

# Mixed use messes up quality of life

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**New Delhi:**

## **Experts Say Mixing Shops And Houses Causes Congestion, Puts Tremendous Pressure On Infrastructure**

Till a decade ago, residents of H-block in New Rajinder Nagar could walk on their main road, Andh Kanya Vidyalaya Marg. That was before the road was approved for mixed land use in Master Plan for Delhi-2021 and became one of the most congested stretches in the area.

Just a few metres away ,a DDA shopping complex with 100-odd shops has remained unoccupied for years. "It (DDA complex) has become a den of anti-social activities while the main road is congested due to rampant commercialization.This has destroyed the residential character of the colony.We are in a mess due to mindless planning by government agencies," said Neeraj Gupta, president of H-block RWA and an urban planner.

Almost all the residential colonies in Delhi where mixed use was allowed face this problem. The mixed use regulation was introduced in 2006 to prevent the sealing and demolition of lakhs of commercial establishments operating illegally in residential areas. But today , this has led to rampant commercialization in residential colonies, thereby adding to the load on civic infrastructure.

Till date, 2,538 streets have been notified for mixed use and 351 are awaiting approval.MPD-2021 allows for more streets to be notified for mixed use. Delhiites say this will harm the city as it can't take the increased load. But urban planners are divided on the issue. While some argue that mixed use is an urban development model accepted worldwide, others say Delhi isn't a fit case for it. "Mixed land use has totally messed up Delhi. This is a result of poor planning in previous master plans which didn't make any space for the informal sector," said S M Akhtar, professor and dean of faculty of architecture, Jamia Millia Islamia University .

Experts at the university have been involved in the preparation of local area plans.They say it is time to de-densify and decongest Delhi. "Just by allowing mixed land use, the wrongs of the last 50 years can't be corrected. We are just burdening the city , which is already congested. There is a need to de-densify and decongest, else people's quality of life will be severely impacted," said Akhtar.

Experts involved in making the MPD say the civic agencies are to blame for the present mess in the colonies as they didn't enforce rules and upgrade the infrastructure."Mixed use is a good idea, as it is aimed at providing essential services to people at a walking distance. But it wasn't implemented properly , " said A K Jain, former planning com missioner of Delhi Develop ment Authority . "Enforcemen was a major issue in its imple mentation. One of the chie reasons for allowing mixed use was to provide for a proper raffic circulation plan and parking facilities."

In areas like CR Park, Kai ash Colony , GK-I, South Extension, Janakpuri, etc, residents complain of encroachment by commercial establishments. "There is a need to create space to meet the growing need for commercial activities. DDA has a lot of vacant plots which have been earmarked for other activities. There is a need to assess the requirement and change the land use accordingly ," said Keshav Aggarwal, member of B-block RWA in CR Park.

For allowing commercial activity on notified streets, the civic agencies have collected close to Rs 1,500 crore as conversion and parking charges. The corporations were to develop the market spaces, and provide parking and basic services. "But the civic agencies have failed completely . There is no clarity on the duration for which traders will have to pay conversion charges. The corporations have no plans to redevelop markets and provide parking. Today , it is difficult to get a trade licence from corporations," said Praveen Khandelwal, general secretary of Confederation of All India Traders.

Residents say more streets should not be notified for commercial use. "We want the colonies to be safe and secure with their social fabric intact. Mixed land use is a bad idea. It has only made life difficult for the residents," said Rajiv Kakria, a resident of GK-I. Experts say streets can't be notified for commercial use if residents don't want it. "If RWAs pass a resolution and inform the government about it, then the street can't be notified for commercial use," said Jain.

Next: Local Area Plan

## BUSINESS EVERYWHERE

Photo: Piyal Bhattacharjee

Shops and other businesses were allowed in residential colonies in 2006 after large-scale sealing and demolition by the erstwhile MCD. The idea was to have commercial services at walking distance. But residents say this has only harmed the residential character of colonies

### THE STORY SO FAR

**2,183 roads** declared 'mixed land use', commercial and 'pedestrian shopping streets' in Sept 2006

**355 streets** added to the list in April 2007

**351 streets** awaiting regularization under mixed land use

**₹ 1,500 crore** (approx) paid by traders as conversion and parking charges



### OTHER REGULATIONS

- Approval based on **category of colony and road width**
- In A and B colonies, **new**

**banks, fitness centres and NGOs are not allowed**

- Minimum road width in A and B colonies is **18m, for others it is 9m**
- Streets that are only 6m

wide have been **declared pedestrian shopping zones**

- **Mixed use norms not applicable in NDMC areas, Lutyens' Bungalow Zone, government buildings, etc**

### WHY RESIDENTS ARE UNHAPPY

- Mixed land use **allowed without consulting RWAs**
- Businesses that weren't permitted have been started
- There's **no limit on the number of commercial units** in any area
- Business establishments **encroached on public space**
- Residents have to face **parking and traffic problems**

### WHAT'S ALLOWED

**RETAIL** | Twenty four types of business allowed from shops measuring 20 sqm in size.

These include vegetable/flower shop, bakery, grocery, dairy outlet, bookshop, photocopier/PCO, cyber cafe, LPG booking, flour mill, meat and fish shop, pan shop, hair salon or beauty parlour, laundry, chemist, sweetshop, optician, tailor, electrical/electronics repair, cycle repair, garment shop, ATM, ration shop

#### PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

| Lawyers, CA, company secretaries, doctors, media professionals, architects, etc

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES

| Pre-primary schools (including creches), nursing homes, clinics, dispensaries, pathology and diagnostics labs, wellness centres, guesthouses, banks, coaching centres, NGOs, vocational training centres, etc

### WHAT'S NOT ALLOWED

Warehouses, liquor shops, printing and dyeing units, sale of building material, repair of automobiles, tyre retreading, battery charging, etc