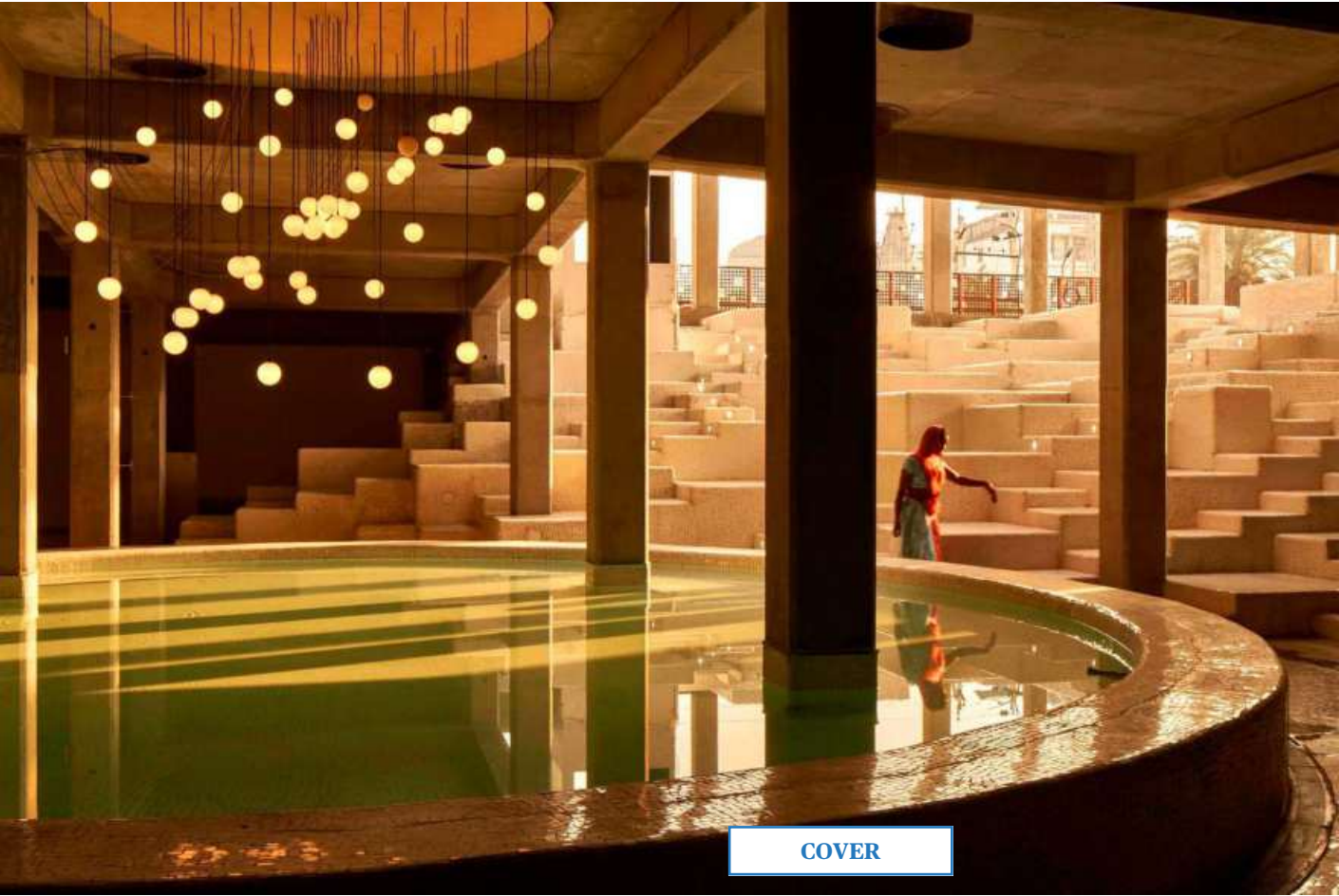


# PROPERTYPLUS

HOMES AND REAL ESTATE NEWS

THE HINDU



COVER

Nidhi Adlakha

About eight years ago, Udaipur-based architectural firm Studio Saar was approached by a non-profit, Dharohar, to design a science centre. Soon, the brief evolved to creating a holistic community space. The team at the not-for-profit organisation – known to create inspiring spaces and deliver diverse learning programmes – was inspired by sociologist Ray Oldenburg’s theory of the ‘third space’.

