

SPREADING THIN - CITY LIMIT EXPANSION

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Ar. Vishal Shah, Founder partner- Aangan Architects and Partner- Urban Initiatives, is a multidisciplinary personality related to the field of design and academics; creating a fine balance between Practice and Preaching. A strong advocate of design for masses and an ardent activist in his own right, he strongly believes in 'What is the City But the People'. He has represented Surat at international level in academics as well as architecture practice and is currently coordinating the Masters in Architecture Programme with specialization in Urban Design at the Faculty of Architecture, SCET in the capacity of Professor.



For a city to expand by 45% in the time of economic slowdown is a decision to seriously ponder upon, with financial capacities of SMC being exposed and with its struggle to provide basic services to citizens, the whole race for mega city seems like a misplaced priority. In the existing 326 sq.km. SMC limit we can still find more than 30% land (approx 100 sq.km.) vacant for development and with a further addition of 150 sq.km the total area yet to be developed amounts to 250 sq.km. That's like adding 1 more present day Surat. This will exert double the pressure on SMC budget and with current financial capacity it seems a distant dream and a move that is uncalled for. The city expansion business in current times defeats the idea of liveable city, where mere increasing the city boundary is not the idea of growth but providing better quality of life in terms of physical and social infrastructure is imperative.



Spreading thin and diluting the efforts will not make us a 'mega city' but will only tire our efforts of creating quality living condition, which is the need of the hour. The city is for people to live a healthy and happy life and should not be mistaken as mere economic entities to be exploited by land speculations. If we intend to make our mark as a liveable city by international standards, its high time to re-evaluate the mad rush for city limit expansion as development model and concentrate on creating a livable city.