

# Redevelopment must involve stakeholders

## GOING TO TOWN

SUDHIR VOHRA



Purely from an urban planner's perspective, it is a refreshing sign of the times ahead that we see the Master Plan of Delhi 2021 being sold at the traffic lights along with the weekly magazines, tabloids and pirated fiction.

The interest that has been created in the planning processes of the capital during last year's turmoil over demolitions and sealings shows up here and there in MPD 2021.

Though it would be impossible to dissect and analyse the nearly 200-page document in these columns, some of the issues which need further work at the city level need to be discussed.

For one, the MPD now recognises right in the introduction the need for redevelopment planning at the micro level. It suggests that Local Area Planning using a public participatory approach be followed for redevelopment of areas which need such rejuvenation.

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Maybe we need to go higher, install escalators and elevators, perhaps paid for over the years by the market association and maintained by them. We, perhaps, need to devise instruments of shareholding which are better than the failed attempts of the past.

Through such pilot projects, the MCD should devise methodologies of redevelopment which can be replicated and constantly refined to get better results. The pressure from the city to clean up and get going is not about to disappear with the municipal elections over — it might become more intense with new corporators realising that they need to show results and not sweep the problems of the city under the carpet.

Such projects will need a completely different set of skills, urban planners who can articulate

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But is the urban local body equipped to handle such tasks? Does it have the trained capacity or the experience to handle such redevelopment work? How will it regain the confidence of the citizens? And how will it set examples in the city?

While these are vexing questions and need to be answered, there is work to be done, and done quickly.

Take, for example, INA market that is crying for redevelopment. It is placed in a high-value location on one of the city's major spines. While encroachment and illegal construction is one vexing matter, so is the fact that there are various land-owning agencies and authorities (L&DO, Department of Estates etc) and stakeholders who are willing to

new ideas and concepts and can draw the stakeholders together into the fold and social behaviour specialists who can change the way the citizen looks at the municipal body. At present the air is full of scepticism and suspicion.

It will also need urban designers who can design the buildings and the complexes in a way that the concerns of senior citizens, handicapped persons, pedestrians and cyclists are addressed in a composite, holistic manner. It will need urban economists who can devise financial instruments to achieve these goals with resources drawn from the beneficiaries' coffers, not necessarily from the municipal bodies' cash-strapped treasuries.

It is only when such pilots are put into place swiftly that the urban local body would be able to grab the opportunity which the MPD 2021 has to offer in terms of redevelopment of the city.

These are not impossible tasks. They need no rocket science — they need only a set of administrators and civil servants who can accept the errors of the past and can have the vision to move ahead with vigour and a sense of grassroots democracy.

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