As part of his research, Ray concluded that all thriving communities had a number of ‘third places’ (not home, and not work) where diverse groups of people came together to engage in a broad range of activities; similar to Indian step-wells or town squares in old Europe, explains Ananya Singhal, co-founder Studio Saar. “These spaces have dwindled in the modern urban fabric, and Dharohar wanted to recreate one in Udaipur,” he adds of the brief to create a space “where anyone could come together and dive into a range of experiences that they could not have at work, home, or school. They wanted

## Udaipur’s curiosity hub

Drawing from the city’s traditional havelis, The Third Space is designed as an activity centre that goes beyond the home and school

a series of inspiring and accessible spaces that celebrated excellence, innovation, and our culture”. Thus was born Third Space. The team started work on-site in 2020, and the project’s first phase opened in July 2023. “As the building has been designed to host an ever-changing programme that reflects the community’s needs and interests, we don’t expect Third Space to ever be ‘complete’,” says Singhal.

### Central courtyard

Also called ‘The Haveli of Curiosity’, the new centre can host up to 2,000 visitors a day, and offers a broad range of activities and workshops for lo-

cal. The structure’s design draws from the region’s traditional havelis and features a central courtyard ‘surrounded by a series of cloisters and shaded external circulation spaces’. “The design incorporates passive cooling strategies, such as shading, insulation, high thermal mass and ventilation, as well as an active cooling system that uses stored water to remove heat from the structure and the ambient air,” says Singhal, adding that the perforated facade features intricate patterned *jaali* screens that provide ventilation, as do the small, cantilevered niches in the façades, known as *gokhra*, that act as wind catchers.

The team at Studio Saar opted for local materials that respond to the region’s harsh climatic conditions while helping to reduce embodied carbon caused by transport, with all heavy material sourced from 400 km driving distance of the site, shares Singhal. The white marble screens, for example, are locally produced, while marble dust replaced some of the cement and mechanically produced sand replaced sand mined from the Aravalis in the concrete mix – resulting in a whiter finish that more effectively reflects the sun’s heat. “Reducing waste was key, resulting in the reuse of the marble off-cuts from the façade



Also called ‘The Haveli of Curiosity’, the new centre can host up to 2,000 visitors a day. EDMUND SUMNER, ANKIT JAIN, AND ANANYA SINGHAL.

craft”. The woven sails, he says, were made over a period of three months, and installed on-site, partnered with a light-weight truss system made with standard mild steel pipes. “This approach brought the costs right down. During heavy winds, the sails are designed to disengage from the structure, preventing wind damage,” says Singhal.

### A reforestation initiative

Another sustainable angle to Third Space is that its activities, programmes and curriculum are connected to 80 hectares of hills that are being rewilded as part of a reforestation project by Dharohar and Studio Saar. Singhal explains how ‘10 Lakh Vriksh’ is an initiative by Dharohar that aims to plant and nurture a million trees in the city and its surrounding areas. “Dharohar and Studio Saar have partnered to create half a dozen beautiful green spaces in the heart of the city that will inspire local residents to become custodians of the natural environment. Two of these green spaces, Jungle and Johadbeed, are the start of this large urban reforestation project.”

Having said that, Singhal admits that since they were working with a complex brief, the biggest challenge was bringing so many different activities into one coherent space. “To overcome this, we focused on the in-between spaces such as the entrance, corridors, and courtyards and placed all community activities in the central courtyard, which was designed to serve as a flexible space for performances and community gatherings.”

The two organisations are now developing traditional bamboo structures for community engagement, protection, storage, as well as a plant nursery, re-creating traditional check dams, reducing reliance on external water sources and the overall staging scheme for the project.



screens as flooring, and the metal offcuts refashioned into chainmail for doors and partitions,” he says, adding that over 1,000 workers were involved in the project, including local craftsmen, and visualisation artists.

