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7-YEAR WAIT FOR 14-YEAR PLAN

On its website, the Delhi Development Authority gives a vivid description of its Vision-2021: "...Delhi a global metropolis and a world-class city, where all the people would be engaged in productive work with a better quality of life, living in a sustainable environment... The Master Plan envisages vision and policy guidelines for the perspective period up to 2021."

This document, notified on February 7, 2007, is supposed to be reviewed every five years to keep pace with the fast-changing requirements of society. But the review process began only on September 2011. The Union Urban Development Ministry said that the Master Plan had failed to meet requirements of a city like Delhi.

The DDA says the process of finalising modifications will be complete by August, with at least 100 changes.

Floor Area Ratio

The plan: Introduction of highrise buildings, increased FAR, incentives to facilitate vertical growth.

The roadblock: The Centre is pushing for highrises since Delhi cannot expand horizontally. But the state government is against the move, says there is not enough infrastructure to support vertical growth.

Senior DDA officials say the Master Plan-2021 recommends no restriction on height in a large number of premises. "To make highrise buildings environment-friendly, additional features such as green buildings, need for service floors, podiums are being introduced in line with other metropolitan cities," an official said.

One of the key problems with highrises is Delhi's lack of available infrastructure to support such buildings. Asked about this, the official said: "To optimise use of resources such as water and power, audits will be introduced and increased Floor Area Ratio (FAR) will be used as incentive."

According to DDA, the incentive of additional FAR is important

to tide over the housing shortage in Delhi.

When his comments were sought, DDA vice-chairman D Diptivilasa said: "The Master Plan has put emphasis on incentivised redevelopment, with additional FAR as a major element of city development covering all areas."

Based on the projected population of 230 lakh by 2021, MPD-2021 estimates that the additional housing required will be around 24 lakh dwelling units — 20 lakh dwelling units for additional population and a backlog of 4 lakh units.

"Transit-oriented development along major transit corridors provides for increased FAR. The FAR for new group housing societies has been revised from 150 to 200," the official said.

The existing FAR of hospitals too will be augmented, based on the width of the right of way of the road and will be subject to no-objection certificates from all agencies. The tourism sector is expected to get a boost with the FAR for motels and hotels being revised.

Land Pooling Policy

What is it: Private parties involved in planning and development of land pockets. Profits shared by land owners who pool land for residential, commercial projects.

Why the need: Introduced to battle problems of land acquisition.

What next: Agricultural land expected to enter urban pool.

The land pooling policy will be introduced as a separate chapter in the Master Plan-2021.

"Acquisition of land was becoming difficult and land owners remained unhappy with the compensation paid by government

as the market value of the land is far more," a DDA official said.

With approval of the land pooling policy by DDA, a large chunk of agricultural land is expected to enter the urban pool. Real estate and industry experts said since majority land in the Capital has already been urbanised, agricultural land in Outer Delhi is likely to see a spurt in development with multi-storeyed housing complexes coming up in the next few years.

Pankaj Bajaj, Managing Director of Eldeco Group and president of CREDAI National Capital Region,

estimates that 20,000-25,000 acres of agricultural land will be urbanised once the land pooling policy is implemented.

"The policy is going to take another three to four years to be implemented on the ground. It will lead to agricultural land entering the urban pool. Such land is mainly available in North West Delhi in areas such as Narela, Kanjhawala and Bawana. This policy is not likely to affect redevelopment of already

urbanised land in regularised colonies since such land is already over-exploited and will have issues related to fragmented ownership," Bajaj said.

The new land pooling policy aims to involve private parties in planning and developing land pockets with residential and commercial components, something which until now was the exclusive domain of DDA. The profits will be shared by the land owners who pool their land for the projects.

"The public notice for objections/suggestions was issued on March 17. The suggestions are in the process of approval," DDA vice-chairman Diptivilasa said.

The two categories of land pooling are Category I for 20 hectares and above and Category II for land between three hectares and 20 hectares. A land owner, a group of land owners or a developer, referred to as the developer entity (DE), shall be permitted to pool land for unified planning.

"The land returned to DE in Category I will be 60 per cent and land retained by DDA will be 40 per cent. In Category II, 40 per

cent will be returned while DDA will keep 60 per cent. Under Category I, 53 per cent will be residential, 2 per cent will be to develop public/semi-public facilities and 5 per cent will be commercial. In Category-II, the entire 40 per cent will be residential," a DDA official said.

Delhi Gramin Samaj secretary general Col Devender Shehrawat said approval of the land pooling policy is a welcome move, but there should be no restriction on the size of land allowed to be developed under the policy.

"A lot of land is still available beyond Dwarka in areas such as Najafgarh, Rajokri, Kanjhawala where farmers can pool land to allow housing projects to come up," Shehrawat said.

Farmhouse policy

What is it: Regularisation of farmhouses built before February 2,

2007. Will allow more farmhouses to come up in urban extension areas. DDA has marked 26 low-density areas for development under the policy.

This policy aims to regularise farmhouses built before February 2, 2007, including built-up area beyond permissible limits by levying penalty charges.

The DDA's planning department circulated a dissent note in 2011. It argued that new farmhouses would curtail new urban extension areas meant to accommodate Delhi's swelling population. But this policy was given the stamp of approval in August 2012.

Under the policy, an FAR of 15 will be permitted as compared to the proposed FAR of 30. The policy will cover nearly 2,400 farmhouses. It will also allow more farmhouses to come up in urban extension areas. For new country homes in designated low-density residential zones (within clusters of existing farmhouses), the FAR has been kept at 10 instead of the proposed FAR of 20.

