iDECORAMA

www.idecorama.com

FEB 2019 ₹200

INSPIRED SPACES
Interior Designer Rishi Raj Khare, Inspired Designs

ON DISPLAY
Lake Riviera Residence by Ekta World

DESIGN TALES
Ar. Rahul Mistri, Open Atelier Mumbai

SPECIAL FEATURE

Emerging Concepts in Urban Design by Ar. Goonmeet Singh Chauhan, Design Forum International (DFI)

CONCEPTS IN URBAN DESIGN

Urban design governs the way we shape our cities and the way they shape us. As our cities expand, the fastest growing economy needs better resources, and more importantly, resourcefulness from architects and planners to make these powerhouses more sustainable, and liveable for citizens. Architect Goonmeet Singh Chauhan, Principal at Design Forum International (DFI), New Delhi, sheds light on the upcoming concepts and challenges in the present scenario

Emerging as a discipline roughly half a century ago, and seen as an extension of architecture and planning, Urban Design is a comprehensive field, that encompasses all spheres of city building, whilst highlighting crucial liveability concerns such as place-making, way finding, and transport infrastructure. Employed as an endeavour to improve the quality of life in the urban realm, it is a collective action by stakeholders and policymakers to shape cities mindfully, in the larger public interest, thinking beyond individual concerns.

Architects and urban planners face a Herculean task, finding solutions to address the needs of burgeoning city populations. In India, with unprecedented socio-economic development in the last couple of decades, the rise of urban agglomerations has become inevitable and challengingly difficult to manage. Delhi NCR is a melting pot of cultures, and millions call it home. However, it ranks miserably low on the global liveability index. Poor architectural interventions, insensitive planning, abysmal air quality, vehicular pollution, lack of basic infrastructure and safety have put the National Capital in jeopardy.

As an ancient megapolis steeped in history, Delhi has undergone major shifts in architectural parlance; its urban fabric is a melange of Hindu, Islamic, Mughal and Indo-Saracenic styles; each epoch reverberating within the existing socio-cultural milieu. Its glorious tombs, temples and mosques, and the monumental seats of governance reflect a traditional urban design, evident in the streets and forts of the 17th-century citadel of Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi, or "Dilli") and the sprawling contemporary gardens of Lutyens' Delhi. Once defined by visual cues and vistas, the city has mushroomed into a cluster of nondescript neighbourhoods.

Architectural heritage is a clear reflection of our own heritage. It is only when one sees exemplars of architectural products that are both contemporary in that they use the materials and technology of today, whether they are global or local, contextually appropriate and in an architectural vocabulary which blends in contemporary aspirations with the cultural sensibilities of the place, that urban design fulfils its agenda.

The elements of urban design that are fundamental are the skylines, the massing, and blocking of buildings, the materiality; in the vast majority of the city's buildings, architects have neglected the urban design impacts of their creations. Since building height was restricted to fifteen meters, the skyline here was mostly dominated by trees. It is only when one visits the heart of the city, Connaught Place, one is struck by a more urbane character, with buildings dwarfing the foliage and the significance of the built form comes into play. The area is filled with copious multi-story office towers, broad streets, and walkways sans the vegetation buffer. This is when architectural intervention is urgently sought, and as a community, we believe we failed to create even a semblance of a skyline in that area.

Speaking of similar neighbourhoods, district centres built over the years such as the Nehru Place were commendable attempts, with the creation of a large public plaza and a balanced juxtaposition of low-rise and a few high-rises bearing testimony to their concept. In terms of massing and pedestrian-friendly shopping experience, Nehru Place is a thoughtful, well-designed project. An interesting solution purely from an urban design perspective, it failed, however, due to the fragmented ownership of the constituents. In the absence of any operating structure to govern such a vast commercial district, it is akin to a body without a brain. We were slow to imbibe and emulate what architects across the globe had been championing, for instance, the egg crate design in Europe by Le Corbusier in the 50s was executed in 80s in India, meaning the practices of the 80s here had not yet created an architectural response which ringed with the authenticity of Delhi and its time. I think, quite often as Indians we don't take pride in our culture and heritage. This is where urban design comes into play, becoming vital in connecting people to their roots.

When an urban design response actually creates skylines and compositions of masses and voids, and scales and proportions, involving materials which blend the contemporary and the culturally appropriate, a canvas is created for the city which people endear with and can connect to and it finds meaning and love and that is how a sense of connection between the city and its citizens is instilled. Unfortunately, Delhi's residential architecture portrays flamboyance and showmanship, integral to the culture here but detrimental all the same.