### Woven bamboo canopy

One of the project’s standout features is the woven bamboo canopy developed in collaboration with AMI Engineers and Webb Yates Engineers. Singhal says, “Through research and experimentation, we decided that using a material that is biodegradable, lightweight and easy to repair and replace would be more sustainable than opt-

ing for materials that do not degrade, creating a lot of waste when it is time to be repaired or replaced.” The team opted for bamboo, and employed local weavers for the ongoing maintenance of the canopy, “resulting in a low-cost, low-carbon solution that creates steady local employment and reinforces the preservation of a traditional



TRIBUTE: 1942-2024

## Christopher Charles Benninger: People’s architect

Architecture was a path to serve and integrate society for this American who made India his home

Sujatha Shankar Kumar

It is said that to write a great book, you must love your characters. To build great cities, an architect must care about its people.

An American who made India his home for over half a century, architect, urbanist and educator Christopher Charles Benninger’s great achievements grew out of his love for humanity.

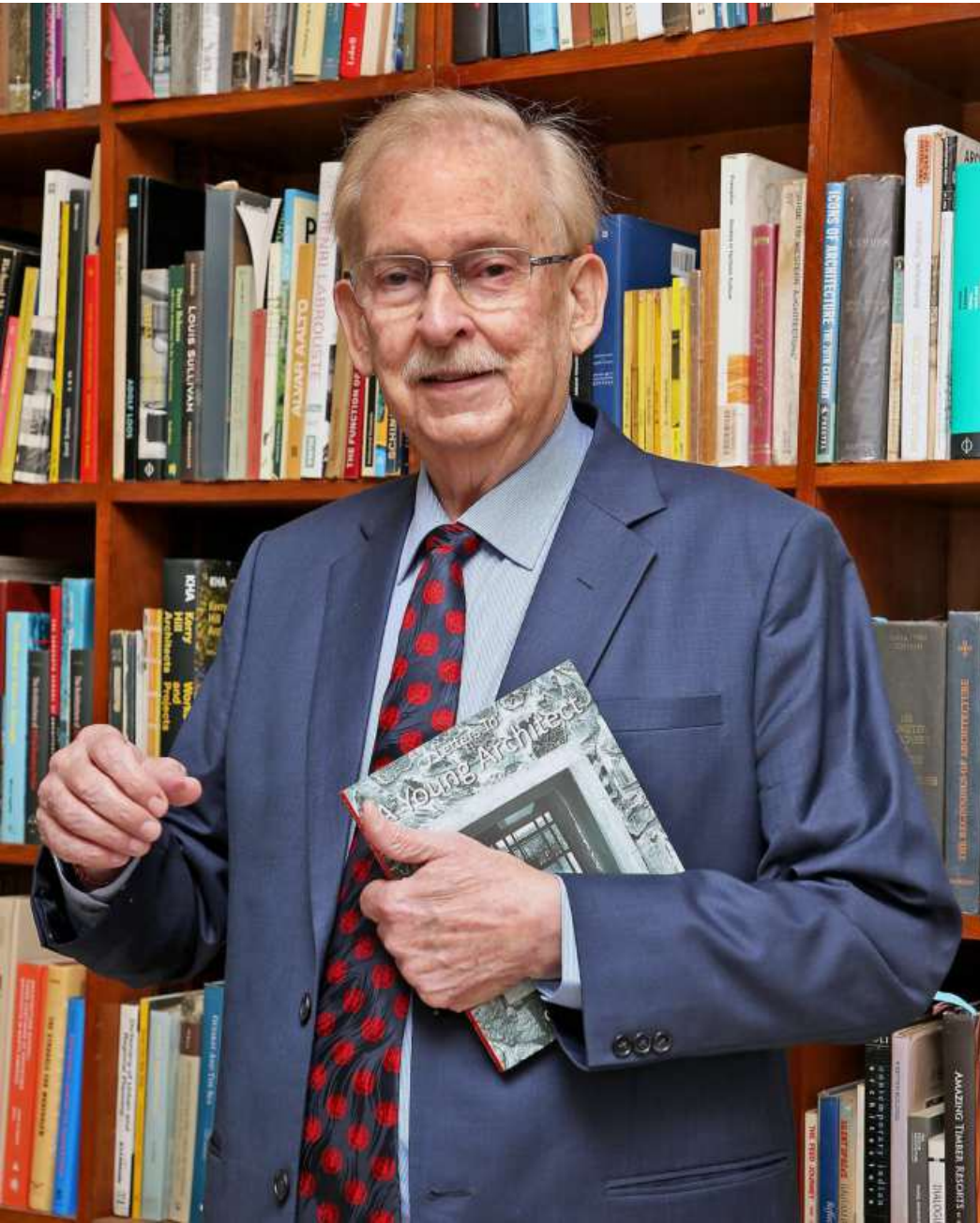
Tall and robust, a cheerful raconteur with a zest for life, he was seen by many as a gentle giant, an intellectual and a wonderful human being. Benninger wrote, “We must understand that our talent and our wealth are only loaned to us, in trusteeship, to use towards the greater good.” Benninger passed away at 82

