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Revitalization of historic settlement of Harisiddhi, Lalitpur metropolitan city

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4.1 Background of the study area: Harsiddhi

Harsiddhi is one of the oldest Newari settlements, southeast about 8km far from the capital city Kathmandu, on the way to Godawari forest. It is located on wards 28 and 29 of Lalitpur metropolitan city. The town is believed to be named after the goddess Harsiddhi, whose four-tiered temple is located in the village's center. It was once believed that two giants went to Kailash Parbat (the location where Lord Shiva lived) and injured the gate-man, 'Nandi.' Lord Shiva was aware of the incident and recalled the Goddess, 'Chandika.' The Goddess appeared immediately and killed the two giants as Lord Shiva had predicted, and she is now worshiped as Harsiddhi. The term Harsiddhi has been misused. Actually, it should have been Hara (Shiva) and Siddhi (Parvati) or Harasiddhi, which means that half of the body is Shiva and the other half is Parvati; the Lord Shiva and Parvati's attributes. The town is also called 'Jala' in Newari term is famous for its ancient cultural and historical monuments.

Harisiddhi touches Siddhipur in the east, Dhapakhel in the west, Lalitpur in the north and Thaiba and Badegaun in the south. The study

area covers approximately 5.39 ha of land (Fig. 4.1). The town is inhabited by mainly 'maharjan' caste from the Newari community. However, this town is gradually losing its heritage value and economic activities thereby encouraging local people to leave their traditional professions as well as leaving the places for better job. Such activities have further impacted on celebration of religious and ritual activities during different festivals.



Fig. 4.1 Harsiddhi historic town and study area

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to revive its local economy through revitalization by intervening on land use and protection and promotion of cultural heritages. The main objectives are threefold: study of settlement patterns and monuments of the town, identification of the main problems in urban transformation process and proposal of revitalization plan along with detailing.

4.2 Settlement patterns and monuments

The settlement pattern of Harsiddhi is of typical Newari settlement. The main street from north-south is crisscrossed by three different

streets from east to west. In all the three junctions, there were public square with important public monuments such as temples, sunken stone spouts and public rest house or community building (Fig. 4.2). In addition to that there are four different gate at four cardinal direction indicating or symbolizing the historic core area.



Fig. 4.2 Four gates at four cardinal directions with three squares housing various public monuments

Harsiddhi comprises of different types of public open spaces (Table 4.1). They are used for various activities. For instance, large courtyards known as 'nani chowks' are basically used for social interaction and children play area whereas the main courtyard or squares (laachi) are the centre for celebration of festivals and rituals. Streets are not only movement of people and goods but they do have symbolic meaning. They are also venue for procession route for chairots during different festivals.

Table 4.1 Type of open spaces in Harsiddhi

<i>S. N.</i>	<i>Type of open spaces</i>	<i>Functions</i>
1	Nani chowks	Social interaction, play area for children
2	Main chowk (Laachi)	Jatras (festivals, procession), ritual, social interaction
3	Streets	For daily activities, drying grains (during harvesting season), used for commercial activities, procession routes for chairots during festivals and connectivity of different neighborhoods
4	Gates	Demarcation of settlement and outside
5	Ghats	Cremation area, pith (worshipping god)

Various monuments are located at specific places with their functions in Harsiddhi (Table 4.2 and Fig. 4.3). Rest places such as 'pati' or 'sattal' (covered place) are located along the streets or corner of the courtyards, which are often used as public shelter at night, social interaction, religious pray and so on. Sunken stone spouts (hitis) are also located along the streets or in the large squares. Depending on the location and purpose of construction, some of them have religious meaning. Others are used for fetching water. Ponds and wells are also found along the streets or in the courtyards, which are basically used for household purpose of washing utensils.

Table 4.2 Public amenities and infrastructure in different forms with their locations and functions

<i>S. N.</i>	<i>Elements of open spaces</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Functions</i>
1	Patis/sattal (covered areas)	Along the streets and in courtyards	Communal space, public shelter, gossip, religious pray and resting spaces
2	Sunken stone spouts (hitis)	Along the streets, in courtyards and large square	For fetching water and religious meaning
3	Pond, well	Along the streets and in smaller squares	For household purpose, fetching water, washing utensils