Architects must strictly adhere to key provisions of the Delhi Master Plan, such as visual integration of the city, safe and unhindered access movement, parking facilities and pedestrian inclusive design. Policies for designing the pedestrian realm should be taken into account, in addition to a reverence for the context. At Design Forum International, we strive to make our cities efficient, liveable and world-class and our project portfolio features impactful solutions that are not just utilitarian, but also contextually relevant. Through some of our projects, we have explored certain possibilities that have invigorated the public realm in which they were executed.

THE ITO SKYWALK, DELHI

The ITO Skywalk, a 535-meter-long foot over-bridge in New Delhi, connecting four principal streets offers a ground-breaking solution to decongest and facilitate safe and seamless pedestrian flow amidst the heart of the city.

The program called for a unified response to the area's burgeoning commuter concerns, especially at the ITO Crossing and the 'W' Point Junction, which sees maximum pedestrian traffic throughout the day. The design paradigm traced this flow and came up with a safety mechanism in the form of a skywalk. It was designed to not just fulfil its utilitarian purpose of serving as a medium of mobility, but also to establish itself as a landmark within the city.

Solutions such as the Skywalk are seen as not just modes of commutes, or to generate ephemeral experiences through spaces, but more so as contributions to the architecture, public infrastructure and the urban context in which they thrive.

DAKSHINESHWAR SKY WALK

The iconic Dakshineshwar Kali temple, one of the most revered Hindu places of worship in the country is accessed through a single narrow road, almost 400 meters long, providing no scope for expansion laterally since either side is occupied by Railway staff quarters.

The street originates at a traffic rotary, a junction for the PWD road leading from Kolkata on the south-east, the PWD road leading to Vivekananda Setu on the west and Ramakrishna Paramhansa Dev Road leading north. The rotary is also the entrance point for the Dakshineshwar temple Railway Station and the bus stop. The convergence of slow-moving traffic causes massive pile-up at the rotary.

In order to address this rapidly growing congestion, the rotary became the first point of focus for intervention, followed by the approach road, Rani Rashmoni Road, the streets leading out of it and the culmination of the approach road at the temple, at the entry gates.

Primary concerns were segregation of traffic and pedestrian movement, ensuring the livelihood of the shopkeepers who had set up a base, and ease of movement, comfort, and safety of the devotees from the point of arrival to the temple gates. The resulting idea, therefore, aimed to transfer both the pedestrian circulation and the shops to an elevated concourse, thereby leaving the grade level space for traffic exclusively and providing for multiple access means to and from the elevated concourse such as escalators, elevators, and staircases.

A crystallized design brief emerged, a 380-meter-long skywalk, 10.5 meters wide, connecting the traffic rotary and the entrance gates of the temple compound with a series of access points. The skywalk also relocates over 200 shops that are currently operating on the Rani Rashmoni Road; it integrates the walking con-course, shops, escalators and elevators with a provision to connect it to the Railway footbridges as well, with separate lanes for motorized and non-motorized traffic.

The Skywalk as a concept is rooted in modernity, a contemporary response to the problems generated over the years, the aspirations of a rapidly modernizing metropolis demands manifestation in its new urban landmarks. The modernity of the concept found its reflection in the dynamism of its form, a never-ending stream of the faithful finding its reflection in the pulsating waveform.