on October 2, but his influence, the design community agrees, is spread across Southern Asia, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and China, as well as South Africa. He assumed many roles, from advisory to the World Bank and UNICEF to planning six state capitals for Sri Lanka. Be it the Azim Premji University campus in Bengaluru or Suzlon One Earth Headquarters in Pune (the company sold it for ₹440 crore in September), he brought joy and wonder with his architecture.

### From student to director

The influential architect first came to India in 1968 on a Fulbright Scholarship to work with architect B.V. Doshi at CEPT

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 2



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



***I saw Christopher’s poster in the library at Gokhale Institute, liked what it said, and decided to apply to the new School of Planning at CEPT. We were the first batch, 14 of us. I think in terms of exposure and education, we were the most***

***privileged batch of the School of Planning. Institution building is a very hard and long process, but it is rewarding. After we set up CDSA, we decided to start our Master’s course in Development Planning in 1978. I am happy to say that we were funded by the very prestigious Jamshetji Tata and Dorabjee Tata Trusts for five years.***

ANEETA GOKHALE BENNINGER  
Executive Director, CDSA & Professor of Sustainable Development, Pune



***There were many eminent architects competing for Mahindra United World College, such as Charles Correa and B.V. Doshi. We only had the CDSA brochure to show. The selection committee asked Christopher, ‘If you had to build an international school, what difference would you bring?’ He***

***answered, ‘I would make really clean toilets!’ Everyone laughed. I think we got the project because they felt Christopher would truly understand the needs of an academic institution. We would go on to have many such firsts – our award-winning factory for Forbes Marshall at Chakan (Pune) was the first of its kind in India.***

AKKISETTI RAMPRASAD NAIDU  
Managing Director, CCBA Designs, Pune



CONTINUED FROM  
» PAGE 1



**I was in my mid-40s and I'd left my partnership. I thought, this is it. But then, Christopher gave me a space in India House to rethink my way forward. I was inspired by Christopher, who embarked on his architectural career when he was 52. Why shouldn't I restart? My firm Indi Design was born, named after India House. It was with Christopher's encouragement that I launched a magazine in 2011 to showcase Indian design. I called it Pool, after watching Christopher swim laps in his pool.**

**SUDHIR SHARMA**  
Founder and Chief Executive,  
IndiDesign, Pune



# People's architect



Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

(Centre for Environment Planning and Technology) in Ahmedabad and returned in 1971 to help establish a School of Planning. He lived and worked in India ever since, and later registered as an Overseas Citizen of India. His association with CEPT would be long and fruitful – as a student, as a teacher, on the board of directors, and finally, as an architect to design the New Academic Block (2020-2023). Benninger met his future wife Aneeta Gokhale in the School of Planning's first batch of students, and

Suzlon One Earth Global Corporate Headquarters, Pune. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

together they established CDSA (Centre for Development Studies and Activities) in Pune in 1976. Barbara Ward was the first patron, and they named the library and documentation centre after her. Gokhale's and Benninger's son, Siddhartha, is a director at CDSA.

### Many firsts

Former colleagues reiterate that Benninger was as honest and open in his personal life as he was in his architecture. He met Ramprasad Akkiseti Naidu in 1993, who would become his life partner and instrumental for a tremendously creative phase of over 30 years. With him, he set up CCBA (Christopher Charles Benninger Architects) in 1995. His design for their home and office in Pune, India House, is based on the plan of a Maharashtrian wada, with a wide central courtyard between two wings. He wrote three books, and the first, *Letters to a Young Architect* (2011) was a bestseller. Its sequel, *Great Expectations: Notes to an Architect* was launched posthumously on October 22. This year, CEPT conferred a Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture on Benninger, a long-cherished dream come true.