4	Enclosed shrine	In large or small squares, along the streets	Daily worshipping,
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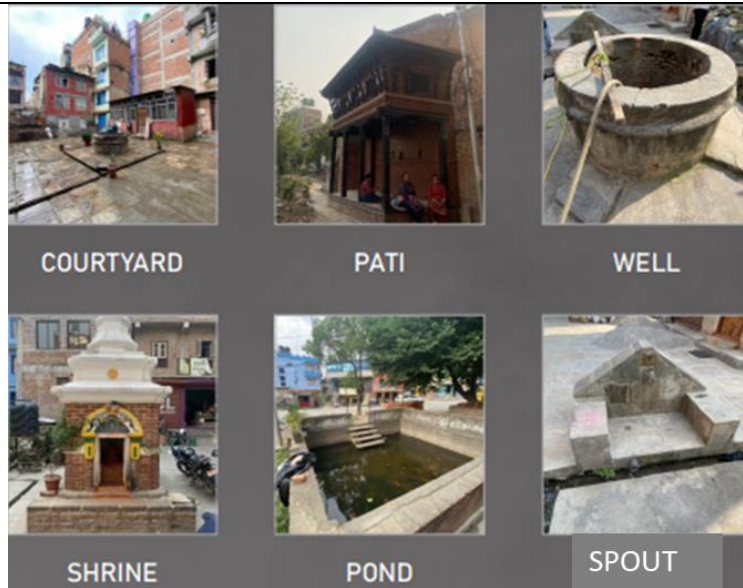


Fig. 4.3 Public amenities in Harsiddhi town

The arrangement of the houses, temples, streets and open spaces have maintained a remarkable balance within the settlement. Houses are clustered along the streets or around the courtyards. All the squares are equipped with public amenities: sunken stone spouts (hitis), well, ponds, small enclosed shrines etc. Public open spaces as symbol of social bonding comprises of supportive spaces (elements).

4.3 Urban transformation of Harsiddhi

In the past one decade, the historic core of Harsiddhi has undergone rapid transformation through extension of the settlement over peripheral agricultural land (beyond the gates) and densification of the historic core area through renovation, addition and extension of spaces of the existing building structure (Fig. 4.4). One can observe rapid development along the major road in 2023 after widening of the highway.

