

If All Goes As Planned, Bandra's Coastline Will Soon Get Its Fourth Promenade After Bandstand, Carter Rd & Land's End

Evening walk along Chimbai beach, anyone?

Linah Baliga | TNN

It used to be an idyllic strip of coast from St Andrew's Church right up to Jogger's Park in Bandra (West). Now it languishes in a decrepit state, strewn with rubble and overrun by encroachers. This is Chimbai beach, which outlines the eponymous fishing village.

In 2008, local fishermen, along with Bandra residents, decided that enough was enough and that the beach must be restored to its former glory. A plan to turn this wish into a reality was conceived by architect P K Das — and nine months ago, it got the BMC's approval.

The beautification plan goes beyond reclaiming the stretch. The entire length would be lined with walkways and a promenade, to be shaded by coconut groves and other plantations. "Chimbai is a part of our masterplan for waterfront development and follows our earlier projects at Carter Road, Bandra Bandstand and Juhu beach," said Das. "The endeavour is to integrate the beach plan and put it into the network of public spaces in Mumbai to safeguard it, as it's now open to encroachments. There will be spaces (a jetty and

ramps) for fishermen to dock and repair their boats. There will be other spaces to carry out their cultural and community activities," said Das. It would be integrated with Bandstand and Carter Road.

The plan also features open spaces and an amphitheatre for cultural and social programmes like at Carter Road and Bandstand. Extra toppings include a children's park, a playground and a few gardens as well. An edge wall has been envisioned to prevent its defacement and keep it off-limits from encroachers.

"We have also planned for weekend bazaars where the local fishing community could serve the visitors fish cooked in their traditional style. So, on weekends one could walk in and buy fried fish, fish curry or fish tandoor and enjoy a typical traditional fish meal," said Das.

But the reality is different today. The builder lobby has not spared these sandy shores and 15 buildings have come up on it. For the last seven years, the developers have been eyeing Chimbai, and constructing one-storey bungalows right on the beach.

"They violate the CRZ norms. We



CHANGING SHORELINE: A view from a fish-drying yard of the seashore that will be revamped and beautified

have been fighting against rampant illegal construction for three years. The BMC and the collector just pass the buck," said Arden Uttankar, a local Chimbaikar. The idea of restoring the beach will begin to take shape only if the rubble-clearing process succeeds.

"The schedule of the tide is hampering the cleanliness drive. The BMC contractors piled up garbage on one end of the beach; it was a failure. We also

learnt that the BMC didn't have enough garbage trucks. It's even worse now. The harbour division was supposed to construct a tsunami wall, to set up a certain boundary to break the force of the tide. Nothing came of that plan. Encroachment has increased and they first have to do a survey on the number of structures that have come up in the CRZ area," said Warren Falcon, whose father was a fisherman.

Falcon remembers the time when the beach was never short of fresh fish and crabs.

"There was ankle-deep sand on the beach for kids. Elderly people would sit there and play cards." Today, the rocks that they walked on during their childhood are covered with construction debris. "It was a beautiful sandy beach, and my son would go fishing on Sundays. We want the beach to come back to Bandra."

So much garbage is thrown into the sea that there is no solution to it. The BMC garbage van comes at 11 am and the local residents throw their garbage into the sea after 8 pm. There should be bins near the shore. Until the garbage is removed, beautification of the beach will remain a distant reality

Arden Uttankar | CHIMBAI RESIDENT

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TOI Interactive 'WE SHOULD HAVE PROMPT ACTION TAKEN AGAINST THOSE WHO MISUSE OPEN SPACES'

Q. Does the Chimbai beach proposal look promising and should more such plans be taken up to improve Mumbai's coastline?

EMAIL: speakout@timesgroup.com with 'Chimbai' in the subject line

SMS: Type SO <space> CHIMBAI Y OR N <space> your views and name. SMS to 58888

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We asked you if Mumbai needs a better system through which complaints can be made, and prompt action can be taken, against parties that usurp and/or misuse the city's precious open spaces. Here are some of your responses

I had been thinking of who should be contacted if one wants to know if a piece of land is rightly in the hands of builders or not. I've been seeing for quite sometime

now that builders have been preying on Borivli national park. In fact, some two to three years back a building was built after chopping down some portion of the park. These days, I'm seeing some more portions of this national asset getting cleared for building purposes. I wish to understand if this has been authorized by the government and more trees are grown to compensate. I reside in Manpada, Thane and am not aware of the NGO or ALM working in the area.

