

Quote by Aarti Harbhajanka, Co-Founder & Managing Director, Primus Partners

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## 65 million in slums, GDP losses mount- Report proposes future ready Indian cities

*With India's urban population projected to reach 52% by 2050, and nearly 65 million people still living in slums, the urgency for a new approach is becoming increasingly apparent.*

by Storyboard 18



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### Article Content:

As Indian cities grapple with the challenges of rising populations, informal settlements, and deteriorating infrastructure, a new report by Primus Partners in collaboration with the Griharmony Redevelopment Stakeholders Federation (GRSF) is offering a transformative path forward. Titled “Rethinking City Redevelopment: Bold Strategies to Propel India’s Urban Future,” the report lays out a compelling vision for reimagining urban growth in India through structured, area-based redevelopment rather than unchecked urban sprawl.

The report advocates for scalable, inclusive solutions rooted in global best practices, robust policy reform, and active community engagement. Shri Gautam Chatterjee, former Chairman of MahaRERA and current Chairman of GRSF, emphasised the deeper significance of the initiative, stating, “This is not just about rebuilding spaces, it’s about rebuilding purpose. Redevelopment is the only sustainable path forward.”

With India's urban population projected to reach 52% by 2050, and nearly 65 million people still living in slums, the urgency for a new approach is becoming increasingly apparent. Urban land is expanding at 2.5 times the population growth rate, further straining available resources and infrastructure.

Aarti Harbhajanka, Co-Founder and Managing Director of Primus Partners, stressed the need to transition from fragmented, plot-level interventions to an integrated, people-centric redevelopment model. “This report brings together global learning and actionable ideas tailored for India’s unique urban challenges,” she said.

The data underpinning the report is stark. India loses an estimated 1.5 million hectares of farmland annually to urban sprawl, according to ISRO (2022). Nearly 47% of the urban population are migrants, yet rental housing comprises only 11% of the total housing stock. The World Bank estimates that urban inefficiencies cost the country between 5% and 8% of its GDP each year. Moreover, India is home to seven of the world’s ten most polluted cities, as reported by IQAir in 2023.

To address these pressing concerns, the report proposes a set of bold, actionable strategies. These include adopting integrated area-based redevelopment using local area plans and Development Control Regulations (DCRs), unlocking rental housing stock in redeveloped plots to accommodate migrant populations, and creating dedicated Urban Redevelopment Funds mobilised through public-private partnerships, land value capture mechanisms, and fiscal incentives.

The report also calls for institutionalising community engagement through consultations under the 74th Constitutional Amendment, leveraging Ward Committees and digital platforms. It advocates for building future-ready cities by embedding green infrastructure, walkability, Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), and ECBC-compliant energy-efficient designs into redevelopment plans.

Drawing on successful international models from Singapore, São Paulo, and London, the report outlines a 2047 roadmap for making Indian cities economically vibrant, environmentally sustainable, and socially inclusive. The initiative has garnered support from sector veterans, urban planners, real estate experts, and former senior bureaucrats, and aims to ignite a fresh wave of policy dialogue at both the state and national levels.

With urban India at a tipping point, this report seeks to spark a decisive shift in how the country envisions and executes city redevelopment in the decades to come.