

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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Return to heritage through Dhal ni Pol fest

AHMEDABAD: If you take a stroll through the winding lanes of Dhal ni Pol, you will find bright and bold coloured homes; restored facades and clean, bright community spaces! “This was merely a dumping yard where construction scrap was kept! But soon after, this space was revamped into a community ground of sorts. Our kids come here to play cricket; the elderly gather here for bhajans and youngsters come here to click pictures and make merry,” said Hansa Rana, 45, a pol resident.

The makeover of the pol, while keeping its heritage value intact, was undertaken by city-based, Brihati Foundation, in the run-up to Dhal ni Pol Festival 2019. The second edition of the festival will see an array of events including a wall painting workshop and an art and architecture exhibition in addition to kids’ heritage walk, music and dance performances, yoga sessions and food marathon – all organized within the pol.

“The real heritage of the 600-year-old world heritage city of Ahmedabad, which lies at its heart even though widely appreciated, is not visited by locals of Ahmedabad as often. Thanks to rapid urbanization of Ahmedabad, migration of people and lifestyle changes that took place over the years, most people began settling in the western part of the city. While people take all the pride in celebrating the coveted world heritage city tag, seldom do they visit the heritage,” said Krishna Handa, founder, Brihati Foundation.

“The festival organized during the World Heritage Week is aimed at promoting the pol as a space of one’s own heritage city, so that people, who have settled in the western parts of Ahmedabad, would come back and visit the place. We aim to do this by improving the condition of public spaces in the precinct of Dhal ni Pol,” she added. As part of the project, the organization, with the help of urban planners, social architects and independent artists have revamped some 100 square metres in the pol through installations, creating open community spaces for residents, introducing street art through wall paintings, and plantation through vertical garden. Some 1,300 plants have been planted all across the pol and some 5,200 more will be planted by March this year. Brihati Foundation is in talks with Main Street America, an organization which is into reviving old and historic districts, to revive public places in the Walled City.

