DHOLERAPEDIA

All About Dholera

A Complete and Sourced Portrait of India's Flagship Greenfield Smart City

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On sources and honesty. Every figure, date, capacity, and status in this book is drawn from public sources and is labelled by confidence. Where a figure is a goal rather than an achieved fact, the words "reported", "target", "planned", or "approved" are kept in place. Where sources disagree, the range is shown. Where no reliable figure exists, this book says so plainly rather than printing a guess. This is especially true of land prices, where no trustworthy open-market per-unit figure exists. The full source list is in the back of the book. Data current to July 2026. Mega-project timelines move; treat every future date as a target unless it is marked as done.

For the reader who wants the whole place, not the pitch.

A city is not a headline. It is a set of decisions, made in order, and paid for over years. This book is a portrait of one such city while it is still being built, drawn only from what can be sourced and dated.

How to Read This Book

This is the third book in the Dholerapedia series, and it is deliberately different from the first two. Those books asked a single question, whether Dholera is worth investing in and on what terms. This book asks nothing of you. It is a portrait and a reference. It sets out to describe the whole place: where it sits, how it began, who governs and builds it, what the master plan actually says, which engines are meant to power it, what the economy and the schemes around it look like, what life and land there involve, and where the whole project is headed. You can read it front to back like a story of a place, or open it at any chapter and treat it as a reference.

THE ONE RULE BEHIND EVERY PAGE

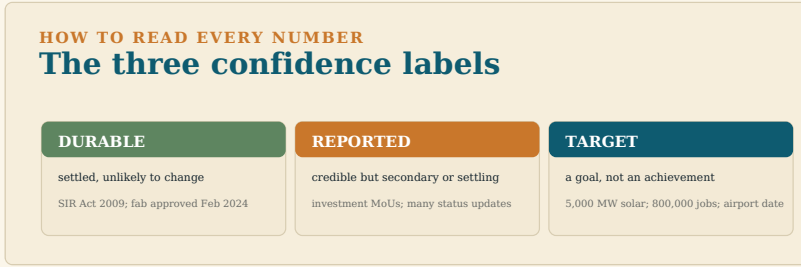


Figure 56. The labels used on every figure in this book. Source: methodology.

Most of what is written about Dholera is trying to sell you something. This book is not. Dholerapedia is an independent reference project that takes no money to rank or recommend anyone. That independence is the whole point, because it lets us do the one thing the

marketing cannot, which is to separate what is built from what is planned, and what is confirmed from what is merely hoped.

To keep ourselves honest, important facts in this book carry a confidence label, and we use three.

Durable. A fact that is settled and unlikely to change. The Gujarat Special Investment Region Act was passed in 2009. Dholera sits in Ahmedabad district on the Gulf of Khambhat. The semiconductor fab was approved by the Union Cabinet on 29 February 2024. These do not move.

Reported. A figure or claim that comes from a credible public source but is secondary, single-sourced, or still settling. Investment announcements, review counts, and many status updates live here. We keep the word "reported" so you know the difference.

Target. A number that is a goal, not an achievement. The 5,000 MW solar capacity, the roughly 800,000 jobs, the airport opening date, the full 920 sq km city. These are aims, and we always label them as such.

WHAT THIS BOOK WILL NOT DO

It will not invent a plot price, because no trustworthy open-market figure exists. It will not promise appreciation, because no government source guarantees it. It will not flatter a developer or flag one, because a neutral reference lists facts and lets you verify them yourself. And it will not use an em dash, because clear sentences do the work instead.

With that settled, we can begin where every visitor now begins, on the new road in.

Contents

PART I

Arrival

Begin where every visitor now begins, on the new road in.

CHAPTER 1

The Road In

You feel the change before you understand it. Leaving Ahmedabad on the new expressway, the traffic thins, the buildings fall away in stages, and then quite suddenly the land opens into something that does not feel like a road trip so much as a passage across a table. The 109 km Ahmedabad to Dholera Expressway, reported inaugurated on 31 March 2026, is a four-lane greenfield corridor, access-controlled and built for a design speed of 120 km per hour, with the room to expand to eight lanes later. It runs almost defiantly straight. Where the old journey to Dholera once took somewhere around two hours to two and a quarter, the drive now compresses, by reported accounts, to roughly forty minutes at the low end and about an hour at the high end. The sources vary on the exact figure, and this book will keep that honesty throughout. A number that is a claim will be named as a claim.

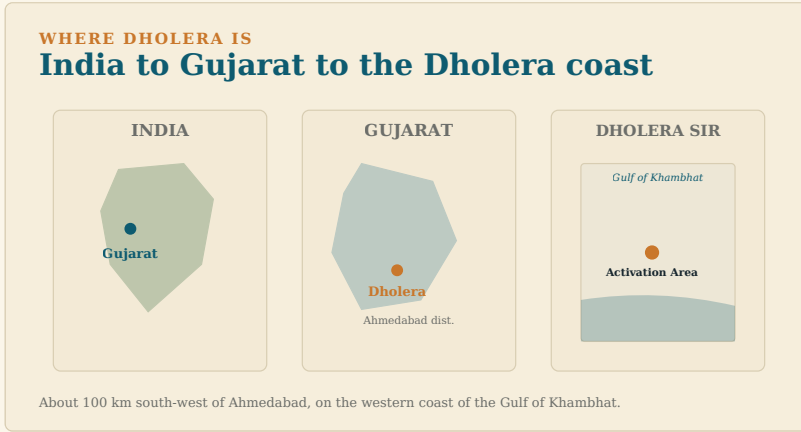


Figure 1. Locating Dholera: nation, state, and coastal site. Source: DHOLERA SIR basics, fact pack.

An access-controlled expressway in India. Illustrative of the Ahmedabad to Dholera Expressway. Illustrative image. Photo: V Malik from New Delhi & Pune, India, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

What the expressway delivers, beyond speed, is a particular kind of arrival. There is no gradual thickening of a town at the far end, no ribbon of shops and signboards announcing that you have reached somewhere. The plains simply continue, wide and low and pale, and at some point you understand that you are inside the boundary of one of the largest planned urban projects in India. The city is here in the way a blueprint is here. The roads exist. The land is marked. Much of what has been announced is still, in the most literal sense, ahead of you.

THE PREMISE OF THIS BOOK

That gap, between what has been announced and what has been built, is the honest subject of everything that follows. Dholera has been described, promoted, and argued over for more than a decade. Two earlier books in this series made the case for investing here. This one does not. This book is a portrait. It wants to place you on the road, in the flat coastal light, standing on the Bhal soil, and to describe what is genuinely there, what is under construction, and what remains a plan on sanctioned paper.

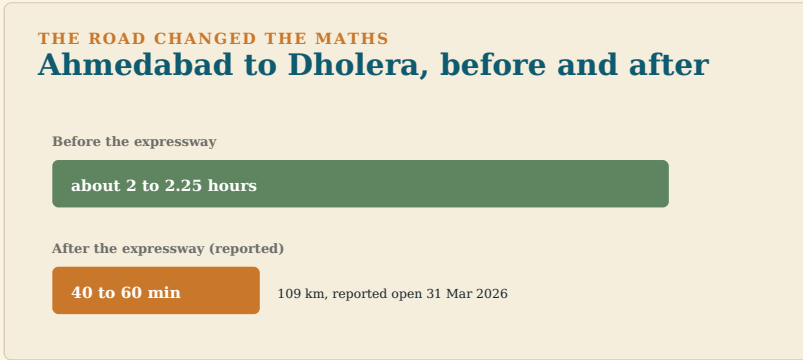


Figure 42. The travel time the new road cut. Source: fact pack, section 4.

So a rule, stated once and kept: a map is not yet a road, an announcement is not a building, and a target date is not an achievement. Dholera is a place where these distinctions matter more than usual, because the volume of announcement around it is unusually loud. The expressway is real and reportedly open. The airport nearby is not open. Its first aircraft, an aviation authority calibration and trial flight, touched the runway on 4 June 2026, and operations are targeted for September to October 2026, which is a goal and not a fact. The semiconductor fabrication plant under construction has, as of mid-2026, produced no chip. Holding these truths side by side, without flattening them into either hype or dismissal, is the discipline of a real portrait.

LOCATING DHOLERA

Geographically, Dholera is precise even where its future is uncertain. It sits in Ahmedabad district, in Dholera taluka, on the western coast of the Gulf of Khambhat, historically also called the Gulf of Cambay. It lies roughly 100 km

southwest of Ahmedabad, and the expressway is the fast tendon that now connects the two. The formal entity is the Dholera Special Investment Region, the SIR, established under the Gujarat Special Investment Region Act of 2009 and marketed to the wider public as Dholera Smart City. It is a node of the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, frequently described as that corridor's largest node, though the word largest there is a reported superlative rather than a measured one.

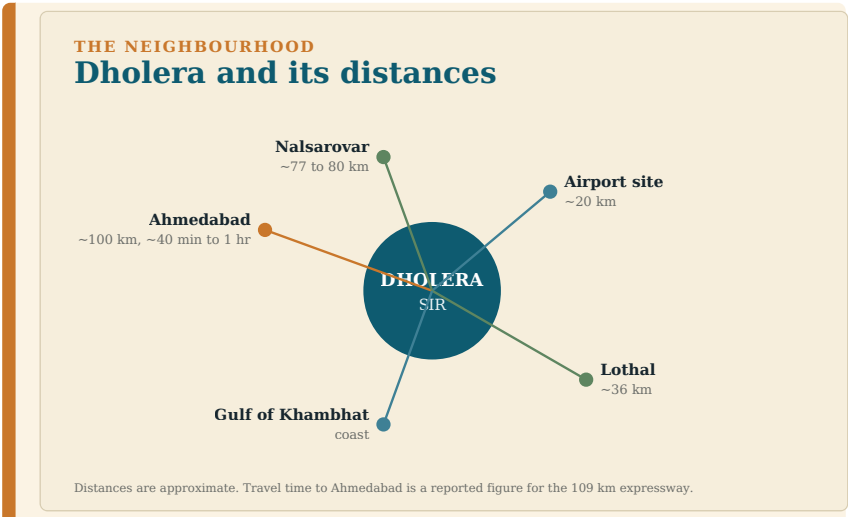


Figure 2. How Dholera sits among its neighbours. Source: fact pack; lifestyle and tourism file.

The distances around Dholera form a kind of spoke diagram that is worth carrying in your head as you read. Ahmedabad sits about 100 km to the northeast, now reachable in that reported forty minutes to an hour. The planned Dholera International Airport lies about 20 km from the SIR, and roughly 80 km from Ahmedabad. Lothal, the ancient Indus Valley port, is commonly cited at

about 36 km away, an approximate figure. These three points, the metropolis, the airport, and the five-thousand-year-old dock, frame Dholera in space and in time. One is a living city you have just left. One is a runway that has felt a single trial landing. One is among the oldest engineered harbours humanity has left behind. Dholera is being built in the middle of that triangle.

WHO IS BUILDING IT, AND UNDER WHAT NAME

It helps, this early, to fix the acronyms, because they recur through every later chapter and they are easy to blur. The land you are crossing is administered through a layered structure. DSIRDA, the Dholera Special Investment Region Development Authority, is the statutory planning and land authority. DICDL, Dholera Industrial City Development Limited, is the special purpose vehicle that actually builds the city, incorporated on 28 January 2016 and owned 51 percent by the Gujarat government through DSIRDA and 49 percent by the central government through the NICDC Trust. NICDC, the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation, is the central nodal agency, and it was formerly known as DMICDC before it was renamed. These are not interchangeable bodies with overlapping logos. They are the state, the builder, and the national corridor authority, and together they explain why Dholera is spoken of in the same breath as national policy rather than as a local municipal project.

That national frame is the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor. Dholera is one of its nodes, and it is often described as the largest, a description this book carries as a reported superlative rather than a verified measurement. The corridor itself has a long and

documented history of announcement and delay, and Dholera has traveled that arc with it. The point to hold on the road in is simply that this is not a private township. It is a flagship of a central industrial-corridor programme, which is both the source of its scale and, historically, the source of its slowness.

THE EXPRESSWAY IN NUMBERS

The road under your wheels deserves its own honest accounting, because it is the most complete large thing the project has delivered. It is a greenfield corridor built by the National Highways Authority of India, four lanes as constructed with the reserved width to become eight, access-controlled, and set to a 120 km per hour design speed. Its cost is reported in two conflicting figures depending on scope, around Rs 3,196 crore for construction alone against around Rs 4,373 crore including land, a gap that reflects what is and is not counted rather than any mystery. Tolling is planned on a FASTag basis, though specific rates are not reliably sourced and this book will not invent them. There is even a live question over the as-built lane count, with the corridor described in some official material as six-lane against the earlier four-lane figure, a detail worth verifying on the ground rather than asserting. None of these caveats changes the lived experience of the drive. They simply keep the record clean.

THE SCALE, STATED CAREFULLY

The number most often attached to Dholera is 920 sq km, sometimes rendered as about 360 sq mi, and it is a real, official figure. But it is a planning envelope, the outer

boundary of the ambition, not a built or even fully developable area. Of that envelope, roughly 580 sq km is considered developable, and of that, about 422 sq km is urban-developable. Close to a third of the developable land falls within the Coastal Regulation Zone, which constrains what can be done near this tidal coast. To drive across Dholera in 2026, then, is to drive across a canvas whose edges are drawn much wider than its painted portion. That is not a criticism. It is simply the accurate way to hold the place in mind, and it is why the sight from the expressway can feel so open. You are seeing the reserve of a city more than the mass of one.

WHAT THE ROAD TEACHES

There is a lesson in the road itself. Infrastructure like this expressway is the part of a planned city that arrives first, because it must. You cannot build industry, housing, or an airport economy at a place that takes two hours of stop-start driving to reach. So the corridor is laid, the travel time collapses, and for a while the road is more finished than the destination it serves. That inversion is normal in greenfield development and it is everywhere in Dholera. The trunk comes before the tree.

Which means the drive in is the truest possible introduction. You experience, in sequence, exactly what the project has managed so far: a fast, modern, reportedly operational road, delivering you smoothly to a landscape that is mostly still potential. Nothing about that is disappointing once you understand what you are looking at. It is a place in the middle of becoming, and the honest pleasure of visiting it now is the pleasure of seeing the underdrawing before the paint. In the chapters that

follow, this book will keep separating the two. The land first, because the land was here long before the plan. Then the small, real, unfinished patch where the plan has actually touched the ground.

THE QUALITY OF THE LIGHT

One thing no announcement prepares you for is the light. On the Bhal the sun does not filter through anything. There are no hills to break it and, across much of the region, few buildings tall enough to throw a real shadow, so the light arrives flat and total and lies across the ground like a sheet. Morning comes up soft and hazy off the Gulf. Midday flattens the land into a pale, shadowless expanse where the new road is often the sharpest line in view. Evening pulls long and gold across the flats before it goes. This is not decoration. It is information. The openness you see is the same openness the planners saw, and it is the physical fact that made a city of this scale conceivable here. To describe the light honestly is to describe the emptiness honestly, and the two are the same thing seen at different hours.

CHAPTER 2

The Land Itself

Long before it was a Special Investment Region, this was the Bhal. The word names a stretch of flat, low-lying coastal country along the Gulf of Khambhat, and it describes the place better than any acronym. The Bhal is level to a degree that surprises people who arrive expecting the folded, dramatic geography of much of India. It is a plain that meets the sea almost without incline, a country of tidal flats and salt-touched earth, of mangroves at the water's edge, under a wide and often hazy sky. The climate is semi-arid, with a tropical-monsoon influence, though precise long-term normals for the immediate area are not reliably documented. What can be said plainly is that this is a hot, dry, exposed coast for much of the year, softened and then flooded by the monsoon.

WHY FLATNESS WAS THE POINT

Salt work on the Gujarat coast, illustrative of the salt-flat landscape that shaped Dholera's low-lying Bhal region. Illustrative image. Photo: Vinod Panicker, CC BY-SA 2.5, via Wikimedia Commons.

The very featurelessness that can make the Bhal seem empty is the reason it was chosen. Building a large new industrial city is far easier on a blank, level surface than on contested, built-up, or broken terrain. Flat land simplifies the geometry of a master plan, the laying of a road grid, the trenching of underground utilities, and the alignment of an expressway and a runway. Planners speak of Dholera as a greenfield site, meaning land not previously urbanised, and the Bhal is greenfield in an almost ideal sense. There is little to demolish and little to route around. A designer can draw a city here in clean lines because the ground offers few arguments.

The master plan concept for the city is widely attributed to the international firm Halcrow, with detailed planning carried out by local counsel, though this attribution is reported rather than primary-confirmed. What is clearer is the structure the plan imposes on the plain. The region is organised into six Town Planning schemes, TP1 through TP6, all six of which have been sanctioned in draft form. Phase I combines TP1 and TP2 for roughly 153 sq km, with TP1 at about 51 sq km and TP2 at about 102 sq km, the latter holding both the Activation Area and the ABCD building that Chapter 3 describes. The later phases extend the plan outward in sanctioned stages, TP3 and TP4 together at about 126 sq km targeted across 2023 to 2032, and TP5 and TP6 together at about 142 sq km across 2033 to 2042. Add these and you arrive at roughly 422 sq km, the urban-developable figure, phased across some three decades. That thirty-year horizon is not a caveat buried in the design. It is the design.

Figure 3. The flat, low-lying Bhal coastal land. Source: fact pack, geography and master plan.

But the same flatness carries a real and documented cost, and the planning record does not hide it. Low-lying coastal land drains poorly. Water does not run off a table. Flooding and drainage are named, in the planning documentation for Dholera, as genuine constraints that the engineering has to answer for, not incidental concerns. This is why so much of the early physical work here has gone into things that move water: a large stormwater canal, graded road levels, and an underground drainage and utility system. A city on the Bhal has to lift and channel and store water deliberately, because the land will not do it on its own. To stand on this coast and grasp its promise, you also have to grasp its stubbornness. The flatness is both the gift and the problem.

THE COASTAL REGULATION ZONE

Then there is the sea's legal shadow. India protects its coastlines through the Coastal Regulation Zone, a framework that restricts construction and activity within defined distances of the tideline and around sensitive coastal features. In Dholera this is not a marginal footnote. Roughly one third of the developable land falls inside the CRZ. Put in the fuller figures the planning bodies report, of about 580 sq km considered developable, close to 422 sq km is urban-developable, and a substantial share sits under coastal restriction. The tidal flats and mangrove fringes that give the Bhal its character are also, in part, the reason a meaningful portion of the map is shaded off from ordinary building. The Gulf of Khambhat is not merely a scenic edge to the project. It is a boundary

condition written into what can and cannot be developed, and any honest description of Dholera's usable extent has to pass through that fact.

THE VILLAGES AND THE CENSUS

The Special Investment Region was not conjured from nothing. It was assembled from 22 villages of Dholera taluka, an area itself carved from the former Dhandhuka taluka. The count of 22 villages is durable and consistently reported. A confidently circulated named list of all 22, however, is not reliably sourced, and some versions in circulation appear to include villages that do not belong. So this book states the number and declines to print a village-by-village roster it cannot stand behind. Where a fact is firm, it is given. Where it is not, it is named as not reliably sourced, and that is the end of the matter.

Of the human scale that existed here before the plan, one figure survives cleanly. The 2011 Census recorded Dholera village itself with a population of 2,779 people, comprising 1,420 males and 1,359 females, across 576 households, with a literacy rate reported at just over 80 percent. The taluka-wide total from that census is not reliably available to cite here. But hold that single number for a moment, because it does a great deal of quiet work. A planning envelope of 920 sq km, a developable expanse of hundreds of square kilometres, a city imagined at full development for a population and workforce numbering in the hundreds of thousands, all of it overlays a coastal taluka whose namesake village counted fewer than three

thousand residents a decade and a half ago. The distance between those two orders of magnitude is the distance the project is trying to cross.

A CANVAS OF ZONES

On the sanctioned plan, the blank Bhal is divided into a vocabulary of zones, and reading that vocabulary tells you what the planners meant this coast to become. The Development Plan names industrial and residential zones, a City Centre, a High-Access Corridor, Knowledge and IT, Logistics, Strategic Infrastructure, Public Facilities, Sports and Recreation, a Solar Park, a Green Belt, the Coastal Regulation Zone itself, Agriculture, and a Village Buffer. The exact percentage given to each zone is not cleanly sourced, because the relevant Development Plan report link is dead, and this book will not manufacture those splits. What is sourced is the total industrial ambition, about 11,000 hectares of industrial area across the full plan, with a Phase-1 industrial gross of roughly 3,000 hectares, and individual land parcels sized anywhere from half a hectare to 150 hectares. The mix of zone names matters more than any single figure. This was drawn not as a dormitory suburb of Ahmedabad but as a working industrial region with its own centre, its own logistics spine, its own energy park, and a deliberate green and coastal buffer folded in.

A CONTESTED ACQUISITION

The land did not pass quietly from field to plan. The record of how this region was assembled includes real litigation and real objection, and a neutral portrait has to say so. Gujarat High Court stayed the SIR land acquisition

in 2015 following petitions from farmers, and a 2017 assessment in Business Standard found that only about 290 of more than 900 sq km had then been secured, describing the wider Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor as a tale of abandonments and delays. Progress since has been substantial, and later chapters record the land now transferred to the developer and allotted to industry. But the early history is not a smooth ribbon. It is a contested one, and the flatness of the Bhal should not be mistaken for emptiness of claim. People farmed this coast, and the making of the region ran through their fields and, for a time, through the courts.

