

Uma Kadam

BAYSIDE PROMENADE IS SEA LINK'S LATEST FEATURE

1.5Km Green Strip Along Mahim Bay Will Have Bollywood Celebrity Walk, Open-Air Theatres, Jogging Track, Picnic Spot And More



Linah Baliga | TNN

Come June and Mumbaiers who visit the Bandra-Worli sea link for a drive will have more options for leisure and recreation. A Rs 9-crore promenade is expected to open on the Bandra approach to the iconic bridge, giving the suburb another public space to add to its kitty.

The promenade along Mahim Bay will extend from the causeway to the sea link and aims to cater to all age groups. It will house a jogging track, a meditation zone, an open-air theatre, a sundial amphitheatre, a Saptdeep Stambh (or seven columns depicting the seven islands that formed Mumbai) and a Bollywood celebrity walk. A Bastion of Eternity, yet to be built, will depict a fort-like structure at the sea-link end of the promenade.

Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) officials said that seating areas and sit-outs are also part of the plans. A median of the promenade, called the Silver Drive, will have plants that reflect silver light.

If all goes according to plan,

the state government's initiative would give Mumbaiers a welcome bayside area to escape the daily grind, with a view of the cable-stayed sea link to boot. Officials said the contract has been awarded to D B Realty, which will maintain the promenade for 15 years and pay Rs 99 lakh a year to MSRDC. While facilities will be free for the public, the plan allows the firm to rent out 62 plaques for advertising.

Till about two years ago, the corporation was maintaining the garden along the approach to the sea link at Bandra Reclamation. But the MSRDC later decided to outsource the space to a private player to develop into a promenade. The promenade will stretch for approximately 1.5km and will be up to 40m wide.

"The best part about this promenade is that there are no entry fees," said Nandakumar Gavkar, executive engineer, MSRDC. "There will also be an eating area, like a picnic spot, where people can bring food to eat."

The MSRDC plans to lend a portion to the Bandra Reclamation Area Volunteers Organisation (Bravo) for cultural activities.

LEISURE BY THE BAY

Waterfront length: 1.5km
Makeover cost: Rs 9 crore
Expected completion date: June 2012
Development & maintenance: D B Realty for 15 years, with MSRDC being paid Rs 99 lakh a year

Key features: Jogging track | Meditation area | Open-air theatre | Sundial amphitheatre | Saptdeep Stambh (seven columns depicting the seven islands that formed Mumbai) | Bollywood celebrity walk | Bastion of Eternity | Sit-outs | Silver Drive, with plants reflecting silver light

Bandra's 'democratic' seafronts are cosmopolitan

Linah Baliga | TNN

Who would think that the fate of a ship called the MV Zhen Don would get tied up with the quality of life in not just Bandra but all of Mumbai? Back in the late 1990s, the ship carrying oil and sludge was grounded off Carter Road. Plans to turn it into a floating hotel (floatel) drew wide protests from local residents, who moved court and won the battle to preserve the coastline.

Since then, it has been more or less smooth sailing for the Bandra West Residents' Association (BWRA), which has developed and maintained the Carter Road promenade, and the Bandra Bandstand Residents' Trust (BBRT), which developed the Bandstand waterfront and restored Land's End.

What the residents have done is create public spaces that are not exclusive. People from all walks of life, communities and cultures avail of these seaside havens. The promenades are "democratic", which is the quality architect P K Das feels open spaces in Mumbai should have. The residents, with help from the Mumbai Waterfronts Centre and others, transformed areas that were virtually being used as dumping grounds. Today, joggers, walkers, senior citizens, families, evening strollers, couples, children and youths get to enjoy the beautified shoreline.

Old-timers say the Carter Road promenade is a unique example of a four-corner relationship that worked with no help from the BMC or the state. It was a partnership between citizens, an MP, design professionals and a commercial agency.

