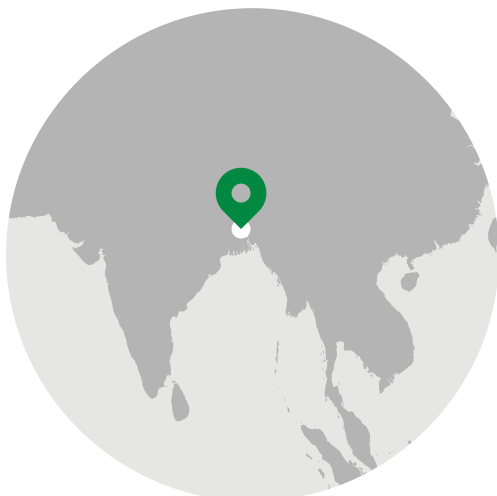


A New Future for Old Dhaka



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DHAKA'S CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (RAJUK) IS TRANSFORMING TWO OF THE HISTORIC OLD TOWN'S DISTRICTS INTO CLIMATE-RESILIENT, GREENER, SAFER, AND MORE LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS.



 **Dhaka, Bangladesh**

 **275,000**



Category of Climate Action:

- Green spaces
- Climate-resilient urban infrastructure
- Brownfield regeneration

Heritage meets a new beginning

The Old Town of Dhaka is a place of movement and memory. Narrow lanes, tea stalls, traders, and families who have lived there for generations. Within this dense and historic core lie Hazaribagh and Lalbagh, two districts that once powered the city's trade and industry. For years, the untreated industrial waste from the local tanneries flowed directly into the Buriganga River, poisoning land and water and endangering nearby communities, while Lalbagh's neighbourhoods grew crowded and suffered frequent waterlogging due to poor drainage.

Today, city officials want these areas to become the testing ground for something new: a vision of the Old Town made green again. Where factories and warehouses once stood, planners now imagine shaded courtyards, open parks, and walkable streets that can mitigate the impact of intense heat and monsoon rains. What was once a challenge is now seen as a chance to show how a city can renew itself without losing its soul.



Earning trust, block by block

Dhaka's planners, led by the Capital Development Authority (RAJUK), wanted to turn their new vision for the Old Town into reality. But to do so, they needed more than ideas. They needed evidence and design – something to bring the local people with them – as years of uncoordinated expansion had made residents wary of big projects. Many wondered if change would actually improve their lives or simply push them aside. Winning back that trust meant involving them from the start, and showing what regeneration could look like, street by street, block by block.



Planning with people, not just for them

Together with RAJUK and GIZ, the EIB-Gap Fund helped create the Climate-Resilient and Green Action Plan (CRGAP) – a roadmap for integrating climate adaptation and mitigation into the regeneration of Hazaribagh and Lalbagh, helping them become more resilient, low-carbon, and healthier places to live.



Teams of planners, engineers, and social researchers worked side-by-side with local residents. They mapped water flows, soil conditions, and climate risks, and analysed how different communities were affected by social and economic vulnerability. At the same time, they listened to people's stories about everyday challenges and asked what residents wanted from their neighbourhoods.

The plan for Hazaribagh proposed dividing the district into twelve smaller blocks, each with more light, open space, and green cover. In Lalbagh, the focus turned to smarter drainage, shaded public areas, and infrastructure that could withstand floods and rising heat.

The plan also identified ways to make local communities more resilient to climate change by integrating adaptation into urban regeneration and pinpointing opportunities for mitigation. It also looks at how people move through these crowded streets. It also looks at how people move through these crowded streets, promotes mixed land use, safer footpaths, and better cycling connections to reduce car dependency and ease congestion. This will give residents cleaner air, calmer roads, and easier access to schools, markets, and workplaces within walking distance.



The Gap Fund's technical expertise brought clarity and confidence to our planning, it helped us engage communities and build consensus.

— Sayeed Rezaul Haque
Deputy Town Planner at RAJUK



From cautious hope to collective action

Slowly, attitudes began to shift. Public meetings filled with residents who once doubted the plans but now wanted to contribute their own ideas. Visual maps helped them picture what cooler, greener streets could feel like. The conversation changed from frustration about the past to excitement about what could be built next.

The new plan sets out clear steps: turning rooftops green, improving water systems, creating small parks and public spaces that manage both heat and flooding. It's not just a plan on paper, it's now part of Dhaka's Detailed Area Plan (2022–2035), meaning these ideas will shape how the city grows for years to come.

The Old Town's new chapter begins

With the groundwork in place, Dhaka is poised to move from vision to action. The Climate-Resilient and Green Action Plan has now been integrated into the city's Detailed Area Plan (2022–2035). This will build climate and sustainability priorities into Dhaka's long-term development, ensuring they can be funded through future national programmes. City leaders are also exploring potential support from multilateral development banks to help bring the plan's ideas to life. Over time, new green spaces, shaded streets, and cleaner, cooler neighbourhoods could redefine daily life across the Old Town.

The next step will be turning lessons from the plan into practice – applying its findings across departments and future development work. What began as a technical study will now connect heritage with innovation and give Old Dhaka a new rhythm of life.