A LANDSCAPE OLDER THAN THE PLAN

It helps to remember that this coast carries deep history, not just future intent. Dholera has a traditional claim to having been a port town, a claim that appears in general reference sources without firm citation and is therefore best treated as tradition rather than settled fact. What is durable is the presence of a Swaminarayan temple here, counted among the nine built by Swaminarayan. And the coast holds a genuine episode of the freedom struggle. In April 1930, in the weeks after Gandhi broke the salt law at Dandi on 6 April, a salt satyagraha unfolded at Dholera port. According to the Gujarati Vishwakosh, Amritlal Seth led a group of roughly twenty-one satyagrahis on 6 April, Balwantrai Mehta led a larger contingent around 13 April, and the poet Jhaverchand Meghani was among those who rallied recruits through song. A separate leadership claim attached to one name in some retellings is unverified and is left out here.

So the Bhal is not a void that planning arrived to fill. It is an old, flat, salt-laced coast with its own villages, its own temple, and its own small chapter of the national story, now designated to carry something vast. The land itself was here first, and it sets the terms. Everything the next chapters describe, the roads, the canal, the command centre, the fab under construction, is an attempt to build on a coast that is generous with space and unforgiving with water. To understand what stands at Dholera today, you first have to respect what the ground is.

CHAPTER 3

What Stands There Today

Almost nothing that is famous about Dholera has been built yet. That sentence is not a verdict, it is an orientation. The semiconductor fab, the airport, the semi-high-speed rail, the five-gigawatt solar ambition, the projected city of hundreds of thousands, these are the things Dholera is known for, and in 2026 they are respectively under construction, not yet open, approved and awaiting build, partly commissioned, and largely still to come. To see what actually stands on the ground, you have to narrow your eyes from the 920 sq km envelope down to a single, small, deliberately chosen patch. That patch is the Activation Area.

THE ACTIVATION AREA, DEFINED

The Activation Area covers about 22.5 sq km, cited in official figures at 22.54, and it sits inside Town Planning Scheme 2. It was conceived as the phase-one, plug-and-play demonstration zone, the first piece of the city to be fully serviced with trunk infrastructure so that industry and development could plug in. In scale it is a little over four percent of the developable land. An older 2020-era target of housing roughly 120,000 residents and generating around 80,000 jobs within this zone has lapsed, and this book does not carry lapsed targets as if they were live. What remains meaningful is the physical reality: this is the square of Dholera where the plan has most concretely become material.

Figure 57. The whole book in five numbers. Source: fact pack.

Figure 4. The plug-and-play demonstration zone as built. Source: DICDL Activation Area, fact pack.

Walk or drive it, and the dominant impression is of a fully engineered emptiness. The framework of a city is present. The population of one is not. Roads run to their full width and simply meet the horizon. Junctions are finished where little yet turns at them. It is the strangeness of good

infrastructure arriving ahead of the life it is designed to hold, and it is the single most honest thing to say about Dholera as it physically exists.

THE ABCD BUILDING AND THE CITY'S BRAIN

The landmark structure here is the ABCD building, the Administrative cum Business Centre for Dholera. It stands in the Knowledge and IT Zone of TP Scheme 2, on a plot of about nine hectares, and it was designed to a LEED Gold standard. Inside it sits the Integrated Command and Control Centre, the ICCC, described as the smart city's brain. From here the systems of the city are meant to be watched and run in real time: water, power, lighting, surveillance, traffic, and environmental monitoring, alongside authority offices and a single-window clearance function for approvals. The building is reported to be structurally complete and operational, though a precise inauguration date is not firmly documented, and its stated built-up area differs between sources, cited at around 14,000 sq m in one government-tier figure and around 36,000 sq m by the developer for the full structure. The discrepancy is worth flagging rather than smoothing over.

The ICCC matters symbolically as much as functionally. A conventional city grows first and acquires its management systems later, often awkwardly, retrofitted onto older bones. Dholera has inverted that. It has built the brain and the nervous system, and now waits for the body to fill in around them. Standing before the ABCD building, you are looking at the control room of a city that is still mostly future, humming over a grid that governs far more empty land than occupied.

THE BONES BENEATH THE GROUND

Much of the real achievement at Dholera is, fittingly for the Bhal, concerned with water and lies out of sight. According to the developer's own accounting of the Activation Area, the zone is laid with underground trunk utilities: power lines, ICT and fibre ducts, piped natural gas, and a potable water network fitted with smart meters and leak detection. There is a separate recycled-water network and dedicated wastewater and effluent lines. Stormwater is gathered and carried into a man-made canal reported at 6.5 km in length, the engineered answer to the drainage problem the flat coast poses. A water treatment plant of around 50 million litres per day capacity, with reservoirs, anchors the water system.

Above ground, the most visible bone is the road network, reported at about 72 km of internal roads within the Activation Area, ranging from roughly 18 to 70 m in width, laid out with pedestrian and cycle lanes and a reserved corridor set aside for future rapid transit. This is the plug-and-play idea made physical: the corridors for power, water, gas, data, drainage, and movement are installed first, beneath and along a road grid, so that a factory or a building can later connect to ready service rather than wait for it to be trenched in. Some further elements described in promotional material, such as a common walkable utility tunnel, are not officially confirmed and are best left as unverified. What is documented is substantial enough on its own: a serviced grid sitting ready on the coast.

This pre-installation of underground trunk utilities before any above-ground construction is, in fact, one of Dholera's few defensible firsts. It is the plug-and-play model in its literal sense, and it is a genuine departure from how Indian cities have usually grown, which is to say organically and then to be dug up repeatedly afterward. Here the sequence is reversed by intent. The corridors came first. Whether the city that plugs into them arrives at the pace once hoped is a separate question, and an open one.

WHAT THE ANCHORS ACTUALLY ARE

Standing in the Activation Area, it is fair to ask what is meant to fill this serviced grid, and the honest answer is a mix of the building, the announced, and the aspirational. The clearest single fact on the ground beyond the Activation Area itself is the Tata Electronics semiconductor fabrication plant, developed with the Taiwanese firm PSMC, approved by the Union Cabinet on 29 February 2024 under the India Semiconductor Mission at an investment of around Rs 91,000 crore. As of the middle of 2026 its civil construction is reported past the halfway mark, with cleanroom installation and equipment calibration underway, and a first-silicon or trial target of around December 2026 at a mature process node, with commercial production reportedly pushed to mid-2028. No source confirms a chip has been produced. It is the strongest anchor Dholera has, and it is still, physically, a construction site.

Beyond the fab, the wider energy story is partly real. The Dholera solar park carries an ultimate announced target of 5,000 MW, but that is a goal by around 2030, not

installed capacity. What is operational is closer to 300 MW, with a Phase-I sanction of 1,000 MW, including a Tata Power plant reported at 300 MW built across 1,320 acres. The city's planned economy names a long roster of sectors, defence, aviation, electronics and semiconductors, pharma and biotech, heavy engineering, auto and ancillaries, general manufacturing, agro and food processing, metals, and renewables, and a SIR-wide employment ambition of more than 800,000 jobs at full development. Every one of those job figures is a target, not a payroll. The distinction is the whole point of this book, and nowhere is it sharper than standing in a serviced but near-empty zone reading a brochure of futures.

THE HONEST MIDDLE

There is a temptation, having listed everything that is not yet finished, to swing to the opposite error and say that nothing is happening at Dholera. That would be as false as the hype. The counter is documented and concrete. The expressway is reportedly open. The Activation Area's trunk infrastructure genuinely exists. About 300 MW of solar is commissioned. A roughly Rs 91,000 crore fab is physically under construction. Semi-high-speed rail to Ahmedabad and the airport was approved by the central cabinet committee in May 2026 at a reported cost of around Rs 20,667 crore over about 134 km, with completion targeted toward 2030 to 2031. Land has been transferred to the developer and parcels allotted to industry. These are not nothing. They are the real, unglamorous first courses of a very large build.

FAME AGAINST FINISH

The temptation, arriving here, is to measure Dholera against its own publicity and find it thin. That is the wrong measurement. The right one is to hold fame and finish apart and look honestly at each. Dholera is famous for a fab that has not yet made a chip, an airport that has felt one trial landing and is not open, and a city projected for a population it does not remotely hold today. Dholera is finished, in the sense of built and standing, in one square of about 22.5 sq km where roads, a command centre, a canal, a treatment plant, and underground utilities genuinely exist. Both statements are true at once, and neither cancels the other.

That is the condition of the place in 2026, and it is not a failing to be explained away. It is the ordinary, unglamorous middle of building something very large from nothing on a difficult coast. The trunk has been laid before the tree. The brain runs ahead of the body. The map, in this one corner, has finally become a road, a canal, a building. Across the rest of the envelope it remains a map. This book will spend the chapters to come walking the reader through both, the built and the planned, always saying which is which. For now it is enough to stand in the Activation Area, in the wide flat light of the Bhal, and to see clearly the difference between what has been announced about Dholera and what, so far, actually stands there.

PART II

Deep Time

> *A city this new sits on very old ground.*

CHAPTER 4

The First Dock

To understand Dholera, begin not with the drawings of planners but with a tide. The coast on which the Special Investment Region now takes shape belongs to the Gulf of Khambhat, once written as Cambay, a shallow funnel of the Arabian Sea that pushes some of the most extreme tides on the Indian subcontinent up into the flat, low-lying land the Gujaratis call the Bhal. Water arrives here in a rush and retreats just as fast, leaving mudflats, creeks, and salt. It is not an obvious place to build a city, and it was not an obvious place to build a port. Yet roughly four thousand years ago, a few dozen kilometres from where surveyors would one day peg out the Activation Area, people of the Indus Valley did exactly that. They read the tide, and they used it.

Figure 5. A deep-time ribbon of the Dholera coast. Source: fact pack, history and milestones.

The excavated Harappan town of Lothal, about 36 km from Dholera, one of the world's earliest known dockyards. Photo: Hardik1602, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

THE TOWN THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS UNCOVERED

Lothal lies in the same Ahmedabad district as Dholera, commonly cited at about thirty-six kilometres away, the distance approximate because both the road and the ruins resist tidy measurement. It is one of the most important sites of the Indus Valley Civilisation, also called the Harappan civilisation after its first-recognised city, and it was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India between 1955 and 1960. What the Survey uncovered there has shaped how the wider world imagines Bronze Age India. The centrepiece is a large rectangular basin of kiln-fired brick, which the ASI identifies as the world's earliest known dock. That phrase deserves to be quoted rather than paraphrased, because it is the Survey's own

claim and it is a strong one. A dock is not merely a pond. It implies that a community understood how to admit vessels on a high tide, hold them in still water while the sea drew back, and release them again when the water returned. It implies, in other words, an argument with the ocean, settled in brick.

Whether Lothal was a working seaport in the fullest sense, with ships bound for the Persian Gulf tying up at its walls, has been debated by scholars for decades, and this book does not pretend to close that debate. What is not in dispute is the ambition of the engineering. The basin connected through an inlet to a river channel that fed toward the gulf, and its builders lined it to hold water. Around it stood a town laid out with the discipline that makes the Harappans so recognisable, and so oddly modern to a visitor who has just driven through the grid roads of a twenty-first-century smart city.

BEADS, BRICKS, AND A PLANNED GRID

Brick foundations at the Lothal archaeological site, excavated by the ASI between 1955 and 1960. Photo: Radhi.pandit, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

Lothal was not only a place of arrival and departure. It was a place of making. Archaeologists recovered evidence of a bead factory, where craftspeople worked carnelian, agate, and other hard stones into the small drilled ornaments that travelled across the ancient trade world. The presence of a workshop of this kind tells you something the dock alone cannot. This was a settlement plugged into a long-distance economy, importing raw material, adding skilled labour, and sending finished goods back out along the water. It was, to borrow a word the modern brochures overuse, a node.

The town itself carried the town-planning genius for which the Indus Valley is famous. Harappan settlements were built to a plan rather than allowed to sprawl. Streets met at intentional angles. Drains ran along fixed lines. Bricks were made to consistent proportions across enormous distances, as if a single code governed construction from the Punjab to the Gujarat coast. Lothal shared this inheritance, with a division between a raised acropolis and a lower town, a warehouse platform near the basin, and an underground network for managing water and waste. A person raised on the language of contemporary urban development would find the vocabulary uncomfortably familiar, zoning, trunk infrastructure, drainage, a separation of civic and residential functions. The Harappans had no such words, but they had the practice.

The reach of that trade is what turns Lothal from a curiosity into a statement about this coast. The carnelian and agate beads worked here were part of an exchange network that connected the Indus cities to distant markets, and Harappan goods and Harappan-style seals have been found far beyond the subcontinent, in the lands around the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia. Whether every bead from Lothal itself sailed that far is not the point. The point is that a workshop on the Gujarat coast was tied into a world economy that spanned the western Indian Ocean, and that it was tied in by sea. The dock and the bead factory are two halves of a single fact. This was a place that imported raw stone and skilled attention, and exported finished value across salt water, which is a description that would not embarrass a modern industrial

zone. Four thousand years before anyone spoke of export-oriented manufacturing, the principle was already being practised in brick and carnelian on this shore.

WHY THE SEA SHAPED THIS COAST

The deeper lesson of Lothal is not architectural but geographic. The reason a sophisticated town rose on this difficult, tidal, salt-laced shore four thousand years ago is the same reason planners returned to it in our own century. The Gulf of Khambhat is a doorway. It draws the interior of Gujarat toward the sea and draws the sea toward the interior, and any civilisation with goods to move and the skill to move them will eventually be tempted by that doorway. The tide that makes the Bhal so hard to inhabit is also what once made it navigable in the right hands. Trade, not comfort, is what wrote the first chapter here.

A CIVILISATION WITHOUT KINGS

There is one more feature of the Harappan world that repays attention, because it changes how a reader should picture Lothal. The Indus Valley Civilisation has left behind no palaces that archaeologists can confidently name, no royal tombs stacked with gold, no monumental statues of god-kings glowering over conquered peoples. What it left instead is infrastructure. The most impressive things the Harappans built were not thrones but drains, granaries, wells, baths, and, at Lothal, a basin for holding ships. This is a civilisation that seems to have poured its collective genius into the shared and the practical rather than the personal and the grand. A visitor standing at the edge of the Lothal dock is not looking at the vanity of a

ruler. They are looking at the competence of a community that decided, together, to solve the problem of the tide. That emphasis on public works over private monuments is precisely the frame in which a modern planned city likes to describe itself, and the resemblance, while it must not be pushed too far, is not accidental. Both are answers to the same instinct, which is that a place is made liveable and prosperous less by its palaces than by its plumbing.

THE NEWEST CHAPTER OF AN OLD STORY

Today the memory of that maritime past is being deliberately rebuilt. At Lothal the National Maritime Heritage Complex is rising, a project reported at roughly four thousand five hundred crore rupees, intended to turn the old dock and its surroundings into a major heritage destination that narrates India's long relationship with the sea. The intention is ambitious, to gather the scattered story of Indian seafaring, from the Harappan dock to later coastal kingdoms and trading networks, into a single place where it can be seen and understood. It sits, quite literally, on Dholera's doorstep, and the planned semi-high-speed rail line has been described in official material as connecting Ahmedabad, the Dholera region, the airport, and the Lothal complex along its route, which would knit the ancient dock and the new city into a single day's travel.

There is a symmetry worth pausing on, and it is fair to state it plainly without turning it into a sales pitch. The oldest known dock in the world and one of the most ambitious new industrial cities in India occupy the same stretch of coast, separated by four millennia and a short drive. Both were drawn to this shore by the same logic.

Both bet that the difficult, tidal, salt-laced edge of the Gulf of Khambhat could be made into a place where things are made and moved. The Harappans made that bet with fired brick and hand-drilled beads. The planners of the twenty-first century are making it with semiconductor fabs and fibre-optic ducts. The tools could hardly be more different, and yet the underlying proposition is continuous.

Dholera, in this long light, is not the beginning of the coast's story. It is the latest attempt to answer the same question the Harappans answered in brick, which is what a person can build where the land is flat, the sea is close, and the tide will not be argued with easily. To frame the new city as the newest chapter of a very old maritime story is not to inflate it. It is, if anything, to keep it humble, to remind the reader that this coast has seen ambition rise and recede before, that the sea has outlasted every settlement built beside it, and that the measure of Dholera will be taken, as Lothal's was, not in the promises made at its founding but in what is still standing long after. The chapters that follow move forward in time, through salt and satyagraha and law and steel, but they never quite leave that shoreline.

CHAPTER 5

Salt, Sea and Satyagraha

If the deep past of this coast is written in a dock, its modern memory is written in salt. The Gulf of Khambhat coast is a salt coast in the most literal sense. Seawater floods the flats, the sun does its work, and what remains is a crust that has been gathered, taxed, fought over, and mythologised for as long as anyone has kept records here. To walk the Bhal in the dry season is to understand why salt, of all substances, became the thing over which a chapter of the freedom struggle was fought within sight of Dholera.

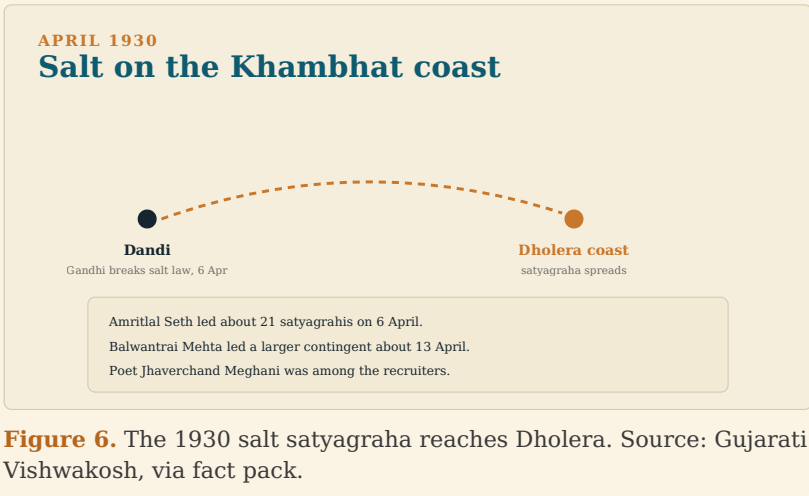


Figure 6. The 1930 salt satyagraha reaches Dholera. Source: Gujarati Vishwakosh, via fact pack.

The National Salt Satyagraha Memorial at Dandi, where Gandhi broke the salt law in 1930. Photo: Snehrashmi, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

A PORT-TOWN, BY TRADITION

Before the salt, a word about the harbour that tradition insists once stood here. Dholera is often described as a historic port-town, a place where boats once loaded and unloaded and a small maritime economy turned. This book presents that description honestly, as tradition rather than as documented fact. The claim as it commonly circulates, including on Wikipedia, carries the scholar's warning that a citation is needed, which is to say that the sources supporting a thriving historic Dholera port have not been reliably established. It is entirely plausible, given the geography and given Lothal's precedent, that small craft used these creeks in centuries past. Plausibility is not proof, and the responsible thing is to record the port-town

as a local tradition that has not been verified rather than to promote it into the historical record. What can be stated with more confidence belongs to the register of the durable. There is a Swaminarayan temple associated with Dholera, counted among the nine temples built by Swaminarayan himself, and that connection is a genuine and lasting thread in the region's religious history.

WHY SALT, AND WHY THIS COAST

It is worth dwelling for a moment on why salt became the chosen ground of a national confrontation, because the answer explains why the Bhal coast mattered at all. Salt is not a luxury. It is a daily necessity of every household, rich or poor, in every corner of the country, and it can be gathered by anyone who lives near the sea simply by letting the sun evaporate a pan of seawater. The colonial state, however, held a monopoly on its manufacture and taxed it, which meant that the poorest labourer paid a levy to a distant government for a substance that lay free on the shore outside his door. There are few clearer illustrations of an unjust law, and that clarity is exactly what made it a weapon. A movement built on salt could be understood by anyone, joined by anyone, and defended in front of the world without the need for lawyers or long explanation. The Gulf of Khambhat coast, with its wide flats where seawater dried naturally into crusts of salt, was among the places where the law could be broken most visibly and most easily. The geography that had shaped Lothal now shaped the freedom struggle.

THE SALT LAW AND DANDI

The event that gives this chapter its spine is the Dholera Satyagraha of April 1930, and to place it one must begin a little to the south and a few weeks earlier. On the sixth of April 1930, at Dandi on the Gujarat coast, Mohandas Gandhi broke the salt law by gathering a handful of natural salt from the shore, the culminating act of the long march that had begun at Sabarmati. The salt tax, and the state monopoly it enforced, had been chosen precisely because it touched everyone. Salt was universal, cheap, and drawn freely from the sea, and the law that forbade Indians from making their own turned an ordinary necessity into a symbol of foreign control. When Gandhi lifted that fistful of salt, he did not merely break a statute. He issued an invitation, and up and down the coast people accepted it. Dandi was the signal, not the whole of the campaign. The genius of the salt satyagraha was that it could be repeated anywhere the sea met the land, and within days of Gandhi's gesture the defiance multiplied across dozens of coastal sites, each a small local re-enactment of the same principled crime. Dholera was one of these.