— Manisha Bindlish

Yes we should have prompt action taken against this. There should also be transparency in the procedures followed.

— Vaishali Shetty

If the BMC is sincerely interested in saving open spaces from encroachment, slum lords and powerful builders, it should display a copy of the Development Plan outside each and every open space, giving the reservation status of the plot. A copy of the DP may also be given to the local ALM to spread awareness among the people.

— Robert Castellino

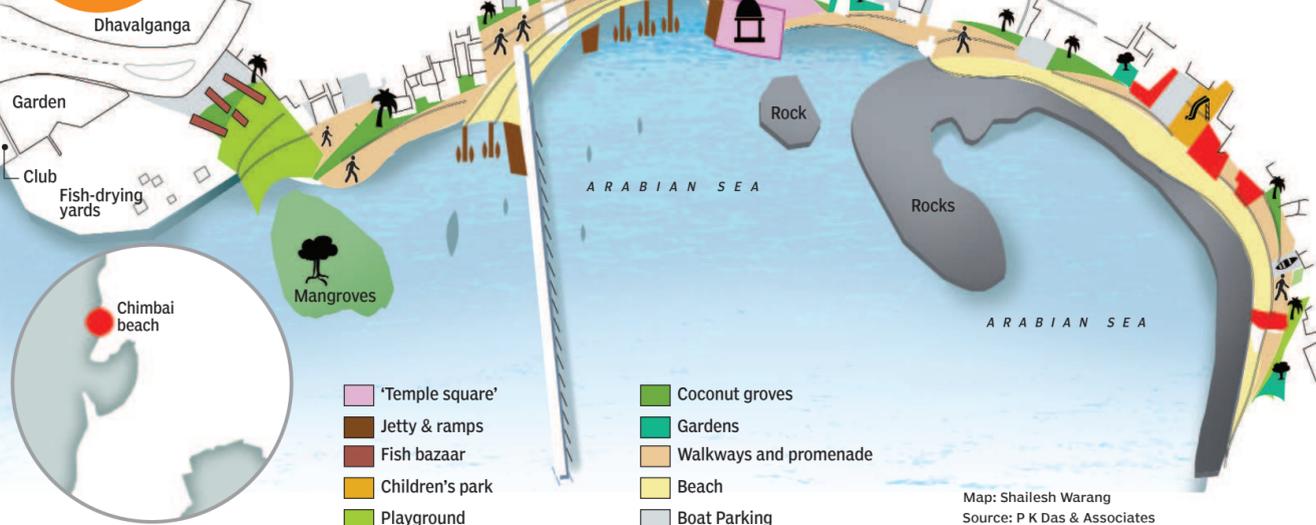
OPEN MUMBAI

An exhibition on how the city can expand and improve its public spaces will be inaugurated today at the National Gallery of Modern Art by chief minister Prithviraj Chavan. The Open Mumbai exhibition seeks to inform citizens on the amount of public spaces Mumbai can have across parks, grounds, beaches, rivers, plazas, sea fronts, hills and so on. The event will continue from March 16 to April 7 from 11 am to 6 pm daily, except for Mondays and national holidays. Maps, charts, statistics and detailed proposals for the future, like for beach nourishment and cycling tracks, will be displayed.

SAND, SHORE AND LONG WALKS

Chimbai beach beautification plan

BMC BUDGET
₹2 crore in the last budget of February 2011

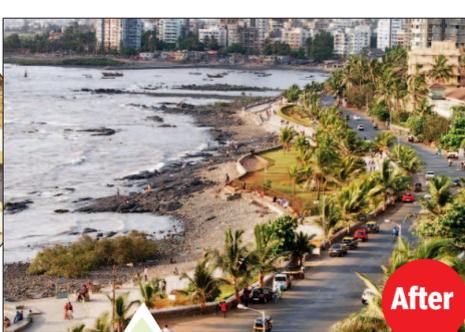


Map: Shailesh Warang Source: P K Das & Associates

Crowd pleasers along the coastline

10 years ago, Bandra residents lit the 'Mumbai makeover' torch by transforming the coastline into promenades

