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## Lutyens' Delhi waits for a development code

Home to the country's most powerful and influential families and individuals, the area was developed by British architect Edwin Lutyens between 1912 and 1930.

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Spread over an area of over 28 sq km, LBZ is governed by a strict building law that does not allow construction of basements and caps the number of floors. (Burhaan Kinu/HT PHOTO)

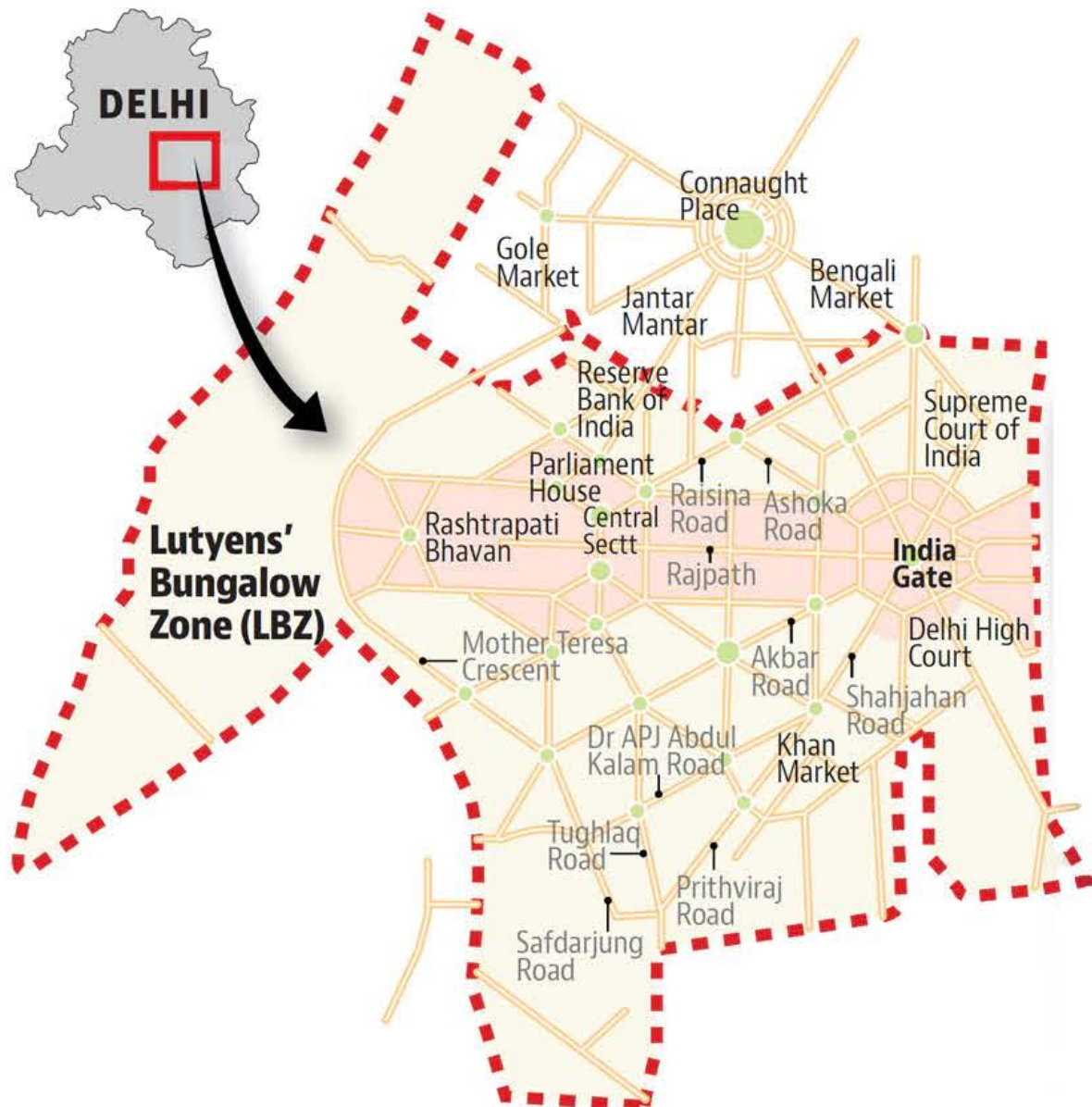
Four years after the Centre sought changes in the Lutyens' bungalow zone (LBZ) guidelines to exclude eight neighbourhoods from the capital's plush residential district, allowing residents redevelop or develop their properties into three and four-storey structures as against the current two and two-and-a-half storey ones, nothing has moved.

Home to the country's most powerful and influential families and individuals, the area was developed by British architect Edwin Lutyens between 1912 and 1930. Spread over an area of over 28 sq km, LBZ is governed by a strict building law that does not allow construction of basements and caps the number of floors.

Residents of these colonies are now planning to approach the new housing and urban affairs minister, once the government is formed, to notify the proposed changes, while some have separately petitioned the Delhi high court over the restrictions that continue to apply.