THE SATYAGRAHA AT DHOLERA

Dholera, with its salt flats and its access to the sea, was one of the places where that invitation was answered. The account preserved in the Gujarati Vishwakosh gives the shape of what happened, and it is worth telling exactly as the source gives it, because inflated or invented versions of this episode do circulate and this book will not add to them. In the wake of Dandi, a salt-law civil-disobedience action took place at Dholera port. Amritlal Seth led a first

contingent of about twenty-one satyagrahis on the sixth of April 1930, moving to make and gather salt in open defiance of the law. About a week later, around the thirteenth of April, Balwantrai Mehta led a larger contingent to the same coast, widening the action from a small vanguard into something closer to a local movement. Among those who helped recruit and rouse volunteers was the poet Jhaverchand Meghani, whose song known as Sindhudo carried the emotional charge of the moment into words that could be sung and remembered.

The two-stage shape of the action is itself worth noticing, because it is characteristic of how the salt campaign actually worked on the ground. A small, determined vanguard would go first, courting arrest and demonstrating that the law could be broken and survived. If they were not immediately crushed, and often even if they were, a second and larger wave would follow, converting a symbolic act by a handful into a genuine local movement that the authorities could no longer treat as a stunt. At Dholera the first wave under Amritlal Seth was small, about twenty-one people, and the second under Balwantrai Mehta about a week later was substantially larger. The role of a poet in this sequence should not be underestimated either. Jhaverchand Meghani was among those who recruited and roused volunteers, and his song Sindhudo belonged to a tradition in which verse carried political feeling into places a pamphlet could not reach. A song can be sung by the illiterate, remembered without paper, and passed from village to village faster than any

newspaper. In a movement that depended on ordinary people finding the courage to break a law, the recruiter with a song was as important as the leader at the front.

One correction belongs here, stated openly rather than buried, because it matters to getting the history right. A claim sometimes appears that a leader named Ambubhai headed the Dholera action. That claim is unverified, and this book does not print it as fact. The named leaders that the sourced record supports are Amritlal Seth and Balwantrai Mehta, with Meghani among the recruiters, and those are the names that belong in the account. The instinct to hand a clean, singular hero to a story is strong, especially to a story rooted in a particular place that would like to claim a particular champion, but the honest version keeps to what can be sourced and leaves the rest as an open question. A history that invents a hero to satisfy local pride is not doing the place a service. It is borrowing against a debt it cannot repay, and this book prefers to record the verified names and note plainly where the record runs out.

THE QUIET CENTURY

What is striking about Dholera in the century that followed is how quiet it became. The salt satyagraha was a moment of national significance played out on a local shore, and then the tide of history moved on. The salt flats went back to being salt flats. The villages of what was then part of Dhandhuka taluka carried on with agriculture, fishing, and the slow rhythms of the Bhal. It is worth stating the administrative geography plainly, because it underlines the obscurity. The Special Investment Region would later be carved from twenty-two

villages of Dholera taluka, itself carved from the former Dhandhuka taluka, and for most of the twentieth century these were simply rural revenue villages on a difficult coast, not a named destination on any national map. The Swaminarayan temple kept its place, a fixed point of devotion in a landscape where little else changed from one decade to the next. The census of 2011 recorded Dholera village at two thousand seven hundred and seventy-nine people, with five hundred and seventy-six households and a literacy rate above eighty percent, the portrait of a small, ordinary settlement rather than a city in waiting. For most of the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first, this was a place the wider world rarely had reason to name. The flat coast that had once drawn Harappan engineers and then a chapter of the freedom struggle settled into obscurity, a stretch of tidal land known to its own people and to almost no one else. That quiet is the necessary backdrop to everything in the next chapter, because the transformation that began at the turn of the millennium did not build on a busy industrial base. It built on salt, silence, and a very old memory of the sea.

CHAPTER 6

From Salt Plains to a Blueprint

The modern story of Dholera does not begin with a groundbreaking. It begins with a law. To convert hundreds of square kilometres of salt plain and farmland into a planned city requires, before any earth is moved, a legal instrument that can assemble land, define authorities, and give the whole enterprise a frame that survives changes of government. In Gujarat that instrument arrived in 2009, and it is the true foundation stone of everything Dholera has since become.

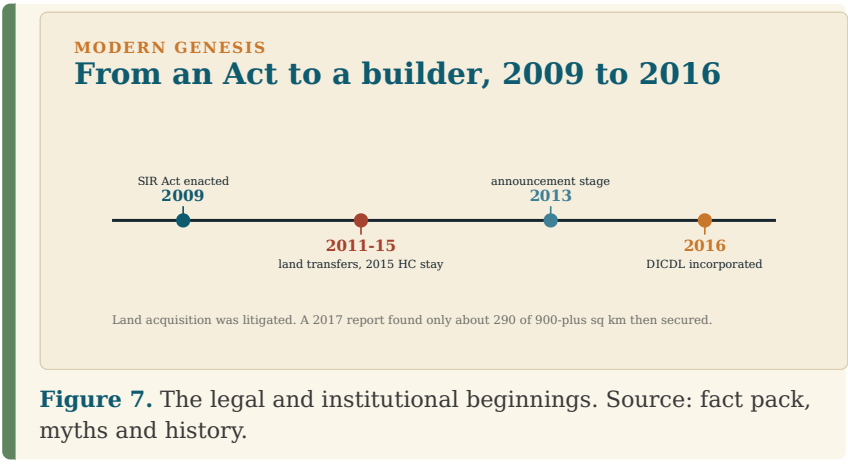


Figure 7. The legal and institutional beginnings. Source: fact pack, myths and history.

Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad. Gandhi's 1930 salt march set off a satyagraha that reached the Dholera coast. Photo: Bernard Gagnon, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

THE LAW THAT MADE A REGION POSSIBLE

The Gujarat Special Investment Region Act of 2009 is the legal basis for Dholera. The Act created the category of the Special Investment Region, abbreviated SIR, a large designated area intended to be planned and developed as an investment and industrial zone with its own governing machinery. Dholera Special Investment Region, marketed in later years as Dholera Smart City, is the flagship application of that Act. The numbers attached to it are large and worth stating carefully. The planned area is about nine hundred and twenty square kilometres, of which roughly five hundred and eighty are considered developable and about four hundred and twenty-two urban, with a significant share of the land falling within

the Coastal Regulation Zone. These are official planning figures, and the honest caveat is that a planning envelope is a statement of intent, not of construction. What the 2009 Act did was make it legally possible to imagine a city on this scale at all.

Two governing bodies grew out of this framework. The Dholera Special Investment Region Development Authority, or DSIRDA, became the statutory planning and land authority, the body that draws the town-planning schemes, holds the land, and issues the sanctions on which any construction depends. Above the node in the wider corridor sat the central nodal agency once called DMICDC and later renamed the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation, or NICDC. Dholera was designated a node of the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, the ambitious industrial and infrastructure project running between the two great cities, and it is frequently called the corridor's largest node, a description that should be read as a reported superlative rather than a measured fact. The distinction between the two agencies matters, because it reflects the two governments standing behind the project. The state, through DSIRDA, controls the land and the local plan. The centre, through NICDC, ties Dholera into a national corridor strategy that stretches far beyond Gujarat. Neither can build the city alone, and the machinery was deliberately designed so that neither would have to.

It is worth understanding, too, what a Special Investment Region is meant to be, as distinct from an ordinary industrial estate. The ambition written into the 2009 Act was not merely to zone some land for factories. It was to

create a self-contained region with its own planning authority, its own trunk infrastructure laid before the industry arrives, and its own single-window governance, so that an investor could plug into water, power, roads, and clearances that already existed rather than negotiating each one from scratch. This is the plug-and-play idea that recurs throughout Dholera's promotional literature, and whatever one makes of how far it has been realised, it is a genuine and specific intention rather than a slogan. The blueprint imagined a city built infrastructure-first, in reverse of how most Indian cities have grown, and that reversal is the whole conceptual gamble of the place.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT STAGE AND THE COMPANY THAT BUILDS THE CITY

Between the passing of the Act and the visible arrival of construction lay several years of announcement and preparation, and this is the period that later critics would point to when they spoke of delay. The project gathered national attention through the early part of the last decade, with a prominent announcement stage around 2013 that lifted Dholera from a state initiative toward a marquee national one. The decisive institutional moment, though, came on the twenty-eighth of January 2016, with the incorporation of Dholera Industrial City Development Limited, or DICDL, the special purpose vehicle charged with actually building the city. Its ownership expresses the dual-government character of the whole venture. The Gujarat government holds fifty-one percent through DSIRDA, and the central government holds forty-nine percent through the NICDC Trust. That split is more than

an accounting detail. It means that Dholera is not the pet project of a single administration that a change of government could quietly shelve, but a joint undertaking in which both the state and the centre have committed capital and reputation. The majority sits with Gujarat, keeping the venture rooted locally, while the substantial central minority ties it to national policy and national funding. From 2016 onward there was a company whose job was Dholera, with a board, a balance sheet, and a mandate, and that is a fundamentally different thing from a plan whose subject was Dholera. A plan can be admired and left on a shelf. A company has to act, account for itself, and answer to two governments at once, and it is from this point that the project's later momentum, uneven as it was, can be traced.

THE SHAPE OF THE PLAN

Before turning to the land, it is worth seeing the scale of what the 2009 framework set out to build, because the size of the ambition is part of what makes the genesis story so fraught. The master plan divides the region into a series of town-planning schemes, six in all, numbered TP1 through TP6, to be developed in three broad phases across roughly three decades. The first phase centres on the earliest schemes and includes the Activation Area, a compact zone of a little over twenty square kilometres conceived as the plug-and-play demonstration piece, the place where the trunk infrastructure would be proven before the wider region followed. Reported targets have imagined the full nine hundred and twenty square kilometres reaching maturity somewhere around 2040, with the promotional literature speaking of a population

approaching a million and jobs in the hundreds of thousands at full build-out. Those far-horizon figures are targets and should be read as such, and the end-year has itself been stated inconsistently across sources. What matters for the genesis narrative is the structure of the intention. The plan never proposed to build a whole city at once. It proposed to build a small serviced core first, demonstrate that the model worked, and let the rest follow scheme by scheme over a generation. That phased logic is why so much attention in the early years fell on a single activation zone rather than on the region as a whole, and why progress can look either impressive or negligible depending on which frame a reader chooses.

THE LAND QUESTION, TOLD HONESTLY

No account of Dholera's genesis is complete or honest without the land. Assembling nine hundred square kilometres in a democracy where much of that land is farmed and inhabited was never going to be simple, and it was not. The mechanism chosen for much of the assembly was the town-planning scheme, a Gujarat instrument under which the authority pools land, lays out the roads and plots, and returns to each original owner a smaller but serviced parcel, keeping the balance for infrastructure and sale. In principle it is a method that can leave landowners better off, holding less land but land that is now developed and worth more. In practice, in a place where families had farmed the Bhal for generations, the prospect of surrendering ancestral fields to a scheme whose payoff lay years or decades in the future was not universally welcomed, and some of those families went to court.

Land transfers proceeded through the first half of the decade, roughly 2011 to 2015, and then ran into exactly that resistance. In 2015 the Gujarat High Court stayed the SIR land acquisition after petitions from farmers who challenged the process, a genuine legal check that slowed the machine considerably. This was not a minor procedural hiccup. It was a court saying that the way land was being taken had to be answered for, and it introduced years of uncertainty into the project's foundation. The scale of what remained unresolved is captured in a widely cited report by Business Standard in 2017, which found that only about two hundred and ninety of the more than nine hundred square kilometres had then been secured. That figure is worth sitting with. More than a decade after the corridor was conceived and years after the SIR Act, less than a third of the planned area was in hand. The same reporting placed Dholera within a broader assessment of the corridor as, in its phrase, a tale of abandonments and delays.

This book records that framing rather than arguing with it, because a portrait that omitted the litigation and the slippage would be a brochure, not a history. It is precisely because the land question was hard, contested, and slow that the later milestones carry any weight at all. A city that assembled itself effortlessly would prove nothing about the durability of the idea. Dholera did not assemble itself effortlessly. The salt plains did not become a blueprint smoothly or quickly. They became one through law, through a company incorporated in 2016 to carry the mandate forward, and through a contest over land that was real, was fought in court, and shaped the pace of everything that followed. The reader who wants to

understand why the visible construction of recent years arrived when it did, and not a decade earlier, will find much of the answer in this chapter, in the gap between a plan drawn in 2009 and a foundation that was still being litigated in 2015.

CHAPTER 7

A Dated Timeline, 2007 to 2026

A CITY ASSEMBLED OVER DECADES IS BEST UNDERSTOOD AS A sequence, and the sequence for Dholera is neither a straight ascent nor the stalled ruin that its harshest critics once implied. It is a line that moves, halts, is checked in court, and then over a remarkable eighteen months finally begins to show the hard infrastructure that plans alone can never prove. What follows is that line, walked milestone by milestone, with every future date kept firmly labelled as a target rather than an achievement.

BEFORE THE LAW, THE IDEA

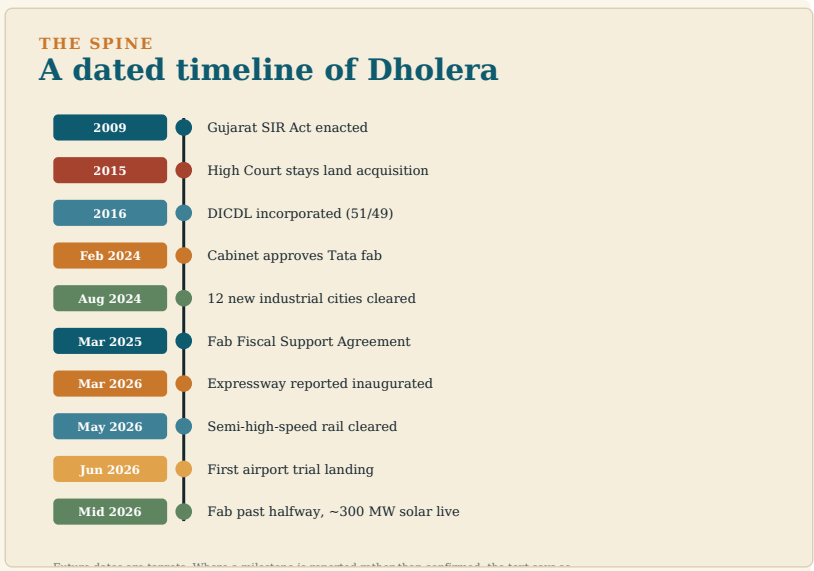


Figure 55. The milestones on one spine. Source: fact pack, milestones.

The convenient starting point is 2009, the year of the Act, but the idea of a corridor and a coastal city predates the statute. The broader Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor concept took shape in the mid-to-late 2000s as a national ambition to build an industrial spine between the two great cities, and Dholera's designation as a node grew out of that larger plan rather than standing alone. This book does not attach a firm dated event to Dholera in 2007 that the sources do not support, and where the record for the earliest years is thin it says so. What can be said honestly is that a milestone sometimes cited as early as 1998 marks the region's appearance in Gujarat's development thinking, that the corridor concept matured across the 2000s, and that by the end of the decade the intention had hardened into law. The reader should treat the years before 2009 as a period of gestation, real but loosely documented, rather than as a string of precise achievements.

THE LEGAL DECADE, 2009 TO 2016

The foundational milestone is 2009, the year the Gujarat Special Investment Region Act was enacted and the legal basis for the whole project came into being. The years that followed were a decade of paperwork and contestation more than of concrete. Land transfers moved forward across roughly 2011 to 2015, and then in 2015 the Gujarat High Court stayed the SIR acquisition after farmer petitions, the single most important brake on the early timeline. The institutional answer came on the twenty-eighth of January 2016, when Dholera Industrial City Development Limited was incorporated as the special purpose vehicle to build the city, jointly owned by the

Gujarat government at fifty-one percent and the central government at forty-nine percent. If one wanted a single date on which Dholera stopped being a proposal and became an entity with a mandate to build, this is it.

THE ANCHOR ARRIVES, 2024

For several years after 2016 the story was one of trunk infrastructure and preparation, punctuated by a false start in semiconductors that this book treats as history rather than achievement. In September 2022 Vedanta and Foxconn signed an arrangement with Gujarat that was widely cited at an enormous figure, but it was a joint-venture project value that never built anything, and Foxconn withdrew in July 2023, leaving the announcement as a cautionary tale rather than a foundation. It is important to keep that episode in its place. The collapse of the Vedanta and Foxconn plan is sometimes waved about as proof that Dholera is all noise, and it is equally sometimes quietly forgotten by promoters. The honest treatment is neither. It happened, it fell through, and it committed no real capital, and the project that followed is a separate and better-sourced thing.

The genuine turning point came on the twenty-ninth of February 2024, when the Union Cabinet approved the Tata and PSMC semiconductor fabrication plant under the India Semiconductor Mission, a commitment of about ninety-one thousand crore rupees and by a wide margin the largest well-sourced single investment ever attached to Dholera. This was a different order of event from the announcements that had come before. It was a central-government approval, tied to a national mission, naming a

specific and substantial Indian conglomerate and a specific foreign technology partner, with a defined investment and a defined site. A few months later, reported around the thirtieth of August 2024, the Cabinet approved twelve new industrial cities under the National Industrial Corridor programme, a move that reaffirmed Dholera's standing as the flagship node of the wider corridor and placed it at the head of a fresh national push rather than treating it as a legacy project running down. The year 2024 was, in short, the year an argument about the future acquired an anchor in the present.

THE INFRASTRUCTURE SURGE, 2025 TO 2026

The most recent stretch is the densest, and it is where a reader must hold the labels most carefully, because much of it is still in progress. On the fifth of March 2025 the Fiscal Support Agreement for the Tata fab was signed, locking in the central government's share of the cost and moving the project from approval into committed support. This distinction, between an approval and a signed support agreement, is not a technicality. Approvals can lapse and be revised. A fiscal support agreement puts the money on a contractual footing, and its signing was the point at which the fab's central backing stopped being a promise and became an obligation.

Then came a sequence of connectivity milestones that, taken together, mark the moment the region's long-planned links to the wider country began to materialise. On the thirty-first of March 2026 the Ahmedabad to Dholera Expressway was reported inaugurated, a roughly one hundred and nine kilometre access-controlled greenfield road that reporting says cut the journey from

Ahmedabad to somewhere between about forty minutes and an hour, down from a drive that had taken well over two hours. A road, unlike a rendering, either exists or it does not, and this one was reported open and operational. On the thirteenth of May 2026 the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs cleared the Ahmedabad to Dholera semi-high-speed rail line, a project of about one hundred and thirty-four kilometres and roughly twenty thousand six hundred and sixty-seven crore rupees, described as India's first semi-high-speed line, with completion targeted, and the word targeted is doing real work here, by around 2030 to 2031. The headline speed figures that circulated in the press are not part of the official approval, which stated cost, length, and timeline rather than a velocity, and this book keeps that separation. On the fourth of June 2026 an aircraft touched down on the runway of the Dholera International Airport in a calibration and trial landing, a genuine and photographed event, complete with the traditional water-cannon salute, that proved the runway usable while falling well short of an operational airport. A trial landing is exactly what it says, evidence that the runway, taxiways, and control tower have reached a working state, and no more than that. It does not mean the airport is open, and it should never be reported as though it were.

THE PARALLEL TRACKS

The connectivity milestones are the ones that make headlines, but the same eighteen months carried a set of quieter developments that belong on the timeline because they show breadth rather than a single showpiece. On the energy side, the Dholera solar park had by this period

commissioned roughly three hundred megawatts of capacity, a real and operating figure that sits inside a far larger sanctioned phase and an even larger long-range target that has not been built. That distinction, between what is commissioned, what is sanctioned, and what is merely a target, runs through the whole solar story and is easy to blur in promotional accounts. On the industrial side, the semiconductor project accumulated the surrounding apparatus that a fab needs to become real. A partnership with the Dutch lithography maker ASML was reported around the seventeenth of May 2026, signalling that world-tier equipment suppliers were engaging with the plant, and a specialised zone was notified to house the semiconductor manufacturing. Around the fab a wider set of investment announcements gathered through 2025 and 2026, spanning data centres, logistics, and other manufacturing, which this book treats as announcements rather than built capital, because the distinction between a memorandum of understanding and a commissioned facility is the distinction between a plan and a fact. The pattern that emerges is not a single dramatic event but a thickening, a place acquiring the several different kinds of activity that a functioning industrial region requires, each at a different and honestly labelled stage of maturity.

WHERE THE LINE STANDS IN MID-2026

At the midpoint of 2026 the honest snapshot is one of an emerging city rather than a finished one, and the sourced record supports neither triumphalism nor dismissal. The Tata fabrication plant is under construction with civil work reported past the halfway mark, cleanroom installation and equipment calibration underway, and no

source confirms that a chip has yet been produced, with first mature-node silicon described as a target for late 2026 and commercial-scale production reported as later still, into 2028. The airport is reported at roughly eighty percent complete after a ministerial review, with operations targeted for around September or October 2026, a date that follows a long history of slipping airport targets stretching back more than a decade and should be read accordingly. Roughly three hundred megawatts of solar capacity have been commissioned within a far larger sanctioned and long-range plan. The expressway is open. The rail line is approved but not built. The airport has landed one aircraft on trial but carries no passengers.

