



SPREAD

White Paper

Design For Governance

A framework for progressive, proactive, participative Governance with Citizen partnership.

An ancient civilization, a comprehensive constitution, a youthful country, India must continuously design and evolve better systems and engines for engaged and progressive citizenry.

Bengaluru, one of the most attractive cities for young talent, is experiencing radical growth. It has always had and continues to have Leadership, Corporate and Citizen will to engage and resolve, to cocreate and create new systems to design for growth.

In this white paper, we think through and around the Bengaluru case/s to create possible models and a **Design for Governance framework**. We also argue that citizens in Bengaluru and elsewhere wish to be involved, the ideal scenario is to design 'with the citizens', by designing a citizen participation framework and architecture.

Authored by **Sonia Manchanda & Girish Raj**

The authors have been designing for Governance through their Design and Innovation practice for over two decades.

Structure

The context - A growing city with a progressive and youthful population. Can the Bengaluru case/s provide a framework for better governance, by design? For India and the world.

Apathy or architecture - How might we design for greater government accountability plus engaged and continuous citizen participation.

Design for Governance Provotypes - Studying the Bengaluru design for governance experiments for the last two decades from the inside to derive learnings.

Developing a model for greater citizen awareness and participation. To turn apathy into interest and empathy to strengthen democracy with more people power.

"Governance cannot be understood from an office alone. To solve Bengaluru's civic challenges, we must see them where citizens experience them - on the ground. That is why we are taking officials to the ground, identifying the gaps firsthand and working towards solutions with clear accountability."

Krishna Byre Gowda | Minister for Greater Bengaluru Development and Parliamentary Affairs, and as the Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Byatarayanapura.

Executive Summary

India is an ancient civilisation with a young population and a constitution built for participation. Its cities now need civic systems equal to that inheritance. Bengaluru makes the case vividly: its growth reflects opportunity and aspiration, and its strain reveals the need for governance that coordinates at metropolitan scale while remaining accessible and accountable in every neighbourhood.

This paper argues that governance can be designed - not only as the delivery of schemes, infrastructure and services, but as an ongoing engagement between institutions and citizens. Design for Governance brings together systems thinking, service design, public communication, institutional coordination and meaningful citizen participation.

The moment is unusually opportune. Bengaluru's civic architecture is being redrawn: the Greater Bengaluru Authority and five new city corporations have replaced a single municipal body, the number of wards has almost doubled, and corporation elections are due by the end of 2026. How citizens participate in this new structure can be designed in from the start, rather than bolted on later.

The paper draws on Bengaluru and Karnataka initiatives in which Spread Design and its founders have been continuously and actively involved - among them Bangalore Forward, Swachha Bangalore, the Millets Movement and Swachhameva Jayate. These are presented as practice-based experiences, not as outcomes attributable to any one organisation. Their value lies in the questions they help us ask about collaboration, public ownership, communication, implementation and continuity.

Central proposition Design not merely for citizens, but with them-by building a participation architecture that makes public information understandable, contribution accessible, decisions traceable, delivery accountable and learning continuous.

Dreams in a growing city

There is nothing more dangerous than the death of dreams.

Few things are more dangerous to a society than the death of its dreams.

A dream is the belief that tomorrow can be different: that effort can lead to opportunity, that a place can offer a future, and that institutions can help people realise their potential.

The summer of 2026 offered a stark reminder of what hope can make people risk. On 30–31 July, tens of thousands of people - mostly young Moroccans - swam into Ceuta, Spain's enclave on the North African coast. Estimates range from roughly 50,000 to more than 70,000 people; at least 67 deaths were reported within days, and later reports put the toll above 80. Explanations for the surge remain contested. The episode is not offered as a comparison with Bengaluru. It is a reminder that when people cannot see a future where they are, they will risk a great deal to reach one elsewhere. The risk of disappointing the ones who come with dreams is significant.

Bengaluru's story begins from a different place. People arrive for education, work, enterprise, family and possibility, and the city's growth is evidence of its promise. But a city that attracts dreams takes on an obligation: to match opportunity with infrastructure, responsive institutions and meaningful participation in the decisions that shape everyday life.

A city's growth is usually measured in population, investment and built infrastructure. Citizens experience it in more intimate measures: the time it takes to reach work, the reliability of water, the safety of a footpath, the dignity of a public service, the health of a neighbourhood and the confidence that their voice can change an outcome. These are not separate from governance. **They are governance, as lived.**

People move toward places where they imagine a better life. Their aspirations are a source of energy and possibility - and a responsibility for the systems that receive them.

Bengaluru's story is one of opportunity, enterprise, education, innovation and aspiration. People come to the city to build careers, businesses, families and futures. The city's promise creates a civic responsibility: to ensure that public systems respond to people's needs, support access to opportunity and make everyday life dignified and safe.

The question is not whether a city should grow. It is whether its institutions can adapt with care, foresight and accountability - and whether the people who shape and sustain the city can participate meaningfully in its future.

Bengaluru - Growth, complexity and the governance challenge

Bengaluru's population is commonly estimated at around 1.5 crore, though figures vary with the boundary used - the municipal area, the urban agglomeration or the metropolitan region. An oft quoted estimate holds that around 1,000 people move to the city every day. Whatever the precise figures, the direction is clear: sustained growth that tests every system the city depends on.

The metropolitan challenge follows. Transport, water, sewerage, roads, land use, housing, drainage and public space operate across boundaries, while residents experience them locally. A commute crosses jurisdictions; a storm-water drain connects neighbourhoods; a water network serves many communities; a single public-space problem may involve several agencies.

The Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024 has redrawn the city's institutional landscape. The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike has given way to the Greater Bengaluru Authority - an apex body for metropolitan planning and cross-boundary functions and five city corporations (Central, East, West, North and South) covering some 712 sq km and 369 wards, up from 198. Bengaluru is growing outwards to a built up area of 1,400 sq km with a future metropolitan plan of 2,000 sq km.

Alongside the Corporations sit transport, metro, rail, water and sewerage, and planning agencies, each with its own mandate.

Smaller wards and more corporations can bring governance closer to neighbourhoods. They also multiply the boundaries a citizen's problem can fall between. Coordination, clarity of responsibility and citizen-facing accountability therefore become more important, not less.

The strategic task is twofold: build a shared metropolitan direction for infrastructure and growth, and design local systems through which residents fulfil their civic responsibilities, understand who is responsible, raise issues, shape priorities and track action.

Every issue escalates up the chain before a citizen can expect to receive an effective response.

Core Bengaluru **780sqkm**
Built-up urban area **1,400sqkm**
Metropolitan Plan **2,000sqkm**

Human Population : **1,50,00,000**
Vehicle Population : **1,50,00,000**
Human : Vehicle: **1:1**

