



Botanica, New Delhi
Design Forum International as Architects



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Amidst the urban residential potpourri of South Delhi, with apartments and plotted developments occupying and maximizing literally every square footage of space available, Botanica attempts to create a landmark development within the contemporary residential building typology by creating spacious, high-on-luxury, three-side open apartments in the heart of Delhi. Through its scale, massing and materiality, Botanica aims to create a distinguished architectural character, conceiving an identity for itself as a boutique bio-luxury development, whilst providing spacious and functionally efficient environs for its residents.

As one approaches the estate from the main road of Neeti Bagh, one is greeted by an inviting wood and brushed steel entrance gate with the name Botanica etched boldly. It announces itself as an exclusive development. The arrival court is animated with a visually scintillating water feature and an incredible 30 feet high green envelop that fills one with joy and surprise. The ground level under the building is left free to allow the eye to see more depth and functionally allows each apartment to park 5 cars, it also accommodates a grand entrance lobby with a concierge desk and a cozy waiting space. The drop off experience with a double height canopy, signature emblem on the floor and warmly lit travertine walls further add to the warmth and visual finesse of the entrance experience. With kids play zones well-crafted sports facilities and a private clubhouse, this private residential development thrives as a spirited bio-luxury estate, with the lush landscaped ground level serving as one of the main attractions.

Sited in a moderately compromised neighborhood, inheriting existing slums on the neighboring sides, a school at the front and access one side towards a posh colony of South Delhi (Niti Bagh), and another leading to the urban village/lal dora area, the site is



private homes. Shaped in the form of two rectangles joined in a manner that come together to form a narrow junction with almost 40% of the site area rendered non buildable because of bye-laws, the site presented severe geometrical challenges to the architect. The adjacent school building goes up to three storeys and 70 percent of its windows open into the site, further augmenting the trials of privacy.

Initially conceived with a brief of smaller units that would be quick and easy to sell, the design brief adapted itself to accommodate the commercial needs of real estate in prime locations such as those of the site. While architecture must be crafted based on purist views, macro issues such as site location and geometry etc., for a commercial project, the mathematical numbers do influence the end-product. A rough mathematical survey that resulted in a 16000 sqft plate area, led the way for 2000 sq ft floor plates, from which 8 apartments could be carved out at one level, and 4 such levels would be created, resulting in 30-32 luxurious apartments. A result of this would have been that the middle ones would actually have very little openings, and would be compromised on account of daylight and ventilation. Another option was to plan 10 villas of approx. 500 sq yards each, but that too did not make commercial and design sense.

The final outcome of these multiple permutations and combinations was a simplistic layout that resulted in a four-sided open, butterfly-shaped plan, and a form that is typically not available in customary plotted developments in Delhi. As a result, a central movement and service core is crafted, around which four apartments each with, three-sided open so, 16 apartments, 4000 sq ft each are created, each of which is vastu-enabled for enhanced saleability. A 35ft strip of land is left free on all sides, and a landscaped, 30ft high green wall, visible from any window, rises high to enhance the views from within the apartments.

The apartment layout provides for entertainment spaces as a blend of indoor and semi-outdoor spaces, a large verandah (roughly 10ft x 35 ft) is hewn in next to the living area. Instead of a typical master bedroom, Master suites are designed with a sitting area opening into an outdoor deck. Wider spaces are crafted as opposed to narrow and long rooms treat with all rooms being endowed with spacious balconies, including the lounge and living room that extend outwards overlooking the greens for sit-out and informal entertaining balconies. Windows are designed so as to provide privacy from sibling units. Each of the 16 families would have access to the central, green oasis and recreational facilities that would be shared between them. A swimming pool, squash



clubhouse, a gymnasium and Spa for leisure and entertainment.

To overcome parking challenges, it was decided to accommodate 4 dedicated car parks and one visitor car park for every apartment. Most people need one multi-functional space, and hence the basement was divided into two parts and shared between the ground floor and the first floor. Dedicated internal lifts are provided between the basement and the ground floor, creating a duplex situation and a similar concept is applied to the terrace as well, where the second floor and the third floor get access to the terraces. The entire built volume is staged up on stilts except the central portion, to enable thorough, cross-views. To accommodate the additional help, a pre-necessity in most luxury homes in India, a separate servant block with a detached entrance and a service lift is created along with a nice lounge space for the drivers. Distinct, yet attached domestic help rooms are provided with each apartment to accommodate the immediate domestic help. Water treatment facility is provided in a dedicated area for each home. To optimize the challenge of the engaging and dynamic backdrop of the school, the developer chose to substitute the school windows with soundproof UPVC ones that are openable. Inspired by nature as a driving force, the name Botanica was conceived for the lavish development which is like a serene green oasis in the heart of south Delhi. The biomass of the periphery green is intensified by accommodating 4 ft deep planters that are 8-10 ft. high along the boundary.

The architectural visual character of Botanica also plays out the nature theme at several levels. All the balconies are staggered, creating playful double height volumes as opposed to stacked balconies with minor cosmetic tweaks. Stone frescos mimicking the traditional leaf pattern adorn the upper levels of the building. The whole composition reads as a combination of tall stark surfaces of textured stone cut horizontally with staggered balconies that resemble hovering planes of timber and crowned with a floating sheet of stone that binds the whole into one composition of stone, timber and glass nestled within a serene oasis of greens!!