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## Roadmap for urban development in the post-COVID era

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*The outbreak of novel Coronavirus has made the world realise that an invisible virus can break the illusion of supremacy of human being technocracy. It has further highlighted the result of environment and social ignorance. However, while majority of the sectors have been opened up today, urban development still faces numerous issues.*



When we compare the impact of the virus globally, and in India, we find ourselves in a much better situation. Though the number of cases continues to increase, the recovery rate is more than 40 percent, which is high as compared to any other country in the world. Despite this, COVID-19 has altered urban life dramatically. It has had a long-lasting impact on everyone, and the authorities are still recognising the impact of the virus. As we continue to fight against the deadly coronavirus spread, the economic activities, after being stalled for almost two months, have started to pick up the pace. While most of the sectors are been opened up, the urban development will still continue to face the wrath, for a longer duration, owing to various factors.

However, the government is proactively working to bring the economy back on the revival path, and Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is among one such step. The support has infused courage across the industries to fight with the crisis-like situation. Taking a stock about what lies for the [urban development](#) in future, and how India will meet its infrastructure goals, we expect five significant ways the sector will be impacted.

### Focus on important services

With the steep spike in the coronavirus cases, it is time now to think, whether we have moved towards urbanisation more than what was required. Has this density caused a bigger problem?

In fact, density is the precondition for successful urban service delivery, and several people in today's cities who lack access to public services have experienced it. It is the lack of access to basic services, including water, sanitation, waste management and health care that have intensified the challenges in many cities.

Bad access in some areas makes lockdown instructions difficult to follow. Closing this gap in public infrastructure needs to be a priority for the future of cities. While planning for the transport system, we should give emphases on active transport mediums such as walking and cycling, which have multiplier effects on environment and health.

### Increased regional planning

The cascading economic effect of this crisis will affect manufacturing and supply chains in the nearby regions and will spill out into global set-ups too. We should benefit from this extraordinary disruption and prepare ourselves well for the next crisis.

We need more coordinated regional planning in order to make these networks a source of resilience rather than vulnerabilities across the economies, the energy supply, transport networks and food supply. A larger and diverse group of players will engage in such a strategic approach, which will lead to a stronger alliance for reform.

### Integrating Blue and Green Spaces

A new approach to infrastructure development will be to place green fields, watersheds and parks at the center while planning and designing our cities. Blue-green infrastructure is critical as a measure for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Moreover, it offers a host of benefits, such as improving air and water quality; reducing noise; cooling effects and biodiversity. Such benefits also contribute to enhancing human well-being and sustainability.

In addition, larger open spaces will help cities enforce emergency services and evacuation plans in urban areas while giving long-lasting support to the current infrastructure.

### Housing and public spaces

How we build our communities ultimately dictates how robust it is. The infrastructure growth would add to challenges without providing for sufficient public space or appropriate, affordable housing assets. COVID-19 can cause improvements, ranging from immediate steps such as social-distancing norms and sanitation to long-lasting reforms that will concentrate on enhancing access to affordable housing and public space, such as improvement in informal settlements.

To apprise, informal settlements are the result of several integrated factors, such as rural-urban migration; lack of affordable housing; weak policy, planning and urban management; economic disconnects; and displacement caused by natural disasters.

India is facing the huge challenge of shaping cities of the next decade, as large numbers of dwellers are expected to be added to the urban populace by 2030. As it turns, a large share of future growth is going to be unplanned, which could raise the alarm for proper planning and investment in infrastructure. Change is important, and COVID-19 might be the wake-up call for better and sustainable cities. In this regards, the government has undertaken in advance, the PMAY and [AMRUT scheme](#).

COVID-19 should not be only taken as a threat, but it can be considered as an opportunity to resolve the existing accumulative problems and move ahead.