## Lutyens' Bungalow Zone (LBZ) in a nutshell

Spread over an area of over 28 square kilometres, LBZ is governed by a strict building law that does not allow construction of basements and caps the number of floors



### LUTYENS' DELHI IN NUMBERS

New Delhi, constructed by the British as their seat of power, was inaugurated on February 15, 1931





**2,800 hectares**  
area

**₹3.01 lakh**  
Total construction cost

**29,000**  
Workers employed

**3,000** No. of  
government properties in the  
Lutyens' Bungalow Zone (LBZ)

**600** No. of private  
bungalows in LBZ

**139** No. of roads

**1,107 acres**  
green cover (parks 6, gardens 6,  
roundabouts 50, green patches  
along roads, and rose garden 4)

**16** No. of plants species,  
which were used along the  
wide avenues of the new city  
built by the British engineers

## CIVIC AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

**99** Notified heritage  
structures

**57** Schools

**24** Commercial  
centres/markets

**13** Community centres

**8** Libraries

**3** Swimming pools

**2** Stadiums

**2** Hospitals

## DUAC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Removal of eight residential neighbourhoods – Golf Links, Sundar Nagar, Jor Bagh, Mandir Marg, Chanakyapuri, Sardar Patel Marg and Panchsheel Marg—from LBZ
- Development control norms of these eight colonies to be governed by Master Plan of Delhi-2021
- Area of LBZ: **28.73 SQ.KM**
- Area after eight colonies are denotified: **23.6 SQ.KM**

## HOW RESIDENTS OF THE EIGHT COLONIES WOULD HAVE BENEFITTED

**Higher Floor Area Ratio:**  
People can construct up to  
four storeys as against  
two/two-and-half storeys

Present FAR: **120**

Revised FAR: **225-250**

## ISSUES

### Bengali Market

No. of plots: **280**

No. of plots which are  
three-storeyed:  
close to **200** (these plots were  
redeveloped prior to 2003 when  
the norms were relaxed)

No. of plots which are two  
storeyed: **80** (approx)

In 2015, the Union government proposed changing building guidelines in LBZ, shrinking it to 23 sq km, excluding eight neighbourhoods — Bengali Market, Golf Links, Sundar Nagar, Jor Bagh, Mandir Marg, Chanakyapuri, Sardar Patel Marg and Panchsheel Marg. This would have allowed these areas to be developed as per the norms laid down by Master Plan 2021.

But when the proposed revised guidelines were put up in the public domain for feedback, a section of residents resisted the change, forcing the Union housing and urban affairs ministry to ask the Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC) to review the guidelines in 2016. DUAC is yet to submit its revised report.

“Now we are going to approach the new government to expedite the process,” said YK Anand, president of the Babar Road Residents' Welfare Association.

Hanging in the balance

Among the affected is Ajit Prasad Jain, 82, who, encouraged by the government's intent to change the guidelines, bought a property on Bazaar Lane in Bengali Market in 2015.

“We bought a property here thinking we would be able to construct a three-storey building as the new guidelines had proposed removing the area from LBZ. But we are stuck,” said Jain, who was among the petitioners who filed a case in the Delhi high court last year. The case, in which several hearings have been held, is slated to come up again in August.

Bengali Market, Jor Bagh and Sundar Nagar already have several three or four-storey buildings, but these were built before 2003, when development norms were relaxed. For instance, of the 280 houses in Bengali Market, close to 200 have three or four storeys. .

“How can different set of rules be applied to the same area? If so many properties have been allowed to redevelop as per the Master Plan of Delhi, then the remaining should be allowed to avail of the benefit. We recently wrote to the ministry to expedite the matter,” said Anand.

In 2003, the Centre amended its 1988 guidelines regulating construction activities in LBZ to maintain its heritage structures, and avenues. The amendment extended LBZ’s boundary up to Sundar Nagar, Golf Links, Jor Bagh, Sardar Patel Marg, and Bengali Market.

The 1988 guidelines didn’t permit augmentation of built-up area and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in LBZ. A ban on multi-storeyed buildings was imposed in 1985. It was partially relaxed in 1986 but reinforced in 1988. It was also incorporated into the Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) 2021, which was notified in 2007.

#### The gaps

In Jor Bagh, houses situated on the main road (Lodhi Road) fall under LBZ, while the remaining do not.

Questioning the logic behind placing these areas in LBZ, Sanjeev Desai, former vice-president and member of Sundar Nagar Residents Welfare Association, said the properties in the area don’t fit into the definition of bungalows. “According to the government’s definition of bungalows, the property should have four setbacks, but properties here don’t have it. Then how can they put us in the LBZ category? Nearly 70% properties are unable to redevelop due to lack of clarity on the matter,” said Desai. A setback is the distance by which a property is separated from the road.

#### The nonconformists

While most residents of the eight areas are unanimous in wanting a change, not all residents of Golf Links want this. While all Golf Links residents want a higher FAR or floor area ratio (the size of the built up area allowed on a plot) , some residents want the government to allow a higher ratio while keeping the area in the LBZ, as they don’t want the neighbourhood to lose its character (or brand equity).

“The size of families is growing and we need more space. Even though residents are divided over whether it should be in or out of LBZ, everyone wants a higher FAR. A decision in this regard should be taken soon,” Sanjeev Chopra, member of the Golf Links RWA, said.

A senior housing and urban affairs ministry official familiar with the development said: “It is an important matter as we have to see its impact on the area. DUAC has been asked to review it. Now that work on the master plan for 2041 has started, guidelines have to be reviewed according to the new plan.”

DUAC chairman PSN Rao was not available for comment despite repeated efforts to reach him.

Sonali Rastogi, a Delhi-based architect, said that while the sanctity of Lutyens Delhi has to be protected, development should be allowed in a controlled manner. “There are demands for the boundary to be redefined to allow new development even as others want to preserve the precinct. This situation needs to be resolved or, I believe, it will lead to an urban decay. My personal view is that all ideas and schemes have to be studied carefully and a plan should be prepared which protects the sanctity of the Lutyens’ zone, while simultaneously allowing development in a controlled manner,” said Rastogi, who is also a member of DUAC.

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