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EDITORS Brijender S. Dua Architect | New Delhi
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ADVISORY PANEL Savita Punde Landscape Architect | Delhi NCR
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STUDENTS' SECTION COORDINATOR Ayla Khan Landscape Architect | New Delhi

DESIGN | LAYOUT Grafiniti

MARKETING Anand Kumar Jha

ADMINISTRATION Shah Alam

PRINTING ADVISOR Atul Naahar | Paramount Printographics

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HCP Design, Planning and Management Pvt. Ltd.

SABARMATI RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

REVITALISING THE HEART OF AHMEDABAD

Ahmedabad was founded on the banks of river Sabarmati in 1411 A.D. Since then the city has grown around the river. The river has always been an integral part of the rich history of Ahmedabad. While the kings built pleasure gardens, summer palaces, and mosques along the river; the people utilized it for trade, meetings and various religious rituals. Daily activities like bathing, washing clothes, and drying were also carried out on the river edge. Sabarmati is monsoon-fed river, hence when it ran dry, the bed was used for farming.

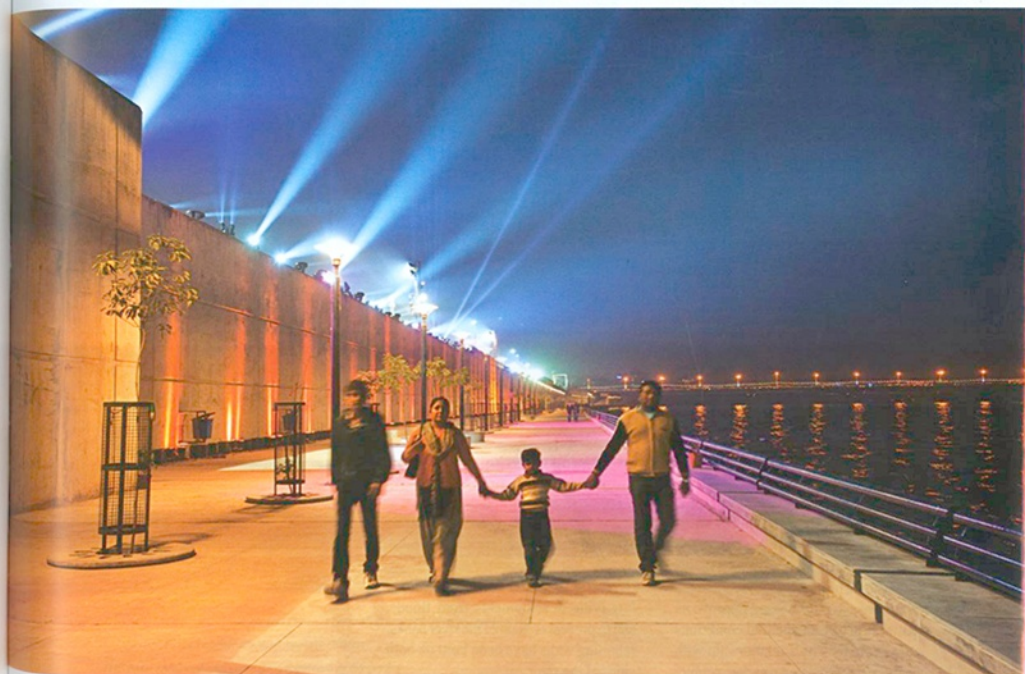
But by the end of the 20th century, the river had become polluted and inaccessible. It was abused and neglected. Domestic and industrial effluents polluted the river and slums encroached both the banks. Private properties abutted the entire length of the river and slums had blocked all access points to the river; it

