



URBAN TRANSFORMATION THROUGH DISPLACEMENT: AN  
ARCHITECTURAL EXPLORATION ON SLUM RELOCATION IN ISLAMABAD

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Abstract

Illegal occupation of state land in Pakistan is a common phenomenon in squatters' settlements. The relocation and vacation of such occupied land is the core purpose of the study. This paper further investigates the complete relocation of an identified slum existing in sector F-6/2, Islamabad, Pakistan, with a focus on sustainable and humane approaches. The primary objective is to enhance the living conditions of the affected population while minimizing social disruption. The study identifies key elements essential for successful relocation, including stakeholder engagement and infrastructure development that extends to the master plan of the relocation site. The existing models proposed by the Capital Development Authority and their reasons for failures are also examined in this study to ensure the proposed model of relocation for the identified slum is achieved successfully by the stakeholders. To ensure long-term success, procedures must be in line to frequently assess the relocation's progress and promptly address any future issues. This study further proposed the relocation sites within the radius of 2-10 kilometers from the existing slum development in sector F-6/2. Finally, a planned master plan inclusive of all basic amenities designed for the community was added in the study. The proposed strategies aim to create a replicable prototype for slum relocation that prioritizes human dignity, socio-economic empowerment, and sustainable urban development.

**Keywords:** Slum, Sustainable Communities, Relocation, Urban Planning.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1960's, Pakistan witnessed the formation of Islamabad according to the planned, master plan conceived by the Greek Architect and Town Planner Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis (C.A Doxiadis). Islamabad's master plan has developed along the mountain range of Margallas in a grid pattern with east-west axis. Master plan divided into sectors such as, C, D, E, F, G, H and I. Further, Islamabad plan conceived on the basis of three major zones. i.e. Residential, Commercial and administrative. Islamabad's development includes all socio-economic classes except the poor working class (Ahmad et al., 2024). For Example, Sector E, F, G and I cater the affluent segment of the society. Sectors like H and I are dedicated for educational institutions and economic zones.

Undeveloped areas/open areas within the limits of Islamabad sectors (F, G & I) densely populated by the poor working class such as, sweepers, construction workers and domestic staff with the passage of time. Doxiadis's design approach miscalculated in this particular area of slums development and created an urban issue for the local government authorities (Bhatti & Iftakhar, 2023). Relocation of identified slum settlement in Islamabad aim to integrate marginalized community of F-6 into the urban fabric by transforming neglected areas into habitable, sustainable environments (Bhatti et al., 2024), and relocate the illegal settlers on nearby Urban void within radius of 2-10 kilometers of the settlement. This approach addresses their living standards, work issues, and willingness to relocate in better and planned community. The initiative not only elevates living standards but also contributes to the holistic development of the city.

Primarily, Settlements are estimated that 0.1 million people living in more than 26 slums near the limits of sectors G-7, H-9, F-6, F-7, and I-11. The living conditions in the slums are dire. There's an imminent need of the strategy and plan to retrieve the precious land from the slums and relocating slum dwellers to more suitable areas with better access to essential services and infrastructure. And transform underutilized urban spaces into vibrant, inclusive neighborhoods, fostering social equity and economic growth.

Hence the formulated problem statement for the research was as under:

The ongoing urbanization and population growth in Islamabad have led to the proliferation of informal settlements, commonly known as slums, within the city's metropolitan area. These settlements are often characterized by inadequate housing, lack of basic services such as clean water and sanitation, and heightened vulnerability to health and safety risks. In particular, the identified slum in Islamabad presents numerous challenges that significantly impact the quality of life for its residents and pose broader socio- economic and environmental concerns for the city. The pressing issue is how to effectively relocate these slum dwellers in a manner that not only addresses their immediate living conditions but also ensures sustainable and inclusive urban development. The relocation of the identified slum in Islamabad's Sector F-6 requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach that balances humanitarian, environmental, economic, legal, and social considerations to achieve a just and sustainable solution.

To move ahead with research work, following major research objectives were set forth:

1. To Provide Improved Living Conditions to the slum settlers.
2. To Create a Sustainable Urban master plan for the slum settlers of the study area.
3. To Retrieve the Precious Land for the CDA & Relocation of the squatters.