Read together, these milestones describe a place that has moved decisively from paper into steel and concrete over the last two years, while a great deal of what has been announced remains, correctly labelled, a target. It is tempting, standing at this midpoint, to reach for a verdict, to declare Dholera either a triumph on the verge of arrival or a familiar Indian story of grand plans and thin delivery. This book resists both temptations, because both require the reader to know things that are not yet knowable. What can be said is narrower and more durable. A law was passed. A company was formed. Land was assembled slowly and against resistance. A landmark investment was approved and then contractually supported. A road was opened, a rail line cleared, a runway proven, a fab raised past its halfway mark. Each of those is a fact with a date, and each of the futures they point toward is a target with a date, and the discipline of this chapter has been to keep the two categories apart. That discipline is the whole method of this history. It refuses to sell the reader a

finished city that does not yet exist, and it refuses to deny the visible construction that plainly does. The line from the Harappan dock to the semiconductor fab is long, uneven, and unfinished, and the truest thing that can be said of it in mid-2026 is that it is still being drawn. That is the position on which the rest of this book builds.

PART III

The Machine

> *Before the concrete, the committees. Someone has to own a city built from nothing.*

A city of Dholera's ambition does not build itself, and it is not built by any single hand. Behind the expressway, the runway, the solar arrays, and the half-finished semiconductor fab sits an apparatus of statutes, companies, and agencies, each with a defined role and a defined jurisdiction. Some of these bodies write the rules. One of them lays the pipes and the roads. Another connects Dholera to a national corridor stretching from Delhi to Mumbai. A wider ring of Gujarat state institutions funds, promotes, and stitches the project into a much older machinery of industrial development. This part maps that apparatus. It names the bodies, explains what each one is legally empowered to do, and marks clearly where a fact is durable, where it is only reported, and where an office-holder's name is a snapshot that will expire. Officers rotate. Corporations are renamed. The

reader who wants to rely on any specific name or figure here should treat this part as a starting map, not a live register, and should verify against the primary source before acting.

CHAPTER 8

The Rulebook

Every planned city rests on a legal instrument that says it may exist, defines its boundaries, and hands a named authority the power to plan and control the land inside those boundaries. For Dholera, that instrument is the Gujarat Special Investment Region Act, 2009. This is a durable fact, stated on the government's own portal and repeated across the official record. The Act is the legal spine of the whole project. Without it there is no Special Investment Region, no statutory planning authority, and no legal basis for the land pooling and clearance mechanisms that make a greenfield city of this scale administratively possible.

The distinction between a law and a settlement is worth holding from the outset. A statute can be passed on a fixed date, printed cleanly, and cited with confidence. The city it authorises arrives slowly, unevenly, and against resistance. The 2009 Act is durable. The Dholera that has actually been built under it, roughly a 22.5 square kilometre activation zone inside a 920 square kilometre envelope, is a small and phased fraction of what the Act contemplates. A reader who confuses the reach of the rulebook with the extent of the city will misread the whole project. This chapter is about the rulebook, its origins, and the powers it distributes. Later parts of the book describe what has and has not been built under it.

WHAT A SPECIAL INVESTMENT REGION IS

Figure 49. Where Dholera sits in the national plan. Source: NICDP context; Gujarat govt ecosystem.

A Special Investment Region, or SIR, is a category created by the 2009 Act. It is a large, legally demarcated area set aside for investment-led development, governed not by an ordinary municipality but by a purpose-built authority with planning and regulatory powers. The full name of the Dholera zone is the Dholera Special Investment Region, marketed publicly as Dholera Smart City. The two names describe the same legal entity. The distinction matters because the marketing name carries promotional weight the statutory name does not, and a neutral reader should keep the legal identity in view.

The physical scope of the region is large. The total planned area is roughly 920 square kilometres, about 360 square miles, a durable figure from the government record. Of that envelope, roughly 580 square kilometres is considered developable, and of the developable land roughly 422 square kilometres is planned as urban. A significant share, about one third of the developable land,

falls inside the Coastal Regulation Zone, which constrains what can be built there. These area figures are reported by the government and its development company; the 920 figure is best understood as a planning envelope rather than a measure of what is built, since only the smaller urban-developable area is the real construction target and the whole is phased across roughly thirty years.

DSIRDA AS THE STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The authority that the Act creates for Dholera is DSIRDA, the Dholera Special Investment Region Development Authority. This is the statutory planning and land authority for the region. It is the body legally empowered to prepare and sanction the development plan, to run the town planning schemes, and to control land use inside the SIR. When people speak of the rules of Dholera, in the strict sense they mean the instruments DSIRDA is empowered to make and enforce under the 2009 Act. The portal for this authority sits at dholera.gujarat.gov.in.

The important conceptual point about DSIRDA is what it replaces. In an ordinary Indian town, land use and building are governed by a municipality and, above it, a local area development authority, with a patchwork of departmental permissions layered on top. A Special Investment Region collapses that patchwork into a single statutory authority with region-wide planning and regulatory reach. That concentration is the whole design intent: an investor should face one authority with one plan and one clearance window, not a dozen offices. It is also why the identity and vintage of DSIRDA matter and why a reader should be careful with dates. The exact year DSIRDA was constituted in its current form is reported as

around 2019, which should be treated as a reported detail rather than a hard-verified one, because the underlying dates in the SIR's institutional history are stated inconsistently across sources.

HOW PLANNING, LAND POOLING, AND CLEARANCE FLOW FROM THE ACT

Three practical powers flow from this statutory arrangement, and each one is worth stating plainly.

The first is master planning. DSIRDA prepares and sanctions the development plan that divides the region into zones, industrial, residential, city centre, high-access corridor, knowledge and IT, logistics, strategic infrastructure, green belt, coastal regulation zone, agriculture, and others. The exact per-zone percentages are not reliably sourced, because the relevant DSIRDA development plan report link is dead, so this book states the zone types but not a precise land-use split. The zone types themselves come from the DSIRDA development plan and are reliable; the numeric breakdown behind them is not, and is flagged as such.

The second power is town planning and land pooling. The region is organised into six town planning schemes, numbered TP1 through TP6, and all six draft schemes have been sanctioned, a reported status. The town planning scheme is the mechanism through which raw land, much of it originally agricultural and held by farmers, is reorganised into a serviced urban layout with roads, plots, and reserved public land. Land inside an approved town planning scheme is treated as Non-Agricultural by Gujarat rule, which is the durable legal

principle that lets construction proceed without each parcel being converted one by one, though the effective date of that treatment is worth verifying. This land pooling authority is central to how a city gets assembled on farmland without the state buying every field outright, and it is precisely the area where the project's history is contested. Land acquisition here was litigated. The Gujarat High Court stayed SIR acquisition in 2015 after farmer petitions, and as late as 2017 press reporting found that only a fraction of the planned area had been secured. A rulebook, in other words, is not the same as a finished settlement on the ground.

The third power is single-window clearance. The SIR framework is designed so that an investor deals with a consolidated approval process rather than a scatter of separate departmental permissions. The physical home of this function is the ABCD Building, the Administrative cum Business Centre for Dholera, in the TP2 Knowledge and IT Zone. That building houses the authority offices, the single-window clearance function, and the Integrated Command and Control Centre that acts as the smart city's operational brain for water, power, lighting, surveillance, traffic, and environment. The building is reported to be structurally complete and operational, though the exact inauguration date is not known and the reported built-up area figures conflict, so its function is durable while its precise status and size are reported.

THE RERA LAYER AND THE LIMITS OF THE RULEBOOK

The 2009 Act and DSIRDA do not operate in a legal vacuum. A second regulatory layer governs anyone who wants to sell plots or built property inside the region. That layer is GUJRERA, the Gujarat Real Estate Regulatory Authority, at gujrera.gujarat.gov.in, constituted under the national Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act of 2016. The durable process fact is that real estate projects, including plotted developments, must register with GUJRERA before they are marketed. This matters to the honest reading of Dholera because much of what a prospective buyer encounters is broker material rather than authority material, and the regulator's registration record is the check on it. A companion mechanism is Non-Agricultural conversion: agricultural land must be legally converted to Non-Agricultural status before construction, and the durable principle here, noted above, is that land inside an approved town planning scheme is treated as Non-Agricultural by Gujarat rule. These are the guardrails around the rulebook, and they define the difference between land that is genuinely inside the serviced, sanctioned region and land that is merely marketed as being in the SIR.

The limits of the rulebook are as important as its powers. A sanctioned plan is not a built road; a Non-Agricultural designation is not a serviced plot; a registered project is not a completed one. The documented history of Dholera includes a High Court stay on SIR land acquisition in 2015 and press findings in 2017 that only a fraction of the planned area had been secured, which is precisely the gap between the authority of the Act and the reality on the

ground. The master-plan concept is widely attributed to the British firm Halcrow, with detailed planning done by a local counsel, though this attribution is reported rather than primary-confirmed and should be cited with that caveat. The phasing over roughly thirty years, three broad phases with reported target windows, is likewise a plan and not a guarantee. The rulebook tells you what is permitted and who permits it. It does not tell you what stands.

Taken together, the 2009 Act, the DSIRDA authority it creates, and the planning, pooling, and clearance powers that flow from it form the legal machine that makes Dholera possible on paper. Who actually builds the city, as distinct from who governs the land, is a separate body entirely, and it is the subject of the next chapter.

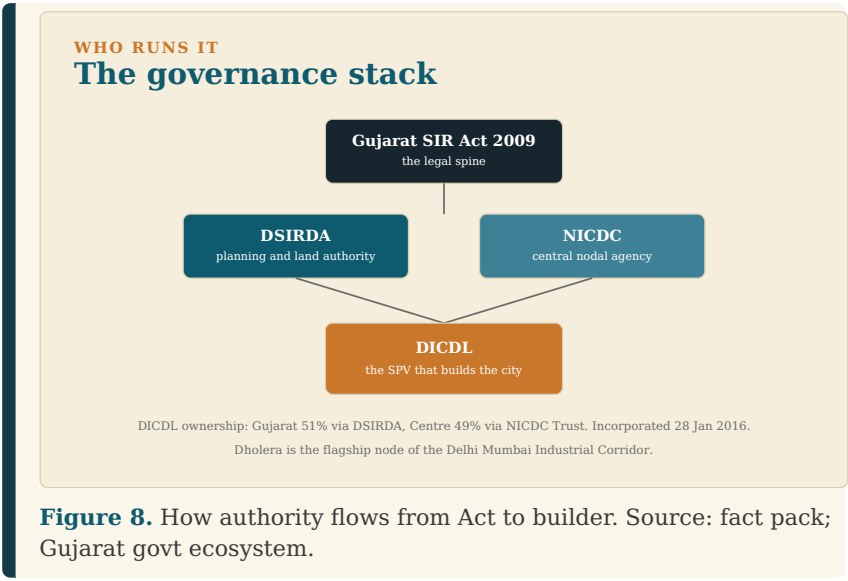


Figure 8. How authority flows from Act to builder. Source: fact pack; Gujarat govt ecosystem.

CHAPTER 9

The Builder

A statutory authority can zone land, sanction plans, and grant clearances, but it does not itself pour concrete, lay fibre ducts, or dig a stormwater canal. For that, Dholera has a dedicated company. The distinction between the authority and the builder is one of the most important things to understand about how this city is being made, and it is routinely blurred in casual coverage.

DICDL, the special purpose vehicle

The builder is DICDL, the Dholera Industrial City Development Limited. It is a special purpose vehicle, a company created for the single job of developing the city. It was incorporated on 28 January 2016, a durable and specific fact. Its registered office is in Gandhinagar, at the 6th Floor, Block 1, of a government building in Sector 11, Gandhinagar 382017. Where DSIRDA is the statutory planning and land authority, DICDL is the development company that actually builds. The authority holds the rulebook; the company holds the project.

Figure 41. The highest-tier money figures, from the primary record. Source: NICDC Delivery Monitoring Unit, 30 Jun 2026.

The special purpose vehicle model is a familiar instrument in Indian infrastructure. Rather than run a project through a government department, the state and centre create a company, capitalise it with equity, and give it a ring-fenced balance sheet and a single mandate. This keeps the development commercially legible, lets it borrow and contract in its own name, and separates the delivery function from the regulatory function. For Dholera the model produces a clean division of labour that is easy to state and easy to forget: DSIRDA is a creature of statute with regulatory power, DICDL is a creature of company law with delivery power. The equity that capitalises DICDL is real and traceable. The government's monitoring record shows matching equity of about 2,784.83 crore rupees released against the activation-area infrastructure packages, which is the money side of the same delivery story.

THE 51/49 OWNERSHIP

DICDL's ownership is a durable and deliberately balanced arrangement. The Gujarat state government, acting through DSIRDA, holds 51 percent. The central government, acting through the NICDC Trust, holds 49 percent. This split is not incidental. It gives the state a controlling majority in the company that builds its flagship region while binding the central government's corridor agency into the equity and the governance. The 51/49 division is repeated consistently across the government record and is one of the most reliable single facts about the project's structure.

The mechanics of that split repay a second look, because they explain why three different bodies keep appearing in the same sentences about Dholera. The state's 51 percent is not held by the state directly but by DSIRDA, the statutory authority from Chapter 8, which means the same body that plans and regulates the land also holds the majority equity in the company that develops it. The centre's 49 percent is held not by a ministry directly but by the NICDC Trust, the vehicle through which the national corridor agency of Chapter 10 takes its stake. So DICDL is the meeting point of all three layers at once: the statutory authority owns most of it, the corridor agency owns the rest, and the company itself does the building. This is why a single question, who did this, so often has three correct answers in Dholera, and why keeping the roles distinct is the only way to report the project accurately.

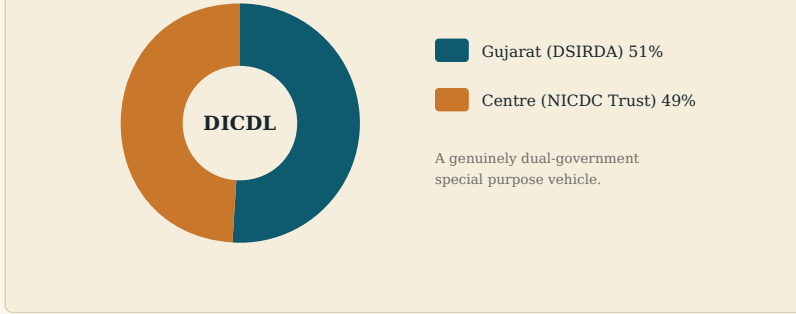


Figure 9. The 51 to 49 split behind the city builder. Source: fact pack; DICDL about page.

THE BOARD, WITH THE ROTATION CAVEAT

The composition of DICDL's board is where durability ends and snapshots begin. As reported for 2026 on the official DICDL about page, the board was constituted with Shri Vijay Nehra, IAS, as Managing Director, in his capacity as CEO of DSIRDA; Smt. Sumita Dawra, IAS, as a Director, in her capacity as CEO and Managing Director of NICDC; Shri S. S. Rathore as an Advisor to the Chief Minister; Shri Pradeep Kumar Agarwal as the NICDC Chief Financial Officer; and Shri Abhishek Chaudhary as Company Secretary. That list is reported for 2026 and is sourced to the government's own page, which places it at the green tier of reliability for the moment it was read. But officers in these roles rotate, and the book must say so plainly: verify before relying on any of these names. A senior IAS officer named as Managing Director this year may have moved to an entirely different posting next year, and the seat will be filled by someone else. There is also a

documented naming tension in the wider record around NICDC's chief executive, with one source citing Rajat Kumar Saini as CEO and Managing Director against the Sumita Dawra attribution, which is exactly the kind of discrepancy that should make a reader check the current record rather than trust a printed name. Treat the board list as a photograph, correct for its date, not as a permanent fixture.

THE JOB: TO BUILD THE CITY

DICDL's mandate is concrete in every sense. It is the entity to which developed land is transferred and through which the trunk infrastructure is delivered. The primary government monitoring record, the NICDC Delivery Monitoring Unit report dated 30 June 2026, gives a sense of the scale of what has passed through the company. Government-approved activation-area infrastructure packages worth about 2,784.83 crore rupees, delivered as five packages, were matched by equity of the same amount, and about 48.31 square kilometres of land was transferred to DICDL. Within Dholera, 14 plots totalling 545 acres had been allotted, of which 476 acres were industrial, with Tata Chemicals named as an industrial anchor, and roughly 1,043 acres of industrial land plus 1,031 acres of other land remained available for allotment. These are green-tier primary figures, the highest-confidence money and land numbers in the record, and they describe DICDL's actual work: taking transferred land, building the serviced activation area on it, and allotting plots to industry.

The activation area itself, roughly 22.5 square kilometres inside TP Scheme 2, is the plug-and-play demonstration zone that DICDL has physically built out. It represents only about 4.25 percent of the developable land, a small proving ground rather than a city, and the original 2020 target of roughly 120,000 residents and 80,000 jobs pinned to it has lapsed, a fact this book states plainly rather than smoothing over. The reported utility work there, delivered by the company, includes underground power and ICT ducts, piped natural gas, potable water with smart meters and leak detection, a recycled-water network, wastewater and stormwater systems draining into a 6.5 kilometre man-made canal, a water treatment plant of about 50 million litres per day, and an internal road network of about 72 kilometres with reserved corridors for rapid transit. This is the tangible output of the builder as distinct from the authority. DSIRDA made it legally possible; DICDL laid the ducts.

The company also operates the city's digital core. The ABCD Building in the TP2 Knowledge and IT Zone houses the Integrated Command and Control Centre, the smart city's operational brain for water, power, lighting, surveillance, traffic, and environment, alongside the authority offices and the single-window clearance function. The building's function is durable; its precise inauguration date is unknown and its reported built-up area figures conflict, so the book records the function firmly and the status cautiously. What DICDL demonstrably has, then, is a serviced activation zone with underground utilities and a command centre, transferred land measured in tens of square kilometres, and a small

number of allotted industrial plots with named anchors. What it does not yet have is the full city, and honest reporting keeps those two facts in the same frame.

It is worth registering here that the builder's early history includes a prominent failure. The Vedanta-Foxconn semiconductor venture, subject of a September 2022 memorandum with Gujarat and widely cited at around 19.5 billion US dollars, collapsed when Foxconn withdrew on 10 July 2023. That figure was a joint-venture project value that never built anything and should never be presented as committed capital. The active semiconductor anchor that followed, the Tata-PSMC fab approved by the Union Cabinet in February 2024, is a separate and better-sourced commitment. The builder's plots are being taken up; the point for this chapter is simply that DICDL is the entity on whose transferred land these anchors rise or fall, and its record therefore carries both the collapse and the construction.

The clean way to hold the two bodies apart is this. DSIRDA is a statutory authority created by an Act of the Gujarat legislature, and its powers are planning, land, and regulation. DICDL is a company incorporated under company law, jointly owned by state and centre in a 51/49 split, and its powers are practical development. One writes the plan and controls the land. The other executes the plan and hands over the plots. When a headline says Dholera did something, the honest reading almost always requires asking which of these two bodies is meant, and often the answer involves a third body entirely, the national corridor agency that sits above both.

CHAPTER 10

The Corridor

Dholera is not a standalone project dreamed up in isolation. It is a node on a national corridor, and the agency that runs that corridor is a central government body with a reach far beyond Gujarat. Understanding Dholera means understanding the corridor it belongs to and the programme that corridor now sits inside.

NICDC, formerly DMICDC

The central nodal agency is NICDC, the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation. It was formerly known as DMICDC, the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation, and the rename reflects an expansion of scope from a single corridor to a national programme. NICDC is the central government's implementing arm for industrial corridor development, and it holds the central government's 49 percent stake in DICDL through the NICDC Trust. Its site is nicdc.in. On the professional network LinkedIn it reports a following in the region of twenty thousand, a minor detail that simply confirms it operates as a public-facing agency rather than a purely internal office.

The Ahmedabad skyline, the metropolis now linked to Dholera by expressway in under an hour. Photo: Anmay204, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

The rename from DMICDC to NICDC is not cosmetic. It marks the moment the mandate stopped being about one corridor and became about a national grid of them. The agency's own account of its journey, published on nicdc.in, tracks a sequence of central approvals for trunk infrastructure, the arterial roads, water, power, and utilities that a corridor node needs before industry will come. In Dholera's case those trunk-infrastructure approvals are the upstream decisions that authorised the activation-area packages DICDL later delivered on the ground. NICDC, in other words, sits at the sponsor and approval end of the chain, the state and its DSIRDA and DICDL apparatus at the delivery end, and the central government's 49 percent equity is the thread that ties the two together financially.

THE DELHI MUMBAI INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR AND DHOLERA AS FLAGSHIP NODE

The Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, the DMIC, is the original corridor: a planned industrial and infrastructure belt anchored on the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor running between the Delhi and Mumbai regions. Dholera is a node of this corridor, and it is durably described as the flagship node. It is often called the largest node, a claim that should be read as a reported superlative rather than a measured fact, because superlatives of this kind circulate widely without a clean primary basis. What is durable is the node status and the flagship framing; what is reported is the ranking as largest.