Urban Planning Norms: 15% To
20% Road Area

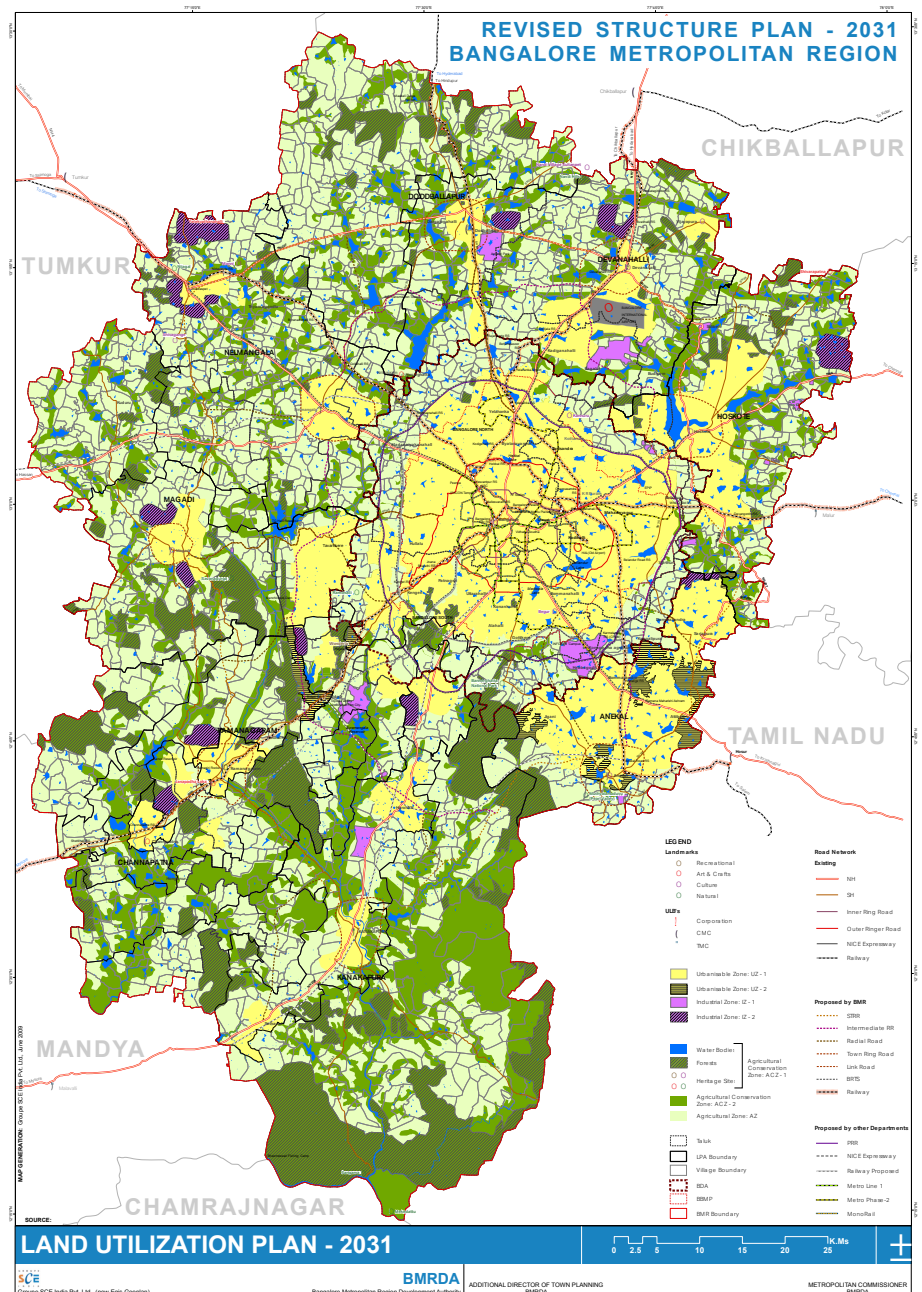
Bengaluru : 8% Road Area
(Approx)



 INDIA'S SECOND LONGEST
METRO NETWORK : **96 KM EXPANDING
TO 257 KM**

 INDIA'S LARGEST BUS FLEET :
**7038 BUSES MOVING
4300000 PEOPLE DAILY,
ADDING 4500 NEW BUSES**

 ROADS ABOVE AND BELOW :
170 KM (approx to be added)

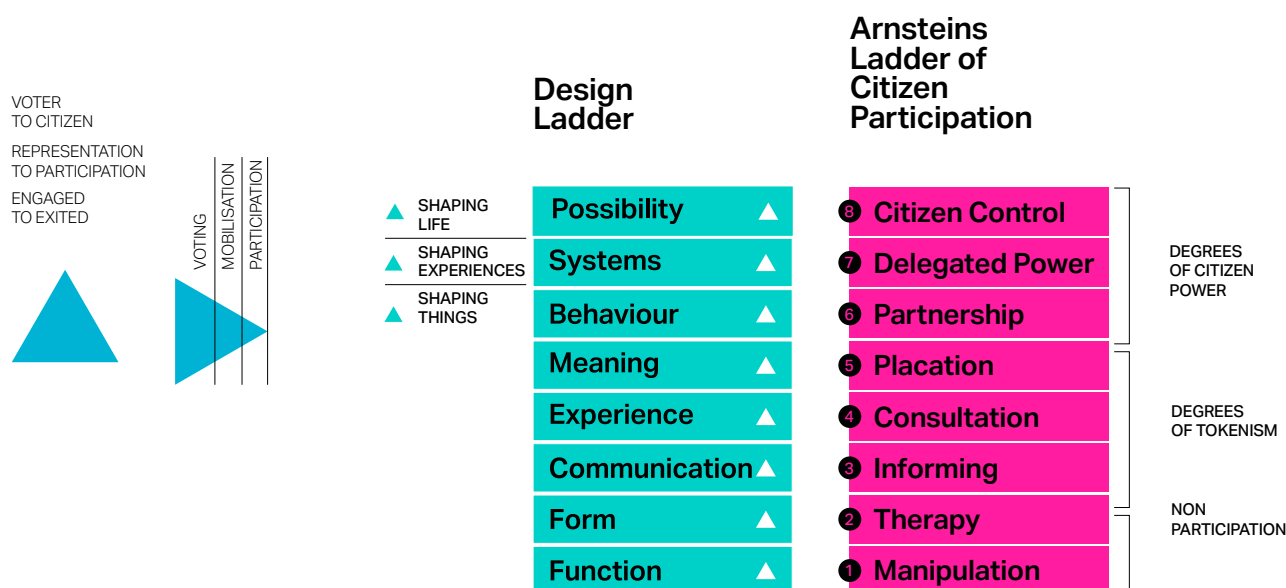


Apathy or architecture?

Citizen disengagement is often described as apathy. But non-participation is frequently a rational response to inaccessible information, unclear responsibilities, consultation without visible consequence, complaints that go unresolved, or processes that demand time and expertise most citizens do not have.

The design question, then, is not simply how to persuade people to participate. It is how to create the conditions in which participation is possible, meaningful and worth repeating. That requires designing a reciprocal system, institutions share information and explain decisions; citizens contribute local knowledge and perspective; agencies respond with reasons, timelines and evidence of action.

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation remains a useful diagnostic, distinguishing non-participation and tokenism from genuine citizen power. It is best used to ask honest questions of an initiative, not as a scorecard imposed on everyone. A complementary design lens asks how far a public service travels along a spectrum: is it merely functional, or also understandable, accessible, usable and meaningful - and, ultimately, capable of shaping behaviour and systems?



Arnstein's ladder of Citizen Participation

Arnstein's ladder on Citizen Participation, moves up from manipulation, to consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, citizen control. Most Indian participatory mechanisms sit on the lower three rungs while being described in official documentation as though they occupied the upper three. The four primitives make that gap specific rather than rhetorical: a mechanism with legibility but without stakes or recourse is, precisely, consultation described as partnership.

At its deepest, the core idea of **democracy is that power belongs to the people**. Not simply that people vote. Voting is one mechanism. The larger idea is that **people are not subjects of government; they are participants in governing themselves**.

Democracy is four connected ideas:

Agency : people have a meaningful say in decisions affecting their lives.

Equality : each person's voice and dignity matter, regardless of wealth, status or power.

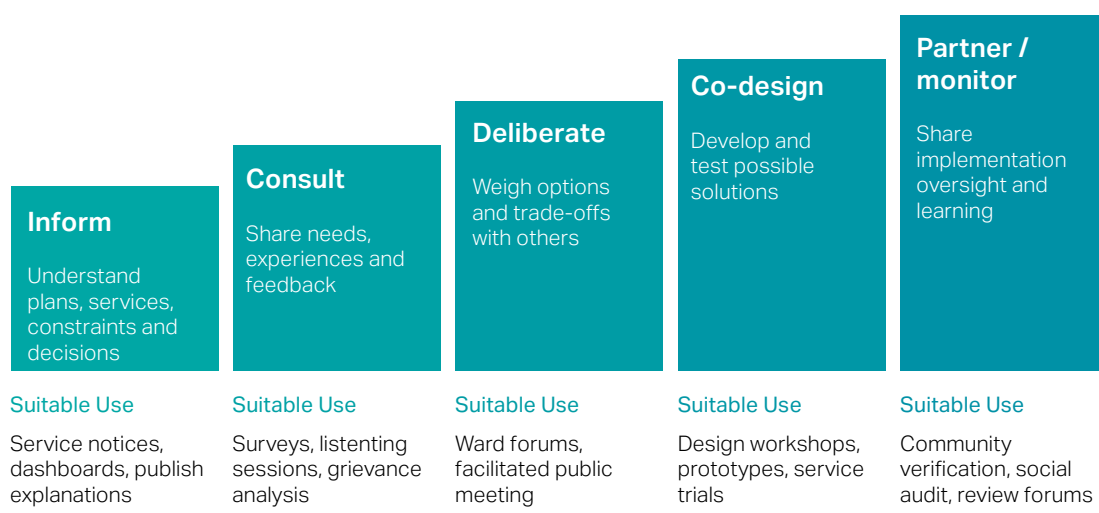
Participation : democracy is something citizens do, not merely something governments provide.

