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## **Scarcity of land hits JNNURM housing project**

G.V.R. Subba Rao

*VMC on lookout for sites for more than 14,000 units*

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*Land identified at Gangireddula dibba for constructing 416 houses yet to be cleared*

*Controversy over move to acquire 44 acres of residential locality*

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VIJAYAWADA: Scarcity of land appears to have badly hit the prestigious housing project taken up by the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).

As many as 28,000 houses were sanctioned to the city under JNNURM in various phases. But land is available for the construction of just about 13,000 and odd houses. The land identified at Gangireddula dibba for constructing 416 houses is yet to be cleared. In short, the corporation is on the lookout for land for more than 14,000 houses.

The VMC zeroed in on a piece of land near Devinagar recently. The district administration even issued land acquisition notices to the owners of about 124 acres here. But, it soon got mired in controversy because a residential locality – Gadde Venkataramaiah Nagar – exists there in a stretch of about 44 acres. Residents of this locality raised a hue and cry when they received the notices. And, it attracted widespread criticism from various quarters, including the opposition parties. The VMC officials are now “rethinking and reassessing” their plans. They are said to be in a dilemma about how far “it is justified to clear a residential locality to take up a housing project,” sources say.

## Agriculture land

As the remaining 80 acres are stated to be agricultural land, the officials are contemplating going ahead to acquire it. They are also exploring the

possibility of replicating the Jakkampudi model by involving the farmers as partners. While land acquisition would cost about Rs. 124 crores, Public Private Partnership (PPP) model would not be a burden on the exchequer. Hence, the officials are contemplating involving the farmers like in Jakkampudi on 60:40 basis. But, it is still in an “embryonic stage.” Moreover, there is no scope for “purchasing the land” under the JNNURM programme as the Centre gives grant only for the cost of the dwelling unit, officials point out.

As many as 4,896 houses, including the ones planned at Gangigreddula dibba, are at various stages of construction in places like Disneyland, New Rajarajeswaripeta, Machavaram, Radhanagar, Payakapuram, Sundaraiah Nagar and Kundavari Kandrika. Similarly, 8,608 houses are at various stages of construction at Jakkampudi. In addition, The Andhra Pradesh State Housing Corporation Limited is constructing 1,152 houses. It may be recalled that the government issued GO Ms. No. 875 approving the district administration’s proposal to acquire and develop land at Jakkampudi on the basis of 60:40 ratio with the VMC executing the programme though there was stiff opposition from the farmers to the proposed housing scheme.