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CW INTERIORS ROUNDTABLE ON DESIGN TRENDS IN TIER II AND III CITIES

Tier II and III cities in India are gearing up for developments across the board. A 1-member panel discussion was organised by CW INTERIORS in Delhi to discuss the potential these cities have to offer and their design needs. Here are some excerpts of the discussion!





Maa Shakti Apartments, Haridwar, by Adlakha Associates headed by Promod Adlakha.



School of Management, Gwalior, by M:OFA.

NIFT Kangra in Himachal Pradesh by M:OFA headed by Manish Gulati.



Tier II and III cities in India hold immense potential for brands and designers as every sector across the industrial spectrum is focussing on them. Prime locations in emerging cities are 30 per cent cheaper than their counterparts in the metros, making them more attractive for businesses. Mysore and Mangalore are witnessing 120% per annum growth in pre-schools; Chandigarh, Coimbatore, Vadodara, Jamshedpur have become hubs of e-commerce; Mohali and Agra are being favoured by global investors; while integrated townships spread across 900 acres are coming up at Pune, Aurangabad, Jodhpur, Gwalior, Bareilly, Solapur, Porbandar, Katni, and Kashipur. Seven more integrated projects are already under construction in Lucknow, Jaipur, Indore, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Satna, and Coimbatore, with developers like Tata Housing, Lodha Builders, Raheja, Ansal Housing and DLF leading the brigade.

CW INTERIORS conducted a round table discussion on the design needs of Tier II and Tier III cities. The panelists included **Architects Promod Adlakha, Sonali Bhagwati, Balbir Verma, Charanjit S Shah, Manish Gulati, Designer Lipika Sud, Ashish Jain, Director, Bleu Concepts; Poonam Gupta, Director, FCML; Ajay Sharma, Director, Intermark Associates; Manisha Sharma, Head of operations for Delhi/NCR Region, Hardwyn and Atul Chharia, Director, Unistone Products India.** The topics discussed were design challenges, customer's definition of luxury, aspirational values, availability of labour and mindsets of the customers.

Outreach in emerging cities

Speaking about the importance of emerging cities, Designer Lipika Sud said, "Projects in Tier II and III cities are very relevant in today's context particularly with the growing economy and with the new government and the Prime Minister emphasising on the growth of smart cities."

"The Tier II cities are the upcoming cities at present because of the economical shift in development and saturation of Tier I cities. As vendors or product manufacturers, our focus would definitely be of going from Tier II to Tier I," added Atul Chharia from Unistone, a leading tile manufacturing company in India.

Emphasising the importance of qualitative development, Architect Balbir Verma said, "For the development of any city, the policy of adopt, adept and improve is required. If the professionals today consider that as their social responsibility, then the planning and development of these cities will be different and better than it is today."

The panellists also cited examples of the work they are engaged with in Tier II and III cities. Chharia said, "We have got a number of projects all over India from Kerala to Kangra, in Himachal Pradesh."

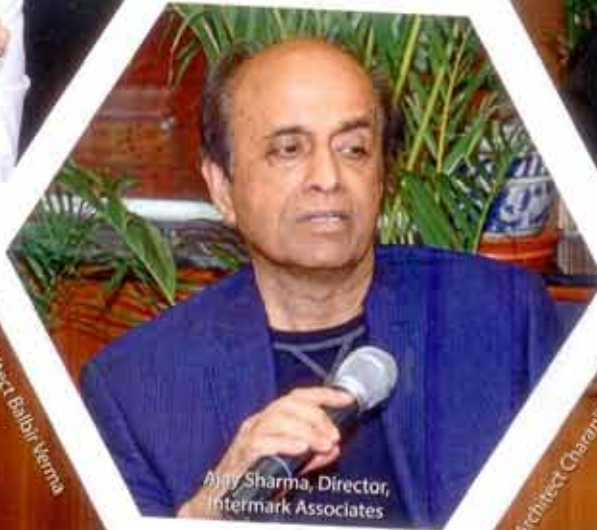
Architect Charanjit Shah divulged, "We have designed a vision of Jamshedpur where we have envisaged how to design and rebuild



Architect Sonali Bhagwati



Architect Manish Gulati



Ajay Sharma, Director, Intermark Associates



Architect Babji Verma



Architect Charamjit Singh



Projects in Tier II and III cities are very relevant in today's context particularly with the growing economy and with the new government and the Prime Minister emphasising on the growth of smart cities."

- Designer Lipika Sud

the city. We are also involved in the Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar metro link."

Design needs

The panellists offered a clear idea of what was required in the development of these cities in the context of design. Ashish Jain from Bleu Concepts said, "The people in these cities are more aspirational. You are required to give them the best of products at low costs. But the essential design driver for us is to organise lives at a very good price."

Speaking about the sourcing of materials, Architect Manish Gulati said, "As far as institutions, housing and smaller projects are concerned, local material is the key. Sourcing local material helps revive the dying arts and skills. For instance, for an institution's design in Gwalior, I wanted to do laser cut stone *jaalis*, but my client suggested hand-cut work from local artisans, at one-fourth the cost. Since the last six years, we have sourced stone work locally from Gwalior. But for projects in Delhi, we prefer laser cut as the necessary skill set is not available."

