

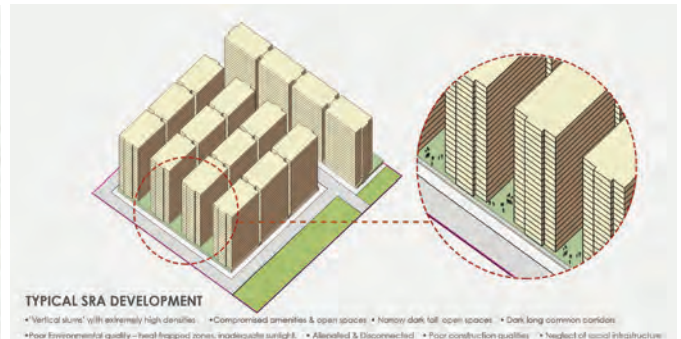
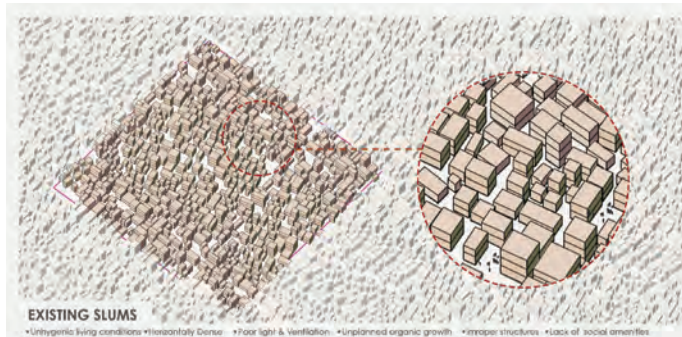
Amending chaos with coherence and compassion

“Mumbai’s vision of a Slum Free city calls for a drastic shift from a developer driven to a community led redevelopment process. IMK proposes a model to help the slum community lay claim to their right of living as dignified residents of the city, through a self-focussed and community-oriented approach.”

- Rahul Kadri, Partner and Principal Architect

*Text: Shriti Das
Drawings: IMK Architects*

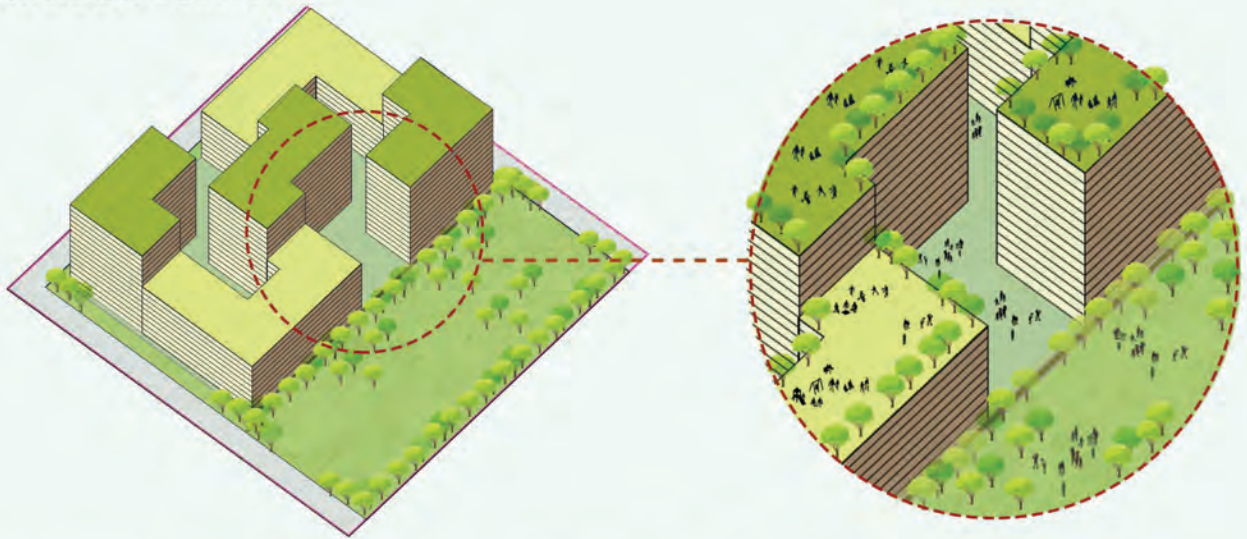
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IMK Architects is set to present their vision for an alternative to the Slum Redevelopment Authority’s (SRA) development plans at the London Design Biennale in June 2021. But executing social betterment through architectural interventions is driven by many parameters beyond the eminence of the said design proposal. And these parameters do not lie within the purview of an architectural practice alone. What lies in the architect’s

purview is ideation, solving spatial, social and cultural challenges and creating a vision for democratic design. Umpteen proposals in the past have offered architectural interventions to the less privileged and slum dwellers. But they have not seen light of day owing to roadblocks like bureaucracy, government protocols, policies and even entities like financial viability and business models. These processes currently operate in

