

The '15-minute city' gaining prominence



Developing townships by establishing hyper-proximity infrastructure with essential services and recreational facilities can play a notable role in nurturing a more holistic, healthy and sustainable way of life.

By Kausar Firdausi

The Covid-19 pandemic has underscored various factors related to safety and health. Urban crowding, pollution, traffic woes and lack of green 'lung' space all contribute towards rendering most of our cities detrimental to overall wellness.

According to industry experts, integrated townships address these concerns to a significant extent. These are planned mini cities where every aspect is carefully planned, green open spaces are reserved as non-development zones, and most essentials of daily life are available within easy reach. "Many of the larger townships encompass retail, entertainment, healthcare and even office spaces within their precincts," says Anuj Puri, chairman, Anarock Group.

Now, India's township culture is catching on in other areas of the world, where the concept of a '15-minute city' is gaining hold. "With everything within short drivable or walkable distances and even the walk-to-work dream possible in some instances, integrated townships represent the necessary future of Indian residential real estate," adds Puri. Hence, housing, offices, restaurants, parks,

hospitals, and cultural events are all within a 15-minute drive of one other.

According to Prashant Solomon, MD, Chintels India & hon. treasurer, CREDAI NCR, the concept of a 15-minute city has become a buzzword globally as this concept has massive potential for growth in the Indian context. "The list of the C40 cities created to implement a 15-minute city concept as part of the post-covid recovery plan includes five Indian cities of Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Chennai. This model helps address urban complexities and encourages mixed-use development and creation of a flexible and complete neighbourhood especially in sync with the evolving concepts of hybrid and remote working," informs Solomon.

Undoubtedly, the pandemic constraints had impacted the way we communicate, travel, consume, and socialise. Manoj Gaur, CMD, Gaurs Group, believes, "When the pandemic shut down city centres, it demonstrated the importance of social ties — but from a different perspective. Many people were unfamiliar with their neighbours or the parks in the area. This was discovered as a result of the pandemic. We've rediscovered the importance of place, which has improved our quality of life."

Ashwinder R Singh, CEO, Bhartiya Urban, too believes, "Today, when the world has seen several lockdowns, what is not just inside the four walls but outside the four walls of your home has become highly relevant. As the concept gets accepted widely, it will add on to the environmental sustainability quotient with reduced transport requirements, which means more time with your dear ones."

Integrated townships have become a preferred choice in tier 2&3 cities also. "The piqued interest in these cities is due to the lower prices, bigger homes and better returns on investment. Moreover, there has been an increasing trend amongst buyers to build a lifestyle away from the infrastructure constraints and challenges of city life such as persistent traffic, congestion, air and noise pollution, as well as high crime rates," emphasises Harshvardhan Neotia, chairman, Ambuja Neotia.

Omaxe Group is one of the pioneers in developing townships. "Starting with one in Greater Noida in early 2000s, the company has over the years delivered and is developing townships and hi-tech townships across various cities of North and Central India," asserts Siddharth Katyal, group director, Omaxe Ltd.

Vatika has also been among the

frontrunners in modern, self-contained township development. "We have developed more than 1200 acres of townships in Gurugram, Jaipur and Ambala, which have become epicentres of well-planned habitation. Though the township spans hundreds of acres, everything is within walking distance," affirms Vinay Wadhwa, GM - sales, Vatika Limited.

Although conveniences near habitation have existed for ages, the 15-minute city concept would be beneficial in bringing a greener perspective to workplaces, cultural events, and the more transitory nature of social connections. Central Park has already made the concept the centrepiece of its successful projects such as Flower Valley outlining proximity, diversity, density and ubiquity. "Above all, the goal is to create a city of proximity — not just between buildings, but also between people. We understand that huge cities can be exhausting and might generate a sense of isolation. We want open places, but ones that aren't used for anything in particular, where people may meet and interact as much as possible. When we live together, we live better, and our social fabric will be reworked as a result," accentuates Amarjit Bakshi, MD, Central Park.

The best part of townships, as per Ananta Singh Raghuvanshi, senior executive director, sales & marketing, Experion Developers, is that it gives the best of both worlds. "It's cosy enough to have congregating spaces and develop meaningful relationships and yet, large enough to give you the space and distance. One can have both peace and pace in townships," avers Raghuvanshi. As a result, the demand for townships is increasing day by day.

Since long before the pandemic, real estate

in India has been working on the concept — which is seen as a response to both the climate crisis, by bolstering green initiatives at the neighbourhood level and reducing travel, and ever-growing urban sprawl, which pushes those on the periphery further out. But Ar Nayan Raheja of Raheja Developers says, "Covid-19 has sparked a trend for localisation, putting the 15-minute city on the radar of cities all around the world. Cities such as Detroit and Paris are implementing the concept. In India, the concept would be effective if the infrastructure was built as planned and the government collaborated with the private sector to bring it to fruition."