Slums in Islamabad have been neglected from last 3 decades. Capital Development Authority (CDA) had strategize several plans to cope with slums. However, slums are still expanding and over populating. It creates health, living, criminal and socio economic

issues for the people living in slums and for the residents living in nearby sectors of the slums. Providing decent accommodation for sidelined communities bring up social inclusion and reduces inequalities and primarily promotes social equity. By ratifying these prolonged issues, the initiative not only improves the lives of slum residents however also contributes to the overall development and transformation of Islamabad.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A typical feature of unplanned urbanization in the developing countries is slums, otherwise known as katchi abadis, which is a thing used to refer to informal or non-permanent settlements. These sub-units of state land in Karachi and other major urban areas exemplify the predicaments of poor housing and the lack of access to fundamental facilities of the city (Server, 1996). According to the United Nations Expert Group Meeting (2002), the term slums refers to settlements that are characterized by inadequate access to healthy water, inadequate sanitation and insufficient housing facilities, overpopulation and lack of secure residential expectation. Such places are frequently not officially recognized by urban administrations, and it contributes to the invisibility of these places and their marginalization in the development plans of mainstream development (Bhatti et al., 2024). The UN Habitat Global Report on Human Settlement (2003) report includes the criticism of slums occurrence and development as being caused by structural failures in city management, housing policies and fair distribution of economic resources. The report relates the state of slums to larger human development issues, where poverty, inequality, and unplanned development contribute to the uncontrolled settlements on risky urban marginal areas (Tariq et al., 2024). Such urban inequalities were to be mitigated through the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, especially Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), with a goal of improving the lives of slum inhabitants. Nonetheless, as UN-Habitat (2003) notes, most of the policies aiming at managing slum conditions have been observed to be fragmented, short-term or political and have not been able to address the structural forces that perpetrate informal urbanization. The absence of regular urban planning, combined with an increase in inequality, has not only enabled the formation of slums not only as a symptom of poverty itself but also as an open expression of policy neglect and urban marginalization.

The report prepared by UN Habitat (2003) states that slums are not the inevitable consequence of population increase or demographic shift; they are the concrete products of the failure of policies at both national and local levels. In most parts of the developing world, the lack of good urban planning and weak enforcement of land use policies has created disjointed, haphazard and ineffective reactions to urban poverty. Most governments have resorted to the informal settlements being assimilated into city planning systems, but most have followed piecemeal or reactive approaches which often favored either the elite or the politically strong (UN-Habitat, 2003). It is due to this negligence that the cycles of poverty have been deeply rooted in informal settlements, where people live in poor conditions pay disproportionate high prices to receive basic amenities like clean water and sanitation (UN-Habitat, 2003). The urban population in the world is one-third as people in most parts are not properly housed and sanitised, and many live in overcrowded and unhealthy places. Such communities are affected by increased vulnerability to disease, contamination and social vulnerability (UN-Habitat, 2003). Pakistan is an especially complicated situation. Since the creation of Islamabad at the 1960s, most of the rural dwellers continued to be displaced as the land was taken to develop the

city. Some of them were given land as compensation in other parts of Punjab but those who declined to leave occupied the land by forming informal settlements within the confines of the new city. Capital Development Authority (CDA) failed to identify and offer services to such settlements, which were classified as slums (UNICEF, 2016). The recorded growth of these settlements slowed but did not stop since a significant percentage of 72 was registered between 1960 and 1990. This goes to show that institutional inability and social marginalization that characterize the urban development process in Pakistan has not only led to the continuation of slums in Islamabad, but also, it is precisely this institutional inability to ensure urban development that has been one of the main causes of slums in Islamabad.

The right to housing and the larger urban citizenship struggle is at the core of the slum problem. Housing, according to Nag (2009), plays not only the role of physical building but also it is a basic social tool which represents a sense of security, identity, and belonging (Mukhtar et al., 2024). The politics of slum relocation and redevelopment have a habit of revealing the conflicts between state views of modernization and the real experiences of its residents. According to Elinoff (2016), the tensions between residents, planners, and NGOs occur when the interventions of urban space are formed according to the different aesthetic and moral visions of the desirable life. These tensions are reflected in the forced evictions and relocations in cities such as Islamabad and Karachi which emphasizes urban aesthetics or real estate value at the expense of human welfare. These interventions often ignore the participatory rights of the poor, only to view them as a hindrance to development as opposed to citizens with their legitimate claims. Michael Cernea (World Bank, cited in UNCHS) underlines that the displacement resulting in urban development is the important gap in the urban planning and social policy. Though modernization is glorified in political narratives, the human costs are displacement, loss of livelihood, and psychological trauma, and fragmentation of a community are mentioned without much attention. The relocation processes then become under-funded, unsophisticated and socially disruptive and aggravate instead of reducing the urban poverty. The policies of relocation have to change to stop considering the poor as mere beneficiaries of aid as argued by UNCHS but as active participants in determining their destiny. In the absence of an inclusive and rights based approach, in all probability slum relocation will be another marginalization cycle in the name of progress.

