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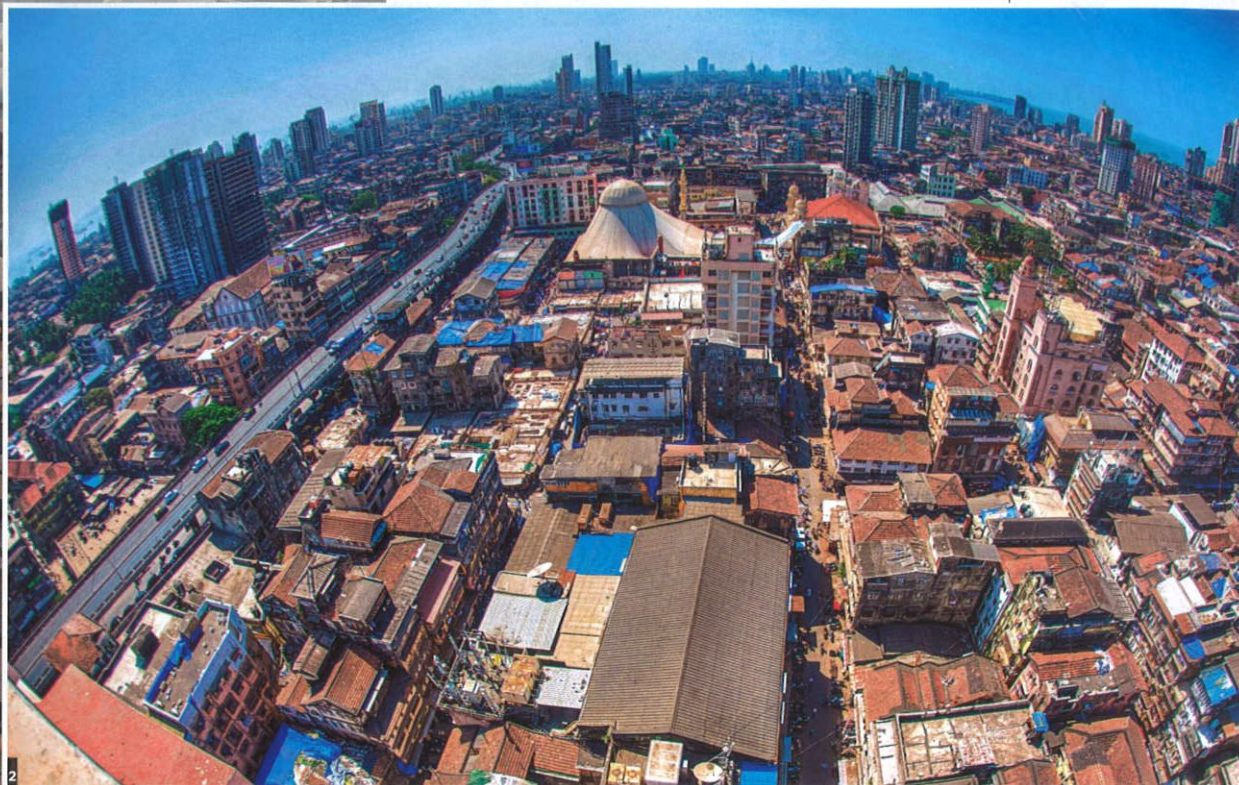
RAISING HOPE

A PHILANTHROPIC INITIATIVE BY THE SBUT, THE BHENDI BAZAAR REDEVELOPMENT IN MUMBAI SERVES AS A BENCHMARK FOR URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS IN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY

BREAKING GREEN GROUND

The Bhendi Bazaar redevelopment project, a philanthropic initiative by the SBUT, is truly uplifting as it fosters hope for a Green India

BY MARIA LOUIS



I walk down a dingy corridor that leads to a rickety staircase with some of the floorboards missing and others caving in. With trepidation, I gingerly ascend the stairs one step at a time, following my nimble guide as closely as possible. It is dark, as the electrical connections [legal or not] have been cut off – so she shines her cellphone light on a signboard that indicates a shop has moved to the commercial transit location. This is one of the vacated buildings that make up phase I of the Bhendi Bazaar redevelopment, and my mind's eye conjures up glimpses of families packed like sardines in a space originally designed for bachelors who came from the villages to work in the city.