Accountability: those entrusted with power remain answerable to the people and can ultimately be replaced.

The Design ladder

To transition from Voter to Citizen, from representation to participation, from 'exited' to engaged, Design has a role at every stage. In shaping better functionality, better form, effective communication, meaningful experiences, positive behaviours, fluid and adaptive systems and finally more imaginative possibilities to reframe the growth challenge into a growth opportunity for the city and its residents.

Participation should be matched to the decision at hand. Not every issue needs the deepest level of involvement; every issue needs honesty about which level is on offer.



Deeper citizen influence and shared responsibility - choose the level that fits the decision, and say which is on offer

Five modes of participation, from informing citizens to sharing oversight with them.

A participation architecture should include:

- accessible information and multiple ways to contribute;
- inclusive outreach and facilitated deliberation;
- transparent decision criteria and named institutional ownership;
- feedback on what was heard and what changed; and
- delivery tracking, with opportunities to monitor and learn.

These elements form a continuous cycle: **inform → listen → deliberate → co-design → decide → deliver → monitor → respond → learn**. Participation becomes credible when citizens can see the connection between their contribution, the decision taken and the outcome delivered.

Design's Progression

While participation architecture must be carefully designed, people must transition from Voter to Citizen, from representation to participation, from 'exited' to engaged. Design has a ground level role in fixing problems and a strategic role in improving systems.

Function : As a city grows and expands, adding new infrastructure, new people - **design anticipates function** - not just in the present but also in the future, determining everyday and extreme scenarios and is as important, if not more than engineering. Design also asks what really is required, what is the real problem here, what more could something do, who else could it serve and this is where function becomes purposeful and transforms into innovation and inclusion.

Form : Shape, proportion, hierarchy, colour, texture **convey meaning** and allow for an instinctive understanding of how something is meant to be used. Besides playing a role in taking perhaps the same function but giving it a cultural meaning. Form embodies culture, creates room for emotion, integrates aesthetics into the everyday, provokes new and desirable behaviours,

Communication : Design plays an important role in making a city and its intentions understandable. It helps to **read a city** - with wayfinding, maps, spatial cues to make it legible. It makes invisible systems transparent - where does my waste go, what new infrastructure is coming up, it gives the city a voice and a story. The city becomes an interface and communication becomes two way through both digital and physical environments.

Services : A citizen visits departments but actually requires a service. Designing around people vs for departments to make the overall process efficient and friendly is **progressive governance**. Connecting physical and digital touchpoints, removing friction, closing the loop is good service design. Designing for dignity and inclusion further strengthens civic relationship, making civic systems feel simple, accessible, responsive and human.

Experience : A city is a sensory experience. Basic expectations are that of - comfort, ease, safety - the best everyday design disappears. Good design integrates nature, makes space for delightful social encounters for residents and visitors. The experience arc draws upwards to transform the **senseless into sensible, sensitive, sensorial and finally sensational**.

Beyond the everyday experience, through carefully designed cultural infrastructure, it's possible to determine and guide civic culture.

Behaviour : Design plays a profound role in shaping behaviors in a city. Of Citizens, Officials, Visitors. Clear cues, affordances and visual nudges determine how people act in an environment. Design shapes the conditions that set social norms and defaults, increasing agency and making **socially beneficial choices** easier. Enforcement may be necessary but

can be made the guardrail while 'real feeling' towards a city and its unique culture can be artfully instilled.

Systems : A city is a living network of relationships, flows, actors and consequences. Design contributes here by seeing the connections. As problems rarely belong to one department or have one cause, they emerge from **interconnected systems**. It makes complexity visible, shapes feedback loops, anticipates consequences, reshapes relationships that produce urban outcomes. The city as an ecosystem is **system design for resilience**.

Possibility : Design's ascendance is in being a bold guide to imagine futures that do not exist and catalysing the cocreation of future possibilities. Prioritizing this important work while not taking attention away from the urgent and the emergent. City authorities can get trapped in everyday constraints, design can and must make better futures vivid and visible. Turning collective aspiration into possible futures. With AI and technology today, it's ever more easy to 'see the future' that we wish to imagine for our future generations - also to prototype it. This is where design is at its most inventive.

Design has a role at every stage. At the first level, as design must do - in shaping better functionality, better form, effective communication, meaningful experiences, positive behaviours, fluid and adaptive systems and finally more imaginative possibilities to reframe the growth challenge into a growth opportunity for the city and its residents.

Bengaluru and Karnataka as a practice ground

Bengaluru and Karnataka have a long history of civic and institutional initiatives that brought government, citizens, organisations and communities into shared problem-solving. Bangalore Forward, Swachha Bangalore, the Millets Movement and Swachhameva Jayate are among those in which Spread and its founders were actively involved as catalysts and communicators. They belong to a broader civic history; no single organisation originated or delivered their collective outcomes.

Working inside such initiatives offers a view of the practical conditions that shape governance: convening stakeholders, aligning institutional mandates, communicating public purpose, designing citizen touchpoints, enabling implementation and sustaining participation beyond the launch moment.

We treat these initiatives as **provotypes** - provocative prototypes. They were not designed as controlled trials, but as working experiments they raise sharp questions and yield transferable principles. This paper describes their mechanisms and lessons rather than claiming measured impact.

Bangalore Forward

A 1999 - 2004 public-private partnership spearheaded by Nandan Nilekani, pairing corporate expertise with BMP, BDA, BWSSB and Police to reform civic services without bypassing existing government authority.

By 1999, Bangalore's rapid growth had overwhelmed its roads, sanitation and civic services. Karnataka Chief Minister S.M. Krishna responded by forming the **Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF)**, a pioneering public-private partnership uniting seven civic agencies with leading corporates and citizens. Guided by a citizen survey of top concerns, BATF paired quick visible wins with long-term reforms. Esign's (which later evolved to Spread) design was central: the **Bangalore Forward** movement, with the green arrow branding every initiative, the "Who else will take Bangalore forward?" campaign inviting participation, and half-yearly public summits keeping stakeholders accountable. Projects spanned property-tax self-assessment, public toilets, waste management, signage, street furniture, bus shelters and Freedom Park.

"Taking Bangalore forward was the only Agenda of this unique public-private partnership, perhaps the first ever in independent India, spearheaded by Bangalore Agenda Task Force. Communication strategy and execution directed by Esign."

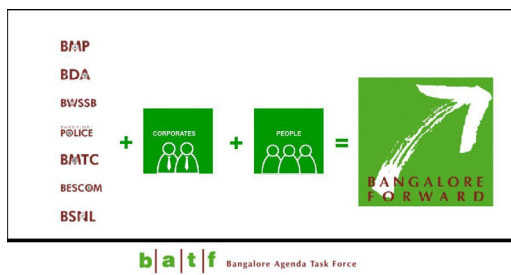
The starting point



Bangalore in 1999

Congestion, potholes and pollution: the civic strain that made change urgent.

Building the movement



The partnership model

Seven civic agencies, plus corporates, plus people, added up to one movement: Bangalore Forward.



The Bangalore Forward arrow

A free-hand white arrow on green, signing every project as part of one shared direction.



The Bangalore Summit

Half-yearly public summits where every stakeholder reported progress, backed by one consistent movement.



Summit collaterals



"Who else will take Bangalore forward?"

A launch campaign featuring citizens from every walk of life, with a call turning spectators into participants.



Areas of work

Five portfolios radiating from one brand: health, citizen services, roads, sustainability and PPP.

Citizen-centric services



Sarala Khata

Introduced in 2000, the Self-Assessment Scheme let property owners declare and calculate their own annual tax, replacing inspector-led valuation, simplifying compliance and widening BMP's overall revenue base.



Swayam Ghoshane

Self-assessment of property tax, whose simple campaign helped deliver record collections in 2001.



Shuchi Mitra

Shuchi (cleanliness/purity) + Mitra (friend) - "friend of cleanliness." A hyperlocal, ward-level volunteer role, not a paid position. A neighbourhood-watch programme that put citizens in charge of their own streets.