The corridor's own history carries a cautionary record that a neutral portrait should not omit. The DMIC was announced in 2009, land transfers ran through the years to 2015 before a High Court stay, and in 2017 a widely cited press assessment described the corridor as a tale of abandonments and delays. That does not negate the corridor; it dates it. The corridor is real, cabinet-backed, and anchored on genuine freight infrastructure, and it has also moved more slowly than its original timelines promised. Both statements are true, and the honest way to present Dholera's corridor membership is to hold them together rather than to lead with the flagship language alone. A node on a slow corridor is still a node on a corridor; it is also still slow.

NICDC markets Dholera with a specific and pointed positioning: "India's First Semicon City." This phrase is NICDC's own promotional language, tied to the Tata-PSMC semiconductor fab under construction in the

region, and this book records it as a marketing claim of the agency, not as an independent finding. The word first, here as elsewhere in Dholera's promotion, carries more weight than the evidence strictly supports and should be read with that caution.

There is a real anchor beneath the slogan, and its status is worth stating precisely. The Tata-PSMC fab, run by Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Private Limited, received Union Cabinet approval on 29 February 2024 under the India Semiconductor Mission, with an investment of about 91,000 crore rupees, a figure the government's own fiscal-support documentation places at 91,526 crore rupees. This is the single largest well-sourced commitment in Dholera and the material basis for the semicon-city framing. What the slogan elides is the timeline. Reported accounts from mid-2026 indicate the fab will begin at mature nodes, 90 and 55 nanometre, before moving to 28 nanometre, with commercial production reportedly pushed to around mid-2028 and a trial or first-silicon target near December 2026. No source confirms a chip has been produced. So the honest statement is that NICDC's node hosts a genuine, cabinet-approved, tens-of-billions fab under construction, and that this fab has not yet made a commercial chip. The city can fairly be called the site of India's flagship fab-in-progress; whether it is the first semicon city depends on how one counts, and first remains a marketing word.

THE NICDP PROGRAMME

Above the single corridor sits the larger programme. The National Industrial Corridor Development Programme, the NICDP, is the umbrella under which NICDC now

operates. Per the official record, the programme comprises 11 industrial corridors and 30 projects across four phases, with Dholera as the DMIC flagship node. This is a durable, green-sourced framing from the government's own material.

The most recent programme-level milestone in the record is from August 2024, when the Union Cabinet cleared a set of new industrial cities under the NICDP. The government's press release, PIB release ID 2050136, is cited for this clearance. The number of cities is stated two ways in the source material, as 12 new industrial cities in one place and as 12 new industrial cities greenlit in the PIB-cited note, with the figure recorded here as 12 per the Press Information Bureau release of August 2024. The point of the milestone for Dholera is contextual rather than direct: it shows that the corridor programme Dholera belongs to is actively expanding, with new nodes being sanctioned, and that Dholera is the established flagship against which those newer cities are measured. Dholera is the proof of concept the programme points to, which is both its strength, a first-mover with real construction on the ground, and a caution, since flagship status invites promotional overstatement.

There is a useful discipline in reading the corridor's numbers at the right scale. India-wide semiconductor figures, roughly a dozen sanctioned projects and a cumulative outlay in the region of 1.64 lakh crore rupees, belong to the national programme and must never be silently reattributed to Dholera, which hosts one large fab within that national total. In the same way, the NICDP's 11 corridors and 30 projects are the frame around

Dholera, not a description of Dholera. The corridor gives the region its national standing, a share of central approvals, and a place in the largest industrial-planning programme the country has attempted. It does not confer on Dholera the aggregate weight of the whole programme, and a careful account keeps the node and the network in separate columns even when the promotional material merges them.

The honest summary of the corridor layer is that NICDC is a central agency, Dholera is its flagship DMIC node, the "first semicon city" line is NICDC's marketing, and the NICDP is a genuine, cabinet-backed national programme of 11 corridors and 30 projects into which Dholera fits as the lead example. The corridor gives Dholera its national significance and a share of central funding and attention. It does not, by itself, build anything in Dholera; that remains DICDL's job under DSIRDA's plan, with NICDC as the central partner and corridor sponsor above them.

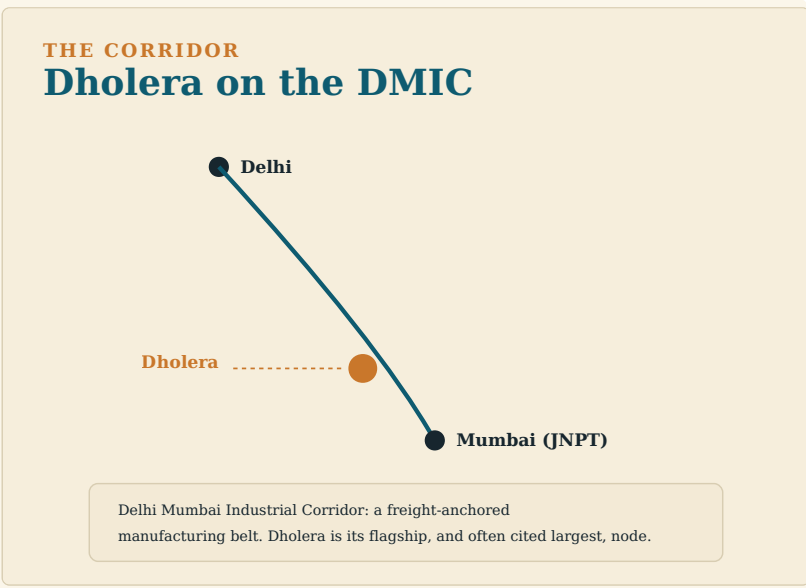


Figure 11. The industrial corridor and its flagship node. Source: fact pack; NICDC.

CHAPTER 11

The Wider Gujarat Ecosystem

Beyond the three bodies that directly govern, build, and connect Dholera sits a wider ring of Gujarat state institutions. None of them is Dholera-specific, but each one funds, promotes, or connects the project, and together they form the industrial development machinery of the state that Dholera plugs into. This chapter maps that supporting layer and is careful to mark where its figures are reliable and where they are merely reported.

GIDB, THE INFRASTRUCTURE BOARD

The Sabarmati riverfront in Ahmedabad, the metropolis the expressway now links to Dholera in under an hour. Photo: Harshil169, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

GIDB is the Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board, a statutory body created under the Gujarat Infrastructure Development Act of 1999. Its function is to facilitate infrastructure, largely through public-private partnership, and it acts as an apex authority for project approval in the state. Its sites are gidb.gujarat.gov.in and gidb.org. Notably, GIDB is now integrated with PM Gati Shakti, the national platform for coordinated infrastructure planning, through the Gujarat portal at gujarat.pmgatishakti.gov.in. For Dholera, GIDB matters as the state-level infrastructure approver and as the institutional bridge into the Gati Shakti coordination framework that aligns

roads, rail, power, and logistics planning across departments. GIDB has also published Dholera activation-area material directly, at gidb.org/activationareadsir, which makes it one of the primary state sources for the region's infrastructure record rather than a merely tangential body.

INDEXTB, THE INVESTMENT PROMOTER

iNDEXTb, the Industrial Extension Bureau, is Gujarat's investment promotion and investor facilitation agency, positioned as the one-stop single window for investors, whether domestic, foreign direct, or institutional. Its site is indextb.com. The bureau cites a set of investment and FDI figures that are useful for framing the state's economic weight, but which must be handled as reported and externally sourced numbers to be verified against current data rather than treated as durable. As cited by iNDEXTb, Gujarat's cumulative foreign direct investment was about 2,87,435 crore rupees, roughly 37,733 million US dollars, over the period October 2019 to December 2023; a broader figure of about 64 billion US dollars in FDI is cited for April 2000 to June 2024; manufacturing is put at about 35.3 percent of gross state value added; and industrial output at about 18 percent. Each of these is a figure iNDEXTb reports, and each carries the instruction to verify the current value before relying on it. They belong in a portrait of Dholera only as context for the promotional apparatus that surrounds it, never as claims about Dholera itself.

The Adalaj stepwell near Ahmedabad, part of the heritage landscape of the gateway city 100 km from Dholera. Photo: Rahilarious, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

GIDC, THE ESTATE BUILDER

GIDC is the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation, the nodal agency created under the Gujarat Industrial Development Act of 1962. It builds the state's industrial backbone and runs a very large estate portfolio, about 239 industrial estates. Its site is gidc.gujarat.gov.in, with land allotment and application handled there and payments through egov.gidcgujarat.org. GIDC represents the older, workhorse tradition of Gujarat industrial development, the model of serviced industrial estates that predates the smart-city concept by decades. Dholera is in one sense a vastly scaled and modernised descendant of that tradition, an industrial region with utilities and

clearances built in, and GIDC's long experience running estates is part of the institutional soil the project grew from. The lineage matters for perspective: Gujarat did not invent industrial development with Dholera, and the state's credibility as an industrial planner rests on more than six decades of estate-building through GIDC. Dholera is the ambitious frontier of that tradition, not its origin, and it inherits both the competence and the bureaucratic weight of the machinery that came before it.

THE INDUSTRIES COMMISSIONERATE AND INDUSTRIAL POLICY

The Industries Commissionerate, at ic.gujarat.gov.in, is the home of the state's industrial policy. Two policies frame the current period. The Gujarat Industrial Policy 2020 was in force from 7 August 2020 to 7 August 2025, with an expected outlay in the region of 8,000 crore rupees per year, a thrust on next-generation sustainable manufacturing, capital subsidy for large and thrust-sector industries, and MSME incentives. Succeeding it, a Gujarat Industrial Policy 2026 was announced around June 2026 under the "Viksit Gujarat 2047" vision, with new investor incentives, MSME support, and an innovation and employment focus, sourced to the Chief Minister's Office. That 2026 policy is recorded here as reported, June 2026, and this book does not quote its specifics as settled, because the final gazette should be confirmed before any particular incentive or figure is relied upon. The policy layer is how the state translates its ambitions into subsidies and incentives that reach investors in regions like Dholera.

THE CONNECTIVITY BODIES

A city on a corridor is only as useful as the roads and rails that reach it, and those are owned by yet another set of agencies distinct from DSIRDA, DICDL, and NICDC. Three matter for Dholera. DFCCIL, the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India, runs the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor between the Dadri region and Jawaharlal Nehru Port, which passes near the Dholera influence zone; the Bhimnath to Dholera freight spur proposed under the DMIC is long-pending with no firm timeline, and this book records it as a proposal, not a built line. NHAI, the national highway authority, delivered the roughly 109 kilometre Ahmedabad to Dholera Expressway, reported open in March 2026. DIACL, the Dholera International Airport Company Limited, is the special purpose vehicle for the airport, owned by the Airports Authority of India at 51 percent, Gujarat at 33 percent, and NICDC at 16 percent, with its portal page at dholera.gujarat.gov.in/about_diacl. Each of these is a separate corporate or statutory body, and each contributes one strand of the connectivity that a manufacturing region needs. The pattern by now is familiar: no single entity does everything, and the achievement, where there is one, is coordination across many.

THE MONEY THE ECOSYSTEM ACTUALLY COMMITS

It is easy for a promotional account to blur intentions with commitments, and a neutral book must not. The clearest committed state money in the near record is a Gujarat Budget 2026-27 line earmarking 610 crore rupees for

Dholera SIR trunk and logistics infrastructure, delivered partly through the Developed Gujarat Fund. That is a reported figure, from the state budget, and it is specific to Dholera. Broader state lines, a semiconductor allocation in the region of 40,000 crore rupees and a Gujarat Semiconductor Policy line of about 1,100 crore rupees, are state-wide covering both Dholera and Sanand, and must never be attributed to Dholera alone. Larger promotional totals that circulate, a state-wide data-centre policy target of 6 lakh crore rupees and 7.5 gigawatts with Dholera as the primary location, are targets and umbrella ambitions, not committed Dholera capital. This is the discipline the ecosystem chapter demands: the state funds Dholera in real but modest committed sums, and it promotes Dholera with much larger aspirational ones, and a reader is entitled to know which is which.

VIBRANT GUJARAT AND PM GATI SHAKTI

Two further instruments complete the ecosystem. The Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, together with the newer Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conferences, is the state's flagship investment-promotion event series, hosted at vibrantgujarat.com. Dholera featured heavily at the 2024 summit in January 2024, where the Prime Minister described it as a modern manufacturing hub. The summits are where memoranda of understanding are signed and headline investment intentions are announced, which is precisely why the figures that emerge from them must be read carefully as intentions rather than committed and deployed capital. A memorandum signed on a summit stage is a statement of interest; it becomes real only when land is allotted, equity is deployed, and construction

begins, and the gap between the two is where much of Dholera's inflated numbers live. PM Gati Shakti, meanwhile, is the national coordinated-infrastructure platform, reached in Gujarat through gujarat.pmgatishakti.gov.in and linked into GIDB. It is the mechanism that aligns the roads, rail, ports, and utilities feeding Dholera into a single planning view across the many agencies that own those assets. The semi-high-speed rail line approved for the Ahmedabad to Dholera axis, for instance, is explicitly placed on the PM Gati Shakti framework, which is how a rail project, an airport, an expressway, and a freight spur owned by four different bodies are meant to be planned as one connected system rather than four disconnected ones.

Alongside these sit the general state portals that any authoritative account of Dholera draws on: the Gujarat State Portal at gujaratindia.gov.in, the citizen-services portal at digitalgujarat.gov.in, the General Administration Department at gad.gujarat.gov.in, and the tourism portal at gujarattourism.com, useful for the region's setting and for nearby Lothal. These are not governance bodies in the sense that DSIRDA or DICDL are, but they are the connective tissue of the state administration within which Dholera operates, and they matter because a neutral, source-linked portrait of the region is built by citing the primary state record rather than the broker material that dominates casual search results.

HOW THE LAYER FUNDS, PROMOTES, AND CONNECTS

The way to hold this wider ecosystem in mind is by function. GIDB approves and, through Gati Shakti, coordinates the infrastructure. iNDEXTb promotes the state to investors and supplies the headline FDI framing, with its figures flagged for verification. GIDC carries the deep institutional experience of building and running industrial estates. The Industries Commissionerate sets the policy and the incentives, with the 2020 policy durable and the 2026 policy still reported. Vibrant Gujarat markets the opportunity and gathers the memoranda. PM Gati Shakti threads it all together across departments. None of these bodies builds Dholera, and none of them governs it in the direct statutory sense that DSIRDA does. What they do is fund, promote, and connect it, supplying the money, the attention, and the coordination that a project of this scale needs from the state around it. Dholera sits at the point where all of these lines converge: a special investment region on a national corridor, built by a joint-venture company, governed by a statutory authority, and embedded in a decades-old state machinery of industrial development that gives it both its resources and its history.

THE WIDER MACHINE

The Gujarat ecosystem around Dholera

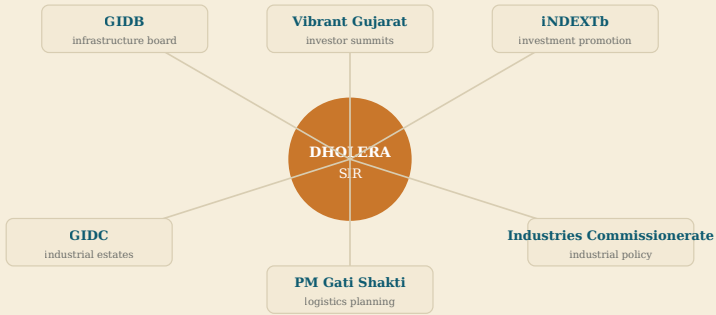


Figure 10. The state bodies that fund, promote and connect Dholera. Source: Gujarat govt ecosystem file.

PART IV

The City on Paper

> *A plan is a promise drawn to scale. Here is what the drawing says.*

Every city exists twice before it exists once. It lives first as a drawing, a set of nested boundaries and colour-coded zones on a planner's sheet, and only later as poured concrete and laid pipe. Dholera is unusual because the gap between those two lives is so wide, so deliberately staged, and so heavily documented. This part reads the drawing. It sets aside the question of whether the city will be filled and asks instead what the plan actually says, where its numbers come from, and where the public record goes quiet. The figures here are the planners' own, drawn from the sanctioned Development Plan, the Town Planning schemes, and the development corporation's technical descriptions. Where a number is confident and repeated across official sources it is treated as durable. Where it is a target, a projection, or a promotional flourish, that is said plainly, because the distance between

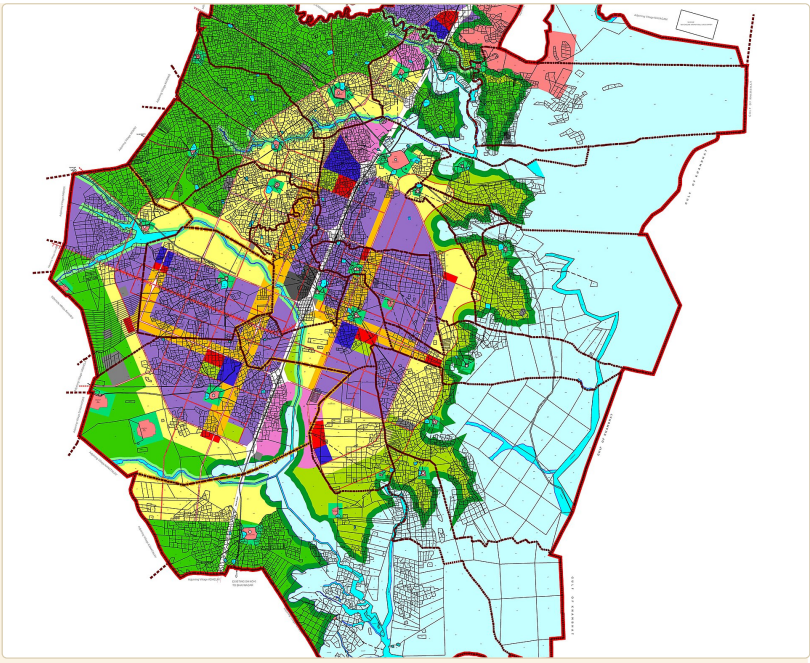
an approved hectare and an aspirational resident is the single most important thing to understand about Dholera on paper.

CHAPTER 12

Three Maps in One

The most quoted fact about Dholera is also the most misleading. The Special Investment Region is described as roughly 920 square kilometres, a figure that lands in almost every headline and turns up in comparisons to Singapore, to Shenzhen, to whichever city the writer wants to borrow scale from. The number is real. It is the official planning envelope notified under the Gujarat Special Investment Region Act of 2009, and it is the outer boundary within which the entire regional plan operates. The problem is that the 920 square kilometre figure describes the extent of a jurisdiction, not the extent of a city. Read as a city, it overstates what is being built by more than a factor of two.

Underneath that outer line sit two smaller numbers, and the relationship between all three is the real geography of Dholera. Of the roughly 920 square kilometres inside the SIR boundary, about 580 square kilometres are classed as developable. The remaining land, close to a third of the whole, is constrained. A large share of the region sits inside the Coastal Regulation Zone, the protective belt that governs building near the shoreline of the Gulf of Khambhat, and roughly a third of the developable land is reported to fall within that CRZ. Dholera lies on flat, low, tidal coastal ground, the tract known locally as the Bhal, and the coastline is not a backdrop here but a binding constraint. Mangrove, tidal flat, and drainage line all subtract from what a plan can place buildings on. The 580 figure is where the city can, in principle, be built.



A proposed land-use plan for the Dholera region, showing the colour-coded zoning of the planned city. Photo: Fulshang, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

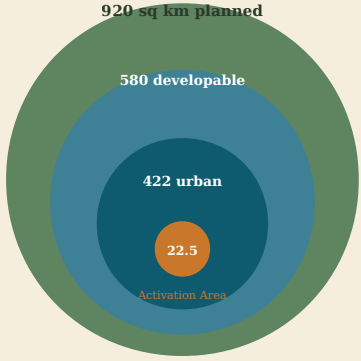
FROM REGION TO CITY TO DEMONSTRATION PLOT

Inside the 580 sits the third number. About 422 square kilometres are designated urban developable, the land actually zoned for the phased build-out of the city over roughly three decades. This is the figure that should anchor any honest comparison of Dholera to another urban area, and it is less than half the headline. When a source says Dholera is 920 square kilometres and another says 422, they are not contradicting each other. One is measuring the region and one is measuring the city. The 920 is the jurisdiction, the 580 is the buildable subset, and the 422 is the urban plan. Each is a legitimate answer

to a different question, and confusion only arises when the largest number is quoted to answer a question about the city.

READ THE MAP HONESTLY

Three numbers, one city



920 sq km
the planning envelope, the headline number

580 sq km
the land actually developable

422 sq km
earmarked urban, phased over ~30 years

22.5 sq km
the phase-1 demo zone built first

Figure 12. Why the 920 sq km headline misleads. Source: fact pack, master plan.