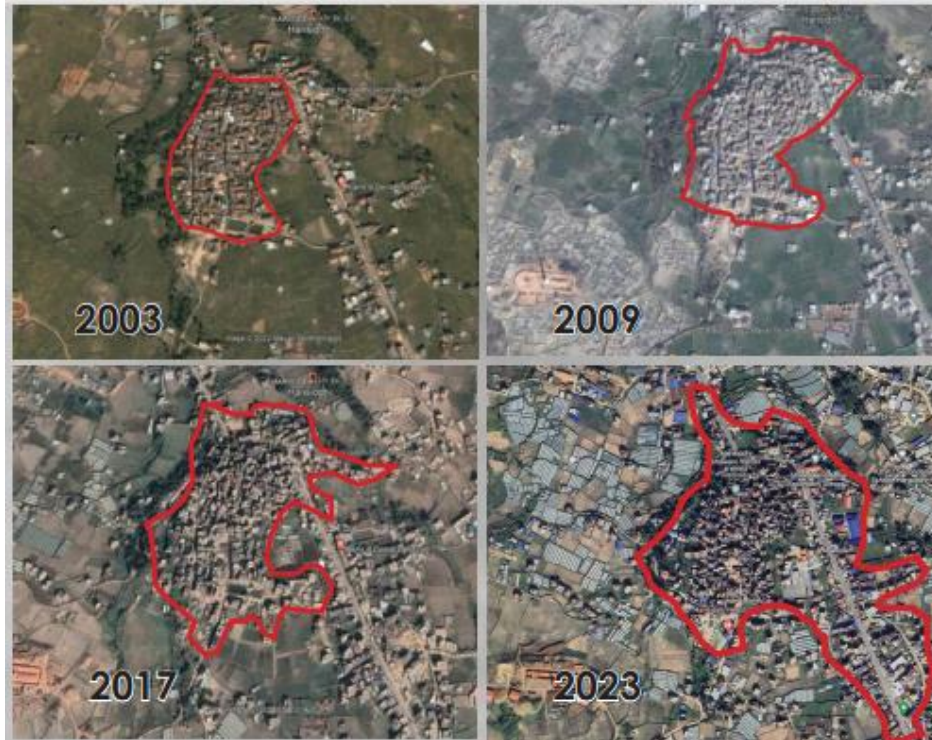


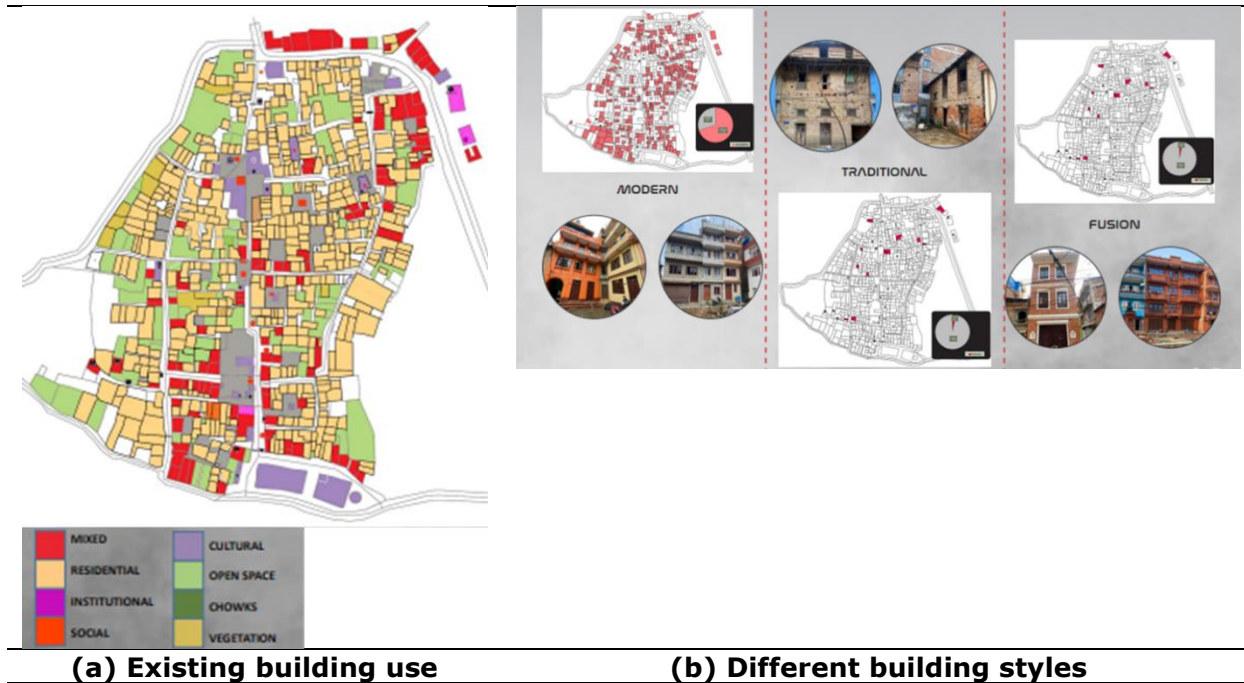
Fig. 4.4 Transformation of the historic core of Harsiddhi (2003 – 2023)

Most of the houses within the core of Harsiddhi are dominated by residential use; however, some buildings especially along the street sides have mixed used: commercial or retail shop on the ground floor and residential use on the upper stories (Fig. 4.5a). Still it has large amount of public or community spaces in the form of courtyards, squares and water bodies.

One can find different styles of the buildings in the area. Traditional houses built with brick in mud mortar have brick faced vertical façade with wooden door and windows. There are cornices or lines separating each floors. The sloped roof with supported by wooden struts is a dominating elements in traditional architectural style (Fig. 4.5b). However, many houses recently built especially after the earthquake do not follow these traditional elements and construction technology. They are all of reinforced cement concrete frame structure with cement plastered facades. There is a floor slab

projection for protection of windows from the sun and rain. In all cases, the roofs are flat with parapet wall around them. Some of the newly constructed houses attempted to incorporate some features of the traditional houses like brick exposed, wooden door and window. However, the windows are horizontally elongated, the cornices are dominating and above all the scale and proportion of the façade along with construction detailing do not match with the scale of the traditional houses.

The total number of traditional houses is 145 occupying 27% of total existing buildings. Most of the traditional houses were built in 'Malla style' while few were of the Rana style. Material used were wood and brick designed in Newari traditional style. The total number of modern buildings is 359 occupying the 70% of total existing buildings. Most of the modern house are built after the earthquake and are developed at the periphery of the main core settlement. The total number of modern houses with traditional features is 8 occupying the 3% of total existing buildings.