Health and sanitation



Swachha Bangalore

Door-to-door waste collection launched 31 March 2000 across 60 health wards, shifting BMP from operator to coordinator - citizens, NGOs, private firms and poura-karmikas sharing the load.



Health and sanitation exhibit

"Chichieeee!" brought humour to the case for clean public sanitation.



Nirmala Bangalore

Twenty-three pay-and-use public toilets, funded by corporate donors including Sudha Murthy, replaced neglected facilities with hygienic design and volunteer 'Shuchi Mitra' oversight, later expanded further by BMP.



Nirmala Bangalore toilets on the ground

Pay and use public toilets replaced neglected facilities with hygienic design, expanded further by BMP

Roads and traffic



Motorable Road Programme

One-way systems and flyovers, communicated through maps and bold campaign graphics. 138 roads identified for resurfacing and footpaths



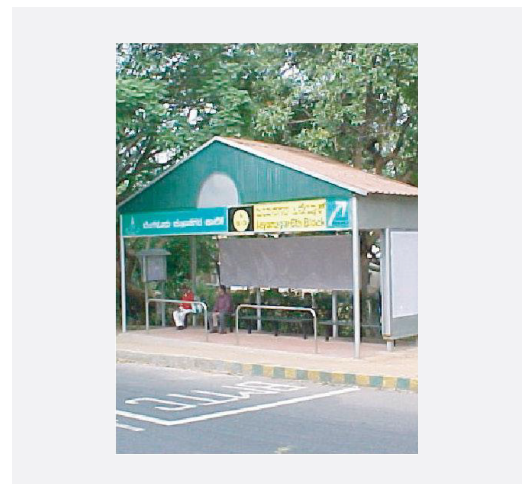
Road Signage Manual 2000

A standard reference that unified the city's road signs.



Street Furniture Programme

A design competition among eight firms, with winning prototypes installed on the street.



Bus shelters

Friendlier, branded shelters designed around the waiting commuter.

Sustainability and partnerships



BCC-State MoU

India's first MoU linking a city body's finances to performance, co-drafted by BATF.



Adopt a Park

A PPP model inviting corporates to adopt and maintain the city's green spaces. Corporates and citizen groups adopted neighbourhood parks for upkeep and beautification, bringing international - standard landscaping to public space - a model later extended to lakes and civic infrastructure.

Freedom Park



Initiative to 'Set a jail free' and reclaim public space. A public competition to turn the former Bangalore Central Jail into a park. Pre-branded as Freedom Park by Esign. A BATF-initiative. Competition launched and closed by BATF.

Site : the former Bangalore Central Jail, ~21 acres, Seshadri Road, Central Business District, adjacent to Cubbon Park. Built 1862–66 by the British, panopticon layout, radial cell blocks around a central watchtower.

Historical weight : held freedom fighters during the independence movement; then, during the 1975–77 Emergency, held Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, Ramakrishna Hegde and Deve Gowda as political prisoners.

BATF's role : redevelopment of the "defunct Central Jail" was named as one of BATF's short-term visible projects (alongside bus shelters and Nirmala toilets) once the prison relocated to Parappana Agrahara around 2000. That's where BATF's involvement ends — it flagged the site, it didn't build the park.

Actual execution : BBMP-led, architects Mathew & Ghosh (Nisha Mathew Ghosh & Soumitro Ghosh). Opened to the public November 2008, formally inaugurated 28 February 2009 - by L.K. Advani, its own former inmate. 16–16.5 acres converted; jail cells, walls and the watchtower deliberately preserved rather than demolished.

As part of the design brief - 5 of the acres were explicitly designated a protest and rally ground - India's closest analogue to London's Hyde Park / Speakers' Corner. "Freedom" here is doing double duty: freedom-struggle memory and freedom-to-dissent civic infrastructure, on the same site.

Some other initiatives, grouped by track (all under the same 1999-2004 mandate):

Roads & Traffic

- **Central Area Traffic Management Plan (CATMP)** - one-way systems, signal upgrades, traffic police reorganisation.
- **Pay 'N' Park** - metered parking at 95 sites, revenue routed back to BMTC.
- **Corporate-adopted road stretches** - Volvo consortium (Old Madras Road), Prestige Group (Hosur/Infantry/Edward Roads), Brigade Group (100ft Road, JP Nagar), ABB (Tumkur Road), Biocon (Bellary Road).

Transport

- **Bus Shelter Programme** - 100–125 shelters plus 40 high-tech ones on Outer Ring Road, later Build-Operate-Transfer with ad revenue.
- Bus depot modernisation and fleet upgrade (BMTC).

Civic Finance & Governance

- **Fund-Based Accounting System (FBAS)** - computerised municipal accounts, later cited in the CAG's national best-practice handbook.
- **Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) revision** - BDA engaged a French consortium to rewrite the city's master plan.

Public Safety

- **Police modernisation** - Infosys-funded Hoysala patrol vehicles and communication equipment; beat system reorganisation.

Utilities

- **BESCOM/KPTCL** - "zero-defect" power transmission and distribution upgrade.
- **BWSSB** - pipeline rehabilitation and sewage-leak plugging.
- **BSNL** - telephone-on-demand and digital network expansion.

Education & Social

- **Municipal school upliftment** - B.V. Jagadeesh's \$1M gift to Bangalore Corporation Schools.
- **Slum development** - bundled into corporate-sponsored road works (Aditi Technologies, Biocon).

Public Realm

- Street Furniture & Road Signage.
- Central Jail site redevelopment.

Process, not project

- **SOFRES-MODE** citizen survey - the priorities study that shaped the whole Agenda.
- The Bangalore Summit - the public forum where the Agenda was launched.

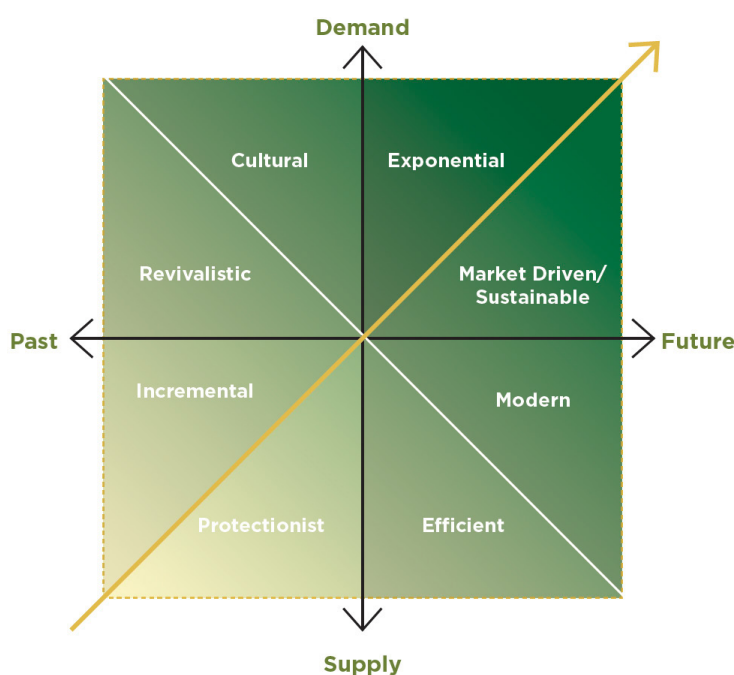
Let's Millet

The Millets movement is a case in point how design played a role in Governance, to catalyse a movement, a resilient **Next Gen Smart Food system** for Karnataka, India and the world, creating the demand that a ready supply had no market for. Where the Design Sense™ philosophy and path, developed by Sonia Manchanda, that starts with authentic intent to create new meaning, value and sustainable impact, set in motion a movement, to drive change by design. Making design our natural adaptive sense.

In 2017, Karnataka's first millet crop was ready, four years after a state push born of six years of drought and 978 farmer suicides in a single year.

The obvious response was protectionist: preserve a traditional grain through incremental, revivalist effort. Spread and the Government of Karnataka chose differently, a radical design led reboot from supply-led to demand-led, from past to future, from incremental to exponential. Millets were repositioned not as a grain to be saved, but as a modern, resilient, Next Gen Smart Food.

The **Reboot Framework** illustrates the strategic transformation of the Karnataka Millets initiative, a potentially protectionist, supply-led and revivalist approach rooted in the past, to a **market-driven, demand-led and sustainable future**.



