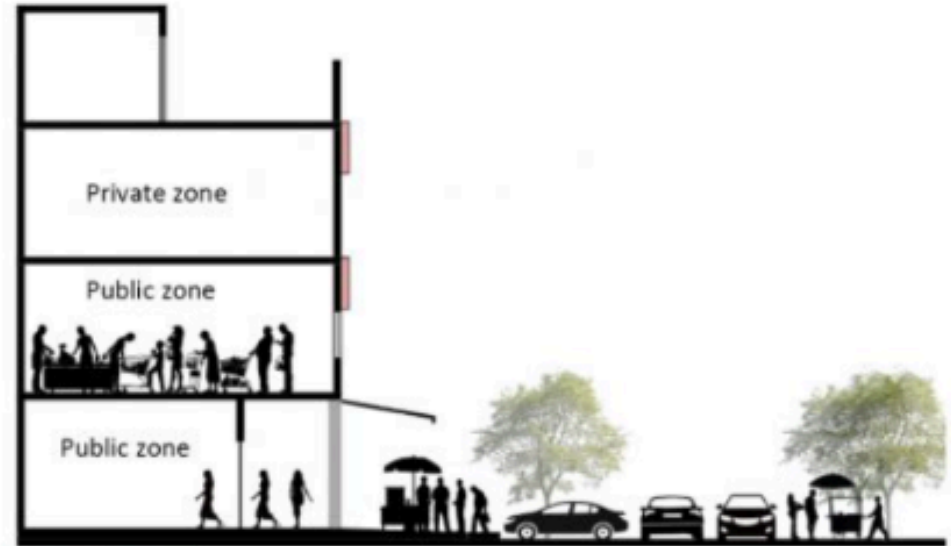


Emergence of Commercial Zones

As the residential areas grew, there was a need for the development of commercial zones both retail and non-retail to cater to the exponentially growing population

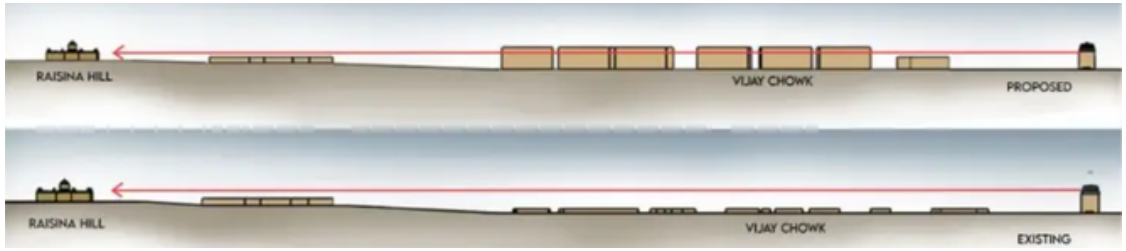


1. Aurobindo Place Market



Central Vista, New Delhi

Central Vista was planned after the British government decided to shift India's capital from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911. Architects Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker designed the new administrative centre, organised around a central ceremonial axis linking the Viceroy's House (now Rashtrapati Bhavan) with India Gate. New Delhi was officially inaugurated in 1931.
After Independence, the area became the centre of India's government and national ceremonies. More recently, the Central Vista redevelopment project introduced a new Parliament building and redeveloped the central avenue, renamed Kartavya Path in 2022.



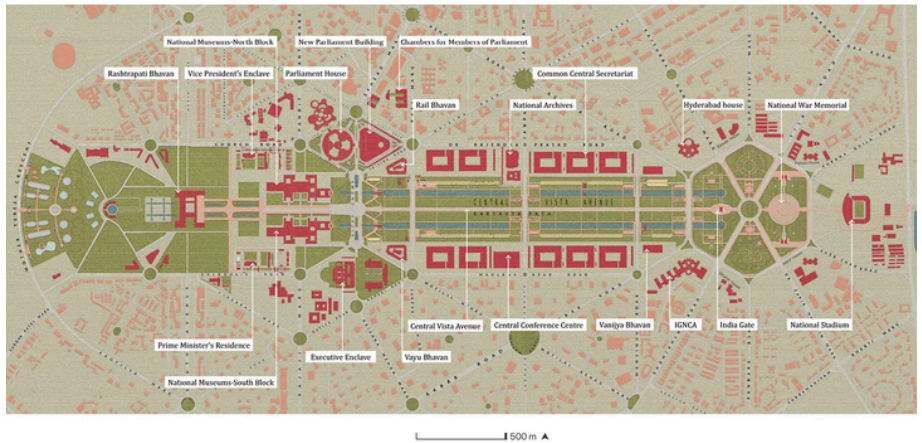




Central Vista in 1931



Central Vista in 2019



Present Masterplan for Central Vista

Dhairya Bhateja | UUR25061 Prisha Goenka | UUR25160

Chandni Chowk, Old Delhi

Chandni Chowk was established in the 17th century, during the reign of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, when he founded Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi). His daughter, Jahanara Begum, is credited with developing the main market street around 1650. It originally had a canal running through its centre, with a pool reflecting moonlight—commonly associated with the name Chandni Chowk, meaning “Moonlight Square.”
The street connected the Red Fort's Lahore Gate to Fatehpuri Masjid and became an important commercial and social centre. During British rule, the canal was filled and the street underwent major changes. Today, Chandni Chowk remains a dense historic marketplace known for its traditional shops, specialised bazaars, food, religious buildings and narrow lanes.

