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DESIGNED FOR GENERATIONS



The Architecture of Permanence

What it takes to build homes that serve generations

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Walk through a newly completed residential development and the most visible features are often the easiest to judge: the floors, the fittings, the size of the rooms and the view. Yet a family buying a home must also ask a harder question: will this home still serve us thirty years from now?

That question changes how a residence is assessed. A home is something to live in, maintain and perhaps hand down. It carries a family's culture, faces a changing climate and accommodates generations. For an owner thinking that far ahead, the practical questions change. How will the house be maintained? Can it adapt when children grow up and parents age? Will it remain comfortable when the neighbourhood around it has changed?

Designing for generations begins with these questions. Whether the property is a modest apartment or a generous family residence, its lasting value depends on the decisions made before construction, the care taken during building and the attention it receives afterwards.

QUALITY BENEATH THE SURFACE

If a house is to serve a family for decades, its structure has to match that ambition. Much of the work that determines its quality will eventually disappear behind plaster, paint and tiles. Buyers may never see how the concrete was mixed, how reinforcement was placed or how closely construction followed the engineering drawings.

In a 2019 interview with The Daily Star, National Professor Jamilur Reza Choudhury emphasised the importance of materials meeting specifications, measured quantities of water in concrete, and proper compaction and curing. He also challenged the assumption that involving qualified engineers necessarily creates a substantial increase in construction costs. His observations place workmanship alongside material quality at the centre of the discussion.

Buying good materials is therefore only part of the task. In another interview published that year, Professor M. Shamim Z. Bosunia linked longevity to sound design and concrete quality that helps resist water penetration and corrosion. He stressed the need to improve technical knowledge alongside the quality of materials. The implication for homeowners is straightforward: a premium specification needs competent execution.

BUILDING FOR THE CLIMATE

Building this way in Bangladesh also means responding to local conditions. Dhaka is hot and humid for much of the year, and the monsoon brings heavy rain. A lasting home has to address that climate from the beginning.

The World Bank's report, An Unsustainable Life: The Impact of Heat on Health and the Economy of Bangladesh, found that Dhaka's maximum temperature rose by 1.4 degrees Celsius between 1980 and 2023, compared with 1.1 degrees nationally. It identifies vegetation loss and unplanned urban development among the factors contributing to the capital's urban heat-island effect. For a home intended to serve future generations, thermal comfort deserves serious consideration.

Orientation, shade and ventilation belong in the earliest design discussions. Deep overhangs, shaded openings and carefully positioned windows are among the architectural choices available. Their suitability depends on the site and surroundings; claims about their performance should be assessed in that context.

At South Water Carees in Baridhara, designed by Shatotto, these considerations formed part of an apartment development accommodating eight families. The architects describe layouts intended to admit summer breezes, communal green rooftops and courts that collect rainwater. The project, dating from 2009, offers a local example of bringing environmental considerations and shared outdoor space into residential design.

ROOM FOR A CHANGING FAMILY

Planning for decades also means planning for change. A bedroom that suits a young couple may later have to suit an elderly parent. Several generations living together need shared rooms for gatherings and quiet places to retreat. A home should be assessed against both everyday routines and the occasions when the whole family returns.

Shesher Kobita Residence in Faridpur makes that relationship tangible. Designed by Studio Morphogenesis, led by Saiqa Iqbal Meghna, the home was commissioned by a retired Bangla professor who wanted peaceful surroundings while awaiting visits from her daughters and grandchildren abroad. According to the architects' account, gardens, courtyards and airy interiors formed central parts of the brief.

The residence separates communal and private areas while maintaining visual connections between levels. Its architects describe openings arranged for airflow and a main staircase with low risers to ease movement. These are specific responses to the household. They also prompt a wider question: how will access work if a resident's mobility changes substantially?

The World Health Organization's Housing and Health Guidelines address accessibility for people with functional impairments alongside indoor temperatures and injury hazards. For an intergenerational home, that makes access, circulation and bathroom arrangements part of the design conversation from the outset.

Adaptability also needs boundaries. Bosunia warned in his 2019 interview against adding floors without assessing the structural implications. A family's changing needs should lead to informed alterations, with professional assessment where necessary.

GIVING FAMILIAR HOMES A NEW LIFE

Sometimes, continuity is achieved by renewing a home already rich in family history. Mala Designs & Architecture's account of a 3,100-square-foot apartment renovation in Baridhara DOHS describes a residence originally designed by the family's late patriarch. As the household grew, the practice reorganised it to provide greater privacy and flexibility.

Folding partitions allow communal rooms to expand or operate separately. Inherited furniture was retained and restored, including the dining table and a family clock. Here, legacy takes a practical form: familiar belongings remain part of a home adjusted for continued use.

That approach has an environmental dimension. UNEP's Building Materials and the Climate: Constructing a New Future identifies extending the life of buildings as a way to avoid waste and reduce demand for new materials. It also recognises that social and cultural attachment can encourage continued use. A home's future depends partly on whether people find reasons to keep it.

CARE BEYOND HANDOVER

Keeping it requires care. "Every structure requires regular maintenance," Choudhury said in his interview. He connected longevity with inspection and timely action, drawing attention to damage that can worsen when left unattended.

For apartment buyers, this raises questions beyond the individual flat. Who will maintain the common areas and building systems? How will repairs be funded? Can services be reached and components replaced? These questions deserve attention alongside the finishes presented at handover.

The construction budget is the first of many financial commitments. Owners must also consider upkeep, repairs and eventual changes. A feature's long-term value should be assessed against those responsibilities as well as its initial appeal.

The homes built today will shape how the next generation lives. That gives developers, architects, engineers and buyers a shared responsibility. A house that is poorly planned or neglected becomes someone else's problem. A home built with care, maintained consistently and adapted thoughtfully can remain a place where family life continues.

Gold leaf and imported marble may go out of fashion. Decades from now, the more meaningful achievement will be a home that remains comfortable, useful and worth keeping—a place the next generation is glad to inherit.



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