This is prime real estate, not to be sneezed at...but the open drains and garbage heaps tell a completely different story. The food stalls in the vicinity are legendary, and South Mumbai's crème de la crème makes an annual trek here during Ramzan (armed with giant hand sanitiser bottles) to partake of the mouth-watering delicacies. As one of the die-hard foodies that this city has bred, I must admit that I make this trek too – so I may be partly responsible for feeding the rodents who thrive on leftovers; and perhaps also for the consequent chronic illnesses and diseases that spread here.

This story is set to change, however, thanks to the philanthropy of the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust (SBUT) that has been working diligently with the tenants to ensure that the new master plan for the area holds solutions tailored to their unique problems. Conceived by the intrepid team of Mandviwala Qutub & Associates (MQA), some of who have lived with the residents to understand them and get a feel of the locale in order to develop the design concept, the project is poised to break new ground. It is already taking steps in that direction, I learn, when I visit the transit camps.

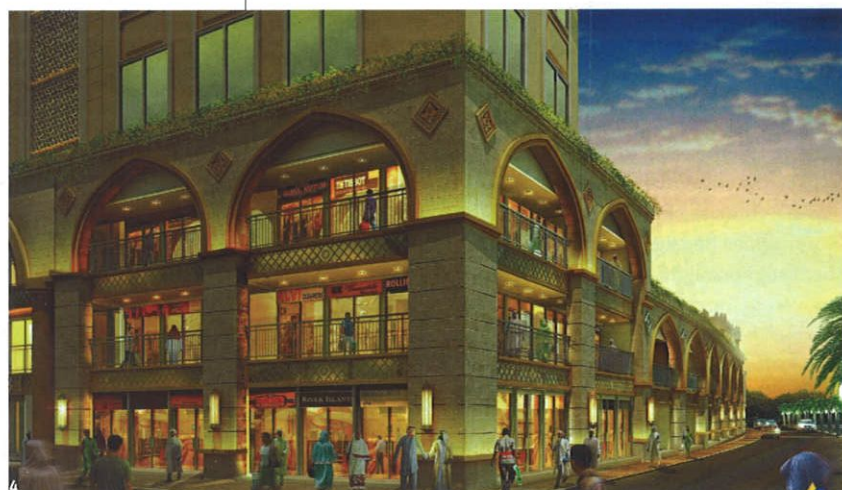
Located not far from Bhendi Bazaar is the commercial transit camp, where the tradesmen whose businesses have thrived in handkerchief-sized cubbyholes are now enjoying the space and the indoor climate they have been craving for,

1. The Bhendi Bazaar Redevelopment is a tailor-made solution for the 100-year-old thriving but over-crowded settlement.

2. Aerial view of Bhendi Bazaar today; it makes a strong case for redevelopment of the locality.

INTERNATIONALLY, WE HAVE DESIGNED VARIOUS EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOODS. BUT THIS PROJECT IS CHALLENGING, AS WE ARE INTEGRATING THE EXISTING CHARACTER OF THE PLACE WITH THE NEW DESIGN

ROLAND BAER,
CONSULTING ARCHITECT
(NEW YORK) OF SBUT



3. Narrow streets with dilapidated structures define this neighbourhood today.

4. Commercial tenants will get their shops on an ownership basis, with new infrastructure equipped with adequate parking spaces, sanitation facilities, etc.

5. To address the issues of density, a high-rise development was considered the only viable solution.

while working in their cramped quarters. A little further off is a bigger eye-opener – the residential transit camp with its garbage chutes for the rubbish to be collected and disposed off, ample parking space for dream cars and bikes, open space for the kids to play, and community living areas for the older folk to socialise. And these are but the tip of the iceberg, as you see if you step into any of the residences.

As Mandviwala aptly puts it, this is not a physical space – but a transit camp for the mind. Having lived in sub-human conditions, the residents will need to be conditioned to move into their spanking new homes. Once tenants with no rights, they will become owners. It is a giant leap, one that they will need to be trained for...and the transit camps are that training ground. No wonder there are other design firms claiming that they have had a role to play in this tableau!

