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Why Green Townships will define India's next decade By C J Singh, COO, Wave City

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India's urban evolution is entering a decisive phase towards sustainability. Rising incomes, expanding social infrastructure and growing concerns on global warming are changing what Indian real estate must deliver. The next phase of development should therefore move from isolated green buildings towards self-sustaining, master-planned green townships in which water, energy, landscape and waste systems are integrated into a cohesive ecosystem.

This shift is particularly important in the Delhi-National Capital Region, where rapid and fragmented urbanisation has intensified pressure on air quality, groundwater and energy security. Traditional responses such as diesel generators for backup power and privately supplied water are increasingly difficult to reconcile with the need for resilient, lower-carbon urban infrastructure.

Structural Advantages of Green Townships

A green township has important structural advantages as they support shared infrastructure and circular utility systems that may be difficult to justify at an individual-building level. India's domestic green-building systems, including those administered by the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), already provide frameworks for integrating water efficiency, energy efficiency, sustainable site planning, materials and occupant well-being.

Dual plumbing, rainwater harvesting and on-site wastewater treatment can enable treated water to be reused for flushing, landscaping and other non-potable purposes. IGBC currently estimates that green new buildings can achieve approximately 30–50% water savings, although actual performance varies by building type, design and operating practices. Large-scale planned neighbourhoods with open spaces, green shaded areas and passive design can deliver neighbourhoods that are measurably more comfortable and less dependent on mechanical cooling.

Energy Efficiency & Renewable Integration

Rooftop solar with energy storage, smart controls and community-level energy management can reduce dependence on conventional grid electricity. IGBC's current benchmark for green new buildings indicates potential energy savings of approximately 20–30%. World Green Building Council evidence from Asia-Pacific reports a 20–60% energy savings across green-certified assets, alongside rental premiums of up to 11%. While these are not guaranteed outcomes, they outline the significant benefits of planned townships.

Policy & Regulatory Push

Policy makers too are pushing the case for integrated townships. With a total programme outlay of ₹75,021 crore, the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana targets rooftop solar adoption among one crore households. The programme is residential rather than township-specific, but its expansion of distributed solar demonstrates the direction of national energy policy.

State-specific policies such as Uttar Pradesh's Township Policy promote integrated communities. The policy specifies minimum township areas of 10 acres within municipal limits, 25 acres outside municipal limits and 50 acres for integrated townships in development-authority areas, while requiring at least 15% of the area for parks, playgrounds and green spaces.

Regulators too are keeping pace. The Bureau of Energy Efficiency's building-efficiency framework has evolved beyond the earlier ECBC regime, with ECSBC 2024 now part of the country's current building-energy framework. Domestic standards and rating systems such as ECSBC, NBC, IGBC and GRIHA should be integrated effectively into approval and procurement processes so that developers are not burdened with unnecessary duplication where an appropriate Indian standard already exists.

Changing consumer mindset

Consumer mindset too is changing accordingly. Buyers increasingly want sustainability claims that can be independently verified rather than marketing language alone. For master planners, architects, developers and institutional investors, the conclusion is clear: sustainability can no longer be treated as an optional premium layer.

Conclusion

Green townships offer India a practical framework for combining resource efficiency, climate resilience, infrastructure reliability and long-term asset value. Therefore, green developments should become a central model for the country's next generation of urban growth.

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