Markets aren't built by supply-side intervention or demand-side campaigns run separately. They're built when both are designed as one interdependent system. This is Design Sense™ in practice: authentic intent as the starting point, a structured path from research through prototyping to a movement that spreads on its own.

Result, a national and two international trade fairs. What began in 2017 as a state agricultural intervention is today a food category worth \$12 to \$15 billion globally, growing at 6% to 16% CAGR. India produces 180.15 lakh tonnes annually and supplies 38.4% of the world's millets. Over 500 startups now operate in India's millet value chain. None of this existed at scale a decade ago.

The 2018 fair drew 2 lakh footfalls, 34 MOUs, ₹340 crore in business. 2019 doubled MOU value to ₹240 crore across six international delegations. A homemaker serving food at the 2017 fair became, by 2019, director of a branded manufacturing company. The Millet Bouquet, designed by Spread, was later carried by PM Modi to the UN General Assembly and the G20 table, feeding into the ₹800 crore national PLI scheme.



Swachhameva Jayate

Karnataka used design as an instrument of governance to make sanitation gains last after infrastructure was built. The Department of Rural Development & Panchayat Raj (RDPR), with design partner Spread Design, treated cleanliness as a cultural and behavioural system, not a construction or awareness problem.

The result was **Swachhameva Jayate**, a statewide **Information, Education, Communication and Activation (IEC-A)** ecosystem covering sanitation, waste and water across 30 districts and 29,000+ villages. It extended into Jalamrutha (water), Swachhotsava (festivals of cleanliness) and Swachha Sankeerna, India's first unified brand and design system for village waste units, which scaled to 1,500+ units by March 2021.

The core insight: infrastructure delivers access, but design delivers adoption. Policy intent sticks when it is translated into rituals, symbols and spaces people already recognise as their own.

The governance challenge

By 2018 Karnataka had declared 100% Open Defecation Free (ODF) status, yet the gains were fragile. Toilets existed but were not always used, and waste systems existed but were not consistently respected. Infrastructure had moved faster than mindset.

Three pressures made this urgent:

Waste: Of roughly 10,000 tonnes generated daily (Jan 2019) by rural Karnataka, only 32% was processed;

the rest was dumped in villages and water bodies.

Water: Groundwater fell to 9.3 m, the lowest in five years, with some regions reporting a 69% decline.

Sanitation: Fewer than 20% of people were actively engaged in sanitation and segregation.

The Department's question could not be answered by engineering, enforcement or awareness alone: how does a state sustain toilet use, make segregation instinctive and embed water conservation, across 6.41 crore people with very different local cultures? It was a **behavioural systems problem**.

The Design Response

The decisive move was a reframe: **cleanliness is culture**. Practices around waste, water and sanitation are learned rituals, so lasting change means designing new rituals that feel natural, social and morally aligned, not issuing more instructions.

Evidence first.

Spread mapped the state into 5 zones and ran primary field research: 2,000 km, 12 taluks, 18 villages in 15 days. This produced the People, Problems, Insights and Gems (PPIG) framework.



This surfaced four insights that shaped every later decision:

- Women are torchbearers: they drive change across regions and become the primary agents.
- Outsiders are culprits: tourists and migrant workers cause disproportionate waste damage and need targeted messaging.
- Homegrown solutions exist: local models such as SLRM and compost pipes can be scaled.
- People do, people win: villages with active community involvement show far better outcomes.

An integrated architecture.

Swachhameva Jayate was built as an IEC-A ecosystem working at once through infrastructure, mass and local media, schools and Anganwadis, and public spaces and homes. Its three pillars, sanitation, waste and water, were

designed to reinforce one another rather than run as separate campaigns.

Design's role in government.

Design acted as a behavioural intervention, a systems connector across departments and stakeholders, and a translator between policy intent and everyday action.

Key design instruments

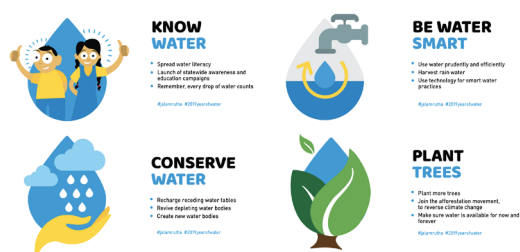


Swachhameva Jayate

A shared identity and call to action for the whole State Bilingual identity in Karnataka-flag colours with child heroes; the pledge; Byallali Beda (no open defecation) and By Two (segregate wet and dry); yellow toilet doors; 150,000 wall paintings; Swachhata Rathas; films, anthem and radio jingle; Minister-led demonstration films.



*Build a toilet if you don't have one. Use toilets everyday!



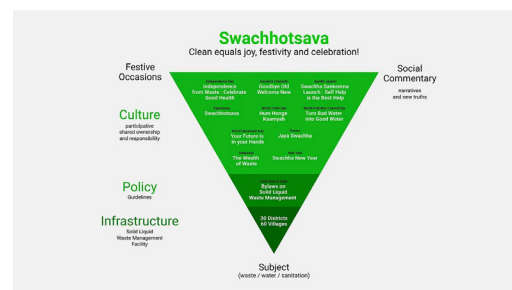
Jalamrutha

Making water conservation a people's movement 2019 declared Karnataka's Year of Water; a Me → My Planet responsibility model; four pillars (water literacy, conservation, smart use, green initiatives); Water Table Challenge and kit for public-private partnership.



Swachha Sankeerna

Standardise and scale village waste infrastructure. India's first unified SLWM brand; a replicable design system (entrance mark, wall instructions, wayfinding, zones, upcycled art, worker uniforms, Swachha Vahini fleet); units designed as Eco Parks and learning spaces. Recipient of a **CII Design Excellence Awards 2020 / Design For Social Impact**.



Swachhotsava

Embedding cleanliness in festivals people already celebrate. A people's Swachhata calendar mapped to festivals; local, humorous conversation starters placed at dairies, markets and temples; **cleanliness as a daily celebration**.

Two enablers made these stick. Digital Swachhagrahi workshops used design thinking to train 90+ field workers in documentation. In parallel, the Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation Department issued integrated SLWM bylaws, which the source describes as a first for any Indian state.

Swachha Sankeerna launched on Gandhi Jayanti, 2 October 2020, in Shivamogga district, and scaled to 1,500+ units with approved project reports by March 2021.

Impact : 26,402 villages reached ODF Plus status by August 2025. Cultural markers such as yellow toilet doors, the pledge in schools and Anganwadis, and festival-linked campaigns turned compliance into visible civic pride. The source also reports gains in rural jobs, incomes and public health; these are the claims most in need of independent evidence.

Insights for other states:

The Karnataka model offers seven transferable principles for any government pursuing behaviour change at scale.

1. Treat adoption as the policy outcome. Measure success by sustained use, not assets built.
2. Start with field evidence. Ground strategy in primary research with citizens, as the PPIG framework did, before designing messages.
3. Design rituals, not instructions. Attach new behaviours to existing cultural moments such as festivals, pledges and daily routines.
4. Make the medium the message. Use the infrastructure itself, toilet doors, walls, bins and vehicles, as the communication channel; it is cheaper and always present.
5. Choose the right champions. Women and children carry change into households faster than top-down directives.
6. Standardise to scale. A unified brand and design system, like Swachha Sankeerna, lets thousands of local bodies build to one standard.
7. Pair design with policy. Bylaws, budgets and project approvals turn a campaign into an institution.

The underlying shift is from top-down programme delivery to an inside-out movement. Systems are only as good as the people who use them; design is how a government makes people and systems work together.

Link to SMJ Case Study : <https://medium.com/spread-design-and-innovation/making-waste-beautiful-302e3e74da87>

Better Governance

For too long, accessing property and land records in Karnataka meant repeated office visits, long waits, dependence on intermediaries, and room for corruption. Better governance starts with better intent and a **citizen centric service culture** that puts citizens, not files, at the centre of every service.

Transparent property records through e-Khata. Digital e-Khata gives property owners a clear, verifiable record of ownership that can be accessed and checked online. With fewer manual steps and less discretion in the process, opportunities for corruption shrink and citizens gain confidence that their property is secure.

Decentralised access to land records.

Bringing land-record services closer to citizens, through online access and local service points, means people no longer need to travel to central offices. Rural and urban citizens alike get faster, more direct access, with wait times cut significantly.

