

When Planning Ages: Structural and Social Challenges in Bhilai Steel Plant Township, India

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Abstract:

The township of Bhilai Steel Plant, in Bhilai, central India, was conceived and developed in the 1950s as a self-contained, planned urban settlement. Spread over more than 7600 acres, the township was designed with a strong emphasis on orderly growth, infrastructure, and quality of life. The township's inclusive and structured development model has been widely studied and appreciated in urban planning and industrial sociology. Despite thoughtfully designed public spaces, robust civic amenities, and a pioneering role in planned urban development, much of its infrastructure now reflects the era of its inception. Many of its core facilities and utilities have aged significantly and require urgent rejuvenation and modernization. Considering the above issues, a case study was conducted to assess land use, housing conditions, and social and physical infrastructure. Baseline data was collected and analyzed. The assessment confirms that while the original "self-contained neighborhood" concept remains visible in the layout but is under severe pressure. The structural integrity of the housing stock is highly variable, necessitating a targeted zoning approach. The recreational network is severely compromised. The township needs some redressal of the assessed issues.