The experience of slum relocation in the world presents grim lessons concerning the social and economic implications of displacement. A study on 14 urban projects that involved resettlement by the World Bank (1993) found out that some of them produced moderate success and others extreme suffering. One project in Ethiopia resettled about 800 people, whereas the figures went well beyond 50,000 in Brazil and Indonesia. Other large scale evictions have taken place worldwide during the 1970s 700,000 people in Delhi in the 1970s and 100,000 in Manila in 1991, with most of them causing massive economic displacement and social destruction. In China, there were millions of resettlements in the 1970s and 1980s, as a result of housing upgrading projects, but these resettlement frequently displaced settled communities. All these instances underline the importance of thorough planning, sufficient compensation, and the possibility of the post-relocation support. The facts show that relocation when performed without adequate socioeconomic protection, often increases poverty and weakens the community resilience (Davidson et al., 1993). Both the UN-Habitat (2003) and the World Bank end up in the same insight which is the fact that successful relocation is not about physical transfer but rather the need to



gather social continuity and economic sustainability. The communities should be included in the decision-making process, and women, children, and minority groups who receive disproportionate burden of relocation should be paid special attention.

## CASE STUDIES & ANALYSIS

### Alipur Farash Town, Islamabad

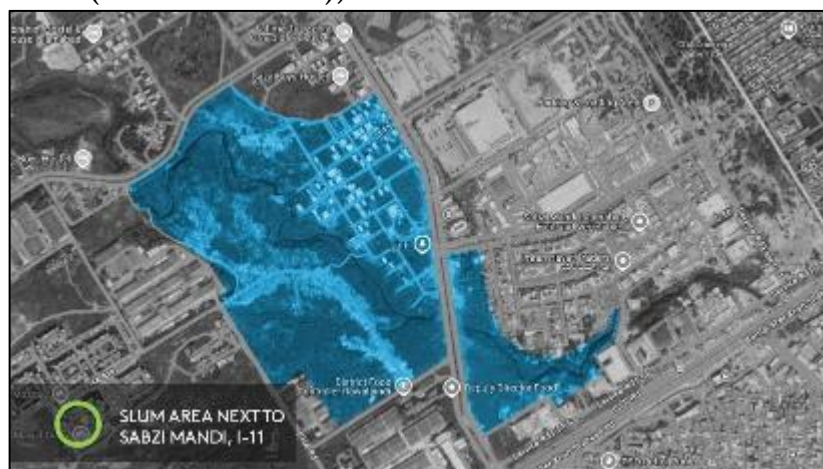
Farash Town is a settlement, which is situated on the Lehtrar road, 17 kilometers away at the Rawal dam and 9 kilometers away at Chak shahzad zone IV of Islamabad. Farash town has 600 households with approximated population of 5500. The first ever planned town of the dwelling slumsters of Islamabad is called Alipur Farash town. It is among the projects of CDA (Capital Development Authority) which is the most important. The cause of unfavorable environment and economic condition can also be people being forced to displacement when migrants. Any difference between Ali Farash and slums can only be observed due to the focus that is being made on Ali Farash and slums are largely at same economic status after the interventions, whereas Ali Farash residences are completely changed after interventions.



**FIGURE 01 FARASH TOWN, ISLAMABAD**

The CDA had set the contemporary shelter urban programme 18 years ago and had resettled residents of most of the slums in the city by giving them over 2,500 non-transferrable plots (20x40 feet) of land there. First, the slum dwellers of the Pakistani Institute of Medical Sciences and F-9 Park were moved to that place. In the later phase two, slum residents of Dhoke Najju in I-10, Haq Bahu I-11 and Muslim Colony were resettled there. Nevertheless, the residents were still complaining to the civic agency over failure to give them basic amenities including water and sanitation and road systems. The CDA has now chosen to give permanent allotment letters to the residents. Many of the slum dwellers sold their stamp paper plots and returned to the urban centers to get jobs due to diverse factors, with job related problems being the greatest reasons. The people in Muslim Colony situated close to Bari Imam would work and eat at Bari Imam shrine. However, once they were transferred to the Alipur Farash scheme, they had lots of problems that compelled them to re-transfer to their former colony.

## I-11 Slum-Dwellers. (i-11 Kachi Basti), Islamabad

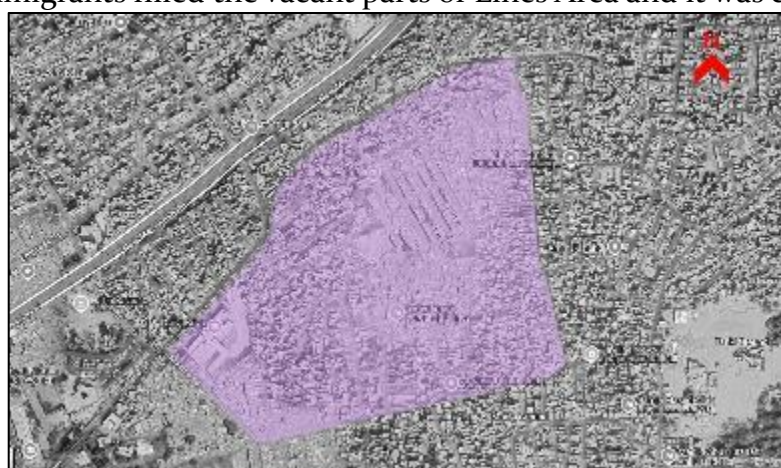


**FIGURE 02 SLUM AREA I-11, ISLAMABAD**

One of the refugee camps in Islamabad and Rawalpindi had 25,000 Afghans. The camps, the I-11 basti among others, were closed officially. In 2009, CDA again served eviction notices on the I-11 katchi abadi inhabitants though it agreed to negotiate on a relocation plan with UNHCR. Approximately, 3,000 Afghans were taken off the I-11 katchi abadi to I-12. UNHCR officials argued that the act implied that Pakistanis still were concerned about the Afghan refugees.