There is a fourth number, smaller still, and it is where nearly everything real on the ground so far has happened. Within the urban 422, inside Town Planning Scheme 2, sits the Activation Area, about 22.5 square kilometres, given by the national corridor agency NICDC as 22.54. This is the plug-and-play demonstration zone, the first patch of the city to receive trunk infrastructure before any private building rises above it. It is roughly 4.25 percent of the developable land. If you have seen a photograph of a wide empty road with street lighting and a central median running through open country near Dholera, you

have most likely seen the Activation Area. It is the proof of concept, the show floor, the piece of the plan that has been turned from drawing into surface.

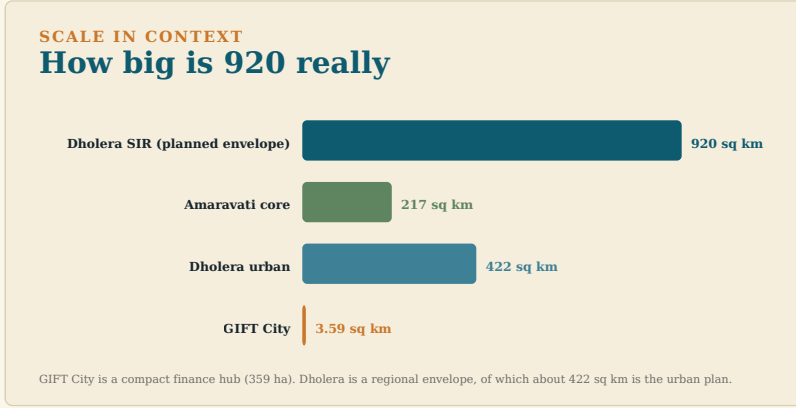


Figure 40. Dholera against other Indian planned areas. Source: fact pack; comparisons file.

The reason a demonstration zone exists at all is worth pausing on, because it reveals the logic of the whole project. Building a city of hundreds of square kilometres from empty coastal land is too large a bet to place all at once, and no investor will commit to a plot that has no road, water, or power because the plan says those things will come. The Activation Area breaks that stalemate. By fully servicing one small square first, the authority creates a place where the plug-and-play promise is not a rendering but a fact on the ground, a zone an investor can visit and see functioning. Everything about Dholera's staged phasing follows from this. The city is designed to grow outward from a proven core rather than to be declared complete on a map, and the 22.5 square

kilometre figure is best understood not as a small piece of a large city but as the seed from which the rest is meant to propagate, if demand arrives to justify it.

WHY THE LAYERS MATTER AND WHAT THE TIMELINE IS

The nesting matters because it disciplines expectation. A reader who holds only the 920 in mind imagines a metropolis under construction across an area larger than many national capitals. A reader who holds all four numbers understands something more accurate and more interesting, that Dholera is a very large planning region with a much smaller intended city inside it, and that the city itself is being switched on one small tile at a time, beginning with a single 22.5 square kilometre square. The scale is genuine but staged. Nothing about the plan promises that the full 422 will fill, and the official phasing does not pretend otherwise. It spreads the urban build across roughly thirty years.

That thirty-year horizon is itself a caution. Reported phasing places the first phase around the early 2020s, centred on the Activation Area, a second phase across the second half of the 2020s bringing the airport and industry, and a third phase reaching toward 2040 or 2042 for the full envelope. The end year is stated inconsistently across sources, sometimes 2040, sometimes 2042, and that small discrepancy is a useful reminder of how these timelines behave. They are planning targets, revised as the project moves, not calendar commitments.

A LAPSED PROMISE WORTH REMEMBERING

There is one number that no longer belongs in the present tense, and it is instructive precisely because it was once quoted as confidently as the areas above. The plan for the Activation Area once carried a population and employment target for the year 2020, roughly 120,000 residents and roughly 80,000 jobs concentrated in that first 22.5 square kilometre zone. That target has lapsed. The year passed and the residents did not arrive on anything like that scale, and the figure now survives mainly in older material that was never updated. A neutral reference has an obligation to say so plainly rather than to keep recirculating a projection its own calendar has already falsified. The lapse is not presented here as an indictment. Large infrastructure runs late almost everywhere, and Dholera is not unusual in that. It is presented because it teaches how to read every other target in this part. When a source attaches a population or a job count to a future year, that number is a projection with a shelf life, not a measured fact, and the honest move is to treat the sourced areas as durable and the sourced populations as aspirational.

THE COASTAL CONSTRAINT IS STRUCTURAL, NOT SCENIC

The one part of the CRZ story worth restating for scale is that the coastal constraint is not a footnote. With roughly a third of the developable land inside the Coastal Regulation Zone, the shape of the city is pushed inland and upward onto the drier ground, and the drainage of a flat coastal plain becomes one of the plan's defining engineering problems rather than an afterthought.

Dholera sits on the Bhal, the low, flat, tidal tract along the western edge of the Gulf of Khambhat, ground that is close to sea level, prone to waterlogging, and historically difficult to build on. The reason the plan leans so heavily on engineered drainage, on a long man-made stormwater canal, and on land raised and serviced before it is built upon, is that the natural landscape does not offer the free drainage a hillier site would. The CRZ is therefore doing two jobs in the plan at once. It is an environmental protection that removes coastal land from development, and it is a marker of the wider hydrological reality that makes the whole site an engineering undertaking rather than simply a surveying one. The three maps in one, region, buildable land, and city, are really a single map read at three levels of ambition, and the Activation Area is the corner where that ambition has so far touched the earth.

CHAPTER 13

Six Schemes, Three Phases

A city this size is not planned as one object. It is planned as a sequence of Town Planning schemes, the standard Gujarat instrument for turning a patchwork of privately held farmland into serviced urban plots. Dholera is divided into six such schemes, labelled TP1 through TP6, and the planning record states that all six draft schemes have been sanctioned. Sanction is a meaningful stage. It means the layout, the road reservations, the plot reconfiguration, and the land pooling arithmetic for each scheme have cleared the statutory process. It does not mean all six are built, and the honest reading keeps sanction and construction in separate columns.

The six schemes group into three phases, and here the sourced figures are reasonably firm at the phase level. Phase I combines TP1 and TP2 and covers about 153 square kilometres. Within that, TP1 is about 51 square kilometres, roughly 12,750 acres, and TP2 is about 102 square kilometres, roughly 25,000 acres. TP2 is the important one, because it holds both the Activation Area and the ABCD building, the administrative and command centre that the next chapters return to. Phase II combines TP3 and TP4 and covers 126 square kilometres, given in the sanctioned Development Plan as 12,600 hectares, with an indicative window of 2023 to 2032. Phase III combines TP5 and TP6 and covers 142 square kilometres, 14,200 hectares, with a window of 2033 to 2042, and the two schemes within it are reported at roughly 75 and 67 square kilometres. Add the phases, 153 plus 126 plus 142,

and the total is 421, which rounds to the 422 square kilometres of urban developable land from the previous chapter. The three maps and the six schemes describe the same city and their arithmetic closes.

Figure 13. The phasing of the planned city. Source: fact pack; DSIRDA sanctioned DP.

There is one gap here that deserves to be named rather than smoothed. The phase totals are sourced, but the split within Phase II between TP3 and TP4 is not separately stated in the material available. We know TP3 and TP4 together make 126 square kilometres. We do not have a reliable individual figure for each. The same caution applies less to Phase III, where TP5 and TP6 are reported at roughly 75 and 67, but even there those are reported values rather than firm sanctioned splits. A neutral account says the phase is the confident unit and the per-scheme division is where the record thins.

Figure 54. The urban area, split by phase. Source: DSIRDA sanctioned DP.

LAND POOLING, THE MECHANISM UNDERNEATH

The Town Planning scheme is not just a map. It is a financial and legal mechanism, and understanding it explains how a greenfield city gets built on land that thousands of farmers owned. The mechanism is land pooling, sometimes called land readjustment. It works differently from outright acquisition. In a straightforward acquisition, the state buys land from owners and takes full title. In land pooling, the planning authority takes a collection of irregular original plots across an area, pools them notionally, lays out the roads, utilities, and public spaces the city needs, and then returns to each original owner a smaller final plot, reconstituted, regularised, and now serviced. The owner gives up a share of area. In exchange the owner keeps title to a plot that is smaller but, because it now sits inside a planned and serviced layout, is intended to carry more value per unit than the raw farmland did.

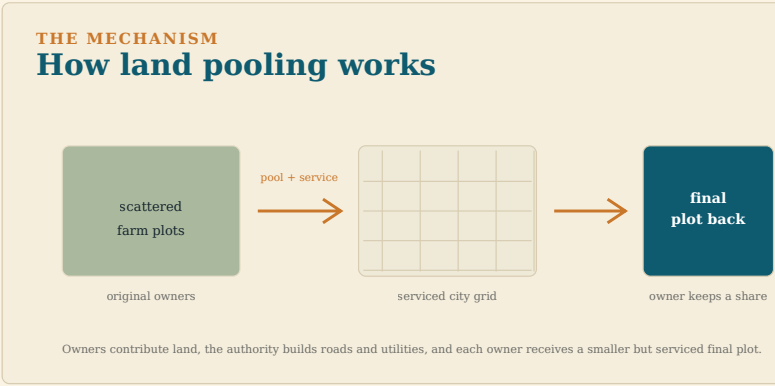


Figure 14. Land pooling: from farm plot to final plot. Source: fact pack, master plan.

The vocabulary matters when reading Dholera land material. An original plot is the pre-scheme holding. A final plot, often abbreviated FP and referenced by an allotted number, is the reconstituted parcel handed back after the scheme. The deducted share funds and physically provides the public realm, the roads, the drainage, the open space, and a portion reserved for the authority to sell to recover infrastructure cost. This is why so much Dholera land discussion fixates on Final Plot numbers and TP scheme status. A holding that has passed through a sanctioned scheme and carries an FP number sits in a different legal category from agricultural land that has not. It is also why land inside an approved TP scheme is treated as non-agricultural by Gujarat rule, which removes one of the conversion hurdles that otherwise blocks legal construction. None of this is a statement about price or return, which this book does not make. It is a statement about legal form, and the legal form is the thing the plan actually delivers to a landowner.

WHY THE STATE CHOSE POOLING OVER ACQUISITION

The choice of land pooling over outright acquisition is not incidental to Dholera's story, and it is worth dwelling on because it shaped how the region was assembled and where it met resistance. Acquisition requires the state to find the capital to buy land outright and leaves former owners with cash but no continuing stake in the place that rises on their fields. Pooling requires far less upfront capital, because owners are compensated in reconstituted land rather than money, and it keeps them as titleholders inside the new city. In principle this aligns the interests of the landowner and the planner, since both now hold plots whose usefulness depends on the scheme being serviced and occupied. In practice the model still asks owners to accept a smaller area and a long wait, and Dholera's land assembly was not frictionless. The acquisition of land for the SIR was litigated, with farmer petitions leading the Gujarat High Court to stay SIR land acquisition in 2015, and independent reporting in 2017 found that only a fraction of the full planned area had by then been secured. Those facts sit outside the drawing this part is reading, but they are the human weather around the mechanism, and a neutral account notes that the pooling model, however elegant on paper, unfolded against real contestation on the ground.

REGISTRATION, TITLE, AND THE BUYER'S DUE DILIGENCE

Because pooling turns farmland into marketable urban plots, a layer of regulation governs when and how those plots can be sold, and it is part of what the plan produces.

Plotted developments, like other real estate projects in Gujarat, must register with the Gujarat Real Estate Regulatory Authority before they are marketed, a requirement under the national Real Estate Regulation Act framework. The practical consequence for anyone reading Dholera land material is that a TP scheme number, a Final Plot allotment, non-agricultural status, and a valid registration are separate checks, and a parcel can have advanced through pooling on the plan while a specific selling project around it has not cleared every one of them. The recurring documented red flag in Dholera is agricultural land marketed as being inside the SIR without the non-agricultural conversion or the scheme status that would make that meaningful. The plan, read honestly, gives owners a route from farmland to serviced plot, but the route has stages, and the paperwork of one stage does not stand in for another.

SANCTION VERSUS SURFACE

Holding the schemes and the mechanism together produces a clear-eyed picture of Phase progress. All six schemes sanctioned is a real milestone, and it means the legal skeleton of the whole 422 square kilometre city exists on paper. But land pooling produces serviced plots only when the trunk infrastructure is actually laid, and that has happened comprehensively in one place, the Activation Area inside TP2. The rest of the sanctioned area is, for now, a legal reconfiguration awaiting its services. The sanctioned Development Plan gives the phase areas with confidence and leaves the per-scheme splits and the on-the-ground sequencing of TP3 through TP6 as the open questions. A reader who wants to know

how much of Dholera is real should count serviced ground, not sanctioned schemes, and the honest answer is that the paperwork spans the city while the pipes, so far, span a corner of it.

It is also worth being precise about what a phasing window such as 2023 to 2032 for Phase II or 2033 to 2042 for Phase III actually promises, which is less than it appears. These are planning horizons attached to the sanctioned Development Plan, the years within which the authority intends each phase to develop. They are not construction schedules with committed funding behind every year, and Dholera's own history counsels reading them loosely. The region has a documented record of slipping targets across nearly every component, from the airport to the timeline of the semiconductor anchor, and there is no reason to expect the town-planning phases to behave differently. The value of the windows is that they establish sequence and rough scale, telling us that TP3 and TP4 are meant to follow TP1 and TP2 and precede TP5 and TP6, and that the whole urban build is conceived over roughly three decades. What they do not do is guarantee that any particular scheme will be serviced in any particular year. The confident facts here are the areas and the order. The years are the softest numbers in the chapter, and a neutral reading treats them as intentions rather than appointments.

CHAPTER 14

Zoning the City

If the Town Planning schemes are the skeleton, zoning is the assignment of function to bone. The sanctioned Development Plan sorts the urban land into a set of land-use zones, each with a purpose, and reading the list is the closest thing available to seeing what kind of city the planners intended rather than how large it is. Fourteen zone types appear in the plan, and it is worth naming them, because the mix tells you the city was designed as an industrial and infrastructure engine first and a residential settlement second.

The fourteen zone types in the Development Plan are:

- Industrial
- Residential
- City Centre
- High-Access Corridor
- Knowledge and IT
- Logistics
- Strategic Infrastructure
- Public Facilities
- Sports and Recreation
- Solar Park
- Green Belt
- CRZ
- Agriculture
- Village Buffer

Each of these earns its place for a reason. The industrial zone is the economic core, the land set aside for the manufacturing that the whole region exists to attract. The residential zone houses the workforce that industry implies. The City Centre is the intended dense civic and commercial heart. The High-Access Corridor is the band of premium, well-connected land along the main movement spine, the frontage that a planned city reserves for its most access-hungry uses. The Knowledge and IT zone is the designated home of offices, technology, and institutional users, and it is where the ABCD administrative building sits inside TP2. Logistics covers warehousing and freight handling, the unglamorous but decisive function that makes an industrial city work. Strategic Infrastructure covers the trunk systems, the utilities and major installations the city runs on.

LIVING SPACE, GREEN SPACE, AND THE CONSTRAINTS

The remaining zones describe the softer and the constrained land. Public Facilities covers the schools, hospitals, and civic uses a population needs. Sports and Recreation is self-explanatory, the reserved space for stadia, fields, and active leisure. The Solar Park zone reflects one of Dholera's signature features, the land committed to large-scale solar generation, a use rare enough in city plans that it earns its own category here. Green Belt is planned open and planted land, part amenity and part the buffer a hot, flat, coastal city needs. CRZ appears as a zone in its own right because the Coastal Regulation Zone is not merely a constraint drawn over other uses but a governing designation for a large share

of the region, and the plan treats it as such. Agriculture retains farmland within the envelope, a reminder that not every hectare inside the SIR is slated to become city. Village Buffer, finally, is the land around the existing settlements of Dholera taluka, the twenty-two villages that predate the plan and continue to sit inside it. That the plan carries a dedicated village buffer zone is a quiet acknowledgment that this is not empty ground but inhabited ground being built around.

Figure 15. The land-use zone types in the sanctioned plan (exact per-zone percentages are not sourced). Source: DSIRDA DP zone types, fact pack.

The single largest land commitment in the plan is industrial. The total industrial area across the full build-out is 11,000 hectares. That is a very large figure, and it confirms in one number what the zone list implies, that

Dholera is at heart an industrial region with a city attached rather than a residential city with some industry. Within that envelope, the Phase 1 industrial land is a gross area of about 3,000 hectares, the first tranche opened for manufacturing users. The industrial parcels themselves are designed to be flexible in size, offered in a range from 0.5 hectare up to 150 hectares. That spread is deliberate. A city courting everyone from a small ancillary supplier to a single enormous anchor plant, such as a semiconductor fabrication campus, needs plots that scale from the modest to the vast, and the plan provides that range explicitly.

THE SECTORS THE INDUSTRIAL LAND IS MEANT TO HOLD

The industrial zone is not a single undifferentiated expanse but a designated home for a specific roster of sectors, and the official list reveals the kind of economy the plan is trying to seed. The development corporation names defence, aviation, electronics and semiconductors, high-tech and emerging industries, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, heavy engineering, automobiles and auto ancillaries, general manufacturing, agro and food processing, and metals, alongside renewable energy. This is a deliberately advanced and capital-heavy mix. It is not the light manufacturing or textiles base that much of Gujarat historically grew on but a bid for the high-value, high-technology industries that governments everywhere now compete for. The presence of electronics and semiconductors at the top of the list is not decoration. It reflects the plan's alignment with national industrial policy and explains why a large semiconductor fabrication

project became the region's anchor tenant, the kind of user for whom the 150 hectare upper end of the parcel range exists. Reading the sector list beside the parcel sizes shows a zone engineered for a small number of very large plants surrounded by a wider field of suppliers, which is exactly how a modern manufacturing cluster is meant to be shaped.

THE CORRIDOR, THE CENTRE, AND THE MOVEMENT LOGIC

Two zones deserve a second look because they encode how the planners expected the city to move and to concentrate. The High-Access Corridor is the band of land along the principal movement spine, the frontage with the best connectivity, and reserving it as a distinct zone means the plan intends the city's most access-hungry and highest-intensity uses to line up along that spine rather than scatter. It is a classic device of planned cities, the deliberate channelling of intensity onto the routes best able to carry it. The City Centre, meanwhile, is the designated dense civic and commercial heart, the place the plan expects to become the downtown that a greenfield city otherwise has no organic reason to grow. Placing both on the drawing is an admission that in a built-from-nothing city, centrality and corridor intensity have to be assigned by decree, because there is no existing high street or old quarter to inherit them from. Whether the assigned centre and corridor come alive is a question only occupation can answer, but the plan at least commits to where they should be.

WHAT THE PLAN DOES NOT TELL US

Here the record reaches its honest limit, and it is an important one. The zone types are sourced and the industrial figures are sourced, but the exact percentage of land assigned to each zone is not. The Development Plan report that would give the precise land-use breakdown, zone by zone, is not reliably available, the official link to it having gone dead. This means anyone who states a clean set of percentages, so much residential, so much industrial, so much green, is filling a gap the public record leaves open. This book will not do that. We can say with confidence what the fourteen zones are and what each is for. We can state the 11,000 hectare industrial total, the roughly 3,000 hectare Phase 1 industrial gross, and the 0.5 to 150 hectare parcel range, because those are sourced. We cannot responsibly publish a per-zone percentage split, and where you see one elsewhere it should be treated as unverified. A zoning legend that names every function and admits the missing proportions is more truthful than a tidy pie chart built on numbers no source stands behind.

The gap is worth naming clearly rather than papering over, because it is the kind of missing figure that gets invented most often. A per-zone percentage breakdown is exactly the sort of clean, chart-ready number that circulates confidently on property sites and in presentations, and its very tidiness is a warning sign, because the primary source that would anchor it is not currently retrievable. What we can infer, cautiously and without putting a number on it, is the emphasis. With 11,000 hectares committed to industry across the build-out and industry heading the plan's roster of sectors, the

balance of the city tilts unmistakably toward production, logistics, and the infrastructure that serves them, with residential, civic, and green uses arranged around that economic core rather than dominating it. That is a statement about priority, which the sources support, not about proportion, which they do not. Holding those two apart is the discipline this chapter asks of the reader, and it is the difference between describing a plan and embellishing it.

CHAPTER 15

The Brain

Every smart city needs a claim to intelligence, and Dholera locates its claim in a single building. It is called the ABCD building, an acronym for the Administrative cum Business Centre for Dholera, and it sits on a plot of about 9 hectares inside the Knowledge and IT zone of Town Planning Scheme 2, near the Activation Area. The building is meant to be the city's front door and its nervous system at once, combining the government offices that administer the region, the single-window clearance function that industrial investors use to obtain approvals, and, most significantly for the smart-city story, the Integrated Command and Control Centre.

The Integrated Command and Control Centre, or ICCC, is the piece that gives the building its billing as the brain. In the smart-city model, the ICCC is the room where the instrumented city reports back to its operators. Sensors and systems distributed across the Activation Area feed a set of live functions into one control environment. The functions the ICCC is described as overseeing are water, power, lighting, surveillance, traffic, and environment. In practice that means the command centre is intended to watch water supply and quality, monitor and manage the electrical network, control the street and public lighting, run the camera surveillance network, manage traffic flow, and track environmental readings such as air and drainage conditions. The idea is that a small operations team can see the whole serviced city at once and respond to a burst pipe, a failed light, or a traffic build-up from a

single console rather than from scattered departments. Whether that promise is fully realised is a separate question from whether the architecture for it exists, and the sources support the architecture more firmly than they support the daily reality.