*The writer is a brand strategist with a background in design from SAIC and NID.*



**One of Christopher's greatest gifts to humanity was the theory of intelligent urbanism that advocates compact, high density, mixed development habitats of substantial scale. This doctrine explains the strategy for the efficient and effective distribution of physical and social infrastructure to society at the lowest per capita cost.**

**SENAKA DHARMATILLEKE**  
Chief Architect, Overseas Realty (Ceylon) PLC  
(From the memorial function on October 22 at Pune)



**We were half a generation apart, but because he embarked on an architecture practice late in life, we ended up being fellow practitioners for over three decades. During that period, I was also president of CEPT. He was a highly skilled architect, a professional and a generous collaborator. But above all, he was my friend.**

**BIMAL PATEL**  
Head, HCP Design Planning and Management Pvt. Ltd., Ahmedabad

## REAL ESTATE

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## RENTAL

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ASHOK NGR Room Type Office Only GF 1500sf CCP 400sf No Brkr 9884755154

EKKATTUTHANGAL ESTATE First Floor 3000Sqft & 6000Sqft Hall Type Grnd 9841372873

THIRUMUDIVAKKAM WIP Estate Ground Floor 2000sqft Hall Type Individual Building Contact: 9841372873

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Gili Nagar Nr. DAV Schl 1200sft 2BHK GF,CCP,27K 944407690



G. Shyam Sunder

As extreme weather conditions are noticed across India, the loss to life and property can be minimised when buildings are designed according to a standard that promotes safety and sustainability. Abiding by a building code that fixes a benchmark for builders is one way to reduce construction cost and conserve the environment. The flip side, however, is such codes restrict architectural experiments and, instead, result in a homogeneous aesthetic of buildings. However, this has its benefits.

The National Building Code of India (NBC) was first published in 1970 to ensure building safety, manage solid waste, and encourage the use of alternate building techniques. It provides guidelines for regulating construction activities all over India.

NBC serves as a model code for adoption by agencies such as local bodies, private agencies, and the Public Works Department involved in building construction activities.

Structural design and safety

The comprehensive building code mainly contains administrative regulations, development control rules and general building requirements. Fire safety requirements, stipulations regarding materials, structural design and construction (including safety), building and plumbing services, approach to sustainability, and asset and facility management are also covered under this.

The NBC was first published in 1970 under the direction of the Planning Commission. A first revision was done in 1983, a second one in 2005, and a third revision in 2016 was also made. Haryana is the only State in India that has formulated a building code on its own. However, each State in the country follows a different set of rules for sanctioning building permits.

**Floor Space Index (FSI):** This method is followed in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat while sanctioning building approvals. The base FSI limits indicate the extent of building area, which can be constructed based on the land area. With 2.00 base FSI limits, a building of 4,000 sq.ft. of total built-up area can be constructed for a land area

# Following the building code

A guide to the most simplified approval norms across India, with Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Haryana leading the list



measuring 2,000 sq.ft. in Tamil Nadu. Likewise, FSI in Maharashtra varies between 1.33 and 3.00 (including premium FSI) and in Gujarat it varies between 1.80 and 2.70 (including premium FSI). Most of the remaining States use Floor Area Ratio (FAR) method. This depends on the maximum permissible height of the building as well and various other parameters like road width, plot area, density of population etc.

**Self-certification of applicant:** The States of Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Haryana issue building permits based on self-certification of applicant. In Telangana, a residential building measuring up to 10 metres in height can be constructed by self-certification on a plot size of up to 500 sq.metres.

**bPASS:** Telangana was the first State to introduce TS-bPASS, a single window system for the entire State by proving complete online services for development of land and construction of buildings. Moreover, Telangana charges only ₹1 as official fee for building approval of residential buildings measuring up to 75 sq.yards and up to 7 metres in height. A few other States have now introduced their own building bPASS window system. Tamil Nadu had recently allowed construction of buildings by self-certification of applicant provided the land area does not exceed 2,500 sq.ft. and building built-up area does not exceed 3,500 sq.ft. with G+1 floor or Stilt + 2 floors and up to 7 metres in height with a maximum of only two dwelling units. In Haryana, residential buildings and shop-cum-flat buildings of up to 500 sq.m. can be constructed under self-certification by giving 15 days notice to the authority for approval of building plans, intimating the date of the start of construction. The applicant can start construction after 15 days if no objection is raised or conveyed to the person concerned. The States of Goa, Gujarat and Maharashtra have also simplified their approval norms by issuing building permits based on Licensed Engineer/ Architect Certification under certain parameters.

