

Kamathipura all set for a facelift, to become a plush township

39 ACRES Global tenders to be floated for the project, more open spaces for residents

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MUMBAI: Kamathipura, Mumbai's red-light district, is to be revamped soon. A staggering 39 acres of the area, one of the biggest red-light districts in Asia, is all poised to get a makeover as both residents and landlords have joined hands to redevelop it into a plush township. With the feasibility report in, the Kamathipura Landlord Association (KLA) is all set to float global tenders inviting developers shortly.

Approximately 700 buildings housing 5,000 tenants would be revamped by the cluster model. According to Balnarsaiah Donthula, vice-president, KLA, this cluster model is best suited for the area. "Majority of the buildings are constructed on small plots where revamp is practically impossible. If we go for cluster redevelopment, it will ensure planned systematic development and the entire infrastructure will get beefed up," he added.

The existing residents have demanded 525 square feet houses with all modern amenities. Cluster model ensures apart from bigger homes, more open spaces for the residents. The area will also get modern schools and hospitals in this scheme. There are hardly 25 buildings housing the 500 sex workers. "Since they have been living for years, even they would be part of the redevelopment. We will not discriminate," said Rajendra Satla, General Secretary, KLA.

Well-known project management consultant Sailesh Mahimtura has prepared a feasibility report on the revamp. A global tender would be floated shortly seeking a well-known developer to undertake the project. Since most of the residents stay in houses ranging from 50-180 square feet, this revamp has been welcomed by them. 55-year old Purshottam Sanal who lives in a 180-square feet with six family members supports the scheme. "It is very difficult to live in such a small house with so many members.



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ABOUT KAMATHIPURA

Kamathipura was set up by the then British Government in 1795 and sex workers started living there since then

However, faced with an AIDS scare and also with regular police crackdowns, the number of prostitutes declined significantly from 50,000 in 1992 to 500 now

In recent times, the area has been in demand owing to its strategic location in the island city and a boom in real estate.

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Redevelopment will solve our problem," said Sanal. The area covered in the scheme starts from Sagar Hotel, Kamathipura 1 to 16 lanes along with Shuklaji street up to Do Taki.

According to local legislator Amin Patel, who facilitated the scheme,

"This revamp will change the face of this area and will enhance the quality of the life of the residents."

For years, buying a house in Kamathipura was shunned by majority because of its reputation of sex workers living there. However the recent boom on real estate have made it an attractive proposition and now revamp will only send prices soaring.

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