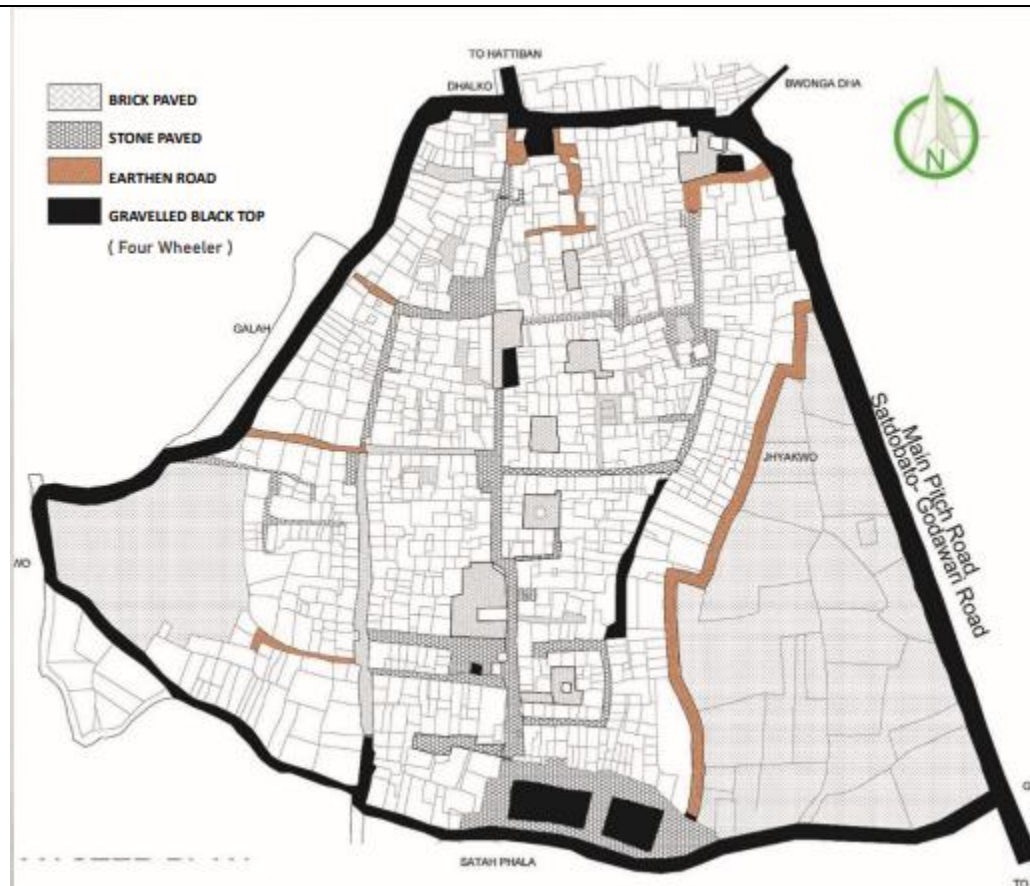


(a) Existing building use **(b) Different building styles**
Fig. 4.5 Transformation of building stocks in terms of use, form and architectural style

Though the whole town along with its streets and lanes were planned for pedestranization and walkability, changes in the lifestyle and profession of the occupancy, shifting economic base from agriculture to trade and service and need of connectivity with other settlements all have encouraged use of vehicles thereby converting the squares and lanes for parking.

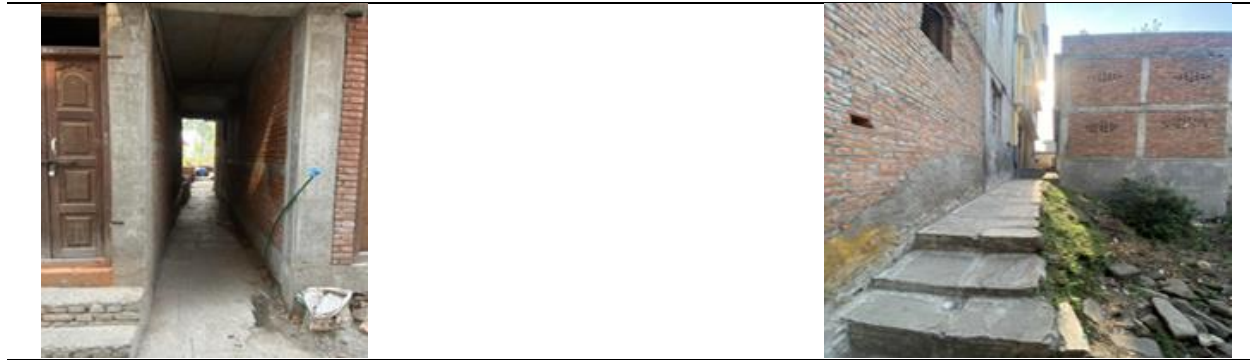
The 'Satdobato – Godawari' road passing through the north-east boundary of Harsiddhi acts as a primary road connecting the town with other cities within the valley. This road was recently widened. The local road links to Harsiddhi from this primary road has been developed on incremental basis. Only the major streets within the core area are accessible for vehicles and the rest of the connectivity to individual houses are mainly through pedestrian lanes only.