**104 plans:** In Odisha, Bhubaneswar Development Authority has 104 stan-

dard building plans for different small size plots based on road width. All the 104 plans have been uploaded online. No prior approval is required by the applicant for construction on any of the 104 standard building plans notified by the authority, subject to certain conditions. This public-friendly initiative can also be implemented in other States for the benefit of property owners.

**Changing approval dates:** Of late, in many States, building plans and layout approvals have to be submitted online for approval by the concerned authorities. Directorate of Town and Country Planning (DTCP)-approved layout plans from the year 1923 could be verified online (year-wise) earlier in the States of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and from the year 1960 onwards in Tamil Nadu. This online facility is not available currently in these States. As per Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA), the details of approved land layouts sanctioned from the year 2000 onwards and approved building plans sanctioned from the year 2006 onwards are available online for public verification.

**Old approved building plans:** Likewise, approved land layouts sanctioned from the year 1983 onwards by Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Regional Development Authority are available online for public verification. However, urban development authorities in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh do not have this online verification. In many States, the old approved building plans/layout details sanctioned by their respective government agencies are not available in the public domain for cross verification. It is high time the Government of India or Niti Aayog gives direction to all States and union territories to enable the uploading of old approved building plans and land layout permits sanctioned by urban bodies in the last 30 years. Making this information available in the public domain will also help in cur-tailing property-related frauds.

*The writer is Chennai-based advocate and author of 'Property Registration, Land Records and Building Approval Procedures Followed in Various States in India'.*



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## Reshaping urban landscape

Mixed-use townships have spiked in sales following the epidemic when compared to ordinary residential projects

Akash Pharande

One important feature changing how people live and work in India's fast urbanising terrain is the incorporation of commercial segments into residential townships.

In the early 2000s, integrated townships, as they are now known, started to take off. Encouraged by India's economic expansion and rapid urbanisation, developers realised the benefits of creating an all-encompassing residential experience for the growing middle class.

The COVID-19 epidemic kicked off a major move towards remote work, less crowded residential areas with sufficient greenery, the convenience and safety of having necessary retail outlets within easy reach, and small commutes to work. Coworking spaces turned out to be the logical solution to bring down corporate costs, and provide a fertile environment for collaboration, networking and creative engagement. Not surprisingly, leading pro-

perty consultants reported that 2021 saw no less than 30% increase in demand for integrated townships over the same period the year before. Compared to exclusively residential projects, mixed-use townships have seen higher residential sales following the epidemic. Here is why:

Sustainable lifestyle

Mixed-use townships lessen the need for driving, and therefore have a lower carbon footprint overall. The more modern integrated townships also offer advanced green features such as wastewater recycling, use of solar lighting and heating, green areas to act as lung space, and proper cross-ventilation in flats to reduce cooling costs in summer.

Profitable for developers

Integrated townships with commercial components are a lucrative proposition for developers. The added appeal and convenience factor of these projects usually makes them more expensive than ordinary residential projects. Indians today are willing to spend

more on a sustainable, convenient and hassle-free lifestyle. Also, there is a brand value involved in creating and sustaining modern integrated townships, since such projects require specialised knowledge and considerable capital to build and maintain.

Buyer preferences

The pandemic changed consumer preferences considerably. People are choosing to live in spacious, uncluttered, and health-promoting projects that provide quick access to workplaces and the requirements of daily living. Mixed-use integrated townships negate most of the stresses and health hazards of inner-city life. They are also ideal for remote working scenarios. The boundaries dividing residential and commercial areas are blurring as urban India develops. More than just a real estate fad, integrated townships are the logical answer to the evolving demands and lifestyles of contemporary Indian society.

*The writer is Managing Director, Pharande Spaces.*

IN STORES

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[muunhome.com](http://muunhome.com)



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**Spruce and Pop**  
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