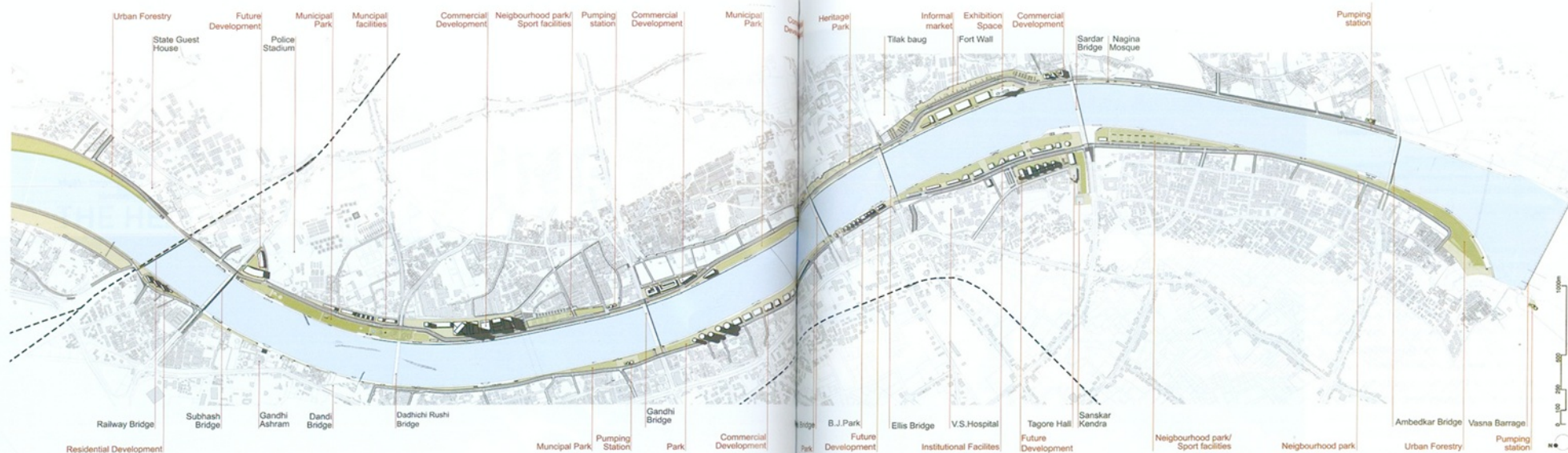
was not possible to walk along its length. Property owners along the banks, who could afford it, had built retaining walls to protect their properties from flood erosion. On account of this, the river did not play a significant role in the life of the masses; the city had turned its back on the river. Untreated sewage flowed into the river from storm water drains, and the sewage from slum pockets, on both banks of the river added to the pollution. This was all the more threatening because Ahmedabad continued to depend on wells dug into the river for a significant portion of its drinking water. In spite of a dam upstream river, and a barrage downstream of the river, it had become difficult to manage floods and to retain water in the river.

River Sabarmati is very important to the city's urban ecology and it has been long acknowledged that appropriate development of the riverfront can turn the river

into a major asset; improving the quality of environment and life in Ahmedabad. The riverfront development has long remained a subject of interest to various city architects; with its inception in 1961 by a French architect Bernard Kohn. In May 1997, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) established the Sabarmati River Front Development Corporation Limited (SRFDCL) under Section 149(3) of the Companies Act 1956. AMC commissioned the Environmental Planning Collaborative (EPC) to prepare a comprehensive feasibility study to develop a 9 km stretch of the city's riverfront. EPC provided development management services to SRFDCL until 2002. During this period its mandate was to direct and monitor all the preparatory work. Since then HCP Design, Planning and Management Pvt. Ltd. (HCPDPM) has been responsible for the project's urban, master plan and architectural design.

Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project – Night view of the completed lower promenade





The Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project is an environmental improvement, social upliftment and urban rejuvenation project. The project aspires to effectively manage the river as a critical infrastructure; hence it is structured to provide benefits to all strata of the society. Its political objective is to provide a highly visible and robust urban renewal project around which the entire city can constructively rally. This multi-dimensional project aims to reclaim the river edge as a public asset, improve its spatial structure and habitat conditions and restore the city's relationship with the river. It will create a thriving, people-

centric network of parks, waterside promenades, markets and cultural and recreational facilities in the heart of Ahmedabad.

Reclaiming land, building flood protection walls, laying sewage interceptors

The project has reclaimed approximately 200 hectares of land from the riverbed. To reclaim the land, protect low lying developments from floods, and to prevent erosion of the river banks, retaining walls have been built on both sides of the river.



THIS AND FACING PAGE | TOP Master Plan - Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project

FACING PAGE | LEFT Construction of working platform

THIS PAGE | ABOVE Aerial view of the riverfront development

THIS PAGE | TOP
Existing view—Shopping plaza at Vallabhsadan

THIS PAGE | BELOW
Existing view—Gardens at Khanpur

FACING PAGE | TOP
Shopping plaza envisioned at Vallabhsadan on the western bank between Nehru bridge and Gandhi bridge.