The peripheral roads of the settlements are blacked topped and use for vehicular movement. Some of the streets are still of earthen type. Major streets and courtyards are paved with stone whereas the remaining pedestrian lanes and small courtyards are paved with brick (Fig. 4.6).



(a) Existing street and open space pavement in Harsiddhi





(b) Street typology

Fig. 4.6 Typology of street pavement and their patterns**Fig. 4.7 Intangible cultural heritage in Harsiddhi**

Like other Newari settlements, the community of Harsiddhi also celebrate numerous festivals (Fig. 4.7). Major social, religious and ritual activities take place either inside the temple or in front of the temple on squares. Harsiddhi dance and 'Salcha pyakha' (horse dance) are famous in this town, which takes place at the main square (laachi). Indra jatra, gaijatra, dashain and 12 year jatras are celebrated here going around a fixed procession routes. The Harsiddhi Youth Club also coordinate various religious and cultural events particularly during festival times.

The town has been facing numerous problems. Numerous houses built after the April 2015 earthquake are totally different from its traditional architectural character. The differences are not only in architectural style and building detailing but also in building envelop and bulk. Most of them have high plinth level and higher floor height. Many squares and even the residential courtyards are being used for parking of vehicles; in other cases, they are used for commercial purposes by the shop owners. Many youths and local people are migrating in other places for job and better income. Those households engaging in agriculture in the past find difficult in switching into other jobs due to lack of skills and trainings. The overall result is gradually losing the unique identity and character of Harsiddhi and degradation of socio-cultural activities.

4.4 Revitalization plan for Harsiddhi

The revitalization plan comprises of three interventions. First, all the squares, courtyards and pedestrian paths are proposed for pavement with different types of materials so that they are visually well connected. Visitors and tourist can easily have access in different residential neighborhoods.