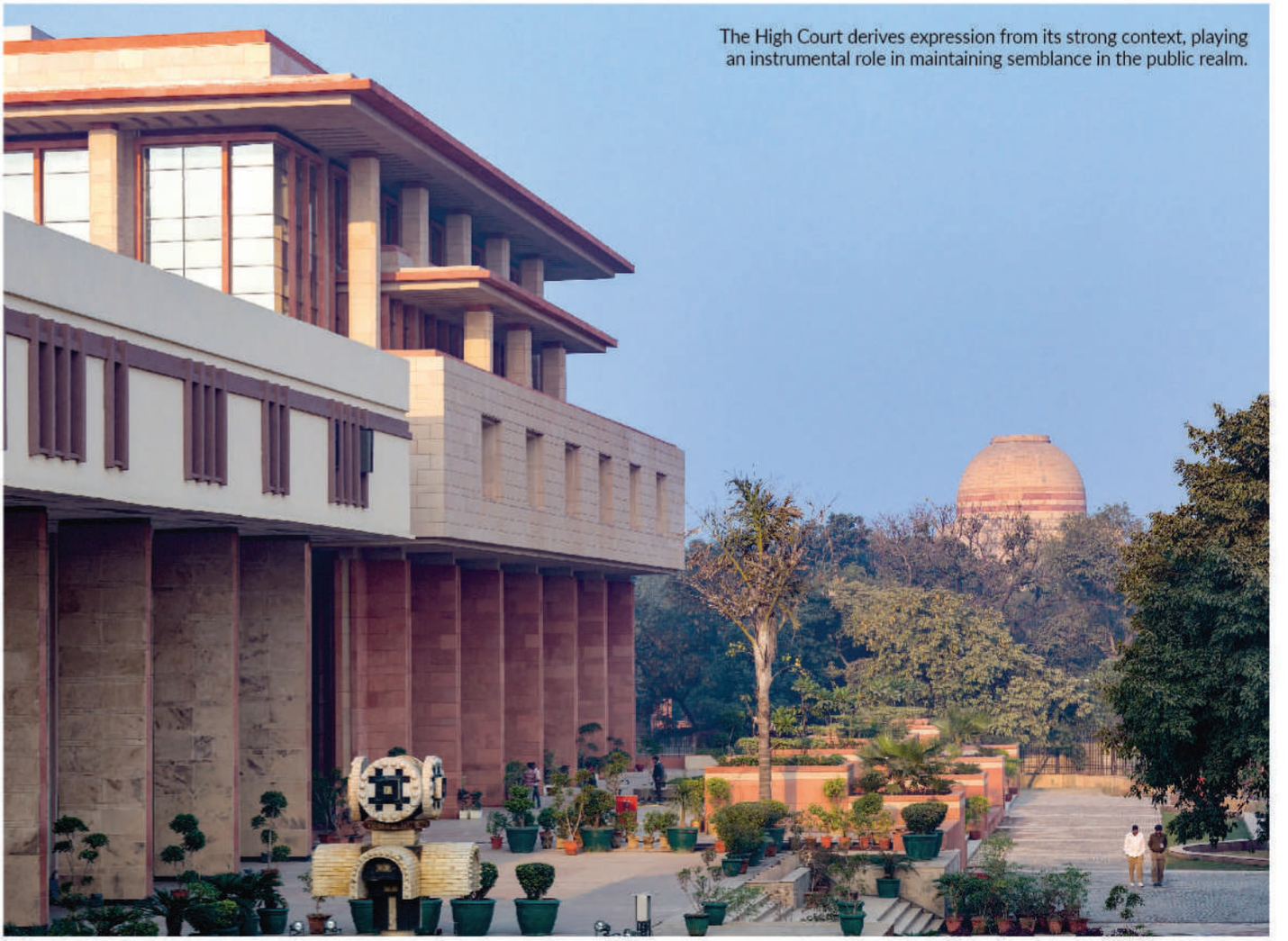
GUWAHATI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The project encompasses a new integrated terminal building of the Guwahati International Airport, an upgrade to the existing infrastructure. The Airport Authority of India (AAI) plans to connect Guwahati to the rest of the country by actively connecting Guwahati to other cities through domestic flights. Bringing the Guwahati Airport under the' Ude Desh ka Aam Nagarik- Regional Connectivity Scheme' (UDAN-RCS), this airport will connect the people of the seven sister states with remaining India, thus solving the major gap in connectivity that exists as of now.

The Indian aviation industry spearheaded by the AAI is currently registering a 15-20% Compound Annual Growth Rate. Contributing substantially to the annual growth, Guwahati International Airport registers an annual growth of 36%, which is double of the national growth. The addition of a new international standard terminal will only add to this growth by supporting the overflow and paving way further for user expansion.

Currently, the airport sees an annual footfall of 3.5 million; once completed, the airport will experience an annual footfall of nine million per annum, registering a nearly threefold increase in users. The existing airport handles only two international flights per week, this number will rise to nine by the time the project is complete in 2021. In the long run, Guwahati International Airport will be instrumental in connecting the northeast with international destinations across the globe, especially Asian nations, and the southwest subcontinental countries.

Sheets of aluminium stacked vertically and digitally cut to express the underlining principle of justice, "Truth Triumphs."



The High Court derives expression from its strong context, playing an instrumental role in maintaining semblance in the public realm.