The 15-minute city concept has become a potent brand for planners in an increasing number of communities. "We are becoming more urban as a species, but metropolitan settings have been related to poor mental health. Some people were harmed by Covid, while others benefitted. If you have a sense of belonging to your neighbourhood, that's a major guardian of your mental health. If 15-minute cities can achieve this balance, perhaps the human species can have a pleasant urban future," says Prateek Mittal, executive director, Sushma Group.

Besides, as Deepak Goradia, vice chairman and managing director, Dosti Realty, points out, this model once implemented would facilitate in minimising the infrastructure costs and will bring daily essentials in proximity to the consumer, while reducing the carbon footprint. Easy access to essential services coupled with world-class amenities, all within a short walking distance will uphold inhabitants well-being and an amplified sense of community.

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IN SPOTLIGHT

Viridian RED puts Faridabad on the global map with the launch of WTC Faridabad at RPS Infinia

Bringing a paradigm shift to put Faridabad on the global map, one of the country's leading office and infrastructure groups, Viridian RED has tied up with the RPS Group's Infinia development project to establish WTC Faridabad.

Industry experts are excited at this new development and are confident that the currently under-construction Infinia project shall now move forward with positive intent and be a true milestone for the macro region. The development comes with the expectation from WTC of replicating its global success by utilising the immense growth potential in the region. The global brand had been in talks with various government bodies and signed various MoUs to promote Faridabad as Growth District Faridabad. Recently, the region has witnessed rapid infrastructure developments and the global partnership is all set to create a multiplier effect on its growth as a megacity.

"We are extremely positive of this initial step in synergy with the RPS Group as it is the right time for all stakeholders to accelerate efforts and unlock the myriad opportunities which exist in this micro market. The project will undoubtedly play a transformational role towards job creation and open the doors of Faridabad for companies and investors," said Ashwani Kapoor, jt. president customer engagement & distribution, Viridian RED.

Strategically located on NH-2 and immediately abutting South Delhi, this mega project further enjoys excellent connectivity from three of India's highest job-creating cities namely Delhi, Noida, and Gurugram.

Elan Epic wins 'The most promising upcoming shopping centre of the year - north' award at the Franchise & Retail Awards 2021

Elan Group's marquee project Elan Epic has won the coveted 'The most promising upcoming shopping centre of the year - north' award at the Franchise & Retail Awards 2021. Ashish Gupta, AVP - leasing, Elan Group, was also awarded 'Shopping Mall Professional of the Year' on the same platform. Gupta and his team received the award on behalf of Elan Group from Lalit Agarwal, CMD, V-Mart and Gaurav Marya, chairman, Franchise India. Franchise & Retail Awards are among India's leading recognitions in the field of franchising & retailing. The award features 50+ categories and 500+ nominations annually. It honours organisations which have shown outstanding business acumen, passion and achievement of franchise businesses across India.

Commenting upon this, Ravish Kapoor, MD, Elan Group, stated, "We are thrilled to win this award and thank the jury and the organisers for this recognition. Elan Epic is one of our finest offerings conceptualised with an aim to redefine the paradigm of experiential retail. This achievement is a testimony to our commitment to providing curated experiences to our patrons."

Sprawling over an area of four acres, Elan Epic is one of India's first commercial projects with a huge water body in the central atrium. This premium retail destination is strategically located at Sector 70 on Extended Golf Course Ext. Road, Gurugram. The project's opulent features have been meticulously designed by UHA London & Architecture by ACPL.



Realtors' Forum

Do you think with the rise in co-working spaces and development of flexible spaces a sustainable annual growth in office absorption is seen? Industry bigwigs answer...



HARSH BINANI,
Co-founder, Smartworks

"The appetite for flexible spaces has strengthened and remains robust. The pandemic has accelerated the demand and has bought in new possibilities and avenues for the sector at large. With more enterprises opening up and embracing managed and flexible office spaces, it will only emerge stronger in the future as it's become part of their real estate strategy."



NAKUL MATHUR,
MD, Avanta India

"Since the pandemic, the acceptance of flex offices has grown multifold and take-up is steadily increasing. The benefits co-working spaces bring will continue to attract all kind of companies and individuals out of home and back to office spaces. Flex offices operators have absorbed millions of sq.ft. of commercial office space and this uptake is bound to increase in future."



MANAS MEHROTRA,
Founder, 315Work Avenue

"With remote and hybrid work trending today, co-working spaces offer an office experience that heightens productivity. The pandemic has also brought in a rethink of realty needs, as a result of which companies are adopting a hub and spoke work model. Corporates are now planning to bring back their workforce to offices and flexible spaces have emerged as the best choice."



NAVDEEP JP SARDANA,
Founder, Elite Landbase Pvt. Ltd.

"The pandemic has forced new ways of working and work models, which has led big companies seeking managed and flex spaces as their alternate workspace option to enable maximum flexibility for employees and future scalability options. Hence, the future of CRE in India is likely to take an uptick due to factors such as robust vaccination, decline in covid cases & business improving."