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How green is my building

The demand for sustainable homes and offices is rising. With people willing to pay a premium for them, realtors are obliging, writes Aneeka Chatterjee

Amid increasing concern for the health of the planet, sustainability is emerging as more than just a trendy buzzword for developers.

A report by advisory firm Xymteo released on March 22 sheds light on the shifting landscape. In Tier-1 Indian cities, middle-income residents are willing to pay an extra 3-10 per cent for sustainable living, while companies are showing a readiness to invest up to 15 per cent more in green-certified structures.

In Mumbai, the number of residents exhibiting a strong preference for sustainability when buying homes, prioritising features like green spaces and indoor air quality, is 70 per cent more than in New Delhi, Ahmedabad, and Hyderabad. However, there's a gap in awareness, with 88 per cent lacking knowledge about green buildings, finds the report titled "Build Ahead".

In the corporate world, over 85 per cent are opting for green office leases, driven by energy savings and eco-commitments, finds the report. And, 74 per cent are open to paying premiums for buildings with lower emissions — 15 per cent for near-zero emissions and up to 50 per cent for net-zero.

"The survey results challenge the notion that Indian consumers' demand for sus-

tainable living is insignificant," says Vipul Kumar, senior partner at Xymteo. "Today, consumers value access to greenery, clean air, reliable materials, and operational savings, all of which green buildings can offer."

Given how significantly the real estate sector contributes to global emissions, Kumar emphasises the need for the industry to urgently adopt green practices.

Some developers say they are already on the job.

Bengaluru-based Brigade Enterprises highlights its commitment to sustainability, which it says exceeds mandated guidelines. The realtor, which aims for net-zero emissions by 2045, says it incorporates various measures, including renewable energy, tree plantation drives, wastewater recycling, and use of eco-labelled materials, during con-

struction. "Our first green building, Brigade IRV Centre, came up back in 2011," says Pavitra Shankar, MD of Brigade Enterprises. "We continue to obtain green certifications across all our projects."

The developer says it currently has over 6.3 million square feet of green-certified buildings in its portfolio with projects such as Brigade Cornerstone Utopia and Brigade Sanctuary.

Concorde, another player in the real estate sector, emphasises its SMART philosophy, an acronym for sustainable living, modern design, amenities-rich, real value and tech-enabled features. Through initiatives like rainwater harvesting, high-effective materials, and energy-efficient systems, Concorde says it prioritises "environmental stewardship and urban innovation".

"As a policy, all our commercial properties will be bio-philic," says Concorde Director Gishma Reddy. The SMART design philosophy extends to residential development.

Mumbai-based realtor IndiaLand Group intends to invest about ₹700 crore in the sector in the next few years, about ₹200 crore of which will be this year alone. "Some of these properties will create ample investment opportunities for those seeking to park money in modern real estate, especially in green building projects," says Harish Fabiani, chairman, IndiaLand Group.

Murali Malayappan, chairman and MD, Shriram Properties, says while incorporating latest sustainability technologies does entail a cost, "we have observed that customers are increasingly willing to invest extra for these advanced features." With a significant portion of its customer base comprising environmentally conscious millennials, prioritising cutting-edge technologies related to water and power consumption is a key focus for the company.

Such developments, says Vinod Rajpaul, CEO of Gurugram-based Ocus Group, not only align with long-term environmental goals but also tend to yield better returns, making them a prudent investment choice.



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Why is senior living still in the junior league?

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NEW DEMAND DRIVERS

Far from Bengaluru, in Bhiwadi, a town in Rajasthan's Alwar district, Amar Bir Singh Lamba and his wife moved into a three-bedroom apartment at Ashiana Housing Ltd's senior living community 'Ashiana Nirmay' in March.

Leaving behind their apartment of many years in Delhi's bustling Janakpuri locality and moving 75km away to Bhiwadi was not easy and took time getting used to.

"We don't miss the city life anymore. Everyone is busy there—nobody has time. Our daughter lives in Malaysia now, so this was a good option. We make our own food and have made friends here. It's not really like an old age home. Most residents are active," he said.

In fact, Lamba liked it so much that he has booked a 2,400 sq. ft villa in the developer's upcoming project close by. Currently under construction, 'Ashiana Advik' is more premium and has a lot of greenery. "Once we get possession of the villa, we will move there and give this apartment up for rent," said Lamba.

Ashiana Housing was one of the early movers in the country's senior living space, and launched projects in Bhiwadi, Lavasa (near Pune) and Jaipur in the early and mid-2000s. It was a new concept, but picked up slowly. Many people bought senior homes at the time, some as a real estate investment.

The company took a break from launching new senior societies in Bhiwadi between 2009



A file photo of an Antara Senior Care property in Dehradun.

and 2015. In Jaipur, where it had launched a seniors society under its 'Utsav' brand, it was somewhat challenging after the first set of apartments were sold.

"We always knew senior housing was a good market but we were not getting the occupancy numbers then. People didn't understand the concept," said Ashiana Housing joint managing director Ankur Gupta. But increased awareness and clarity among homebuyers in recent years have led to an exponential boost in demand, he added.

Higher demand has boosted sales. In 2023-24, Ashiana sold 400 units, after selling 200-220 units annually for two-three years earlier. In 2024-25, it aims to sell 500 units. The developer has a project coming up in Mahindra World City, Chennai, and will launch projects in Bengaluru and Mumbai. "Given the kind of launches planned, we want to sell 1,000 units annually in three years' time," Gupta said.

"As India becomes more geriatric in demographics, staying

in senior living homes is not a stigma anymore," said Rajit Mehta, managing director of Antara Senior Care, a care platform for seniors. Antara, part of Max India Ltd, has been partnering with various developers across cities, including Hyderabad and Bengaluru, to operate senior projects. In Gurugram, it has formed a partnership with group real estate firm Max Estates, which is building six towers in a so-called inter-generational project, where two have been earmarked for senior living.

"The market is seeing a number of relatively new players, with a mix of developers, operator platforms and healthcare providers," said Alok Kumar Puri, associate executive director, head of business development and alternate assets consulting and valuation, CBRE India. "Given that the target group is expected to double, it should motivate the industry to increase inventory to address the growing demand."