## Lines Area, Karachi

Lines Area is in the middle of the city and is enclosed by the M.A. Jinnah road (north), Sharee Faisal (south), Sindhi Muslim Housing Society and PECHS (east), and Saddar (west). The LARP has an area of 462 acres that is split into eight sectors. A senior governmental official of the Sindh who has served more than 15 years with LARP revealed that the area was built as a cantonment and barracks to build the armed forces were built during the first and second world wars. During the ten years following partition, a high population of immigrants filled the vacant parts of Lines Area and it was congested, he said.



**FIGURE 03 LINES AREA, KARACHI**

The region over the years was made inhabitable with poor sanitation and health amenities and marred with frequent flooding. In 1973, the Karachi Development Authority which no longer exists informed the Lines Area Redevelopment Project to solve the problems. According to the official, the project was in 1980 changed to an independent organization with an executive committee and an authorized board. It was initiated in 1981 as a self-funding venture. The official explained that the Lines Area was one of the most deplorable

slums in Karachi and LARP is thought to be the first type project in Pakistan. Nevertheless, even though over thirty years had passed since the project was being conceptualized, the project is still not finished. The majority of the business plots have been sold throughout the years and the inadequacy of sanitation, medical and infrastructural facilities are not addressed. Indeed, the government official admitted, in case the government wishes to close down the project, it must be called a failure.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Site Analysis

Identified Slum at F-6/2. 100 quarters

Sector F-6/2 of Islamabad, 100 quarters were built by the local authority (CDA) for its low-paid employees. It is located along the Saidpur Kas stream. Expanded on the Area of 99 Kanals. Originally it was designed in 30 Kanals with all basic amenities.

Site for relocation is located within radius of one kilometer from the 100 Quarter’s site. According to the United Nation’s parameters relocation site must be located within five kilometers of radius. Near Sector F-6/2 of Islamabad & Saidpur village’s Green Area - land owned by the Capital Development Authority (CDA).