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY



- Sustainable architecture - in terms of materials, energy use & long term adaptability.
- Diversity of space makes a place enjoyable to live
- Controlled Densities & heights - Set a higher limit.
- Allow variety in building heights.
- Adequate open spaces
- Good ventilation & light
- Safety for the vulnerable
- Appropriate social amenities
- Recreational indoor/outdoor spaces
- Lower operating and maintenance costs & creating sufficient corpus for maintenance
- Designs that promote social interaction
- Designs that allows to retain community feel prevalent in existing slums.
- Thus allowing the community to flourish



ROOF TOP USABLE TERRACES



BALWADIS OPENING ONTO GREENS/OPEN SPACES



INTERACTIVE PUBLIC STREET

isolation from architecture. While each have an intention, a goal and a problem that they are attempting to solve, none can materialise successfully unless aligned with one another.

Community Led Development of Slums is an undertaking by IMK Architects that addresses the design of the processes in place for low-cost mass housing in India alongside factors that determine

its realisation. Rahul Kadri, Partner and Principal Architect at IMK Architects advocates a system that borrows from the self-redevelopment model which has been adopted by many housing societies in Mumbai. The redevelopment of buildings over 30 years old is undertaken by the society as they secure loans, employ an architect, a contractor, a chartered accountant and other agencies. They give inputs on design leading to a democratic



process of building which is unique to their cultural, social and equivalent context. Since the redevelopment is undertaken sans a builder, the focus is on the quality of built-environment and not about saleability of flats.

If the self-redevelopment model is adopted for SRA schemes, the intent shifts from generating profits for the builder to involving the slum-dwellers in decision-

making. Rahul says, "From a builder's perspective, he needs to accommodate the entire population in 1/3rd of the land and optimise the FSI to sell maximum flats for profits." Rahul feels that the problem lies in the design of the process. Irrespective of the ingenuity and ease of design, it is difficult to navigate the process.

To which, Rahul proposes a retrofit instead

of erasing existing systems, "We want the self-redevelopment method to coexist with existing systems. There are areas in the city where the density is low and the land value is high and the traditional system of developing land by a builder may accrue profits." He also points out, that the key lies in empowering slum-dwellers with knowledge and choices. They should be able to loan capital at reasonable rates and let the intention not be making profits, but offering sound and hygienic habitation. While the intent of SRA schemes is low-cost mass-housing, there is no reason why good design and holistic living should not be a fundamental right. The current state of SRA buildings illustrates that the scheme has not been successful. Rahul explains, "Every SRA project is a negative for the city. The buildings offer little fresh air and light. There is no scope for social gatherings. They cause health problems. It is not solving, but adding to the problems of the city." The next step to empower slum-dwellers is communicating that a high-rise is not even a viable solution, let alone be the 'only' one. The practice is identifying slum communities and looking to discuss alternate designs with them once the pandemic subsides or as the near future allows.

It is interesting to note that most renowned practices are known for milestone projects that aid cultural contributions. IMK Architects have been one of the pivotal

firms that have shaped the architectural identity of Mumbai. But the intent of design is not limited to landmarks and badges of aesthetic skylines. Problem-solving often lies at the core of design and its undertakings. Good design not only navigates function but also takes into account challenges that it will face. Else, the design is reduced to an aspiration and perhaps an inspiration to the next generation. IMK Architects has devised a team of senior architects to bring synergy to the energies. They are currently understanding business models, banker psychologies and stakeholders to offer to the people a home that they love and one that enhances their lives.

Having said that, it is also imperative to also address the fact that no single body can be held responsible for a good social project not being realised. While social betterment is in everyone's best interest, it is nobody's responsibility apart from those governing our cities and nations. But on a positive note, Rahul reassures, "Politicians have been forthcoming and welcoming of new ideas. We are talking to political party members about conducting workshops once normalcy resumes. Creating awareness and sensitising people, is important." ■