

DP proposals may turn sleepy Madh Island into prime realty

UNDER THREAT? Blueprint provisions, along with projects to improve accessibility, will attract builders



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MUMBAI: A closer look at plans for Madh Island's growth shows how the area will soon be opened up to the mainland, with various infrastructure projects.

This has raised questions whether the draft development plan (DP)'s proposal, to change large parts of the island's reservation from a no development zone (NDZ) to a residential-commercial belt, is being done to facilitate the entry of builders into the area.

The new plans for better connectivity, coupled with the sea-side views the weekend gateway offers, and now the civic body's intent of opening up the land with high FSI, mean the island will become one of the most precious pieces of realty in the city.

Sources said a prominent city builder has already bought large swathes of land in Madh and surrounding areas. With the civic body's large-scale de-reservation of NDZ areas, the builder may be in for a windfall. Locals add that a similar pattern, involving other builders, is seen across the island.

Two major projects, locals claim, are aimed at boosting the area's connectivity. The ambitious Coastal Road, which will pass through Madh, along with a recently proposed Andheri-Madh flyover as well as a Malad-Manori flyover, will make the island much more accessible.

"Builders have been taking over large swathes of land in the region by various means. Some have encroached on the land, while others have bought agricultural plots from locals and are sitting on it. This de-reservation is clearly aimed at helping them," said local resident Kiran Koli, who is also the chairman of the Maharashtra Machimaar Kruti Samiti (MMKS).

A civic official defended the move, saying the de-reserved

LOCALS LEFT OUT, URBAN FABRIC AT RISK: EXPERTS

THE ISSUE

The BMC has proposed to de-reserve large parts of Madh Island and areas around it

While these were earlier marked as no-development zones, the new DP marks them for residential-commercial use

WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM

- There are two dominant communities in the region—the Koli community and the East Indian Roman Catholics
- Currently, these areas have seen very low-intensity development, which is largely in the form of Koliwad and Gaothans
- These areas, many estimate, consume less than 1 FSI
- Urban researchers and planners argue that marking such areas for a high FSI use of 2, and for residential and commercial purposes, will destroy the area's identity
- The BMC in its maps, many



Madh Island has seen low-intensity development, with low-rise houses and community structures dominating the landscape. VIDYA SUBRAMANIAN/HT PHOTO

allege, has also marked hillocks, wetlands and salt pans in Madh for residential and commercial use

Experts have claimed destruction of mangroves has already begun in the area.

"The problem with such a marking of the area is that the plan has just not considered its existing urban fabric. It has either not marked or marked wrongly the spaces conventionally used by local communities for fish-drying or as docks."

SHWETA WAGH, assistant professor, Kamla Raheja Vidyanihi Institute of Architecture, Juhu

AS PER THE DP, WHAT CAN COME UP AT MADH

- 4 or 5-star hotels
- Resorts, guest houses
- Hospitals
- Schools
- Offices
- Restaurants
- Retail trade
- Malls, shopping complexes
- Stadiums, amusement parks
- Gymkhanas
- Marriage halls, auditoriums

Developers slam city's blueprint

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MUMBAI: After citizen groups and planners, property developers have voiced concerns over provisions in the city's development plan (DP), saying they will make houses more expensive and derail redevelopment projects.

The Property Redevelopers Association (PRA) on Thursday said the DP will make the redevelopment of cessed properties—those built before 1960—economically unviable.

In a press conference, Punit Aggarwal, PRA's spokesperson and general secretary, slammed the provision of replacing FSI incentives with transfer of development rights (TDR) for redevelopment projects. "This

OBJECTIONS

The PSA has filed a petition, asking the civic body to exempt redevelopment schemes from proposed premium charges. It expressed concerns over the 'incredibly high' premiums, claiming if the provision was passed, they would fetch the BMC ₹7.5 lakh crore.

will severely hit redevelopment, as the new provisions will make the viability of such projects as good as zero," he said. The DP lacks clarity on how the TDR will be awarded, which will cause confusion, said Aggarwal.

He claimed the exorbitant premium the civic body proposes to

charge for additional FSI will increase production costs exponentially, leading to a sharp hike in property prices. "Houses will become unaffordable, for the common man and even the rich."