FACING PAGE | BELOW
Gardens at Khanpur between Gandhi bridge and Nehru bridge on eastern bank

Since Sabarmati is a seasonal river, water is channeled into the river from Narmada canal, which intersects the river upstream from Ahmedabad and is retained in the river using the Vasna Barrage which is located downstream. To prevent untreated sewage from flowing into the river, two sewage interceptor lines with new pumping stations are constructed parallel to both the reclaimed banks. These lines carry untreated sewage to the augmented sewage treatment plants south of Vasna Barrage. Slum dwellers living on the riverbed, and affected by the project, are in the process of being relocated and provided with *pucca* housing with secured tenure.

Improving access to the river

The reclaimed land will make Ahmedabad's riverfront a public asset. To better access the riverfront and facilities built along it, a number of streets leading up to the river are being strengthened and some new streets are being developed. Most of the proposed streets are under construction. The new streets are designed with wide foot paths and designated cycle tracks to improve and encourage pedestrian access to the river.



Building public promenades, gardens and play fields

The project has provided Ahmedabad with 11.5 km long pedestrian promenade at the water's edge along each bank of the river. *Ghats* punctuate the lower promenade at planned intervals, to provide access to the water. Stretches of these lower promenades are now open to the public. For the first time it is possible for the people of Ahmedabad to stroll along the length of the river. In addition to the promenade many new parks and gardens will be built on the reclaimed land, some of which are under construction. All of the parks will be de-

veloped to enhance livability in the area that they are located in. These parks and gardens will provide the city with much needed green space and a respite from the sweltering summers.

Building public facilities, financing the project

Many new public facilities are being built on the reclaimed land: cultural centers, museums, sports facilities, trade fair grounds and open air markets. All of them will add to the city's many attractions, and help place it on the global tourist map. They will also help to renew the center of the city.





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View of the proposed street along the western bank of the riverfront

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View of the Lower promenade on eastern bank near Subhash bridge

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View of Lower promenade during the Kite festival - January 2012

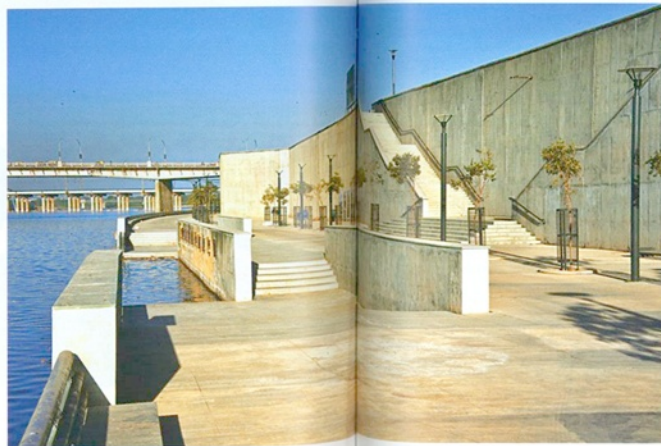
A small portion of the reclaimed land will be sold for commercial developments. This development will be carefully controlled by regulations that will ensure that Ahmedabad has a harmonious and memorable skyline.

Creating precincts with unique character by developing design guidelines

In addition, 18 precincts along the length of the project will be developed. All regulations prepared by HCPDPM in consultation with SRFDCL pertaining to ground coverage, margins, height of building, use of building etc. will regulate the development in the Sabarmati Riverfront Development Area. These regulations prepared for the Sabarmati Riverfront Development Area will

prevail over the General Development Control Regulations.

The Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project is an urban project, being built in the heart of an existing city, stitching together the east bank and west bank. The main objective is to bring the river back to the city and the people back to the river. The simple joy of being able to walk along the river bank, to sit in a garden and enjoy the serene beauty of the river is now a reality. The project is currently ongoing, but several parts of are being used by the public and the reclaimed space is home to several events such as the kite festival. Over the years the project strives to become a part of the public realm and gradually transform into the new center of Ahmedabad, creating a new identity for it.



Client	Sabarmati River Front Development Corporation Ltd., Ahmedabad
Site Area	200 hectares
Year of commencement	1997 - Ongoing
Lead Consultant	HCP Design, Planning and Management Pvt. Ltd.
Sub Consultants	Advanced Engineering Consultants
Structural Design	Jhaveri Associates, Ahmedabad
Electrical Design	MWH India Pvt. Ltd.
Infrastructure Design	MWH India Pvt. Ltd.
Landscape Consultant for Ashram Baug (part of the SRFD)	Oasis Designs Incorporated, New Delhi

Scope of Work

Urban Planning, Master Planning, Urban Design, Architecture, Structural Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Landscape Design and Project Management

Text, drawings and photographs courtesy HCPDPM, Ahmedabad.