

‘Affordable housing doesn’t mean cramped apartments without privacy’

Expat was conceived in the year 1994 as a company with a unified theme, quite like a symphony, a new theme that once crystallized would resonate a personal, service-based model never before experienced in real estate, thus with investment and transparency services which has helped establish themselves in the arena of real estate.

Extended as pioneering ‘relationship-based’ model successfully in other areas including investments in land and developed property, construction and contracting, leisure and resorts, media, turnkey projects and management consultancy, they have come a long way since the early days. The one ingredient which remains unchanged has been the symphony of values that has helped win the trust and build endearing relationships with clients across India and overseas.

The Expat Group boasts of extensive success in handling complex real estate transactions. The company has established a reputation for trustworthiness, value addition professional capabilities and skill in handling transactions requiring real estate specialties.

Its genesis project ‘The Solitude’ on the outskirts of Pune paved the way for emergence of land trade, property sales and contracting divisions. However, in 2006, the company continued to build on our strategic direction by expanding our operations to offer a broader array of services. With some of India’s residential projects in its portfolio, the team of highly experienced professionals dedicated to Indian property management and ensures that one’s property delivers maximum yields with minimum hassle.

Property investments often constitute a big chunk of one’s portfolio investments, but are seldom looked after in like manner. Buy it and forget it – is often the overriding attitude – until of course you look at selling it!

When undeniably a modest amount of attention can bring out the best value from your property investment and avert big capital outlays arising from neglect. This is where Expat offers hassle-free comprehensive range of services to lease, redesign or refurbish, and realign one’s portfolio.

Tell us more about your company and various verticals that it operates.

The Expat Group has worked at providing unique investment opportunities to Indian and overseas real estate clients for over 20 years. We are known for our value engineering expertise and have built a trustworthy standing through our unique, personal, service-based approach to real estate.

The Group strives to deliver superior quality on all its offerings -- land as an



Global real estate firms will demand more accountability and transparency from their Indian counterparts and that is a big benefit to the image of the Indian real estate industry as well, remarks Santosh Shetty, CMD Expat Group in his interview with Remona Divekar. Excerpts:

asset class (LAAC), apartments and weekend homes. Our hassle-free approach has made the dream of owning property a reality for many.

The Expat Group consists of Expat Properties, Expat Engineering, Expat Leisure and Resorts and Expat Media.

Expat Properties is a vision initiated in 1994. How have the hardships you faced moulded your experience in real estate?

Since our inception, Expat has always placed customer interests as the focal point of whatever we do. Our experience has been moulded by experiencing first-hand trials, the hardships one has to go through while investing in real estate.

The pitfalls and risks that plague the industry have led us to shape our offerings to target these pain points and make investing in real estate as hassle-free and profitable as possible for the customer. For example, we offer our customers an interest-free EMI option up to a period of 5 years so they do not have to go through the additional burden of raising finances.

How would you explain your progress in executing realty and infrastructure projects, thus pioneering in relationship-based services?

We strongly believe in democratization of real estate

ownership. What we mean is that everyone who yearns to own property or a home should have access to the best that they can afford without compromising on the basics of a good life with their loved ones. Which is why at Expat, we believe that affordable housing doesn’t necessarily mean living in cramped apartments without privacy and amenities.

If you look at all our ‘affordable’ housing options, we always endeavor to deliver more than what can be expected at a particular price point. Our flagship project at Chandapura in Bengaluru reflects just that, with duplex apartments priced at just Rs 26 lakh onwards, but has a host of amenities like a moonlight cinema, shopping arcades and a world-class swimming pool, apart from its great location near the Electronics City.

Given India’s current economic growth rate at approx 9 per cent, demand for land around expanding cities is at an all-time high. How do you balance the demand and supply in the real estate market, and the trend of people moving into second homes?

Real estate pricing should always be a combination of factors like demand and supply and value delivered to the client. Apart from the growth rate, interest rates on bank finance and returns from your real estate investment play a big role in the purchase decision of buyers. With the government taking steps to incentivize affordable housing, first time buyers will find it easier to find better options.

At Expat, we believe that time has come for the Indian real estate market to take the concept of weekend homes more seriously. Families who want to escape the hustle and bustle of urban lifestyle are looking for comfortable, scenic and fun-filled options about two hours’ drive away from cities where they can go and unwind with the pressures of modern lifestyles.

The Expat Group has acquired and transacted over 8,000 acres of land in and around key cities like Pune, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Goa, and developed

extensive infrastructure and marketed exquisite homes. Tell us more about the same.

We have offerings in multiple states as you have rightly observed and that in itself is a unique proposition to customers as seldom is this kind of reach handled by the same developer. We follow very simple but proven techniques in identifying, acquiring and developing land options so they become ideal high yield investment options for our customers. We have a long term development forecast while choosing land parcels and because of this rigorous planning, investments usually are very profitable for customers.

Tell us about your projects you are doing in the above cities.

Our flagship project at Chandapura in Bengaluru will be coming up shortly and is one of our best offerings in the value housing category. Also, we have apartments and weekend homes, coming up shortly outside Bengaluru and Pune/Mumbai respectively. In terms of apartment projects, we currently have offerings in Pune and Bengaluru.

The Indian real estate sector is one of the fastest growing and globally recognized sectors. The total realty market in the country is expected to touch \$180 billion by 2020. What are your company’s projections for 2015-16?

The Indian real estate has been attracting global attention of late for its latent potential and the rise of the Indian Diaspora across the world. Indians retain an intimate connect with the homeland and we see a lot of demand from Indians living abroad for quality and hassle-free real estate buying.

With the current government making good strides with foreign policy, India will be more awake in global consciousness and we hope to tap that to the fullest this year. Our deep understanding of customers not only in India but also abroad puts us in a good position to do so. We are also betting big on weekend homes and value housing.

With the government allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) in this sector, the number of foreign firms owning real estate projects in India has also increased. What is your take on this?

It is definitely an encouraging development as India can benefit not only from the inflow of funds but also more importantly from global real estate best practices, intelligence and technology which will naturally follow.

Again, this really benefits the customer at the end of the day. Global real estate firms will demand more accountability and transparency from their Indian counterparts and that is a big benefit to the image of the Indian real estate industry as well.

Since Expat has always maintained the highest ethical standards in every transaction and legalities related to our projects, we hope we will be ideal partners for global players looking to make a successful, long term and meaningful business impact on India.