Setting the record straight, Mandviwala declares, “MQA is master planner and architect for the entire project, while Roland Baer is the consulting architect appointed by the client for peer review. The Bhendi Bazaar redevelopment is a one-of-its-kind philanthropic project undertaken by SBUT.”



PROJECT DETAILS

- **Name of the project:** Bhendi Bazaar Redevelopment
- **The client:** Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust
- **Area:** 16.5 acres
- **Location :** Bhendi Bazaar, Mumbai
- **Cost:** Estimated at Rs4,000 crore (approximately)
- **Duration of project:** Once all approvals are in place, the aim is to complete the 'rehab' portion in about 5-6 years.



6. The plan is to increase the green cover of the area, as it will help absorb noise and improve the quality of air.

7. The project is pre-certified Gold-rated by the Indian Green Building Council.

While there are no direct references available for a project of this nature, the reference guideline while designing was the existing DCR 33/7 policy projects which we are doing in South Mumbai; but this might not be an absolute fit."

Though the redevelopment spells hope for the residents living in dangerous conditions, many would balk at the idea of a high-rise development taking the place of the 'chawls'. Justifying the solution, Mandviwala says, "The present residential as well as commercial density of the project is very high; 70% of the total residential area comprises units with 150 to 175sq-ft area, having a common sanitation facility. The ground coverage is presently 110% (approximately)."

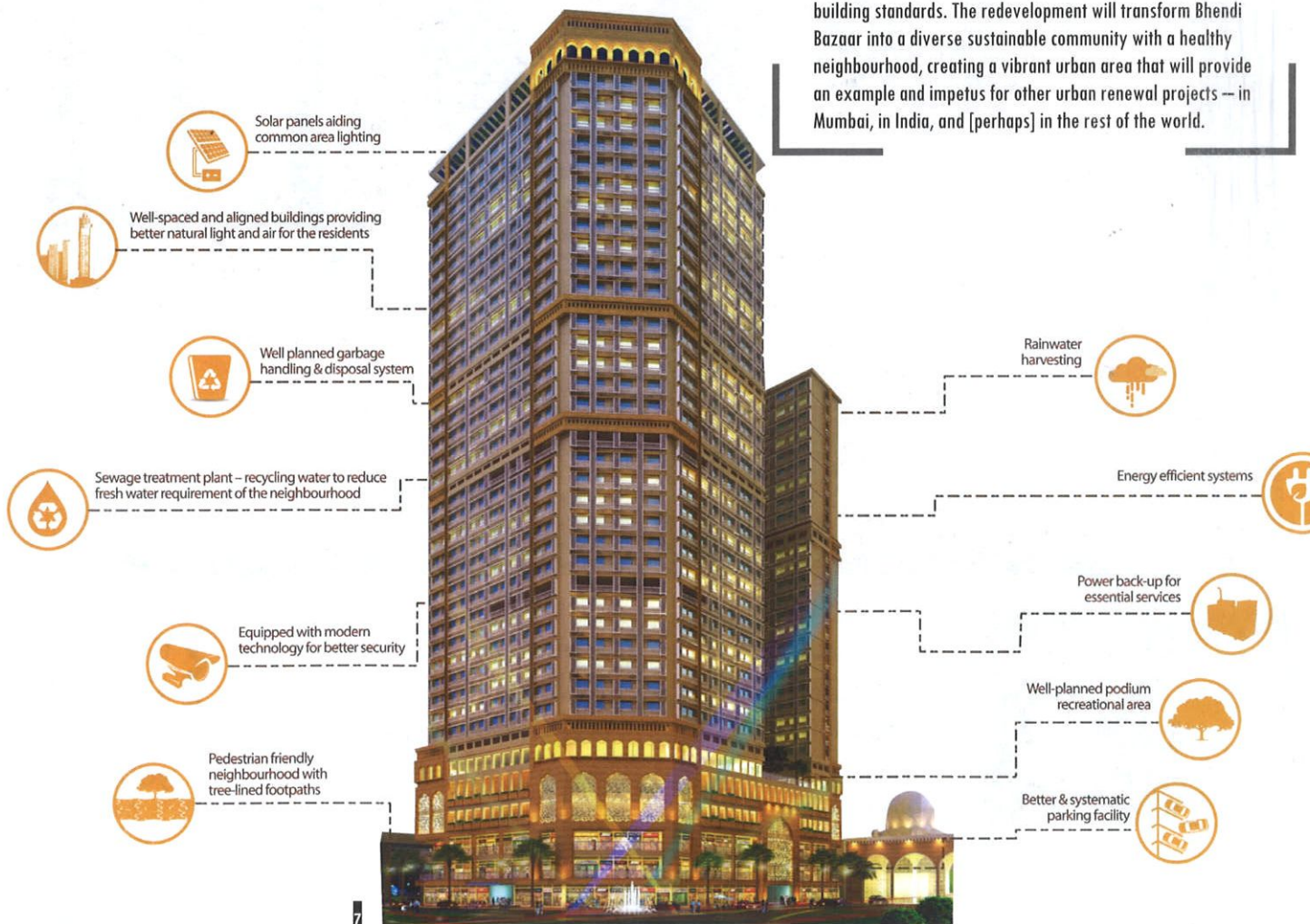
A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Bhendi Bazaar redevelopment project is planned holistically to promote a sustainable way of living. Each of the nine sub-clusters will be self-sustaining, backed by modern technology and environment-friendly practices. These include:

- Sewage treatment plant will be installed, which will recycle waste water for flushing and cleaning. Apart from saving water, it will reduce the load on municipal sewage system.
- Despite a moderate increase in population after redevelopment, the introduction of rainwater harvesting will reduce total water consumption in the area.
- Solar-powered lights will be used in streets and public areas like staircases, to reduce electricity consumption.
- The project will have a waste management mechanism at the locality level.
- Energy-efficient power lights will be installed in all flats.

Most buildings are designed to face North-South instead of East-West. This will result in minimising the heat ingress and allow better air circulation as well as natural lighting. Better air circulation and reduction in heat absorption will eventually minimise the use of air conditioners, saving a huge amount of energy. Also, the project aims to increase the green cover of the Bazaar, which currently has just one tree standing. Post redevelopment, Bhendi Bazaar will have more than 700 trees and shrubs planted — which will help absorb noise and, more importantly, improve the quality of air.

The project is pre-certified Gold-rated by the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), which is LEED's equivalent building standards. The redevelopment will transform Bhendi Bazaar into a diverse sustainable community with a healthy neighbourhood, creating a vibrant urban area that will provide an example and impetus for other urban renewal projects — in Mumbai, in India, and [perhaps] in the rest of the world.





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8. The residential transit at Anjirwadi in Mazgaon, Mumbai, has garbage chutes, ample parking space, play areas and more; it is expected to help locals to make a smooth transition into their new homes.

9. 3D layout of the proposed 350sq-ft redeveloped residential unit.

The 'reborn' Bhendi Bazaar has been visualised as a green neighbourhood that will replace the century-old infrastructure with not just wide roads, but appropriate parking spaces for residential and commercial use. A minimum area of 350sq-ft is to be provided for each residential unit. The rehabilitation of residential and shopping areas consume FSI of 6.5 to 7. "In a limited envelope of land, and considering the dense population that needs to be accommodated, it leaves no option but to go vertical and achieve design feasibility through a high-rise development," insists Mandviwala.

This redevelopment seems to be a win-win for both, residential and commercial, tenants. "For 70% of the residential tenants, a minimum area of 350sq-ft will be provided. While the existing dwellers are living as tenants, the rehabilitation