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1638–1648: Shahjahanabad takes shape
Shah Jahan moves the center of power from Agra to Delhi, establishing the Red Fort as the eastern cornerstone of the new fortified city.

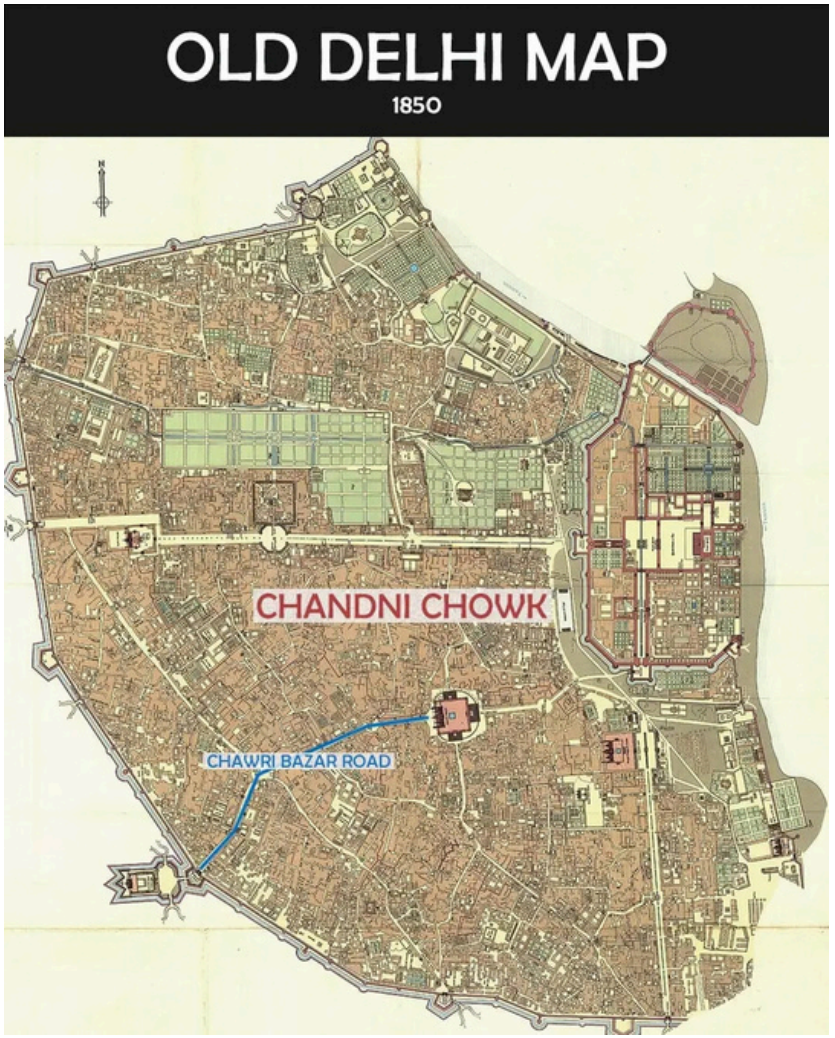
1650: Jahanara's boulevard
Chandni Chowk is designed as a broad market street leading to Fatehpuri Masjid, featuring a canal and shops organized in an orderly layout.

18th century: Plural sacred landscape
The road is marked by mosques, temples, Jain institutions, and Sikh memory-sites, showcasing the shift in political power and religious diversity.

1857 onward: Colonial reshaping
The British destroyed and reconstructed sections of Shahjahanabad following the uprising, with the Town Hall and clock tower changing the traditional Mughal layout of the area.

1947 onward: Refugee commerce and wholesale density
Partition is changing the demographics and economy of the old city, speeding up the transition from residential-haveli living to more commercial purposes.

2018–2026: Beautification, disputes and new infrastructure
The 1.3 km Red Fort–Fatehpuri stretch has been improved, however, issues with maintenance still remain. Delhi agencies will reassess Old Delhi development in 2026, focusing on Town Hall preservation and infrastructure enhancements.



Conclusion

The comparison of Chandni Chowk, Central Vista and Hauz Khas shows how different forces have shaped Delhi's urban form. Chandni Chowk has a fine grain, narrow streets and dense development formed through gradual growth. Central Vista has a large grain, wide roads and open spaces created through planned development. Hauz Khas has a mixed grain, where older settlements have changed with new institutions and commercial activities. This shows that Delhi has developed at different speeds and in different ways. Its morphology is a combination of planned and organic growth, where older urban patterns continue to influence new development.



Illustration by fanaticstudio

sources
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