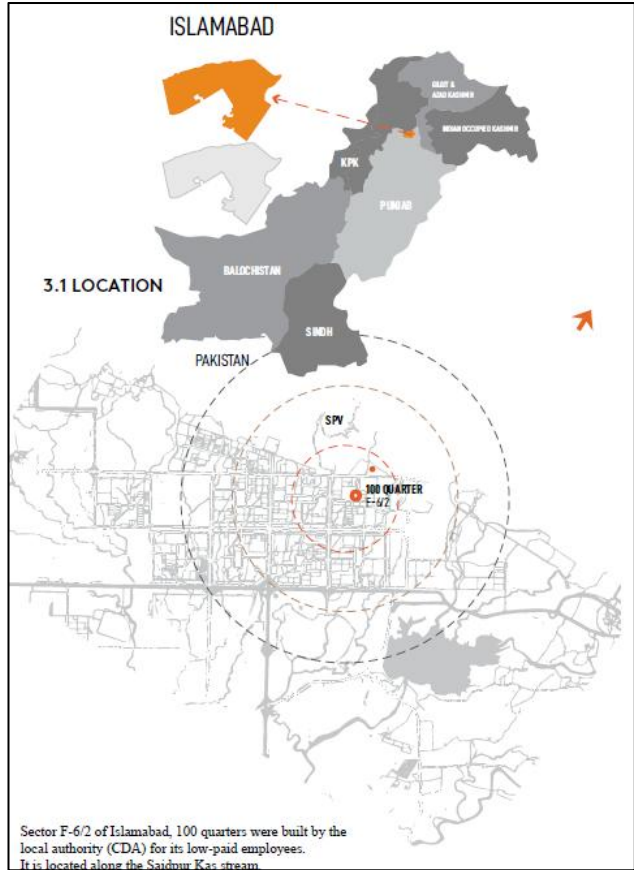


FIGURE 04 PROPOSED SITE LOCATION

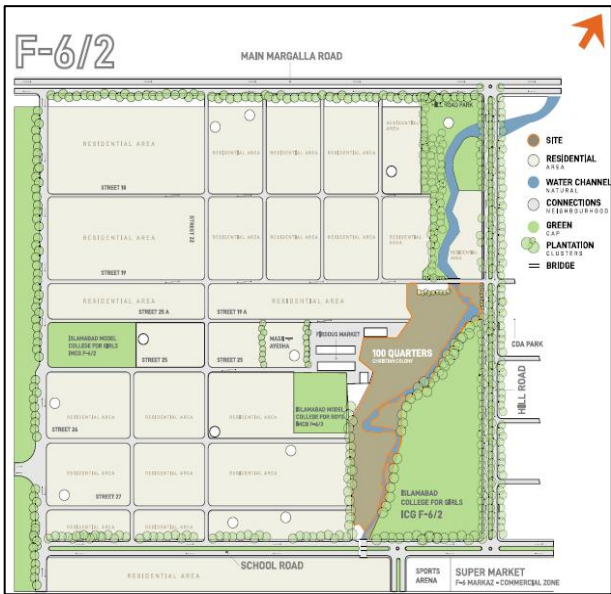


FIGURE 05 PROPOSED INTEGRATED PLAN



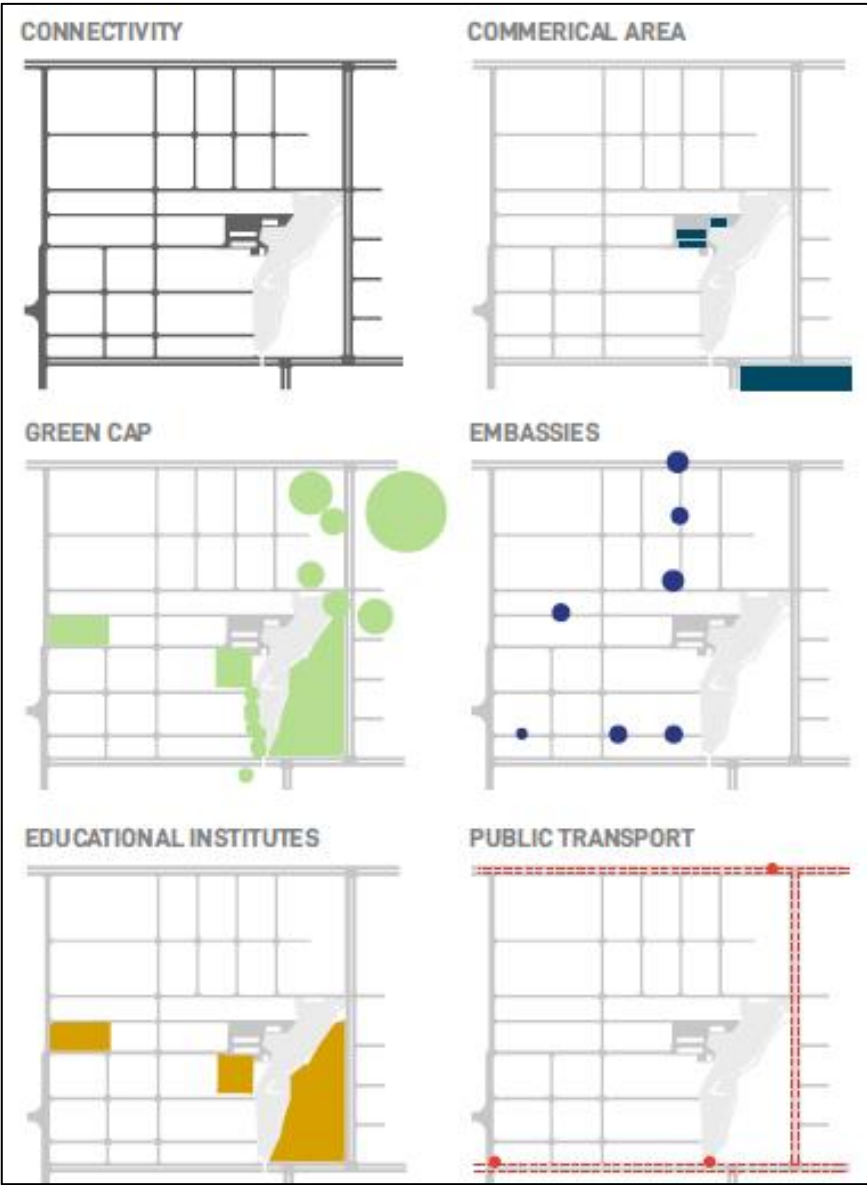


FIGURE 06 SITE CONTEXT





FIGURE 07 DETAILS OF CURRENT SITE CHALLENGES  
Proposed Site for Design Development