Figure 16. The smart-city control room and the systems it watches. Source: fact pack, DICDL interview.

The building also carries a green-design credential. It is described as being of LEED Gold design, LEED being the international rating system for environmentally efficient buildings and Gold being its second-highest tier. As with much of Dholera, design intent and independent certification are not the same thing, and the sourced claim is about the design standard the building was built to rather than a certificate on the wall. The single-window clearance function housed alongside the ICCC is worth flagging as the pragmatic heart of the building for investors. In a country where industrial approvals can mean a procession of departments, the promise of one counter that coordinates the permissions an investor

needs is a genuine selling point of the SIR model, and locating it in the same building as the command centre concentrates the city's administrative machinery in one place.

WHAT A COMMAND CENTRE ACTUALLY DOES, AND WHAT IT NEEDS

It is easy to let the phrase "command and control centre" carry more weight than the thing itself. In a working smart city, the ICCC is a dashboard and a dispatch desk, not an artificial intelligence running the town. Its value is aggregation. Instead of the water department knowing about water, the electricity department knowing about power, and the police knowing about the cameras, all of those feeds surface in one room where an operator can correlate them, see that a traffic snarl coincides with a signal outage, or that a pressure drop signals a main break, and route a response. The functions Dholera's centre is described as integrating, water, power, lighting, surveillance, traffic, and environment, are the standard six or so streams such centres run on. The important dependency to understand is that a command centre is only as real as the instrumentation feeding it. Cameras, smart water meters with leak detection, network sensors on the power grid, and traffic detection all have to be physically installed and connected across the serviced area before the room upstairs can do anything but display a map. This is why the ICCC and the Activation Area's buried instrumentation are two halves of one system, and why the centre's genuine capability tracks the extent of the sensor network below it rather than the sophistication of the screens inside it.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE CASE FOR CONCENTRATION

Beyond the technology, the ABCD building embodies a governance idea that is central to the whole Special Investment Region concept. The SIR model exists to compress the friction of setting up industry in India, and single-window clearance is the mechanism. The theory is that an investor deals with one authority that coordinates the land, the utilities, the environmental permissions, and the approvals, rather than assembling them piecemeal from many agencies. By housing that clearance function in the same building as the region's administration and its live operations centre, the plan puts the investor's paperwork, the region's managers, and the city's monitoring under one roof. Whether the promise is fully delivered depends on institutional performance that a building cannot guarantee, but the architectural intent is unambiguous. The ABCD building is designed to be the place where the abstract advantages of an SIR, faster approvals and coordinated infrastructure, are meant to become a physical address a visitor can walk into.

THE SIZE AND STATUS THE RECORD DISPUTES

Two things about the ABCD building are unsettled in the public record, and a neutral account has to flag both rather than pick a flattering version. The first is the building's size. Sources do not agree on its built-up area. One figure, associated with the Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board and referring to a Phase-I extent, puts the built-up area at about 14,000 square metres. Another figure, associated with developer material and referring to the full building, puts it at about 36,000 square metres.

That is not a small discrepancy. The larger number is more than double the smaller. The likeliest explanation is that the two figures measure different things, a first-phase extent versus a full-building extent, but the material available does not reconcile them cleanly, so the honest presentation gives both and marks the gap rather than averaging them into a false precision.

The second unsettled point is status. The building is reported to be structurally complete and operational, and the ICCC is described in official interview material as operational within it. But the exact inauguration date is not established in the record. This matters because "operational" is a word that gets used generously in project communications, and there is a difference between a building that is physically finished, a command centre whose hardware is installed, and a control room that is actually running the live city day to day. The sourced position is that the building stands, that its function is real and defined, and that the precise moment it began operating, and the degree to which the ICCC now governs the Activation Area in practice, are not pinned down. The brain exists. How fully it has been switched on is described more confidently in promotional terms than in dated, primary ones, and the reader should hold the function as durable and the operational detail as reported.

This distinction between function and operational fact is not pedantry, and it recurs across the whole of Dholera. A smart-city command centre is one of the most photogenic things a project can point to, a room of screens that photographs as proof of a working future city. It is precisely the kind of asset that gets described as

operational the moment it is capable of operating, well before it is meaningfully in charge of anything. The neutral reading holds three separate claims apart. That the ABCD building is built is well supported. That it is designed to house administration, single-window clearance, and the ICCC is well supported. That the ICCC is today actively governing a live, occupied city is the weakest of the three, not because there is evidence against it but because the Activation Area it would govern is still largely unoccupied, and a command centre watching an empty serviced zone is running a rehearsal rather than a city. None of this diminishes the building's role in the plan. It simply keeps the drawing and the photograph in their proper relation, which is the task this part sets itself throughout.

CHAPTER 16

Utilities Underground

The defining engineering promise of Dholera is not a building or a road. It is a sequence. In a conventional Indian city, infrastructure chases development. Buildings go up, populations arrive, and roads, water, power, and drainage are retrofitted afterward, often badly, into a fabric already built. Dholera inverts that order. The plan is to lay the trunk utilities first, underground, across a serviced area, and only then to invite building above them. This is the plug-and-play model, and the Activation Area is where it has been executed. A plot buyer in the serviced zone is meant to arrive to find power, water, gas, data, and drainage already waiting at the boundary, the way an apartment arrives with sockets in the wall. The city is engineered before it is occupied.

The specifics, drawn from the development corporation's own description of the Activation Area, are concrete. The utilities laid underground include the power network, ducts for information and communications technology and fibre, piped natural gas, and potable water fitted with smart meters and leak detection. Alongside the drinking water runs a separate recycled-water network, a second pipe carrying treated water for non-potable uses, which is the mark of a city designed for water scarcity rather than water abundance. Wastewater and effluent lines carry used water away for treatment. Stormwater, the great problem of a flat coastal plain, is channelled into a man-made canal 6.5 kilometres long, a piece of hard drainage infrastructure sized for a landscape that does not drain

itself. Water is treated at a plant with a capacity of about 50 million litres per day, supported by reservoirs. This is the buried city, the layer that does the work no resident sees.

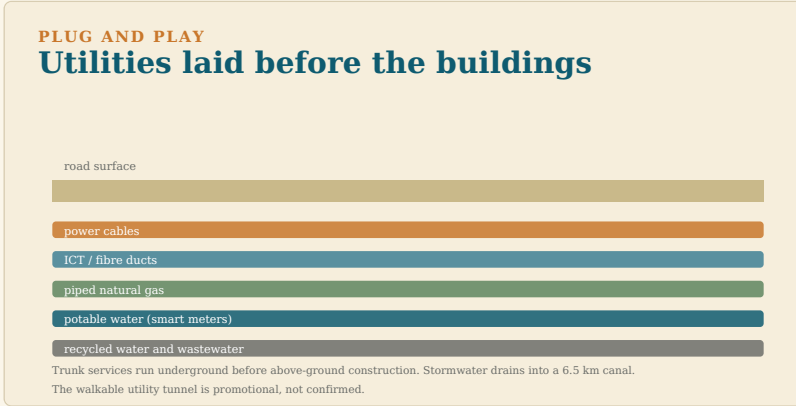


Figure 17. The underground trunk corridor. Source: fact pack, smart-city utilities.

Above the pipes runs the road network. The Activation Area is served by about 72 kilometres of internal roads, and their widths are generous by design, ranging from 18 to 70 metres. The wider reservations are not merely for cars. The road cross-sections are described as including pedestrian and cycle lanes, and, importantly, a reserved corridor for rapid transit, land held open within the roadway for a future mass-transit line so that the city does not have to tear up its own streets to add one later. Reserving transit right-of-way at the outset is one of the more genuinely forward pieces of the plan, because it is the kind of provision that is nearly impossible to add once a city is built and cheap to hold when it is not yet built. Underneath and beside all of this sits the ICCC's

instrumentation, the meters and sensors that feed the command centre described in the previous chapter, so that the buried network is not only laid but watched.

WATER AS THE ORGANISING PROBLEM

If one theme runs through Dholera's utility design, it is water, in both directions, too little to drink and too much to drain. The plan's water architecture reflects a city that expects scarcity. The dual-pipe system, one line for potable water with smart meters and leak detection and a separate line for recycled water, means the city is built from the outset to reuse treated wastewater for non-drinking uses rather than draw fresh water for every purpose. The wastewater and effluent network exists to feed that reuse loop as much as to carry waste away. On the drainage side, the same flatness that makes the site hard to build on makes stormwater a first-order engineering concern, and the answer is hard infrastructure, the 6.5 kilometre man-made canal that channels stormwater off the plain rather than trusting the land to shed it. The roughly 50 million litre per day treatment plant and its reservoirs sit at the centre of this system. A reader who wants to judge whether Dholera is seriously engineered or merely marketed can look here, because a dual-pipe recycled-water network and a purpose-built stormwater canal are expensive, unglamorous commitments that no brochure needs but a working coastal city on the Bhal genuinely does.

THE TRANSIT CORRIDOR AND THE SHAPE OF A LOW-CAR CITY

The reserved rapid-transit corridor deserves emphasis because of what it signals about the intended form of the city. Holding land within the roadway for a future mass-transit line, alongside dedicated cycle and pedestrian lanes, is the physical grammar of a city that does not want to be entirely car-dependent. Whether that ambition is realised depends on a transit line eventually being funded and built into the reserved space, which is not guaranteed and lies beyond the drawing this part reads. But the reservation itself is a real and consequential planning decision. Retrofitting mass transit into a built city is among the most expensive and disruptive things an urban government can attempt, and the cheapest moment to protect the right-of-way is before anything is built beside it. Dholera's plan takes that cheap moment. The 18 to 70 metre road widths are wide enough to carry a transit spine, footpaths, cycle lanes, and the full underground utility bundle at once, which is what a serviced right-of-way in a purpose-built city is supposed to look like on a cross-section.

CONFIRMED, AND MERELY PROMOTED

The line between what is built and what is marketed runs right through this chapter, and it has to be drawn carefully, because utility infrastructure is where smart-city promotion is most tempted to embellish. On the confirmed side, reported by the development corporation for the Activation Area, are the items above: the underground power, ICT ducts, piped gas, and metered potable water, the recycled-water and wastewater

networks, the stormwater canal, the roughly 50 million litre per day treatment plant, and the 72 kilometres of wide internal roads with their walking, cycling, and reserved transit provision. These are described as built, and they form the substance of the plug-and-play claim.

On the other side sit features that circulate in Dholera coverage but are not officially confirmed, and each deserves a clear label. The most persistent is the common walkable utility tunnel, the image of a single accessible corridor running beneath the streets carrying every service, wide enough to walk through, so that a cable or a pipe can be repaired without ever digging up the road. It is an attractive idea and a staple of Dholera promotional material, but it is not officially confirmed, and it should be read as a promotional concept rather than a documented feature of what has been built. District cooling, the centralised chilled-water system that some smart cities use in place of individual air conditioning, is mentioned in connection with Dholera but its status is unknown. Long-range and desalination-based water supply, which a coastal city on a saline plain might eventually need, is similarly unverified as to capacity and status.

It is worth understanding why the utility tunnel in particular has such staying power in the Dholera story, because the reason is instructive. The walkable common services tunnel is a genuine technology, used in a handful of dense cities, and it is the single most vivid way to dramatise the plug-and-play idea. A tunnel you can walk through carrying every pipe and cable is a far more compelling image than a trench full of separate ducts, even though the separate ducts are what deliver the same

practical benefit of servicing a plot in advance. Promotional material reaches for the tunnel because it photographs and explains well, and over time the concept has migrated from aspiration to assumed fact in a lot of secondary coverage. The confirmed record supports underground ducting for the various services, which is a real and significant achievement. It does not confirm a single continuous walkable tunnel beneath the Activation Area, and the responsible thing is to say the ducts are built and the tunnel is a concept until an official source states otherwise.

THE CORE BENEATH THE SHINE

The pattern is consistent and worth carrying out of this part as a whole. The buried, unglamorous, sourced infrastructure of the Activation Area is real and specific, the underground power and data ducts, the metered potable water, the piped gas, the dual recycled-water network, the wastewater lines, the 6.5 kilometre stormwater canal, the roughly 50 million litre per day treatment plant, and the 72 kilometres of wide roads with their walking, cycling, and reserved transit provision. The most futuristic flourishes attached to it, the walkable tunnel above all, along with district cooling and desalination, are aspirations dressed as features. This is the same double register that runs through the whole city on paper. The nested areas are real and the metropolis-scale headline oversells them. The six sanctioned schemes are real and the per-scheme splits are unsourced. The ABCD building is real and its full operation is reported rather than dated. The Activation Area's utilities are real and the tunnel is promotional. A city on paper is honest

only when it keeps those two registers apart, and Dholera's paper city, read closely, does contain a genuine engineered core beneath the promotional shine. The task of this reference is neither to inflate that core nor to dismiss it, but to draw the line between what the plan has actually laid down and what it has only imagined, so that the reader can see the city as its planners drew it and judge for themselves how much of the drawing has become ground.

PART V

The Engines

> *A city runs on engines. These are Dholera's, each on its own timetable.*

A city is only as real as the machines that will run it. Master plans and land maps describe intent. Engines describe capacity. Dholera has been sold for more than a decade on the strength of what it would one day contain, and for most of that decade the honest answer to what it actually contained was flat coastal Bhal land, a canal, a command centre, and a set of surveyed roads. That answer changed between 2024 and 2026. In that window a semiconductor fabrication plant broke ground, an expressway opened, an airport runway took its first aircraft, a semi-high-speed rail line won federal clearance, a solar park crossed 300 megawatts of live generation, and a data-centre policy arrived with the city named as its primary location. This part is the longest in the book because these six systems are the difference between a promise and a place. Each chapter treats one engine, and

each chapter draws a hard line between what is built or formally approved and what is announced, promised, or targeted. That line is the whole point. In Dholera the gap between an MoU and a foundation has historically been measured in years, and sometimes in collapses.

A word on method before the engines themselves. The SIR is a node of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, planned over roughly 920 square kilometres of envelope with around 422 square kilometres treated as urban-developable, and it is built and governed through a layered set of bodies: DSIRDA as the statutory planning and land authority, DICDL as the special-purpose vehicle that physically builds the city, and NICDC as the central nodal corporation. The engines in this part do not belong to a single owner. The fab is a private Tata project under a central mission; the expressway is the National Highways Authority's; the airport sits inside a three-way government joint venture; the rail line is a Railways project under a Cabinet clearance; the solar park runs through a Gujarat state corporation; the data-centre push rides a new state policy. This dispersed ownership is why the engines advance at such different speeds, and it is why a single honest verdict about Dholera is impossible. The only defensible verdict is engine by engine, fact by fact, with each labelled for what it actually is.

CHAPTER 17

The Chip

The single most important object in Dholera is a building that has not yet made a chip. It is the Tata Electronics semiconductor fabrication plant, the anchor that converts the entire SIR from a real-estate story into an industrial one, and understanding it correctly requires separating four different things that are routinely blurred together: what collapsed, what was approved, what is under construction, and what has actually been produced.

Start with what collapsed, because the wreckage still distorts the record. In September 2022, Vedanta and Foxconn signed a widely publicised memorandum with the Gujarat government for a semiconductor and display venture, a figure of roughly 19.5 billion US dollars attached to it, and Dholera named as a candidate site. That joint venture never built anything. Foxconn withdrew on 10 July 2023, the partnership dissolved, and the 19.5 billion dollar number that still circulates was a projected joint-venture value, not committed or deployed capital. Any account that presents that figure as money invested in Dholera is wrong. A separate solo-Vedanta fab claim has surfaced since, but it remains an announced and restructured proposition, not a confirmed build, and it should never be placed beside the Tata project as an equal. One more correction belongs here because it is the most common error of all: Micron's assembly and test facility is in Sanand, not Dholera. It is a real project, but it is not this city's.

A semiconductor cleanroom. Illustrative of the fabrication environment the Tata-PSMC fab is building. Illustrative image. Photo: E.gordienko, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

The Tata-PSMC fab

Rs 91,000 cr	**Investment** PIB Fiscal Support Agreement cites Rs 91,526 cr
50,000 wpm	**Capacity** wafers per month, 300 mm
28 to 110 nm	**Nodes** mature and specialty, 90/55 nm first
29 Feb 2024	**Approved** Union Cabinet, India Semiconductor Mission
under construction	**Status** civil past halfway mid-2026, no chip produced yet

Figure 18. India's first major commercial semiconductor fab, by the numbers. Source: fact pack, section 6.

Now the project that is real. On 29 February 2024 the Union Cabinet approved a commercial fabrication plant under the India Semiconductor Mission, to be built by Tata Electronics through the entity Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Private Limited, with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC) as the technology partner. The sanctioned investment is Rs 91,000 crore, roughly 11 billion US dollars, and the government's own Fiscal Support Agreement documentation cites a figure of Rs 91,526 crore. This is a 300mm wafer fab, designed for a capacity of up to 50,000 wafers per month. The India Semiconductor Mission covers 50 percent of the eligible project cost, and the Fiscal Support Agreement was signed on 5 March 2025. This is the single largest and most bankable commitment anywhere in the Dholera pipeline, and unlike almost every other headline number in this book it is fully sourced to the Cabinet, the Press Information Bureau, and the company itself.

To place the number in national context without borrowing it, India had by mid-2026 sanctioned on the order of a dozen semiconductor projects, with cumulative approvals near Rs 1.64 lakh crore across the country under the India Semiconductor Mission and allied schemes. That national figure must never be attributed to Dholera, but it frames why the Dholera fab matters: it is the largest single sanctioned unit inside a much wider, deliberately seeded national programme, and it is the one whose sheer scale, 50,000 wafers a month at 300mm, sets it apart from the assembly, test, and packaging units that dominate the rest of the list. On 5 May 2026 the Union Cabinet cleared two further, much smaller semiconductor

units, one of them at Dholera and one at Surat, together worth more than Rs 3,900 crore and more than 2,200 jobs. Those should be kept mentally separate from the Rs 91,000 crore fab; they are additional units, not part of the flagship, and folding them into the headline number would overstate the anchor. The fab stands on its own as the bankable commitment. Everything else in the electronics cluster is smaller, later, or reported.

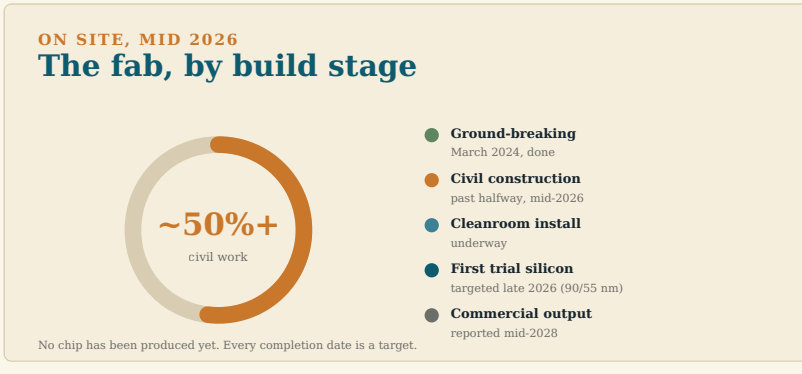


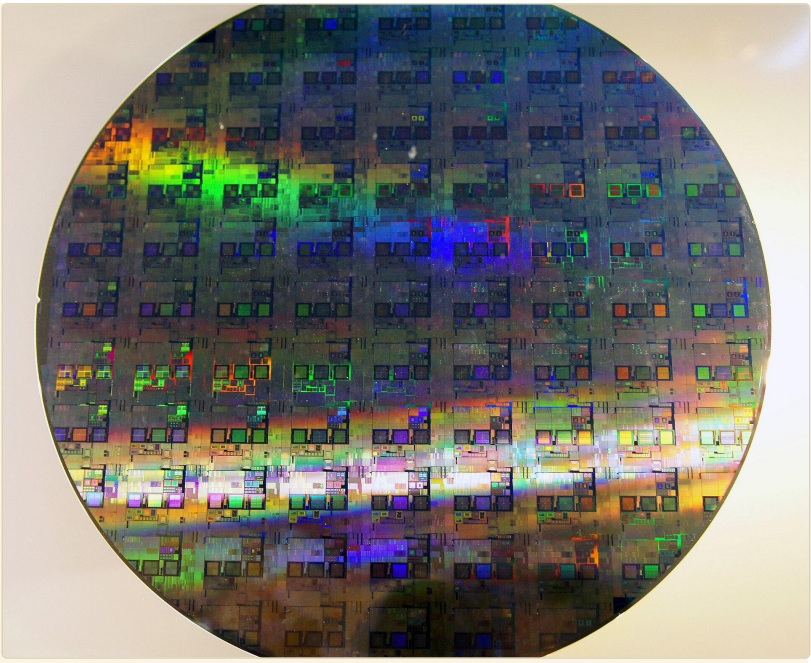
Figure 43. Where the semiconductor fab stands. Source: fact pack, section 6.