The promenade opened in January 2002 and recently completed a decade. BWRA chairperson Darryl D'Monte notes, "Unlike many other open spaces, this one is far more democratic. It doesn't bar people by imposing entrance fees or have any other form of restraint. It's much more inclusive than any other development." He adds, "I

remember singer Shaan performing and that children with bare feet came and started dancing with him. All communities and people use such kind of spaces. These promenades are for people from across all classes who have existed cheek by jowl."

Apart from creating public spaces for everyone, Bandra's promenades have also improved the quality of life for locals. The Celebrate Bandra festival would not have been possible without the Land's End restoration and its amphitheatre and the Bandstand promenade. For residents, it is a coming together of past and present. "It has provided space for cultural activities in Bandra. It was like further enhancing the use of that space," says D'Monte.

The upkeep of the promenades is not easy, and the generosity of corporate sponsors and others has to be relied on. "We have sponsors. We spend nearly a lakh a month," says Roshan Dabhoiwala of BWRA. "Rs 30,000 is spent only on the gardens along the promenade. Recently we revamped the children's play area. New equipment has been installed — swings, slides, seesaws, a merry-go-round." The sponsors are now planning to put in Disney figures and 12 new benches. She says private firms, the BMC, ONGC etc have all been chipping in to help.

The maintenance of the Bandstand promenade is entirely managed by the BBRT. It costs Rs 70,000 to Rs 80,000 a month and the residents raise the funds by collecting Rs 20 a month from themselves. Corporates look after the gardens, but security and maintenance is completely in the residents' hands.

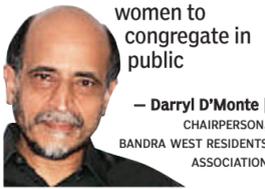
The BWRA manages the Carter Road promenade from Otter's Club to the amphitheatre, but a motley band of residents formed the Khar-Bandra-Santacruz (KBS) Foundation in 2009 to extend the promenade to Khar Danda (another 150 metres). Apart from being a recreational centre, "it's a great boon to people in the area," says Anandini Thakoor, former chairperson, KBS Foundation. "It was a challenging job, because we took funds from politicians to the tune of Rs 45 lakh. In the future,



Hemant Shirodkar

LABOURS OF LOVE: Constant upkeep and maintenance by residents have been key to preserving the beauty and lushness of Bandra's popular seafront promenades

"The Carter Road promenade is like an enclave, which gives it its special character. There are not too many places where women can go alone easily. But at this promenade, they have forged friendships. From a gender perspective, it is important, as the promenade allows women to congregate in public



— Darryl D'Monte | CHAIRPERSON, BANDRA WEST RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

"The promenades have quadrupled traffic flow into Bandra from neighbouring areas, because all want to use the promenades in the evenings. Consequently, Bandra's roads, already burdened by traffic, get choked. Also, I dislike that a good clean open space like the Carter Road promenade is used for music performances and plays. I prefer if that is done in auditoriums



— Anil Joseph | CHAIRPERSON, PERRY ROAD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

we wouldn't want to make use of any politician's funds. Had we collected funds on our own, they wouldn't have been misused. So that's a lesson we have learnt," says Thakoor.

The extended promenade boasts chess tables and a gazebo, which provides underprivileged children a place to study and shelter during the monsoon. Lighting is battery operated. "We wanted to regularize the drying area for fishermen, but we couldn't hold talks with them," says Thakoor.

Das, who designed the major promenades, says, "People of all classes intermingle and share the spaces equally. This has contributed enormously to the community life of the area and their cultural and social life as well. For example, slum dwellers, fisher-folk, women, children and senior citizens share the space and it has been a great social equalizer and truly a democratic space. That's the hallmark of these promenades which are not barricaded and open."

Open space exhibits give hope of better city: CM

Linah Baliga | TNN

This exhibition shows us a Mumbai which we did not know existed. It has given us hope and we can implement some of the ideas with political will. It is possible to reclaim the lost glory of the city." These were the words of chief minister Prithviraj Chavan at the inauguration of the Open Mumbai exhibition at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) on Friday.