At present, the rule of 6m open space on two sides and 1.5m open space on the other two sides of a building is not binding while redeveloping chawls in the island city, built very close to each other. However, the DP seeks to enforce it, and the association claims it is unfair, as it is equating new projects with redevelopment.

Aggarwal criticised the ever-changing laws in relation to Development Control Regulation 33(7)—which governs the redevelopment projects—saying the changes cause uncertainty and discrepancy.

Frequent fires at Aarey Colony leave locals, activists worried

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MUMBAI: Environmentalists and residents living close to the Aarey Milk Colony, Goregaon, have alleged there have been frequent fires in the area over the past two weeks.

Locals claimed some people started a fire near the Aarey Garden restaurant on Thursday. Vinayak Prabhu, resident of Goregaon, found a patch of trees burnt near the Aarey guesthouse on Thursday. Prabhu said he went to a police chowkie close to the spot to file a complaint. "The police said they could not prevent such incidents because they take place after dark. But the chowkie is manned day and night," he said.

The Aarey police denied the claim. "We have not received complaints of any fire on Thursday. But there was a fire on Wednesday



A patch of burnt trees near the Aarey Garden restaurant, at the Aarey Colony, Goregaon. STALIN DAYANAND

close to the BMC hospital. It may have happened because of a cigarette carelessly thrown into the dry leaves," said Rajendra Pise, constable, Aarey police station.

Environmentalists feel the fires may be deliberate. "These fires seem unusually frequent. It looks like a deliberate attempt to destroy Aarey's landscape," said

environmentalist Stalin D.

However, some environmentalists say the fires are lit by locals. "Locals light fires to catch rabbits and small birds. I had complained to Aarey staff about this, who said these were controlled fires to prevent a major blaze because of dry grass and foliage," said environmentalist Biju Augustein.

EXTORTION CALLS TO MOVIE PRODUCER

Former employee held for helping gangster

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MUMBAI: The crime branch on Wednesday arrested a 45-year-old man for allegedly helping gangster Ejaz Lakkawala make extortion calls to a film producer in the city.

Parvez Kayyum Qureshi, a former Chhota Rajan gang member, got himself employed at the woman's production house and allegedly passed information about her to the gangster, the police said.

The complainant is the wife of a builder who lives in Vadodara, Gujarat, and has his construction business in Vadodara and Mumbai. According to the police, her production house produced a film that was released last week, after a delay of about one year from the original intended date.

During the movie's pre-release party in June 2014, the producer received a phone call from a man who identified himself as gangster Ejaz Lakkawala and demanded ₹3 crore. Before this, the gangster had also called on the landline of the woman's Millat

Nagar residence and demanded the money, the police said.

She registered an FIR with the Oshiwara police and in July, approached the joint commissioner of police (crime), who asked the anti-extortion cell to investigate the matter. "The producer's husband expressed suspicions about Qureshi. The investigators were watching Qureshi's movements, but he went to his Pune home a few days later. From there, he went into hiding," said a crime branch officer.

On Tuesday, the crime branch received information that Qureshi would come to his house in the city. Acting on the tip off, the police laid a trap and nabbed him.

Police said Qureshi has cases of murder and extortion on his name. "We are trying to find out if he took someone's help to gain information about the producer," said an officer.

Investigators are yet to seize the phone and the SIM card with which Qureshi allegedly contacted the gangster. The police are probing if Qureshi provided information about other businessmen too to the gangster.

BUILDER GETS THREAT CALLS FROM RAVI PUJARI

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DOMBIVLI: A builder from Dombivli has allegedly received a call from gangster Ravi Pujari, who threatened to kill him if he fails to pay up ₹2 crore.

The Dombivli police have registered a case on Wednesday and are investigating the case.

The complainant, Shriram Keshav Bhagat, 46, who owns a construction business, received the call on his mobile phone on March 30 at 9.50pm, said the police. The call came from an international number and the caller identified himself as Ravi Pujari. He also said he would call the businessman again, said the police.

"We have registered a complaint according to the statement given by the complainant, who claims he received one threat call. The case is being investigated further," said KS Suryavanshi, assistant commissioner of police, Dombivli division.

Earlier in March, two people, a builder and a cable operator, had received similar calls, the police said.

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