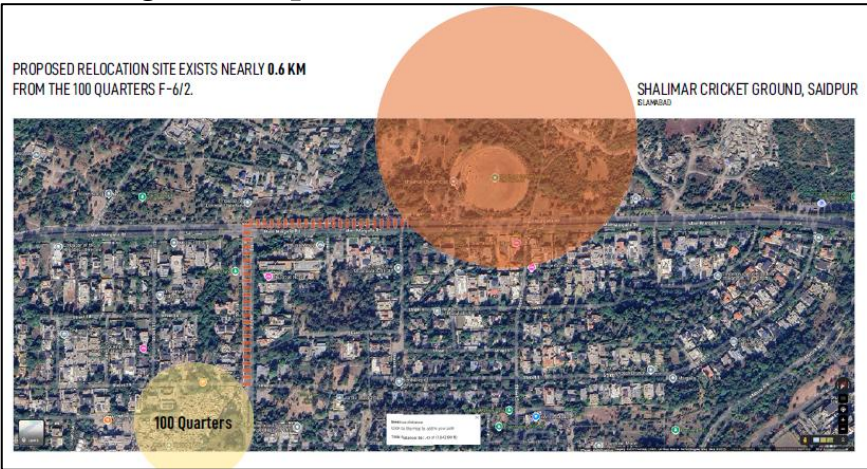


FIGURE 08 PROPOSED SITE FOR DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

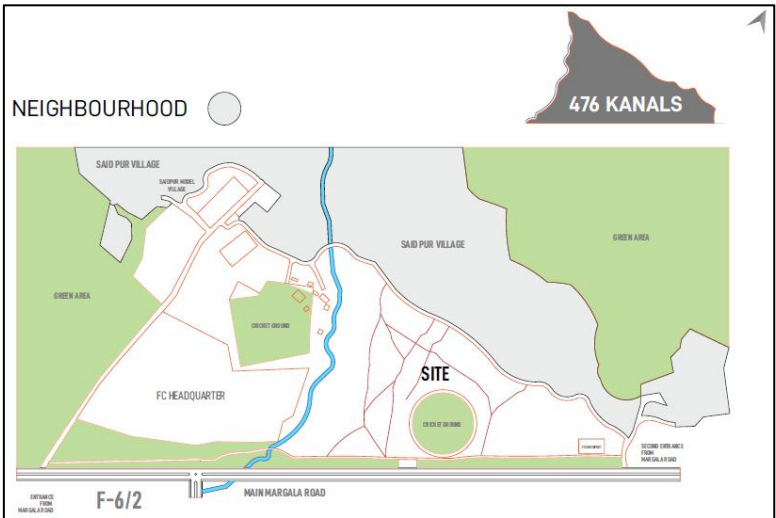
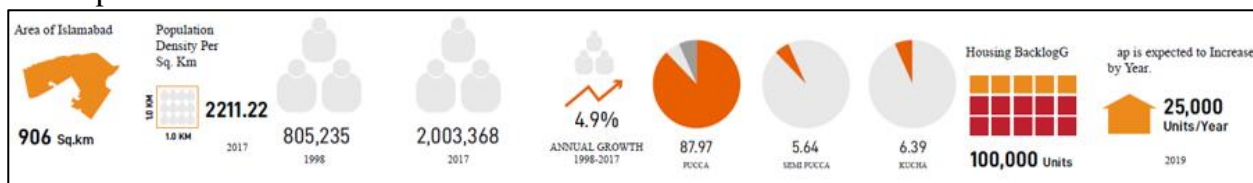


FIGURE 09 DETAILS OF PROPOSED SITE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Analysis of Data

The study's objectives were achieved through the use of a hybrid research model. In which several interviews were conducted of professionals in different fields associated with the study area such as, Architects, Town planners, Government officials and relevant stakeholders. Site visits of the identified site conducted at various times to analysis the on ground situation as per the claims of the local authority and the residents regarding the approach taken by the local authorities towards the legal and illegal aspects of the squatter development.



**FIGURE 10 DETAILS OF POPULATION BASED ON CENSUS DATA OF 2017**

1960's Pakistan witnessed the creation of Islamabad according to the planned master plan conceived by the Greek Architect and Town Planner Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis (C.A Doxiadis). Islamabad's master plan has developed along the mountain range of Margallas in a grid pattern with east-west axis. Master plan divided into sectors such as, C, D, E, F, G, H and I. Further, Islamabad plan conceived on the basis of three major zones. i.e. Residential, Commercial and administrative. Islamabad's development includes all socio-economic classes except the poor working class. For Example, Sector E, F, G and I cater the affluent segment of the society. Sectors like H and I are dedicated for educational institutions and economic zones.

Undeveloped areas/open areas within the limits of Islamabad sectors (F, G & I) densely populated by the poor working class such as, sweepers, construction workers and domestic staff with the passage of time. Doxiadis's design approach miscalculated in this particular area of slums development and created an urban issue for the local government authorities. As per official data fifty-two slums are developed in the limits of Islamabad. It includes rural and urban combined slums. Eleven slums are developed with the limits of Urban sectors of the Islamabad mentioned above.

