

# Housing schemes after development

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LAHORE, Sept 27: Most of the housing schemes in the city gradually degenerate into expensive slums after development due to flagrant violation of structural plans and lack of proper maintenance of infrastructure facilities.

Infrastructure facilities start deteriorating after the development of housing schemes because the private and public developers make no arrangements for the maintenance of the same. They consider their task having been completed after the development of the schemes and disposal of plots.

The City District Government, town municipal administrations and union councils start receiving taxes from the residents of housing schemes after development. The Lahore Development Authority receives the fees for transfer of ownership, sanction of site plans and commercialization of all kinds of buildings, the CDG recovers the sanitation fee, the TMAs property tax and property transfer fee and the union councils the birth and death registration and licensing fees.

The city government is recovering sanitation fee at the rate of 30 per cent of water supply bills for the past one year, but has not bothered to deploy the required number of sanitary workers for sweeping the roads and streets. More sanitary workers have been deployed in the localities outside the housing schemes paying far less sanitation fee.

TMAs receive the property tax from the housing schemes, but consider maintenance of infrastructure facilities the responsibility of the LDA as it has not transferred most of the schemes to towns. Allama Iqbal Town is the only LDA scheme which was transferred to the ex-Metropolitan Corporation of Lahore during the tenure of Mian Azhar's mayorship in 1990's. The LDA is retaining the building control of all housing schemes developed by it and the private sector and receiving site plan sanction and commercialization fee without spending anything on the maintenance of

infrastructure. The union councils cannot be expected to maintain the infrastructure facilities due to their limited resources.

Roads are the first to deteriorate when the construction activity starts after the development of housing schemes. Most of the roads require repairs five years after development due to the movement of trucks and tractor-trolleys transporting construction material but no government agency is ready to accept the responsibility. Funds are usually sanctioned for repairs and reconstruction of roads when the same have been rendered unserviceable.

Sanitary conditions in the housing schemes start deteriorating with the construction of houses as sanitary workers are not deployed for cleaning the roads and lifting the garbage for more than 10 years after the development of a housing scheme. The residents continue dumping the garbage in vacant plots till the buildings come up there. The Solid Waste Management starts lifting the garbage from its designated collection points after buildings come up on the vacant plots used for dumping it. Deployment of the required number of sanitary workers, however, takes many more years.

Waste water disposal is one of the major problems faced in all new housing schemes because the public as well as the private sector developers have stopped construction of surface drainage systems for the purpose. The Water and Sanitation Agency builds a sewerage system in every housing scheme and connects it to its trunk sewers for disposal in the Ravi. The private housing scheme developers lay the sewerage systems, but face the problem of disposal of the sewage. In the past, they used to solve the problem by connecting the sewerage system with that of Wasa or disposed of their sewage in a drain when the schemes were developed adjacent to the existing localities. The solution is not available any more as most of the schemes are being developed in far-flung areas

where the sewerage system or drains are not available and Wasa is demanding substantial charges for developing a trunk sewerage network for the purpose. As many as 170 private housing schemes in the city are facing the sewage disposal problem at present.

Storm water drainage problem is also common in most of the schemes as surface drainage arrangements exist in none. Wasa has built storm water channels in Garden Town, Faisal Town and Allama Iqbal Town, but the storm water cannot reach the same because surface drains are still to be built for the purpose. The storm water drainage problem crops up in every scheme when roads start disintegrating due to its accumulation on account of non-availability of vacant plots for its disposal with the increase in number of buildings.

Commercialization of residential plots is yet another nuisance faced by the residents of the housing schemes where residential and commercial areas are clearly demarcated in the structural plans. Residential plots on all main roads and in the vicinity of the commercial centres and markets are, however, commercialized with the passage of time making the lives of those living in the neighbourhood miserable on account of increased noise and traffic problems.

The pace of commercialization of residential buildings was slow till the establishment of the City District Government three years ago as the LDA continued to prosecute those doing so. No residential plot or building could be commercialized without a no-objection certificate from the neighbours. District Nazim Mian Amer, however, dispensed with the NOC condition and allowed unrestricted commercialization on payment of a prescribed fee two years ago.

Those opposed to the commercialization of the residential premises in their neighbourhood are now left with no option but to dispose of their houses and migrate.