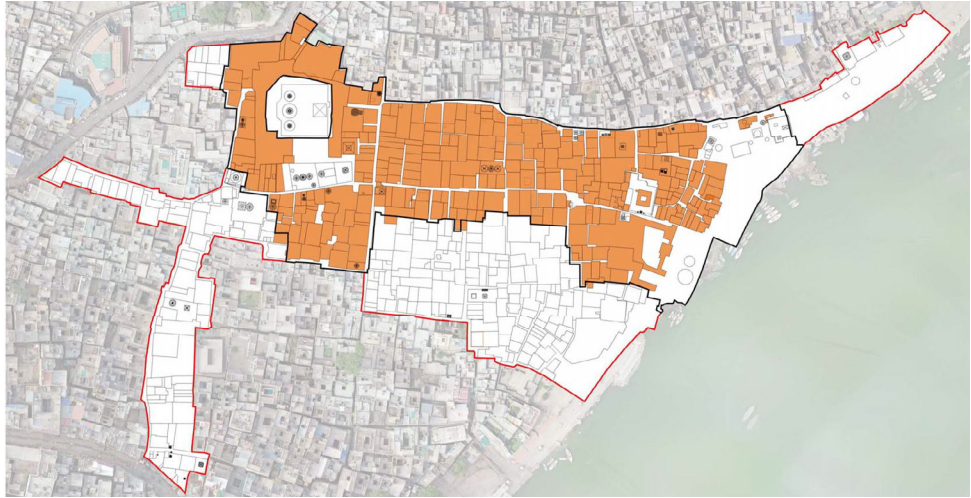




**The Context**  
Over time, the Kashi Vishwanath Temple, sitting atop a hill on a bend of the Ganga River, was hemmed in all sides by very dense and haphazard development. The many temples and fine houses in the area were insensitively built over. Public spaces were encroached upon. The area became very difficult to service and keep clean and the access to the temple was severely constricted.



**The Redevelopment**  
The redeveloped precinct provides a befitting setting to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple and upgrades this special spiritual destination in Varanasi for pilgrims and tourists. A picturesque path running through the centre and lined by many cultural and civic amenities connects the Temple and the Ganga River.