In Discussion, the officials revealed that the Government is working on the issue of slums to provide better living to the squatters and trying to lay a unified approach to cope with this issue. Slums are identified on the basis of their legal status as per their development time tenure and their population. Furthermore, officials classified the slums on the basis of its area and their resident's status. The Identified Slum in this study has same status of legality for the area and illegality for its residents in 100 Quarters in F-6, Islamabad. On unfolding the phenomenon, it revealed that slum resident's fate is unknown and their status would remain illegal. According to the Planning expert, this issue is based on the poor urban planning and incompetency of the local authorities. Squatter development is witnessed across Pakistan where government land is in abundance and monitoring of such land is sparse. According to the expert the solution lies in the mutual understanding of the local authorities and squatters. Alternate land for relocation with its legal rights to the squatters is seen as workable and positive solution. Slum residents maintain their livelihood on various income resources such as laborious jobs, street carts and rentals. It is witnessed that majority of the slums residents sublet their spaces on rent. If slum residents asked to shift into any multistory project or single floor space, then it considered as failed approach. Expert explained the case study of the relocation of the

empire market's neighborhood relocation in the multi-story building where residents allotted flats per family. It failed their associated businesses and their incomes affected at large. Allotted residents sold their flats in open market to people and relocated in another slums site nearby.

Law enforcement agencies in Islamabad view the development of slums, including those in F-6, with a focus on maintaining public order, safety, and legality. Slums often face issues such as poverty, unemployment, and crime. As per their assessment some slums are the points, where unlawful activities happened due to lack of identification of the residents and their easy approach to posh areas of Islamabad. Nearby, residents also reported regarding unlawful activities by the slum residents. In 2010, Islamabad law enforcement agencies suggested CDA to evacuate these developments in order to maintain law and order in Islamabad. Residents often express concerns about safety and crime in slum areas. The lack of proper infrastructure and policing can lead to higher crime rates, affecting the overall security of the community. Many residents highlight the poor living conditions in slums, including inadequate access to clean water, sanitation, and electricity. These conditions can lead to health issues and a lower quality of life. The housing structures in slums are often temporary and made from non-concrete materials, which are not durable and can be unsafe.

## DESIGN EVOLUTION

### Concept Development

The Master Plan for the Slums of F-6 in Islamabad envisions a transformative approach to urban development, aimed at uplifting the living conditions and prospects of the slum residents. This comprehensive plan is rooted in the principles of social justice, sustainability, and inclusivity. It recognizes the vital contribution of these communities to the urban fabric of Islamabad and seeks to integrate them fully into the city's socio-economic mainstream.

This master plan is designed with a deep understanding of the unique needs and aspirations of the slum residents. It aims to provide them with safe, affordable, and dignified housing, while also ensuring access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. By fostering a participatory planning process, this plan places the residents at the heart of decision-making, ensuring that their voices are heard and their rights protected. The Master Plan for the Slums of F-6 is not just a blueprint for physical infrastructure but a roadmap for holistic development. It emphasizes the importance of social cohesion, economic empowerment, and environmental stewardship. Through innovative and sustainable design solutions, this plan aims to create vibrant, resilient communities that can thrive in harmony with the natural and urban environment.

As we embark on this transformative journey, we remain committed to the ideals of equity, justice, and sustainability. This master plan is a testament to our collective resolve to create a better future for all residents of Islamabad, where every citizen has the opportunity to live with dignity and hope. The Proposed plan and Interventions include detailed recommendations for the construction of community centers, skill development, green spaces, infrastructure. Conceptualized proposed master plan is conceived on the basis of design approach that provides the adequate living conditions which lacks in the older site of the 100 Quarters. Master plan is set east-west orientation in footsteps of the Margallas. Key factors considered were mainly as follows:

1. Sectors are designed with the plot size of 20'x 30' approximately 2.5 Marla.



2. Five sectors are divided along the central boulevard that dissects the plan and provides easy access to all residents.
  3. 20' wide streets are proposed with services area on both sides of the street.
  4. Main boulevard is connected from Margalla Road.
  5. Community Area, Commercial area and sports/part facilities programmed across the center of the master plan.
  6. Shalimar Cricket ground and nearby forces spaces are protected by making a Gated-walled community with dual Entry and exit points.
  7. Green spaces are also protected along the Margalla Road.
  8. Site naturally provides the buffer between Settlement of Saidpur Village and proposed master plan of this settlement.
  9. Natural water stream and village road is used to contain the plan.
- The design evolution is shared below:



FIGURE 11 DESIGN EVOLUTION INITIAL STAGES

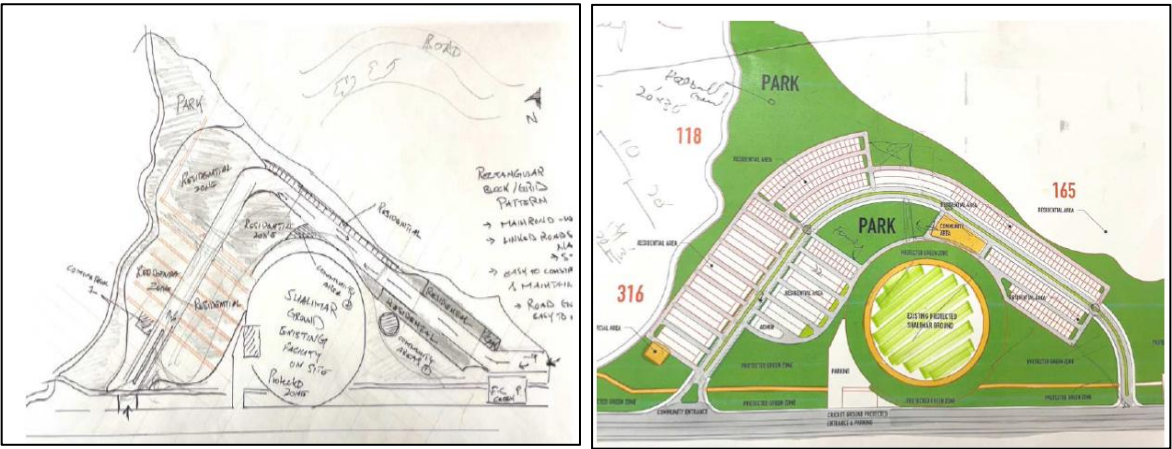


FIGURE 11 DEVELOPMENT OF MASTER PLAN



Proposed Design



FIGURE 12 PROPOSED MASTER PLAN

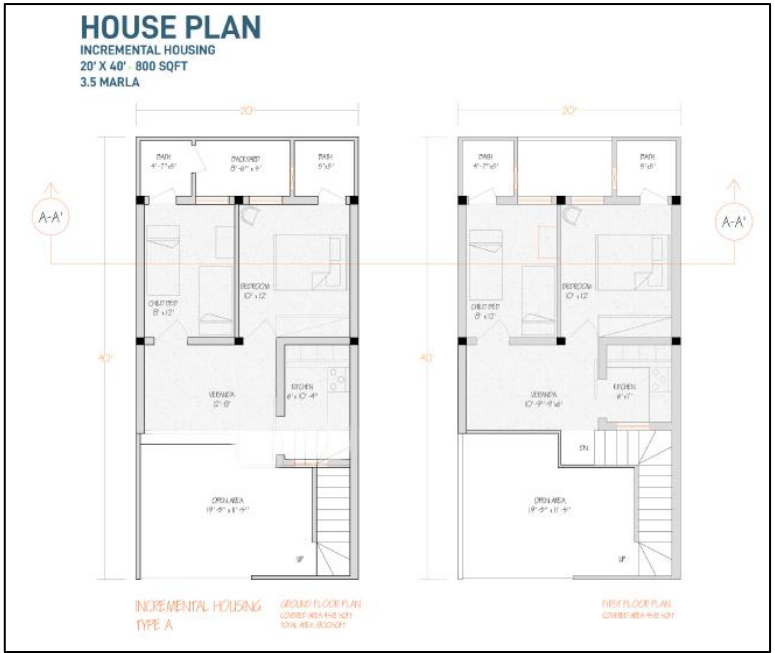


FIGURE 13 PROPOSED HOUSE PLANS



**FIGURE 14 PROPOSED ELEVATIONS OF THE HOUSE**



**FIGURE 15 PROPOSED PLANS OF THE APARTMENTS**



**FIGURE 16 SITE ELEVATIONS**



**FIGURE 17 PROPOSED :LANDSCAPE DESIGN**

## Research Findings & Conclusions

The master plan developed with a community-centric, sustainable, and phased relocation approach. It includes:

- Zoning for Residential, Community, and Commercial Use, ensuring self sufficiency and reduced travel distance for daily needs.
- Hierarchy of Roads (primary, secondary, and pedestrian pathways), with proper drainage, street lighting, and landscaping.
- Green Buffers and open spaces act as social nodes and improve microclimate.
- Cluster-Based Housing Layout encourages neighborhood bonding and safety.
- Materials

The design addresses multiple interrelated urban challenges:

- Climate Responsiveness: Use of CSEB walls, shaded streets, and passive cooling
- Cultural Continuity and Better living spaces: Maintaining communal spaces akin to existing slum patterns
- Infrastructure Upgrades: Proper sanitation, water supply, and solid waste



management

- Cluster Housing Typology: Designed for shared courtyards that encourage community interaction
- Incremental Housing Flexibility: Allowing residents to modify and grow homes over time
- Eco-Friendly Materials: Use of Stabilized Compressed Earth Blocks (SCEBs) and low-carbon concrete
- Green Infrastructure: Rainwater harvesting, bioswales, and rooftop gardens

The final master plan design bridges the gap between informal and formal settlements through a thoughtful, inclusive, and sustainable framework. It goes beyond merely rehousing and instead aims at reintegrating displaced communities into a dignified urban lifestyle. The project demonstrates that relocation need not mean disconnection, and with sensitive design, livelihoods, culture, and community identity can be preserved and strengthened.

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