The exhibition highlights the tragedy of Mumbai's shrinking open spaces and seeks to generate a dialogue between citizens, the government, professionals and organizations that work for social, cultural and environmental change. The exhibition, hosted by the Union ministry of culture, NGMA, the Mumbai Waterfronts Centre and architect P K Das and Associates, focuses on redefining the notion of open spaces to go beyond gardens and recreational grounds. It proposes the effective use of all natural assets, including rivers, mangroves, creeks

Hemant Shirodkar



GREENING THE BIG CITY: (From left) Former MP Shabana Azmi and chief minister Prithviraj Chavan with architect P K Das, who on Thursday described proposals for expanding Mumbai's public spaces at the launch of the Open Mumbai exhibition at the National Gallery of Modern Art

ponds, wetlands and beaches. "Mumbai's Development Plan (DP) will be finalized in a couple of years. We can integrate some of the grand ideas here into the next DP, which would be great for the city," said Chavan.

Among others present were BMC chief Subodh Kumar, police commissioner Arup Patnaik, principal secretary to the CM Ashish Kumar Singh, principal secretary (housing) Gautam Chatterjee, nominated Rajya Sabha member Javed Akhtar and actor Shabana Azmi.

Azmi, who earlier as MP gave funds to develop promenades, said, "This exhibition redefines land use and development and puts people at the centre of development, not just real estate developers. What it does is open up democratic spaces where people become the centre. It's crucial to generate a dialogue.... It is essential that people claim ownership of open spaces." She said Akhtar would use Rs 28 crore in Juhu.

Chavan said, "Mumbai's population has seen slower growth, which is dangerous. We are facing a challenge in the inland city. There are also long commutes, which turns people off. We need to create a socio-environmental infrastructure, which is not there. We cannot remove people who come from the interiors of the state or other states to Mumbai, even if others want to do so for populist reasons. We need to have a concerted effort to reclaim our city." The exhibition will continue till April 7.

TOI Interactive

Q. The Bandra promenades were built on neglected lands that were being misused, including as dumps. Should more Mumbaiers embark on similar initiatives to develop recreational areas for people from all walks of life?

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'IF SUCCESSFUL, THE MODEL TO REVAMP CHIMBAI BEACH SHOULD BE REPLICATED AT ALL BEACH FRONTS IN THE CITY'

We asked readers if the Chimbai beach revamp proposal looks promising and whether more such plans should be taken up to improve Mumbai's quaint fishing villages and coastline?

Yes, the Chimbai beach proposal does look promising and we need more such plans to improve Mumbai's coastline. However, the builders with vested interests and the authorities are indifferent to the need to protect Mumbai's coastline. They make it extremely difficult to execute beautification plans along the coast. ALMs and NGOs need to create awareness amongst the local residents so they come forward and actively protest against violations of

Coastal Regulation Zone norms. Mumbai's coastline is too precious to fall prey to illegal construction and garbage dumping. — Vijay Mullaji

We live in this neighbourhood and this is something we've been hoping for. — Jyothi

No, originality has its own natural charm. — Shruti

It's good that the beach front in Bandra is being beautified and one will be able to take a walk in Chimbai in improved surroundings. However, there has been no provision for toilets at all these places. This should also be a part of the beautification plan. The

same goes for the promenades at the Carter Road and Bandstand areas. — Anthony

Yes, I fully endorse the improvement of Mumbai's coastline. — S Mukherjee

Yes, we need more such plans for open spaces across Mumbai. — Sanjay C

The public can rejoice only when the revamp of Chimbai beach finally becomes a reality. However, this will also result in an increase in pollution if proper steps are not taken for cleanliness and waste disposal. Along

with the beautification, attempts should be made to maintain cleanliness and punish those who flout norms. On-the-spot fines, to some extent, would help restrict the nuisance and generate funds for the future maintenance and development of the beach. — Sugandhi Ramani

The plan to beautify Chimbai beach with walkways, a promenade, gardens and a unique weekend bazaar — where the local fishing community can serve fried fish, curry and tandoor — is a great idea. If successful, this model should be replicated at all beach fronts across the city.

— Robert Castellino