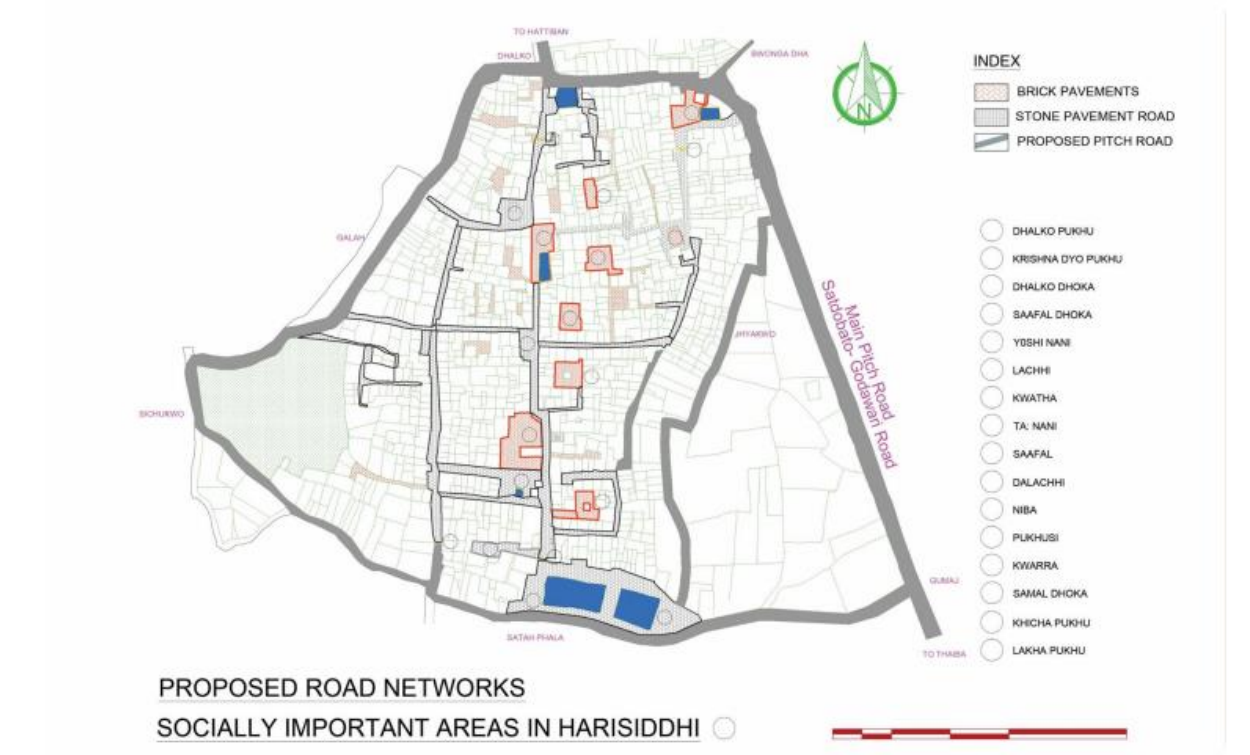


Fig. 4.8 Proposed pavement of streets

All the small courtyards (encircled by residential houses) and two main squares along the north-south streets are proposed for brick pavement and the rest of the squares along with pedestrian paths are proposed for stone pavement (Fig. 4.8). The public spaces around the ponds are also to be paved with stone. Both stone and brick pavement will have different pattern, depending on the street type and importance of each courtyard. During emergency period, vehicular movement is also possible in the main streets. Parking on the streets and open spaces will be removed gradually after consultation with the local retail shop owners and households owning vehicles.

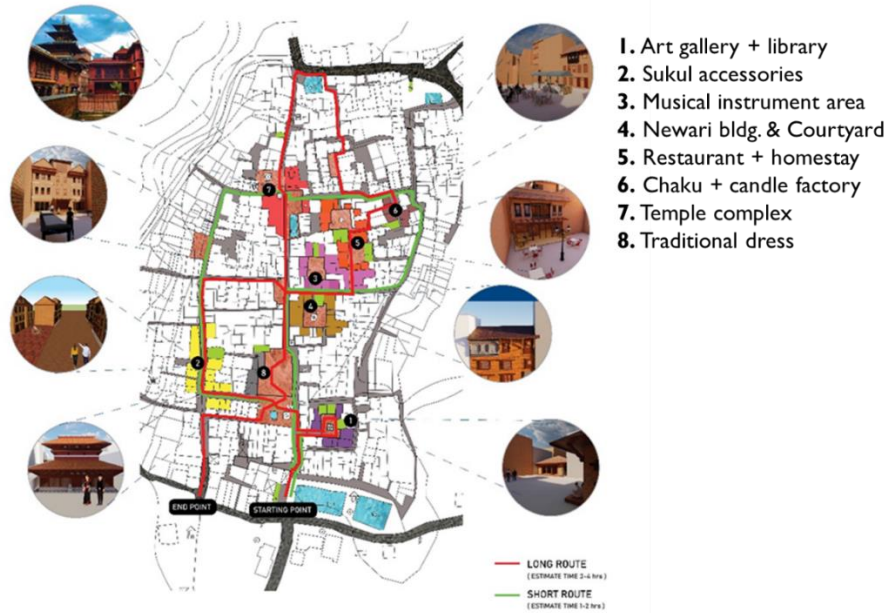


Fig. 4.9 Proposed activities associated with local economy and heritage conservation

Numerous activities associated with traditional professions as well as present day needs are proposed at various locations (Fig. 4.9). Such activities will encourage tourist and visitors go around different lanes and courtyards to watch the workshop and community working. It will also enhance their income, as it will increase stay of tourist and visitors in the area. Workshop or shops associated with traditional dresses, weaving (matt, woolen and carpet) are proposed around different lanes and courtyards. Also, restaurants and coffee shops are proposed at various street corners. Musical instrument repair and shops are also proposed. In addition to these, the traditional food called 'chaku' and candle workshop and shop are also proposed. Provisions of home stay around different courtyards especially in a quiet location are suggest. Also, modern day needs such as art gallery, community building and public library area also suggested.

Finally, the existing façade elevation of buildings along the main street was studied. Many of those houses have violated the prevailing building regulations in terms of height and detailing. Those built according the regulations fulfill the provisions but do not match with traditional architectural characters and detailing. Hence, renovation and remodeling of facades of those houses are proposed with new façade elevations (Fig. 4.10). Formulation of architectural design guidelines and linking them to incentive mechanism are also suggested for implementation of façade remodeling.



Fig.4.10 Proposed street façade elevation improvement