A consistent citizen experience. A shared governance design system ensures every service uses plain language, works in Kannada and English, and follows familiar steps across channels. Clear communication tells citizens what to expect, what documents they need, and where their application stands.

Creating nudges that make the right action easy. Timely reminders, document checklists, and real-time status updates help citizens complete applications correctly the first time. For officials, deadline alerts and prioritised queues encourage timely, accountable service.

A capable, future-ready workforce. Revenue staff equipped with the right tools and skills to deliver citizen-first service every day.

The outcome : Transparent and digitised land and property records, reduced corruption, shorter waits, greater accountability from officials and peace of mind for citizens. Karnataka's Revenue Department, getting ready to deliver better governance every day. Making life simple, easy, effortless.

Freedom Habba

Public celebrations show a democracy how it sees itself. For most of independent India's history, Independence Day has followed a familiar arrangement: officials on a raised dais, citizens behind barricades, a ceremony to watch rather than join. The arrangement is orderly and dignified, but it carries a quiet message about who the nation's moment belongs to.

Freedom Habba, held on the grounds of the Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Independence Day 2026, set out to change that arrangement. It was conceived as a habba, a festival in the Kannada sense of the word: communal, joyful, and shared. Elected representatives and citizens took part on a single platform, in a single parade, as equal participants in a common celebration.

Bridging the Gap

Distance between those who govern and those who are governed is rarely a matter of policy alone. It is built into physical space, ritual, and access. Gates, security cordons, VIP enclosures and protocol all signal, however unintentionally, that the institutions of democracy are something citizens visit with permission.

The Vidhana Soudha sits at the centre of this tension. It is the seat of Karnataka's legislature and one of the most recognisable civic buildings in the country, and its facade carries the inscription *Sarkarada Kelasa Devara Kelasa*, "Government's work is God's work." Yet for most residents of Bengaluru, it remains a building seen from the road.

The central design question for Freedom Habba was therefore simple to state and hard to answer: what would it take for citizens to experience the seat of their government as their own? The answer was a set of principles that shaped every decision, from the layout of the grounds to the order of the parade.

Design principles

Freedom Habba demonstrates four principles. The first is **zero distance**. Politicians walked, ate and celebrated alongside citizens, which made possible the human encounter that ceremony usually prevents. The second is **access as a right, not a privilege**. Simple registration opened the Legislative Assembly grounds to some 25,000 people, who stayed four to five hours on average: long enough to make the space their own.

The third principle is **non-parochial participation**. In one of India's most diverse cities, no single language, region, religion or community could claim the day. Every group came as itself and as part of a whole, mingling under the Tiranga as equal citizens. The fourth is **celebration as civic learning**. The stories of the freedom struggle and the Constitution were woven into the day itself, so understanding grew through taking part.

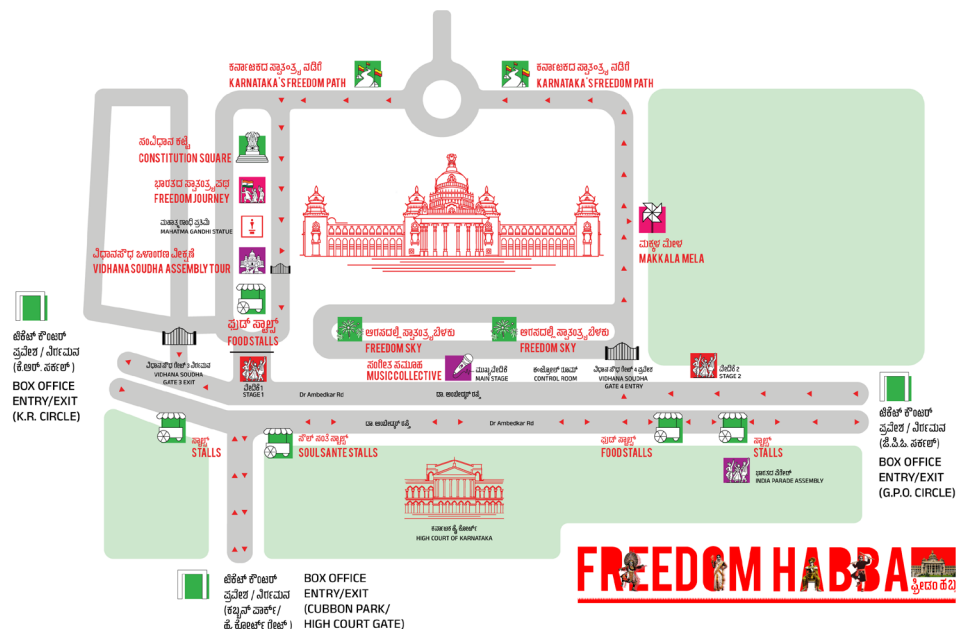
The programming

The Freedom Walk brought Bengaluru's ethnic, cultural and linguistic communities together under one flag, each in its own attire and with its own music. It showed that India's unity is not sameness but a shared commitment held across differences. At Makkala Mela, games and creative stations gave children a joyful first memory of their legislature, as a place that welcomed them rather than one that kept them out.

For one day, the Vidhana Soudha became a civic commons. Food and craft stalls, local bands and a Constitution Square invited people to linger. Exhibits brought to light Karnataka's and India's freedom journey. A concert and fireworks closed the day, as citizens and their representatives shared one night sky.

Outcomes

Freedom Habba demonstrated that a large, open, multicultural public gathering of over 25000 people on the grounds of a seat of government can be safe, peaceful and orderly without being distant. It showed that digital registration can serve public life as well as private convenience, allowing scale and safety to coexist with openness. And it showed, perhaps most memorably, that elected representatives are at their most persuasive when they are simply present among the people they serve.



Bengaluru Provotype : Better Governance meets Better Citizenry for a Better Bengaluru.

The Bengaluru model charts change over time, from push to pull: governance that begins Of the people, moves through For arriving at With and By the people.

Jawabdari

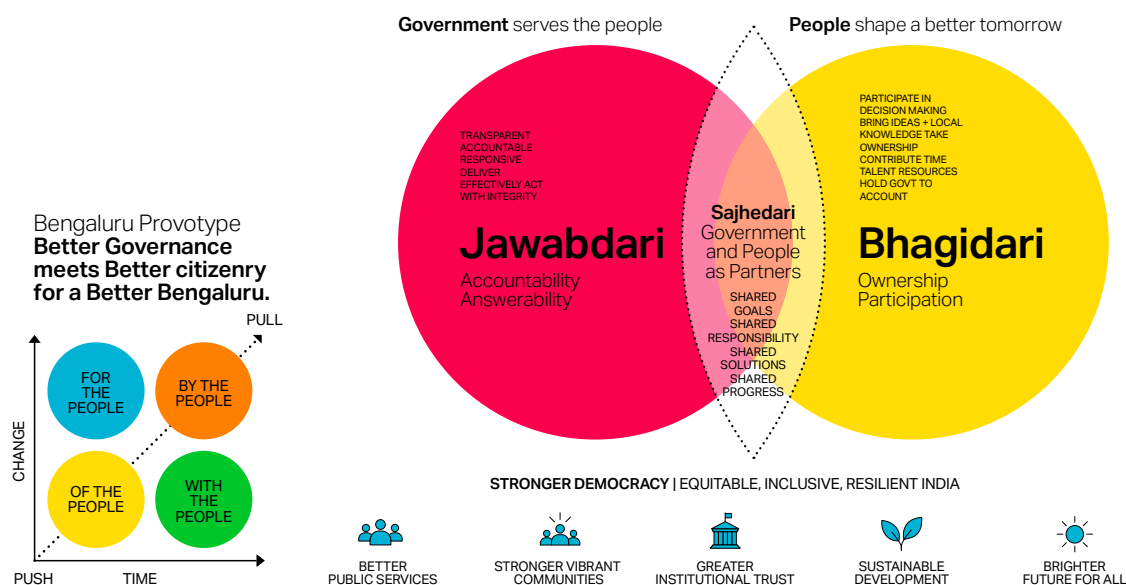
Jawabdari is the government's side of the bargain: accountability and answerability. It asks the state to be transparent, responsive and accountable, to deliver effectively, and to act with integrity. Government serves the people, and that service is measured, visible and open to question.