CONSULTANTS & CONTRACTORS

- **Master planner and architect:** Mandviwala Qutub & Associates
- **Consulting architect (New York) of SBUT:** Roland Baer
- **Raudat Tahera Complex:** Tricone Architect
- **Consulting architect:** ME Eran and Associates
- **Liasoning architect:** Spaceage Consultants
- **MHADA consultant:** PS Kumar and Co.
- **Structural consultant:** Sterling Engineering Consultancy
- **MEP & Infrastructure consultant:** AECOM India
- **Traffic consultant:** Systra MVA Consulting (India)
- **Vertical transportation:** TAK Consulting
- **Cost consultant:** GEM Engserv
- **Internal auditor:** KPMG, India
- **Statutory auditor:** Deloitte Haskins and Sells (LLP)
- **Consulting solicitor:** Mulla & Mulla; Craigie Blunt & Caroe
- **Overseer and solicitor:** Wadia Ghandy & Co.
- **Market research:** Knight Frank (India)
- **Design & Build contractor for transit accommodation:** Noor Enterprises

units will be given on ownership. The new design will offer High Street shopping created in 16.5 acres of land. Each commercial tenant will get their shop on an ownership basis with new infrastructure equipped with adequate parking spaces, sanitation facilities, etc," explains Mandviwala.

The area that comes within the purview of the project is planned holistically to promote a sustainable way of living. In order to provide the tenants with an uplifted lifestyle, there will be a significant rise in open areas, green spaces, play and recreational facilities. Some of the best principles of traffic management have been incorporated into the design. To replace the discomfort of traffic jams, narrow and crowded lanes will be replaced by wider roads for the accommodation of tree-lined footpaths.

Despite all the positive outcomes that are being projected, there are still some naysayers for this philanthropic initiative – mainly disgruntled tenants who want more than they have already been promised.

"For a large-scale urban development with a strong vision, there were mild objections during the initial stage," concedes Mandviwala. "But we were fortunate to overcome them, as the tenants witnessed our master plan being sanctioned by high-power committees (we got MoEF and high-rise committee clearances for one of the sub-clusters). We are positive that, once the work on the sub-cluster begins, it will speed up the pace of the entire project."

If the Bhendi Bazaar redevelopment project is successful, it could well be the benchmark for redevelopment of crowded localities all over India. Though this is a one-of-a-kind locality set in the heart of the crowded city of Mumbai, it could serve as a trigger for more cluster developments in other urban areas of the county in future. The best part about using this master plan as a template is that sustainability was the main criterion right from the initial stages of planning.

As Mandviwala discloses, with justifiable pride, "From the inception stage, this project was considered as a green neighbourhood and we have ensured, while planning at the micro and macro level, that it aligns with all the Green Building norms. In fact, we are in receipt of pre-certification as LEED Gold from IGBC (Indian Green Building Council)." ■

BUZZ ABOUT THE BAZAAR

Abbas Master, the CEO of SBUT, throws more light on the philanthropic project

INTERVIEWED BY MARIA LOUIS

Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust (SBUT; Bhendi Bazaar Redevelopment Project) is a not-for-profit trust formed for the transformation of the 100-year-old Bhendi Bazaar into a magnificent, vital urban setting. This ambitious redevelopment plan comprising 16.5 acres of landform has approximately 250 existing buildings, 1,250 shops and 3,200 families; and will impact the lives of 20,000 people. In this interview, the CEO of the Trust sets the context and outlines the transformation that is on the anvil for this prime location in Mumbai.

Tell us about the genesis and glory days of Bhendi Bazaar.

Steeped in history and culture, Bhendi Bazaar is a 100-year old settlement in Mumbai. For the longest time, it was considered the city's most lively commercial hub. Originally, Bhendi Bazaar formed a part of the inner-city areas developed to cater to the housing needs of manpower aiding trade and commerce activities in the harbour of Old Bombay, as Mumbai was known then. Proximity to the [then] elite Crawford Market offered better business prospects for the area.

The colloquial pronunciation of 'Behind the Bazaar' (Crawford Market) became Bhendi Bazaar. Businessmen from various communities like Dawoodi Bohra, Memons, Gujaratis, Sindhis, Parsis, Katchis, etc, seeing an opportunity owing to its strategic location, moved here – selling things as diverse as hardware and foam, to clothing and antique items.