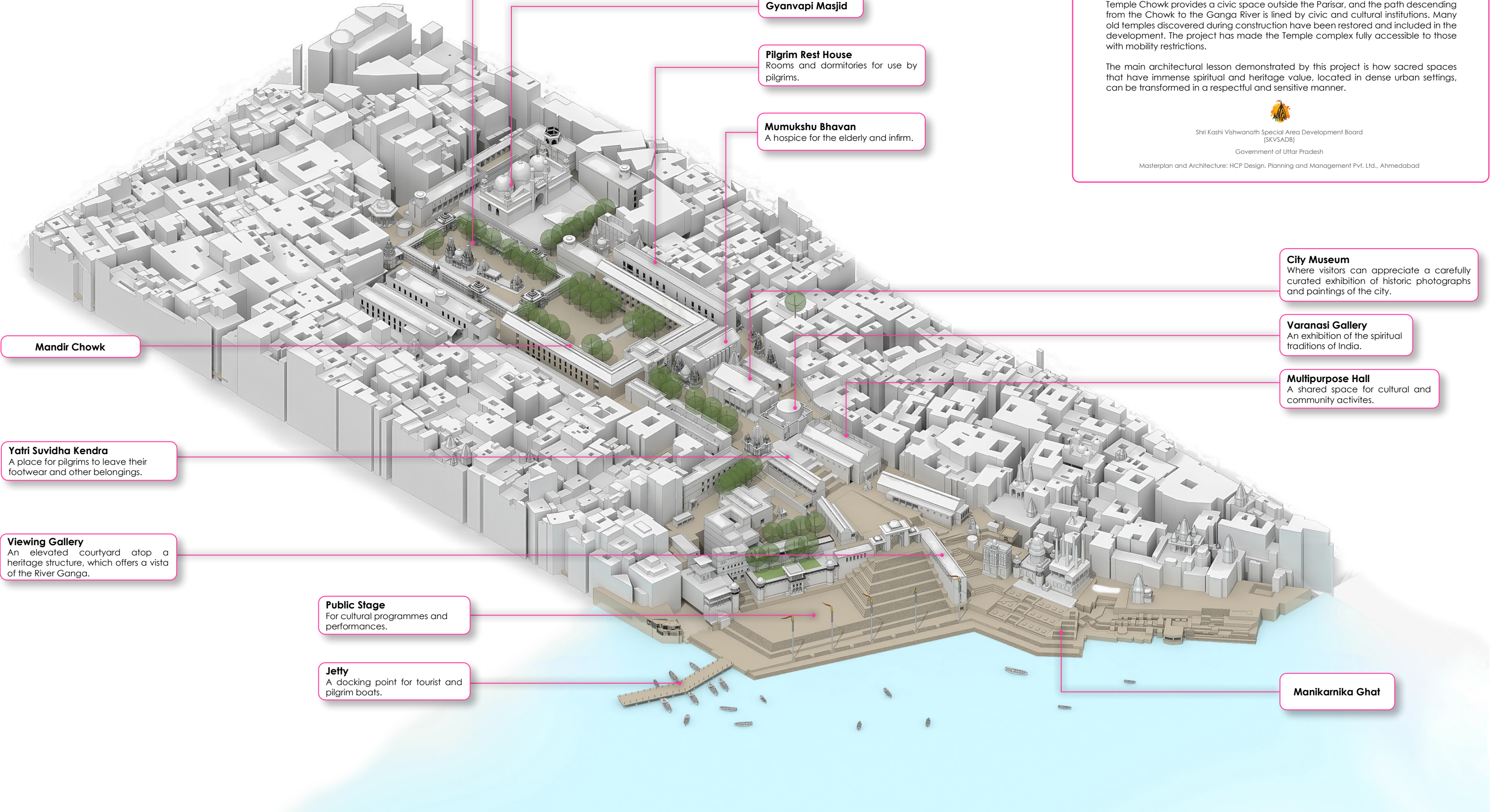


**Project Area**  
Shri Kashi Vishwanath Special Area Development Board, the statutory authority created to plan and implement the redevelopment covers an area of 8.21 Ha. Approximately 260 properties (highlighted in orange) were purchased by the Board to facilitate the redevelopment.



**Temple Pariser**  
The new, rectangular and more spacious Temple Pariser - the sacred compound around the temple - is enclosed by an ornate colonnade and approachable from four decorative gateways. The colonnade and gateways use traditional motifs of Hindu Architecture and are constructed entirely from local Chunar stone, without any steel or concrete reinforcement.

**Shri Kashi Vishwanath Mandir Pariser**  
A shaded colonnade that surrounds the temple, providing people with shelter within the Mandir Pariser.



**Mandir Chowk**

**Yatri Suvidha Kendra**  
A place for pilgrims to leave their footwear and other belongings.

**Viewing Gallery**  
An elevated courtyard atop a heritage structure, which offers a vista of the River Ganga.

**Public Stage**  
For cultural programmes and performances.

**Jetty**  
A docking point for tourist and pilgrim boats.

**Gyanvapi Masjid**

**Pilgrim Rest House**  
Rooms and dormitories for use by pilgrims.

**Mumukshu Bhavan**  
A hospice for the elderly and infirm.

**City Museum**  
Where visitors can appreciate a carefully curated exhibition of historic photographs and paintings of the city.

**Varanasi Gallery**  
An exhibition of the spiritual traditions of India.

**Multipurpose Hall**  
A shared space for cultural and community activities.

**Manikarnika Ghat**



**Temple Chowk**  
The Temple Chowk, a civic space fronting the Temple Pariser, is formed by a building, which has public facilities on the ground floor, handicraft emporiums and exhibition centre on the first floor and offices for Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust on the second floor. A gateway to the east connects the Chowk and the path leading down to the Ganga River.



**The Path to the Ganga River**  
A picturesque pathway connects the Temple Pariser with the ghats along the Ganga River. It is lined with several cultural and civic amenities, such as the Pilgrim Facilitation Centres, City Museum, the Varanasi Gallery and the Multipurpose Hall.



**Main Gateway**  
While ascending from the Ganga River, the Temple's presence is announced by a gateway atop a pyramid of steps, that leads to the Temple Chowk. This gateway is centred on an axis with the Temple. There is a viewing gallery atop this gateway that offers views of the Temple and the vast expanse of the Ganga River.

## VISHWANATH DHAM

Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple was built in 1780. Over time, the main Temple and many others surrounding it were hemmed in by dense and ad hoc development. Access to the Temple was severely constrained, and the lack of infrastructure resulted in the neighbourhood being unkempt and unhygienic. In 1916 when Gandhiji visited Varanasi, he had the following to say:

*"I visited the Vishwanath temple last evening, and as I was walking through those lanes, these were the thoughts that touched me... Is it right that the lanes of our sacred temple should be as dirty as they are? The houses round about are built anyhow. The lanes are tortuous and narrow. If even our temples are not models of roominess and cleanliness, what can our self-government be?"*

Over a century later, in 2019, the area between Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple and the Ganga River was cleared for a comprehensive redevelopment called Vishwanath Dham. The Temple now has a Pariser befitting its significance. Many new amenities that are necessary for the Temple's functioning and for the comfort, safety, and security of tourists and pilgrims, have been added in the vicinity. The Temple Chowk provides a civic space outside the Pariser, and the path descending from the Chowk to the Ganga River is lined by civic and cultural institutions. Many old temples discovered during construction have been restored and included in the development. The project has made the Temple complex fully accessible to those with mobility restrictions.

The main architectural lesson demonstrated by this project is how sacred spaces that have immense spiritual and heritage value, located in dense urban settings, can be transformed in a respectful and sensitive manner.



Shri Kashi Vishwanath Special Area Development Board  
(SKVSADEB)

Government of Uttar Pradesh

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