Design Strategies for Diverse Users in a Composite Layout

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Any development of a SRA or Cess plot scheme or a re-development project for that matter entails the creation of a built-form for users very diverse within the same composite layout / plan. These tenanted / rehab units are akin to a low-cost housing unit and are quite different from the sale units in terms of type, scale, quality, finishes etc. How do these manifest itself in the built-form & why and how does one integrate them with the whole scheme?

The sizes of these units are quite compact without any frills. The finishes are pretty decent with all the necessary amenities. The constructions adhere to the concept of being utilitarian – very functional. The people occupying the rehab / tenanted units are generally people from a weaker economic background and have thus a lesser paying capacity. The sale units are generally for people with a very good paying capacity and these units are greatly enhanced. When both these are to be accommodated within the same site / layout, the question arises of integrating the whole development together – how to bridge the economic divide?
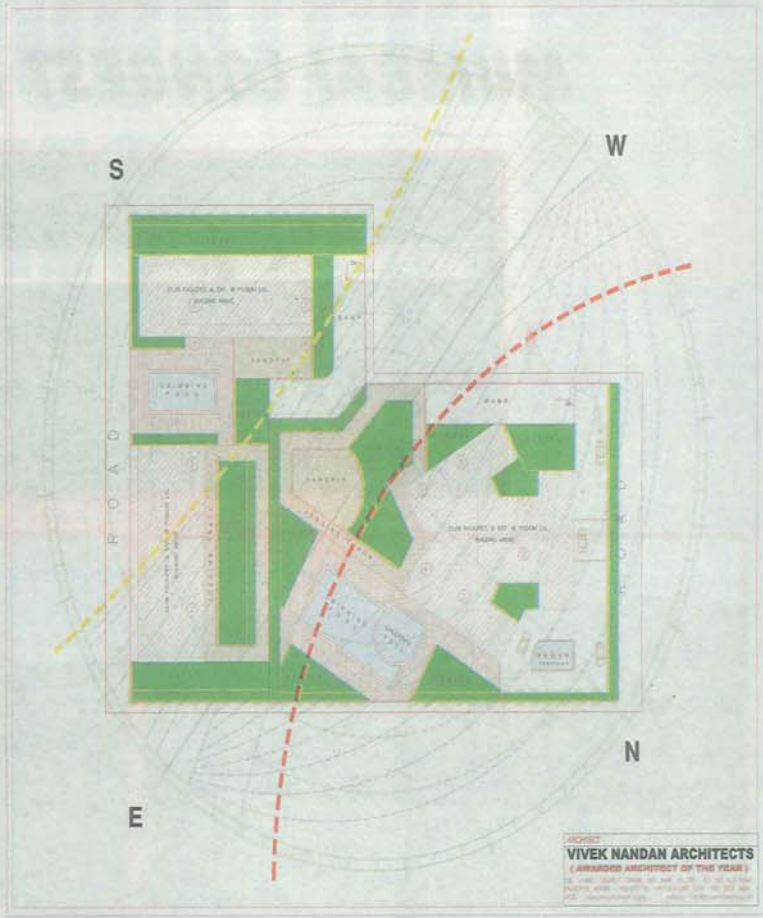
The emphasis for LIG units is however on being very utilitarian – functional without compromising ergonomics. These units being very compact, space is at a premium – hence the necessity to maximize space and volume. It thus has to be multi-functional - to as great an extent a possible. It also ought to be smart and comfortable and satisfy the needs of the people.

When such developments are to be undertaken and the size of the plot is small, then the size of the plot itself becomes the basic constraint – a challenge to be overcome by "Design Strategy". Rather than trying to bridge the economic, socio-cultural etc. divide, it is so much more prudent to carve out areas for the different categories of the user. One has to minimize the incidents of forced interaction in terms of separate entries, staircases, lifts etc. It would also entail the creation of a separate set of entities – individual spaces at the ground, separate amenities, a separate set of services, etc. – in short it is more like creating / developing two individual projects on the same plot – with as less as possible any direct interlinking between the two.

When the plot is so small that the developed building has to be a single/composite entity- the design strategy has to be even more evolved. If the two structures are joined together horizontally, they are to be integrated to some extent in terms of planning parameters, structure-wise, elevation-wise – to be able to create a cohesive and aesthetic building elevation that flows through rather than jarring the sensibilities. When the two entities are to be integrated vertically within the same built form, the planning strategy has to also integrate the different unit planning modules in the same vertical framework of the structure.

A design strategy that takes advantage of the "Sun Path" attributes and the "Wind Patterns" generates the optimum amount of heat, light and wind at the right time intervals to provide maximum light and air without the heat generation and also at the optimum time of the day & year. This generates a much smaller carbon footprint. However constrained the site / space may be provision of Green spaces goes a long way in providing not only a heat sink but also elevating the living standards substantially. It also offers a very interesting and colourful imagery in the midst of the built environment – this structuring of the un-built space has the potential to dramatically uplift the ambience of the complete development.

Good standards of living are of the utmost importance – rather a necessity across the range of habitable solutions. It is not that they are not possible – whatever the constraints might be – it is rather that they require the optimum "Design Strategy" to be applied to achieve the same.

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