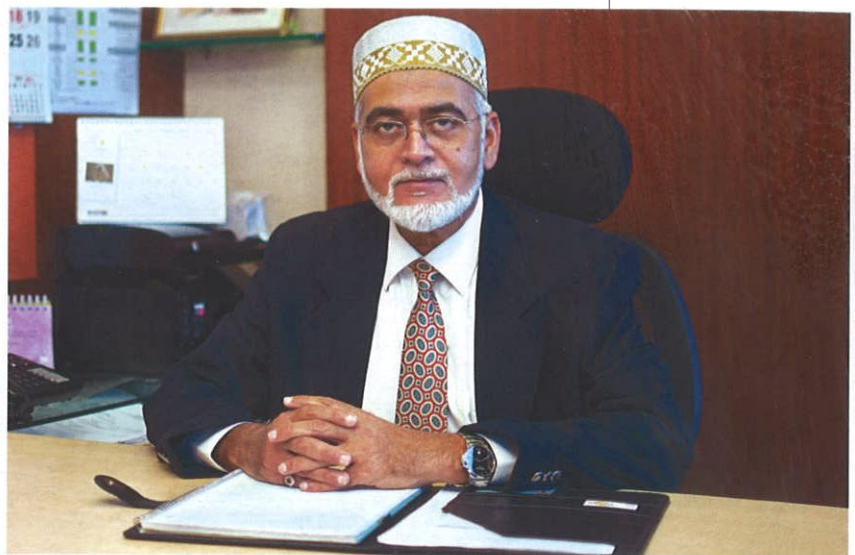
Bhendi Bazaar was developed in the 'chawl' or dormitory fashion. It was designed to house single men who had moved to the city to earn a livelihood – but as their businesses started flourishing, the traders brought their families and settled into these chawls. Today, the area is reduced to dilapidated buildings and a crumbling infrastructure that is a century old. What remains intact, though, is the vibrancy and richness of Bhendi Bazaar's culture, character and community living.

How did it reach its present dilapidated state?

With a history that dates back to the 18th century, the demands of an escalating population at Bhendi Bazaar far exceeded the infrastructure it had to offer. It has also failed to adapt itself to the needs of modern-day living. All of this, put together, led to a complete infrastructural breakdown.

Who envisioned the idea of this redevelopment project?

Bhendi Bazaar is in an alarming state with a majority of the buildings declared unfit for living. Occupied majorly by ten-



CASE STUDY BHENDI BAZAAR REDEVELOPMENT

ants, the very structures that people call home are a threat to their lives. This sight was saddening to the late Dr. Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin Saheb (RA) when he visited a few of the old buildings in Bhendi Bazaar. He was disheartened to see families in cramped tenements and unhealthy living conditions. Moved by their condition, he conceived the idea.

This led to the formation of the SBUT in 2009. The vision of the late Syedna (RA) is now carried forward by his son and successor, His Holiness Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin (TUS).

At what stage is this redevelopment project today?

The project has withstood a number of challenges, ranging from government approvals to tenant and landlord approvals. Having said that, the wait has paid off. The project has now received the IOD (Intimation of Disapproval) and master plan layout approval, with construction to begin in a few months. More than 1,600 families have been vacated from Bhendi Bazaar, with most tenants opting for transit homes.

The Trust has also built a one-of-its-kind commercial transit facility, Mufaddal Shopping Arcade, to temporarily house 200 of those businesses which are part of the 16.5-acre redevelopment project. More than 60 dilapidated buildings have been demolished so far, and a few are in the process of demolition. MHADA has already certified more than 80% of the buildings. The project has received environment clearance from the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) department.

What do you hope this project will achieve in the long run?

The project will transform Bhendi Bazaar from its current dilapidated state to an uplifted urban locality. It will also serve as a benchmark for other urban renewal projects – not just in Mumbai and India, but also across the globe.

The redevelopment of Bhendi Bazaar will not only de-clutter the congested area, but also have a phenomenal impact on the lives of residents. Their decaying rented houses will be replaced by modern apartments that they will own. Apart from the physical changes, the socio-economic fabric of the area will also change. Better commercial spaces would be created without erasing the essence of Bhendi Bazaar. The upliftment project will bring in more jobs and business prospects, thereby contributing economically to the area as well.

There's a lot at stake – not just for the people and the locality, but for urban India. It will [hopefully] serve as a model for urban renewal projects in the metros and other inner-city areas, where space is getting scarcer and lives are in danger. ■