

Bengaluru Emerges as a National Model for Green Urban Living



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Bengaluru, India's technology and innovation hub, is fast becoming a pioneer in sustainable and resilient city development. Over the past year, the city has taken bold strides in waste management and water conservation, balancing rapid urbanisation with ecological responsibility. Backed by data-driven outcomes and community-led action, Bengaluru is positioning itself as a model of green urbanism for India's future.

Waste Management Revolution in Kannamangala

On Bengaluru's eastern outskirts, the Kannamangala Grama Panchayat has become a laboratory for community-driven waste management. Since late 2023, nearly 5,000 households have adopted a rigorous system of segregation, dividing waste into 14 distinct categories using colour-coded bins. Far from being a cosmetic exercise, this initiative has delivered measurable, replicable results.

At the heart of this programme are 50 women organised in Self-Help Groups (SHGs), who manage segregation, composting, and recycling. Their daily efforts not only reduce the city's landfill burden but also generate livelihoods. On average, recyclables sold from the programme bring in nearly ₹50,000 a month, while over 3,000 kilograms of compost is produced monthly from wet waste.

For Bengaluru, where only about 60–65% of waste is currently processed efficiently, Kannamangala offers a scalable model of a circular economy, turning household waste into a resource stream while empowering women through dignified employment. The experiment highlights that behavioural change, when reinforced by infrastructure and incentives, can move urban India closer to sustainability.

The Million Wells Campaign: Reviving Water Wells

Bengaluru has embraced an ambitious project that merges heritage with modern necessity, the Million Wells Campaign, launched in 2023.

The initiative seeks to construct one million shallow recharge wells across the metropolitan region by 2025. These wells, dug using traditional techniques, allow rainwater to percolate into the ground and replenish aquifers. Crucially, the project mobilises government bodies, NGOs, industries, and local communities, ensuring shared responsibility for water conservation.

By mid-2025, over 350,000 wells had already been completed—an achievement that represents 35% of the campaign's target. In many areas, groundwater levels have risen by as much as 1.5 metres, offering much-needed relief during the dry months. Beyond hydrological gains, the campaign sustains over 1,200 families of traditional well diggers, reviving an artisanal craft that might otherwise have been lost.

This marriage of science, community participation, and cultural heritage underlines Bengaluru's innovative approach: addressing a contemporary ecological challenge while preserving livelihoods and traditional knowledge systems.

Balancing Growth with Green Commitments

With a population of more than 14 million in 2025, Bengaluru's growth places immense pressure on its natural resources and infrastructure.

Recognising this, the city's governing body, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), has aligned its urban policies with sustainability objectives. Its headline target is ambitious: raising the city's green cover from 14% to 25% by 2030 through afforestation campaigns, the creation of green corridors, and partnerships with resident welfare associations.

The private sector has also embraced the green transition. Bengaluru has emerged as the leader in India's green leasing market, reflecting growing corporate demand for energy-efficient and environmentally certified workplaces. By Q2 FY24, the city recorded a 22.85% year-on-year increase in the absorption of eco-certified commercial spaces, touching nearly 13 million square feet. This surge underscores the alignment between corporate ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) mandates and tenant preferences, strengthening Bengaluru's reputation as a global business destination with sustainability at its core.

Learnings for other Cities

What makes Bengaluru's progress especially noteworthy is the multi-stakeholder approach at play. Kannamangala's waste management system shows the impact of bottom-up community involvement, while the Million Wells campaign illustrates how traditional practices can be adapted to modern challenges. Simultaneously, the BBMP's policy vision and private-sector participation ensure that these efforts scale up meaningfully across the metropolitan region.

For other Indian metros grappling with similar issues Delhi with its landfills, Chennai with water shortages, or Hyderabad with rapid sprawl Bengaluru offers practical, data-backed lessons. Its example proves that ecological stewardship is not merely a slogan, but a strategy that can produce quantifiable outcomes in waste reduction, water recharge, and green cover enhancement.

Towards a Scalable Model of Green Urbanism

Bengaluru's model points to a larger possibility: that India's cities can grow without sacrificing ecological integrity. By integrating scientific research, traditional knowledge, community empowerment, and corporate responsibility, the city is shaping an urban ecosystem that is both resilient and regenerative.

The success of waste segregation in Kannamangala and groundwater recharge through the Million Wells campaign demonstrate that environmental challenges can be met through inclusive and measurable action. The private sector's adoption of green-certified spaces, coupled with municipal commitments to expanding tree cover, reinforces that sustainability can be embedded across scales from the household to the corporate tower.

As Bengaluru continues to expand, its ambition extends beyond local transformation. The city is crafting a blueprint for green urbanism where technology, tradition, and ecology converge. If these models are replicated and scaled across India's urban landscape, our country can simultaneously drive economic growth and environmental resilience, setting a standard for other developing economies.



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