"The needs of the client are also of prime importance. Architect Sonali Bhagwati opined, "Architecture is not an art, which is irrespective of the client. While I completely endorse sensitising the client, it is also important for the architect to know that they need to fulfil the needs of the client."

Aspirations and more

Even in emerging cities, the clients understand and want luxurious designs, "There is a part of the community which is rich and well-travelled and they will spend any kind of money to get what they wanted," elaborated Jain.

The panellists agreed that the internet and media have changed the way people think, behave and spend their money. Today people are more aware of what luxury is and want that reflected in their homes and offices. Poonam Gupta from FMCL said, "Every customer of ours, irrespective of the tier he is from, has the same aspirations, the same needs and the same global thoughts."

Ajay Sharma, whose company Intermark specialises in building smart roofs, pointed



Poonam Gupta
Director, FCHL



Architect Piyush Adlakha



Ashish Jain, Director, Bleu Concepts



Designer Tapika Sud



Manisha Sharma, Head of Operations, Hardwyn



Falguni Paabode, Group Managing Editor, ALSAPP Media



We need to offer what is best for the people who are living there not what is best for an architect"

- Architect Balbir Verma



Anuj Charia, Director, Unistone



The aspirations of tier II and III cities' inhabitants are Paris, New York, Italy - they are no longer Delhi and Mumbai."

- Architect Manish Gulati



India Grill restaurant at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Jaipur, by Design Plus Associates headed by Sonali Bhagwati.



Affordable Housing at Omicron, Greater Noida, by Adlakha Associates headed by Promod Adlakha.

out that people in Tier II and III cities are aware of high value innovative systems and need for courtyards, making them potential customers.

"The aspirations of Tier II and III cities' inhabitants are Paris, New York, Italy – they are no longer Delhi and Mumbai," said Gulati.

Access to skilled labour

Shah said, "In today's context of Tier II, III or may be IV, all construction products are

available there. People are also more aware. Today, the globe has become a village and in everything there is a lot of competition."

Adding to this aspect of skilled labour, Verma "The definition of luxury, comfort or materials should be put into one compartment – quality of life irrespective of the status of the person. According to me, if there was no skilled labour available in those cities where are we getting those labourers in Delhi or Mumbai? They are all coming from there."

Customer mindset

When asked about the customer mindset in emerging cities, the panellists had interesting anecdotes and examples to share. Sud said, "The maximum number of Mercedes Benz cars are sold in Ludhiana. That says a lot about the deep pockets in Tier II and III cities. One of my clients once gave me a brief that said, 'Only use things which are not found, used or seen anywhere else.'"

Jain said, "We've been working with Tier II and III cities with our retail division. We have found that almost every area is different. You go a 100 km in one direction and the dialect changed, the people change and their mindsets change."

Citing an example of one of his works, Architect Promod Adlakha said, "High rise



Times Square Mall, Raipur by Creative Group partnered by Charanjit Shah.

building have become a norm in emerging cities too because the builders want to utilise the maximum FARs. Why not go in for low cost housing – G plus 2 and G plus 3? In one of my projects in Chennai, 50 km from the main city, we innovated using pre-cast materials and pre-cast concrete made at site and we introduced inter-locking fly ash blocks. The developer panicked saying he would not be able to sell the product. I explained to him the plus points of the materials and technologies that we were using, which included green building, permanent finish, maintenance free technology, etc. I convinced them and today 500 houses have already been constructed and sold out. And those houses are all load-bearing structures.”

Shah pointed out that the material awareness is also different in different regions in India. “We have been involved in various projects in smaller cities in South India. We see quality consciousness there. The vendors are better equipped, their showrooms and displays are nicely done up and people are really aware of the materials and go by branding.”

Design challenges

Challenges in emerging cities differ from place to place and are mostly cultural in nature. Bhagwati explained, “Tier II cities

like Ahmedabad and Baroda are very different from places in the north like Jalandhar and Ludhiana. Similarly down south, they have a different take. So it’s a very cultural issue. Your approach to every city has to be in sync with the cultural background because by and large what is good about these places is that people are still rooted. They have aspirations but they have not lost their rootedness and I think that’s a plus point.”

Verma clarifies, “We need to offer what is best for the people who are living there not what is best for an architect. Wood structures in earthquake and tsunami prone areas are a good example.”

Adlakha is of the opinion that developers should save 25 per cent out of structures and invest that into the finishing material. That is what the common man wants. His aspiration is to have a home with good finishing. If you innovate further on the technology and materials, you can further save 20 per cent.”

Shah said, “For the design of the Tier II city, we need to learn from metros and from the types of things we have done there.”

Bhagwati concluded the topic by saying, “We need to look at our work far more carefully to know what we do is sustainable over a long period of time. If people can use it effectively, it can wear effectively.” **i**



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– Architect Sonali Bhagwati



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