Bhagidari

Bhagidari is the citizen's side: ownership and participation. People take part in decisions, bring ideas and local knowledge, contribute time, talent and resources, and hold government to account. People shape a better tomorrow, not as beneficiaries waiting to be served, but as **co-owners of the outcome**.

Sajhedari

Sajhedari is where the two meet: **government and people as partners**, with shared goals, responsibility, solutions and progress. Neither side carries it alone. The result is better public services, stronger communities, greater institutional trust, sustainable development, and a brighter future for all: a stronger democracy, an equitable, inclusive, resilient Bengaluru. As a model for other cities, states and India.



Participative Governance Ecosystem

Bengaluru has just rebuilt its structure. The Act dissolved the BBMP and made the GBA an apex coordinating body over five city corporations. The Chief Minister chairs it and the Bengaluru Development Minister is vice-chair. The corporations together hold 369 wards. The Supreme Court has directed that elections to all five be held in December 2026. What is being explored and developing now in Bengaluru as an ecosystem looks something like this.

Leadership at the hearth. The Chief Minister and the Greater Bengaluru Development Minister are at the focal point of a hemicycle, not the apex of a pyramid.

Problems belong to no single body. Water, waste, lakes and traffic run through corporations and parastatals at once, and every effort is made to make them work together. Gradually, through outreach, citizen volunteer and organised civic groups are also being aligned. In one coordinated ecosystem.

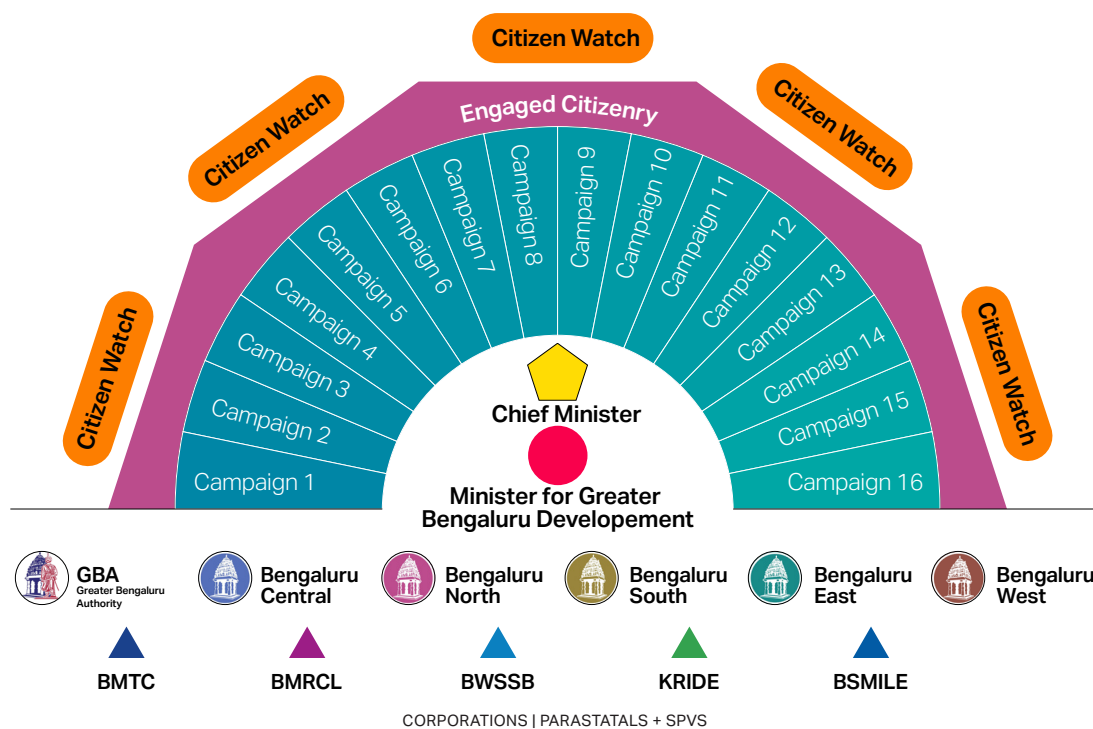
Corporations, State Departments, Civic Agencies and Parastatals as the task force.

The GBA convenes. The five city corporations, answerable to 369 wards, work closest to the ground. Around them, parastatals such as BDA, BWSSB, BESCOM, BMTC, BMRCL and BSWML build and run the city's infrastructure. State departments carry the essential services: Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Health, and Forest and Environment. All of them are drawn into one task force, because a flooded underpass or a choked junction doesn't stop at the edge of anyone's jurisdiction.

The campaign layer is the engine. Fundamental issues will be solved through coordinated campaigns rather than one-off projects, with effective reporting and participation, until the fixes become part of the infrastructure. The ecosystem is the parts: leadership, the GBA, the corporations, parastatals, state departments, central agencies, labs and citizens. The engine is the repeatable cycle that turns citizen energy into state action, and state action back into results that citizens can see and build on.

Citizenry as the shell. The purple band wraps every campaign, so no campaign reaches leadership, or is reached by it, without passing through citizens.

Citizen Watch on the perimeter. They sit on the membrane, not inside the machinery and will slowly be evolved to provide qualitative inputs to the system. There should eventually be five of them, mirroring the five corporations.



- Civic participation organisations
- Women's groups
- Apartment associations
- RWAs
- SHGs
- Neighbourhood volunteer groups
- Market associations
- Youth groups
- Plogging groups
- Environment watch clubs
- Ward committees
- Civic action groups
- Citizen forums
- Mobility groups
- Senior citizen groups
- Cultural associations
- Corporate volunteer groups
- Schools/colleges
- NGOs

"Better governance begins with citizen participation. That's why we brought citizens, organisations and civic groups together to share ideas, identify gaps and shape better solutions for one of Bengaluru's most pressing challenges - solid waste management."

#BetterBengaluru #CitizenParticipation

Krishna Byre Gowda | Minister for Greater Bengaluru Development and Parliamentary Affairs, and as the Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Byatarayanapura.

The governance provotype canvas

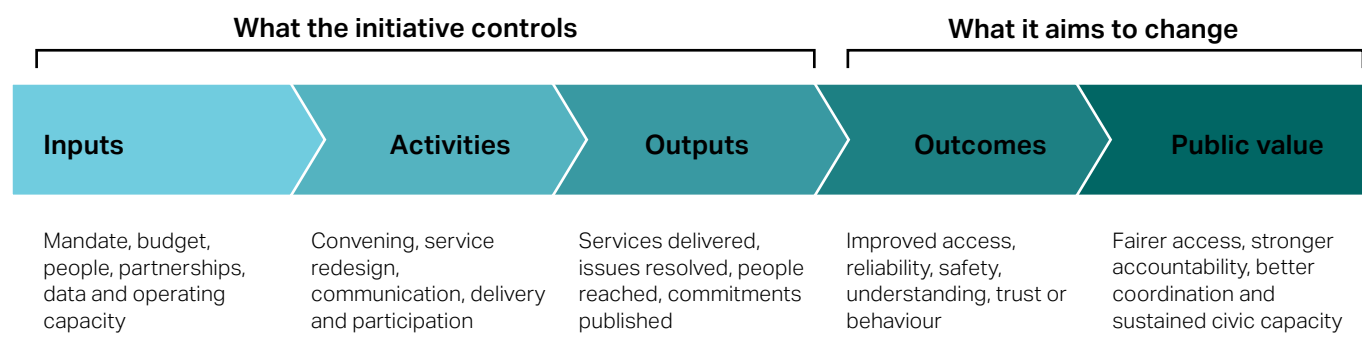
We believe that the same canvas can be used to document each initiative consistently, distinguish intention from evidence, and extract principles others can adapt.



A one-page canvas for documenting any initiative.

From prototype to public value

Evaluate initiatives through a results chain rather than relying on launch activity or reach alone.



Evidence rule: Where outcome data is unavailable, describe the mechanism without implying measured impact.

The results chain separates what an initiative controls from the change it aims to create.

From apathy to agency

A proposed participation model

Citizens move from **awareness → understanding → engagement → deliberation → co-creation → accountable action → monitoring and learning**. People enter at different points, and no one should need to pass through every stage to be heard.