The DDA has compiled a list of 26 villages declared as low-density residential areas for development under the policy.

The list includes Sayurpur, Satbari, Chhattarpur, Khanpur, Devli, Bhatti, Fatehpur Beri, Asola, Jaunapur, Chandan Hula, Gadaipur, Sultanpur, Mehrauli, Ghitorni, Rangpuri, Chhawla, Pandwala Khurd, Rewla Khanpur, Paprawat, Ghumanhera, Jhatikara, Kangan Heri, Holambi Khurd, Bakoli, Bakhtawarpur and Hiranki.

'Plan has to keep in mind population, limited land'

What necessitated the need for a review of the Master Plan?
How is it expected to change development patterns in the city?

The plan is proposed to be reviewed at five-year intervals to keep pace with fast-changing requirements of society.

Development patterns in the revised Master Plan are envisaged to be in consonance with ground realities of increasing population and limited land resources.

When is the review process likely to be wrapped up?

The target for publishing the revised Master Plan is March 2014.

How many people are working on the review process?

A Master Plan review unit is working on the review exercise. Experts in various fields are associated as members of the advisory group and management action groups.

Who will monitor implementation of the Master Plan?

A dedicated monitoring unit will be set up to ensure timely implementation .

To go vertical or not? Centre, state differ

One reason why the Master Plan-2021 review process is taking so long is the difference of opinion between the state and the Centre on how the city should be developed. The Delhi government's complaint is that it has not been kept in the loop on several changes in the document.

Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit and Union Urban Development Minister Kamal Nath, for instance, have disagreed on the city's vertical growth.

"While I know that the city will need to grow vertical eventually, I feel that highrises should only be constructed in Outer Delhi," Dikshit said last week. She also said she would not allow highrises to come up as long as she was alive.

The highrises, she underlined, require uninterrupted and adequate supply of power and water, and restrict open spaces in the city.

At the meeting of the NCR Planning Board on Monday, Kamal Nath made it clear that since Delhi can't expand horizontally, vertical growth has to happen. "Such development can happen in new areas where there is space and opportunity for such growth."

"Delhi cannot expand, it has Haryana on one side and Uttar Pradesh on another. With increasing population and the 40 lakh people who live in slums, what other solution is there? Land is expensive. So where it is possible, there should be highrises in new areas."

On May 27, Dikshit, while speaking to Newsline, said many

changes in the Master Plan were being made without taking her government into confidence. She warned that Delhi's "problems will keep mounting" if the Master Plan review process continues to crawl.

A month later, she seems to treading cautiously. Asked about the Master Plan review and the changes it will bring, Dikshit said she will wait and see what happens.

"I met Urban Development Minister Kamal Nath at the NCR Planning Board meeting and it would not be right for me to say anything. Let us wait and see what happens."

Redefining boundaries of bungalow zone, floodplains

The Master Plan review will also redefine boundaries which until now were considered sacrosanct — The Lutyens' Bungalow Zone (LBZ) and the O-Zone or the Yamuna

floodplains.

The DDA has floated a proposal to shrink the LBZ. The revised proposal with recommendations has been forwarded to the Ministry of Urban Development and is under consideration," DDA vice-chairman D Diptivilasa said.

Sources said the proposal seeks to exclude areas like Bengali Market, Golf Links, Sunder Nagar from the LBZ. This will allow vertical growth in these areas.

Many areas, constructed decades after Edwin Lutyens built government bungalows in the 1920s-30s, were added to the LBZ in 1988 and 2003. Under existing norms, fresh construction in this zone is virtually impossible.

Many residents in the LBZ want to be taken out of the zone. Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit has taken up the case of Bengali Market with the Urban Development Ministry since many houses there are now dilapidated but cannot carry out repairs. The area around Bengali Market has 270 plots. Of these, around 200 were reconstructed with additional FAR between

1998 and 2002 when the colony was taken off the LBZ list. In 2003, it was again listed under LBZ.

A K Jain, former Commissioner (Planning) of the DDA, said: "Any change that is brought about should not be environmentally damaging or should not affect the heritage character of the city while taking into consideration future growth."

Naysayers say LBZ should be left as it is. "Lutyens' Delhi should be as it was initially designed. Areas that were included subsequently need not be there. But why this mania to shrink an area which constitutes 1 per cent of the total area when you have the remaining 99% to work around," INTACH (Delhi chapter) convenor AGK Menon said.

The Master Plan review also includes changes in defining Zone O or the Yamuna floodplains. The move has been initiated so that colonies like Sonia Vihar, Jaitpur and others can be excluded from the zone to get a legal tag.

"This exercise has been undertaken after directions from the Lt

Governor's office. In association with Geo Spatial Development Ltd, Department of Environment, Delhi government is re-examining the boundary of River Zone O with the help of other stakeholders," DDA vice-chairman Diptivilasa said.

Unauthorised colonies like Sadatpur, Karawal Nagar (part), Khajuri Khas (part), Abul Fazal Enclave, Shaheen Bagh fall under Zone O. According to the government, these colonies, like unauthorised colonies elsewhere in Delhi, have existed for over 40 years and cannot be uprooted now.

"The built-up area, approximately 2000 hectares, can be taken out from Zone O and merged with adjacent zones. The active flood-prone area can be retained within Zone O which shall be around 8,000 hectares," an official said.