

Consultancy Archiplan

Arun Goel

Draping native architecture along the contours of Dehradun



By Sakshi Agrawal

Consultancy Archiplan, a Dehradun based firm driven by Arun Goel garners local wisdom and seasons buildings with a “green-take”. Arun’s role in conceptualising and advancing sustainable development has been paramount regionally. He absorbs the client’s requirements while tactfully enlightening them on the idea of ‘authentic local architecture’, to preserve the cultural fabric of Dehradun. The firm embraces a broad portfolio of works ranging from high density housing to industrial planning to hospitality and landscape. He discusses the design philosophies acquired over four decades of professional experience in Dehradun.

Arun’s practice eyes Dehradun with the primary lens of how it was manifested initially. The city was designed for a population of 50,000 by the British. It was proclaimed as the city with ‘Grey Heads and Green Hedges’ until the 1970’s and early 1980’s. He mentions, “The entire city descends from North to South with a natural uninterrupted drainage, which has been completely disturbed due to insensitivity to nature and environment while urban expansion.” With the raising of the boundary walls around sub-divided smaller plots of land carved out of erstwhile large chunks, the topography of the entire length and breadth of the city has been vastly besmirched. A little rain now sees the water logging everywhere with drains overflowing with unbearable stench and non-biodegradable litter. Besides, multi-storied housing dotting the horizon has veiled the lovely mountain view, which was characteristic of this beautiful valley town.”

Abandoning these heterogeneous trajectories, Consultancy Archiplan has always adopted an approach that bodes well with the natural drainage of the land and captures the alluring hills keeping with the local climate. They treat the last vestiges of British architecture in the area with a fusion of local materials. Doubling down on the idea of reduced energy consumption, most of their projects feature substantial energy saving up to 30%. “This has been successfully achieved by bringing in the natural light and ventilation to each and every space including the stores and dress areas,” says Arun. He considers cost-saving as a by-product of manoeuvring time-honoured techniques along with efficient completion within scheduled timelines. Neshvilla Residence in Dehradun is one such project where they availed ‘pahadi’ architecture and design principles. Exposed brickwork was adorned with colonial arches that hold the slab, as against RCC beams. The doors were sourced from Kumaon region villages of Uttarakhand. For the ceilings, instead of using normal plaster & paint, clay pots were set during the casting of the slab.

These pots were used much like how a coffer slab is constructed, wherein 'voids' are created in the slab in places where there is no actual need for excess concrete. This not only saves cost, material, but also vastly enhances the aesthetics of the ceiling.

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Anirudh Ashram situated in the Tauli region of Uttarakhand, was envisioned to empower its regional communities by employing local workforce and utilising local materials. Built completely in exposed stone masonry and lime plaster walls, all materials were sourced within a 30 km radius. Local villagers were exclusively employed for construction processes like plastering the walls, doing the woodwork and laying the roof tiles. Such an impact-driven approach effectively reduced carbon footprint, transportation costs, labour costs and material costs, all while providing a source of income to the local villagers.

Year in, year out, clients are ambitious about Vastu compliant homes. Houses which are underpropped with Vastu design principles bring in a huge effect – both placebo and saleable aspects. Arun confers, "To us, Vastu is more to do with the uninterrupted energy flow in the building in and around, which we achieve through sensible placements of the spaces." However, they shun a crude Vastu compliance, which leads to a lack of sunlight or ventilation. To find an authentic building, which stands out, and at the same time blends in with the surrounding is an art slowly disappearing from our cities. And that expression for authenticity is what Consultancy Archiplan brings to its projects. Consultancy Archiplan is currently working on Everest Base Camp, a luxury camping resort at Hathi Paon, Mussoorie. Few of their upcoming ventures include Shaantam Resort, Mussoorie homestay, multi-storey residences and other individual residences.



Anirudh Ashram, Tauli, Uttarakhand



Dudhley Manor, Dehradun



Neshvilla Residence, Dehradun



Consultancy Archiplan Office, Dehradun