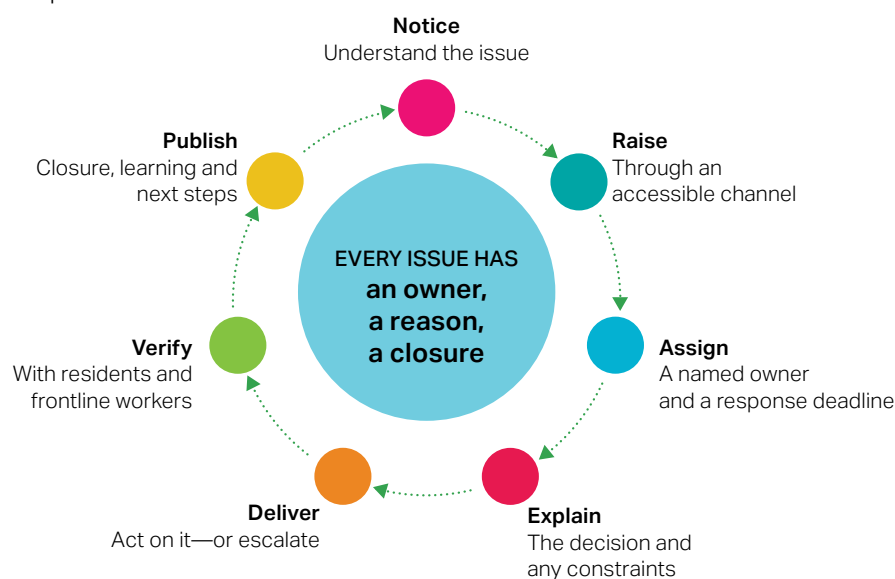
At neighbourhood level, the model could include ward-level issue mapping, accessible public dashboards, regular open forums, facilitated design sessions, participatory prioritisation, response commitments and public review of completed work. At metropolitan level, the Greater Bengaluru Authority and its partner agencies should connect those local priorities to transport, water, land-use and infrastructure plans.

The model must be designed for inclusion: language access and disability access; digital and offline channels; deliberate outreach to renters and informal workers; safe participation for women and young people; and ways to contribute without attending lengthy meetings.

The objective is not participation for its own sake. It is better public decisions, more responsive services, stronger trust and shared responsibility-supported by transparent institutions and citizens who can see how the system works.

The citizen-to-outcome accountability loop

For each pilot, make the relationship between citizen input and institutional action visible at every step.



Seven steps that turn a citizen's input into a visible, closed-out institutional response.

Way forward

Pilot, learn, scale

Each campaign can begin with a bounded civic challenge where responsibilities can be mapped and outcomes observed, a neighbourhood public space, a waste-service journey or a pedestrian-access corridor. Establish a baseline, identify every responsible actor, listen to residents and frontline workers, co-design improvements, publish commitments and review results with the community.

The pilot can be used to test both the service and the participation architecture. Could people understand the issue? Who was missing from the conversation? Were decisions explained? Did agencies coordinate? Could residents track progress? What changed in lived experience?

This can be scaled only once learning is documented and roles, resources, maintenance and accountability are clear. A replicable governance model is not a template imposed unchanged on every place; it is a set of principles and tools adapted to local context.

Recommendations for Bengaluru's new civic structure

The first term of the five new city corporations is the natural window to put this into practice.

- **Publish a responsibility map** for each corporation, showing which agency owns each service and asset, with named escalation routes.
- **Give every ward a standing participation channel**-digital and offline-with published response standards, working through ward committees where constituted.
- **Build a shared issue-status view** across the Greater Bengaluru Authority, the corporations and service agencies, so residents see one picture rather than many.
- **Run two or three bounded pilots** in the councils' first year, documented with the prototype canvas and tracked with the scorecard.
- **Commission an independent learning review** that publishes what worked, what did not, and what changed as a result.

Bengaluru's next transformation requires more than projects delivered by individual agencies. It requires a connected civic system: institutions that coordinate, services designed around people, information that is accessible, and participation that continues beyond consultation. The opportunity is to design not only for the city's growth, but for the people who make the city grow.

Conclusion

Democracy as a designed everyday experience

Democracy is renewed through elections, institutions and law. It is also lived in the everyday relationship between citizens and public systems: in whether information is understandable, services are accessible, decisions are explained, responsibilities are clear and people can influence what happens in their neighbourhoods.

Design for Governance begins with the aspirations that bring people to a city, asks how its systems can respond, and proposes citizen partnership as an essential part of governance. The ambition is progressive, proactive and participative governance: not government acting alone, and not citizens left to navigate complexity alone, but public institutions and people working together with clarity, capability and accountability.



Confederation of Indian Industry

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering Industry, Government and civil society through advisory and consultative processes.

CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organisation, with over 10,500 members from the private as well as public sectors, including SMEs and MNCs, and an indirect membership of over 365,000 enterprises from 332 national and regional sectoral industry bodies.

For more than 130 years, CII has been engaged in shaping India's development journey and works proactively on transforming Indian Industry's engagement in national development. CII charts change by working closely with the Government on policy issues, interfacing with thought leaders, and enhancing efficiency, competitiveness, and business opportunities for industry through a range of specialised services and strategic global linkages. It also provides a platform for consensus-building and networking on key issues.

Through its dedicated Centres of Excellence and Industry competitiveness initiatives, promotion of innovation and technology adoption, and partnerships for sustainability, CII plays a transformative part in shaping the future of the nation. Extending its agenda beyond business, CII assists industry to identify and execute corporate citizenship programmes across diverse domains, including affirmative action, livelihoods, diversity management, skill development, empowerment of women, and sustainable development, to name a few.

For 2026-27, CII has identified "Accelerating Competitiveness: Growth, Resilience, Inclusion, Sustainability, Trust" as its theme, prioritising five key pillars. During the year, CII will align its policy advocacy, institutional initiatives, partnerships, and outreach to support Indian industry in strengthening these five interconnected pillars of competitiveness.

With 70 offices, including 12 Centres of Excellence, in India, and 9 overseas offices in Australia, Egypt, Germany, Indonesia, Singapore, UAE, UK, and USA, as well as institutional partnerships with 255 counterpart organisations in 102 countries, CII serves as a reference point for Indian industry and the international business community.



Spread is a Radical Imagination Factory. A business, creative consulting, and design organisation where ideas are not just conceived, but built and set in motion. With studios across Strategy, Design, Digital, Film, Art, and AI, Spread bridges strategy and craft, the physical and the digital, translating intent into impact as we design, build and spread bold ideas.

At its core, Spread believes that design is strategy, and experience is the new currency.

This belief has been proven through a vast body of work across private enterprise and public systems—catalysing the growth of private higher education and healthcare in India, setting new benchmarks, and creating tangible value. Spread has also worked at the intersection of design and governance, using design to make complex systems more human, participatory, and actionable. From Bangalore Forward and city-scale initiatives for Bengaluru, to strategic communication and experience design for National Highways, Spread has helped translate policy and infrastructure into experiences and narratives that citizens can understand, engage with, and act upon. Its work with millets demonstrates how design can go beyond communication to help reboot an entire ecosystem—building demand, changing perceptions, and contributing to a more resilient food system for Karnataka, India, and the world. Across waste, water, sanitation, mobility, public infrastructure, and citizen participation, Spread has designed behaviour-change frameworks, communication systems, participation platforms, and strategic narratives that help governments move from simply delivering programmes to building public ownership and collective action. From universities to airports, hospitals to museums, and large-scale public environments, Spread consistently brings the same belief to every challenge: that design can shape not just what people experience, but how systems work, how people behave, and how societies move forward.

Spread designs, builds, and spreads Imagination Properties—shaping brands, narratives, communication systems, and outreach ecosystems that drive growth and cultural relevance. Its work seamlessly integrates physical and digital realms, crafting journeys and multi-sensory experiences at scale, with precision and pace.

A globally awarded organisation and a member of the World Design Organization (WDO), Spread was established in 2015 and represents its third evolutionary avatar, built on over three decades of cumulative experience. Today, it stands to expand possibilities, using design, technology, and storytelling to shape how people experience the world.

Confederation of Indian Industry

The Mantosh Sondhi Centre
23, Institutional Area, Lodi Road,
New Delhi - 110 003 (India)

T: +91 11 45771000

E: info@cii.in **W:** www.cii.in

Spread Design LLP

Design Barn
121, Bileshivale Main Rd, Essel gardens, Bileshivale,
Bengaluru, Karnataka 560077

T: +91 80502 53222

E: hello@spread.ooo **W:** www.spread.design