SEA CHANGE AT BANDSTAND



BANDRA BANDSTAND
Waterfront length: 1.2 km
Makeover cost: Rs 140 lakh
Construction period: 2001-02.
Project undertaken by: Bandra Bandstand Residents' Trust in association with then MP Shabana Azmi and architect P K Das
Funding: Shabana Azmi MPLAD funds
Key features: Beautiful black rock structures that form the

sea bed | 1.5 km stone wall with rounded mosaic patterns that separates the forecourt at the water's edge and the promenade from the road | A distinct central gallery of steps, which goes down to the water's edge, for musical programmes | Steps leading down to sand and rock beds | Street furniture for seating | A large, central garden

Age Award in 2007 for its efforts to "transform the lives of Mumbai's citizens". A decade old now, Bandstand is a popular hangout, a jogging spot, a park and a lovers' point. While the area is frequented every evening and on weekends by those seeking an idyllic moment by the Arabian Sea, it also accommodates crowds every now and then when cultural events are held

at the amphitheatre in nearby Land's End. Bandstand stands as an example in which a simple stroll by the sea can be transformed into a memorable outing thanks to the vision of a few locals and others. Das had said in 2007 that the aim was to turn our waterfronts into "unbarricaded public spaces that are truly open and democratic in nature".

The Bandra promenade story began in 1998-99, when local residents had approached the Bombay High Court to disallow permission for a stranded ship, the Zending, to be converted into a floating hotel. They argued that it would harm the environment and the coast and adversely impact the locality. Then MP Shabana Azmi later released money from her MPLAD funds to develop the Carter Road and Bandstand promenades.

PAVING THE WAY AT CARTER ROAD



CARTER RD PROMENADE
Waterfront length: 1.25km
Makeover cost: Rs 150 lakh
Construction period: 2001-02.
Project undertaken by: Bandra West Residents' Association in association with then MP Shabana Azmi and architect P K Das
Funding: Shabana Azmi MPLAD funds, Marico

Industries and others
Key features: Mangroves form the central point of the Carter Road promenade | Galleries with steps at two places for cultural events | A 1.3km yellow wall, with rounded mosaic coping demarcates the forecourt | A large central forum, with a gallery of steps leading down to the water

worth it," Roshan Dabhoiwala, a trustee with Bandra West Residents' Association, had said in 2007. The picturesque Carter Road promenade is today a hotspot for many Mumbaiers seeking a laid-back evening by the sea and walkers and joggers. It also boasts of an annual festival, an open-air amphitheatre and preserved mangroves that

get dramatically silhouetted against the sunset. The mangroves, once abused as a dumping ground, are a focal point at the Carter Road waterfront. The redevelopment meanders around them and the mangroves' night-lighting provides a different perspective. Residents say the promenade has protected and helped the mangroves regenerate.

The third major project along the Bandra coast to be taken up for redevelopment transformed the southern tip of the suburb into, among other things, a hub for cultural events. The amphitheatre at Land's End has hosted many music concerts, dance performances and stage shows, and is also the venue for the Celebrate Bandra festival

SHOWTIME AT LAND'S END



LAND'S END RESTORATION
Area: 18,000 sq mt
Makeover cost: Rs 90 lakh
Construction period: 2002-03
Structures and restoration: Arup Sarbadhikari
Project undertaken by: Bandra Bandstand Residents' Trust in association with then MP Shabana Azmi and architect P. K. Das
Funding: Shabana Azmi MPLAD scheme and others
Key features: Retained as a historical precinct | An active public place with lighting and signage | Some landscaped spaces and pathways | A large amphitheatre and stage in the midst of palm trees for hosting cultural shows and art exhibitions

Residents' Trust, included afforestation. Earlier, most of the palm-tree lined, sloping stretch had already been excavated and destroyed for private purposes, leaving a clutch of trees, some overgrown ruins and untended patches.

The project, undertaken by the Bandra Bandstand

— Linah Baliga