WHAT KIND OF CHIPS, AND WHEN

The fab is not built for the leading edge. It targets mature and specialty process nodes: 28, 40, 55, 90, and 110 nanometres. These are the nodes that produce power-management integrated circuits, display driver chips, microcontrollers, and various high-performance-computing logic components, the unglamorous but enormous market of silicon that goes into cars, appliances, industrial systems, and consumer electronics rather than the newest smartphone processors. It is worth

being precise about the ladder of nodes, because press coverage has occasionally implied the plant would open at 28nm.

Figure 19. The mature-node-first roadmap. Source: fact pack; Tata Electronics, 2026 coverage.



A 300 mm silicon wafer. Illustrative of the wafers the Dholera fab is designed to produce. Illustrative image. Photo: Peellden, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

It will not. A Tata Electronics spokesperson clarified in mid-2026 that the plan was always to begin with 90nm and 55nm, followed later by 28nm. So the first silicon out of this fab will be at a mature node, not the finest one the plant is rated for. The timeline reflects that staging. Ground-breaking took place in March 2024. As of the middle of 2026, civil construction was reported past the halfway mark, with cleanroom installation and equipment calibration underway. The company entered a lithography partnership with the Netherlands firm ASML, the world leader in lithography equipment, reported around 17 May 2026 and now corroborated through Tata Electronics' own primary channels rather than a single press report. A first mature-node trial-silicon target of around late 2026 has

been stated by the Minister for Electronics and Information Technology and by the project's chief executive, while commercial production has reportedly been pushed to around mid-2028. The distinction matters enormously: a trial wafer is a proof that the line works, not a product shipped to customers at volume.

THE HONEST STATUS

No source confirms that a single chip has been produced at Dholera. That sentence should be read plainly, without disappointment or spin. A fab of this class takes years to move from cleared land to qualified volume production, and the Dholera plant is roughly on the schedule such a project would be expected to follow. The Centre notified a 66-hectare Tata Semiconductor Special Economic Zone in Dholera in April 2026, a procedural step that supports the build. The employment figure attached to the fab, more than 20,000 direct and indirect jobs, is a target, as is the far larger multi-fab vision that occasionally accompanies it. What is durable here is the approval, the investment, the capacity rating, the node list, and the fact of active construction. What is reported or targeted is every date and every claim about output. The correct summary is this: the most significant industrial anchor in Dholera is real, funded, and half-built, and it has not yet made a chip. Both halves of that statement are true at once, and the city's credibility depends on saying both.

WHY THE FAB CHOSE THIS LAND

It is worth asking why a 300mm fab, one of the most demanding industrial facilities a country can build, was placed on flat coastal Bhal land in Ahmedabad district.

Part of the answer is the India Semiconductor Mission's fiscal support, which covers half the eligible cost and applies wherever a qualifying unit is built. Part is Gujarat's own semiconductor policy layered on top of the central scheme. But part is specific to Dholera as a site. A fab needs three things in enormous quantity: stable power, ultra-pure water, and clean, vibration-free, well-connected land at scale. The SIR was engineered to supply exactly that profile. Its trunk infrastructure in the Activation Area was laid before the fab arrived, with underground power distribution, fibre and information-and-communication-technology ducts, piped water with smart metering, and a reserved land bank in large industrial parcels. The adjacent solar park offers a route to the low-carbon power that a modern fab increasingly needs to promise its customers. Suppliers of the specialty gases a fab consumes have themselves announced Dholera plans, including a reported electronic-specialty-gas hub and air-separation unit intended to feed ultra-high-purity gases to the fabs. None of the supplier projects should be counted as delivered, but their clustering around the anchor is the mechanism by which a single fab is meant to seed an ecosystem. The 66-hectare notified Special Economic Zone is the legal wrapper for that ecosystem. Whether it fills depends, as everything at Dholera does, on the anchor working first.

THE JOBS QUESTION, KEPT HONEST

The fab's most repeated social promise is employment, and here the labels matter as much as anywhere. The figure attached directly to the Tata fab, more than 20,000 direct and indirect jobs, is a target, not a headcount. The

much larger figure that sometimes accompanies the semiconductor story, on the order of 100,000 jobs, refers to a multi-fab vision in which the first plant is followed by others, and it is an aspiration rather than a plan with dates. These fab-specific numbers sit inside a still larger SIR-wide employment target of more than 8,00,000 jobs at full development, a figure now sourced to the official Dholera government portal rather than to brokers. That SIR-wide number has a documented internal structure worth stating because it shows the target is at least modelled rather than invented: the development-plan basis splits it into roughly 312,900 direct industrial jobs and roughly 483,630 indirect jobs, with sector-by-sector potentials that place electronics and emerging technology highest at around 87,300, followed by pharmaceuticals and biotechnology near 49,100, heavy engineering near 45,100, automotive and auto-ancillary near 43,900, and general manufacturing near 42,400. None of these are people currently employed. They are a planning model of what full build-out could support. The older, more concrete near-term target, roughly 80,000 jobs and 1.2 lakh residents by 2020, lapsed, and its lapse is part of the honest record. The correct way to carry the jobs story is therefore to name the fab's own more-than-20,000 target, to name the SIR-wide more-than-8,00,000 target with its modelled breakdown, and to keep both firmly in the future tense until payroll data replaces projection. The fab under construction is the first real test of whether any of that modelled employment materialises, which is one more reason the whole employment case rests on the anchor being built and run rather than merely approved.

CHAPTER 18

The Road

Before anything could be manufactured at Dholera, the site had to stop being two and a quarter hours from Ahmedabad. For most of the SIR's history the connection to the state's largest city was an ordinary road across the Bhal, and that single fact did more to keep Dholera notional than any planning delay. The Ahmedabad-Dholera Expressway was built to erase it.

The road is a greenfield, access-controlled expressway running roughly 109 kilometres, executed by the National Highways Authority of India. It was designed for a 120 kilometre-per-hour speed. There is a genuine discrepancy in the public record on its lane configuration that an honest account must flag rather than resolve by guesswork: the durable description is a 4-lane carriageway engineered to be expandable to 8 lanes, while NICDC has at points described it as 6-lane. The as-built configuration should be verified against the road itself rather than asserted, and this book treats the 4-lane-expandable figure as the base description with the 6-lane claim noted alongside it.

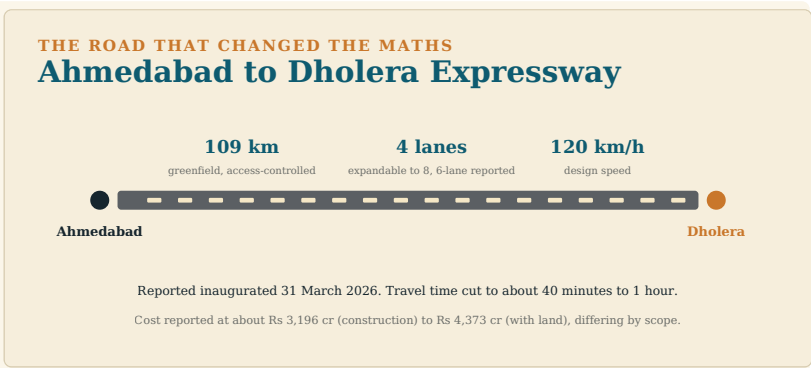


Figure 20. The 109 km access road, the first engine to open. Source: fact pack, section 4.

A container freight train. Illustrative of the logistics role Dholera is built to play. Illustrative image. Photo: shankar s. from Poona (pune), India, India, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

The expressway was reported inaugurated by the Prime Minister on 31 March 2026 and is operational. Its effect on travel time is the number that matters to a factory manager or a resident, and here too the sources vary

honestly: the journey from Ahmedabad to Dholera, formerly around two to two and a quarter hours, is reported cut to somewhere between roughly 40 minutes and about an hour depending on the source and the endpoints measured. That range is wide enough to be worth stating as a range rather than collapsing into a single triumphant figure. Even at the conservative end, an hour, the road changes the economic geography of the SIR. A semiconductor fab and its supply chain, a workforce, and a construction pipeline all depend on being able to move people and freight between the corridor's largest labour market and the site quickly and predictably. An access-controlled expressway does that in a way an ordinary highway across tidal flats never could.

COST, TOLLING, AND THE CORRIDOR LOGIC

The cost figures also carry a scope-dependent conflict that should be presented straight. Construction alone has been reported at around Rs 3,196 crore, while a figure of around Rs 4,373 crore appears when land is included. These are not competing claims about the same thing; they measure different envelopes, and the difference between them is essentially the cost of the right-of-way. Tolling is planned on a FASTag basis, consistent with national practice, but specific toll rates are not reliably sourced and should not be invented. A reader who wants a firm per-trip cost will not find one in any reliable source, and the honest response is to say so rather than to quote a broker estimate as fact. What the expressway represents in the wider design of the city is the first of several connectivity layers. It is the road tier of a multimodal spine that the rail line and the airport are

meant to complete, and it is the only tier that, as of this writing, is finished and carrying traffic. That alone makes it the most concretely useful engine in the entire SIR today. The fab will not produce chips for years, the airport is not open, the rail line will not run until the end of the decade, but the road works now, and everything else physically arrives over it.

THE ROAD AS A PRECONDITION, NOT A PRODUCT

There is a temptation, common in promotional accounts of new cities, to treat an expressway as a destination in itself, as though the road were the achievement. It is better understood as a precondition that had to be met before any of the real achievements could begin. Dholera sits roughly 100 kilometres south-west of Ahmedabad, on the western coast of the Gulf of Khambhat, and for the entire early history of the SIR that distance was covered by ordinary roads across low-lying tidal land that floods and drains poorly. Drainage and flooding are documented planning constraints in the Bhal, not incidental ones, and building a fast, access-controlled, elevated-where-necessary carriageway across that terrain is a genuine engineering task rather than a ribbon-cutting formality. The expressway is also the physical spine along which the SIR's own internal road network connects to the outside world. Inside the Activation Area the developer built roughly 72 kilometres of internal roads, ranging from 18 to 70 metres wide, with pedestrian and cycle lanes and a reserved corridor for future rapid transit. Those internal roads are only useful if they meet a fast link to Ahmedabad's labour market and Ahmedabad's port and

airport access, and the expressway is that link. In corridor-planning terms the road is the first completed segment of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor's ambitions at Dholera, the node often described as the corridor's largest. It is the piece that turns a surveyed site into a reachable one, and reachability, unglamorous as it is, is the precondition every other engine in this part quietly depends on.

Behind that reachable road sits the layer of built infrastructure the expressway connects to, and it is worth naming because it is real and it is finished, unlike so much else in this part. Inside the Activation Area the developer laid underground utilities before the plots were sold: power distribution, information-and-communication-technology and fibre ducts, piped natural gas, potable water with smart meters and leak detection, a recycled-water network, wastewater and effluent lines, and stormwater draining into a man-made canal roughly 6.5 kilometres long. A water treatment plant of around 50 million litres per day and reservoirs support the zone. The smart-city brain, the Integrated Command and Control Centre housed in the ABCD building in the Knowledge and Information Technology zone, was reported operational, coordinating water, power, lighting, surveillance, traffic, and environmental monitoring for the built area. Not all of the promotional claims about this layer are confirmed; a walkable common utility tunnel is promotional rather than officially verified, and district cooling and long-range desalination capacity are unknown or unbuilt. But the core trunk infrastructure of the Activation Area is a delivered fact, and the expressway is what connects that plug-and-play zone to the country. A

factory can be dropped onto a serviced plot with power, water, gas, and data already at the boundary, and its output can leave on a 120 kilometre-per-hour road. That combination, serviced land plus fast access, is the concrete meaning of the word engine in this chapter.

CHAPTER 19

The Runway

An airport is the engine that most clearly separates Dholera's ambition from its delivery, because an airport either accepts commercial flights or it does not, and Dholera's does not yet. It is also the engine where the temptation to declare victory early has been strongest. Opening dates for a Dholera airport have slipped repeatedly since around 2010, and the correct posture toward any stated date is to attach the word targeted to it and never to present an opening as achieved.

The airport is being built by a dedicated special-purpose vehicle, the Dholera International Airport Company Limited (DIACL), whose ownership splits three ways: the Airports Authority of India holds 51 percent, the Government of Gujarat 33 percent, and NICDC 16 percent. The Gujarat State Aviation Infrastructure Company is frequently cited as the eventual operator. The Phase-1 design is a single runway of 3,200 metres, rated Code 4E, which is the category that accommodates large wide-body aircraft. The site sits roughly 20 kilometres from the Dholera SIR and about 80 kilometres from Ahmedabad, positioning it as the corridor's aviation node rather than a replacement for Ahmedabad's existing airport.

Figure 21. The airport: runway usable, airport not yet open. Source: fact pack, section 3.

Figure 44. The airport component by component. Source: fact pack, section 3.

The three-way ownership is worth reading closely, because it tells you who is accountable for the airport and how it is likely to be run. The Airports Authority of India, the national body that operates most of India's public airports, holds the controlling 51 percent, which places the project inside the mainstream national airport system rather than treating it as a purely state or corridor venture. Gujarat's 33 percent and NICDC's 16 percent tie

it to the state and to the industrial-corridor programme respectively. The Gujarat State Aviation Infrastructure Company is frequently named as the eventual operator, and the presence of the national authority as majority owner is a stabilising feature: it means the airport's certification, air-traffic systems, and operating standards sit under an established national operator rather than a first-time entity.

The construction record is specific. Phase-1 civil works were contracted to Varaha Infrastructure at around Rs 636.45 crore, and the terminal engineering-procurement-construction package at around Rs 333 crore in January 2024. A total consolidated project cost is not reliably sourced and should not be manufactured to fill the gap. The most important recent event is also the most easily misread. On 4 June 2026 the first aircraft landed on the 3,200-metre runway, an Airports Authority of India calibration and trial landing by an aircraft registered VT-CNS, near Pipli village, greeted with the customary water-cannon salute. That landing proves the runway is physically usable. It does not mean the airport is open. Runway, taxiways, and the air traffic control tower were reported complete, while the passenger terminal stood at around 75 percent. Following a review by the Union Civil Aviation Minister, the airport was reported roughly 80 percent complete overall, with operations targeted for September to October 2026.

AN ASSEMBLY LINE THAT MAY FOLLOW THE RUNWAY

Beyond passenger operations, the airport has drawn an industrial proposition worth stating carefully because it is at the earliest possible stage. Embraer, the Brazilian aircraft maker, and the Adani group signed a memorandum of understanding exploring Dholera airport as the site of a Make in India civil-aircraft final-assembly line, targeted around 2028, with the site not finalised. This is an MoU, an exploration, not a committed factory, and it must be described that way. If it materialised it would give the airport a manufacturing dimension on top of its transport function, tying it into the same industrial logic that drives the fab and the data centres. But the honest present tense is narrow: a runway that has taken one calibration flight, a terminal three-quarters built, an overall project around 80 percent done, an opening targeted for late 2026, and an aircraft-assembly idea at the memorandum stage. The airport is close, and close is not open. The distinction is the entire discipline of reading Dholera accurately, and nowhere does it matter more than here, where a slipping date has been announced as imminent more than once across fifteen years.

THE HISTORY OF THE MOVING DATE

The airport deserves a short reckoning with its own past, because its credibility problem is not a matter of construction quality but of repeated premature announcement. A Dholera airport has been described as opening soon at various points since roughly 2010. An original target of December 2025 was missed. Reference sources subsequently listed December 2026. The

mid-2026 ministerial review produced the September-to-October 2026 target that stands as this book is written. A reader encountering any of these dates in isolation could be forgiven for thinking the airport was about to open, or should already have opened, and that impression is precisely the trap. The correct method is to treat each date as a target carrying the year and the source, and to weigh it against the physical evidence rather than the announcement. On that test the June 2026 calibration landing is the strongest evidence yet that the project is genuinely near completion, because a calibration flight cannot be faked or announced into existence; an aircraft either lands on a finished runway with working navigation aids or it does not, and one did. The runway, taxiways, and control tower being reported complete is consistent with that landing. The terminal at roughly 75 percent and the overall project at roughly 80 percent are consistent with an opening some months out rather than immediate. So the honest reading is more positive than at any earlier point in the airport's history and still short of open. Both things are true, and the discipline is to say the second even while acknowledging the first.

WHAT A CODE 4E RUNWAY SIGNALS

The 3,200-metre, Code 4E specification is worth dwelling on because it signals intent. Code 4E is the category for large wide-body aircraft, the class used on long-haul international and heavy cargo routes. A regional airstrip does not need 3,200 metres or a 4E rating. Building to that standard at Dholera indicates the airport is meant to function as a genuine international gateway and freight node for the corridor, not merely as a commuter field, and

it aligns with the SIR's ambitions in electronics and manufacturing, industries that move high-value, time-sensitive air cargo. Whether the traffic materialises to justify the specification is a separate question that only years of operation can answer, and nothing in the record answers it yet. But the built form states the ambition clearly, and the Embraer-Adani assembly memorandum, tentative as it is, points at the same industrial reading of the airport rather than a purely passenger one.

THE GATEWAY IN THE CORRIDOR'S LOGIC

The airport's real value is best understood alongside the two land engines that flank it. On its own, a Code 4E runway 80 kilometres from Ahmedabad and 20 kilometres from the SIR is an isolated asset. Wired into the corridor by the expressway and, from the end of the decade, by the semi-high-speed rail line, it becomes the aviation node of an integrated logistics system: goods and people can reach it fast by road today and by rail later, and high-value electronics output from the fab and its supply chain has an air-cargo gateway near the point of manufacture. This is the coherent version of the airport story, and it is a design intent supported by the alignment of the rail project, which is planned to touch the airport directly. The incoherent version, the one to avoid, is any claim that the airport is open, imminent as a certainty, or already serving passengers. It is a nearly complete facility that has taken one trial landing, and its opening remains a target. The gap between an 80-percent-complete airport and an operating one includes terminal fit-out, certification, airline agreements, and the ordinary friction that has moved this airport's date more than once. The

honest gateway is a gateway under construction, not yet in service, whose eventual value depends on the same corridor whose other engines are themselves mostly unfinished.

CHAPTER 20

The Rail

The rail engine is the newest of Dholera's major approvals and, in some ways, the one that most changes the shape of the finished city, because a semi-high-speed line does for mass movement what the expressway does for road traffic, and it does it on a scale and at a frequency that private vehicles cannot match. It is also a clean example of how to read a Dholera announcement, because the durable facts and the press embellishments are unusually easy to separate.

The durable core comes from a single authoritative source. On 13 May 2026 the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the Ahmedabad-Dholera semi-high-speed rail project, confirmed through Press Information Bureau release 2260624. The approved cost is approximately Rs 20,667 crore. The line is a double-line roughly 134 kilometres long, running from Sarkhej on the Ahmedabad side to the Dholera region, and it is described as India's first semi-high-speed rail built on indigenous technology. Its route is designed to connect Ahmedabad, the Dholera SIR, the Dholera airport, and the Lothal National Heritage site in one corridor, and the government material notes it enhances connectivity to around 284 villages with a population near five lakh. The project sits under the PM Gati Shakti framework, and completion is targeted at up to 2030-31.

Figure 22. The approved rail link and what it connects. Source: PIB 2260624, via fact pack.

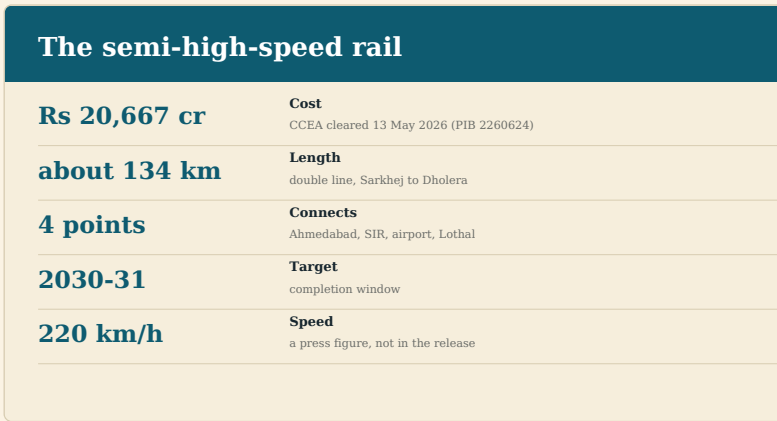


Figure 46. India's first semi-high-speed line, by the numbers. Source: PIB 2260624, via fact pack.

Now the part that requires care. The figures most often repeated in coverage of this line, a top speed of 220 kilometres per hour and a journey time of roughly 45 to 48 minutes, are press figures. The official Press Information Bureau release states the cost, the length, and the timeline; it does not state a speed. So the 220 kilometre-per-hour headline and the sub-hour journey

should both be labelled as reported rather than presented as confirmed specifications. This is not a trivial distinction. A semi-high-speed designation is compatible with a range of operating speeds, and the difference between a marketed peak speed and a scheduled service speed is exactly the kind of gap that separates a brochure from a timetable. The approval, the money, the alignment, and the target year are solid. The speed and the exact journey time are claims awaiting a primary specification.

WHERE THE RAIL FITS

The value of the line is that it stitches the corridor's nodes into a single spine. An expressway moves cars and trucks. An airport moves long-distance passengers and, potentially, freight and manufacturing. A double-line semi-high-speed railway moves the daily volume of people that a working industrial city of the intended scale actually generates: workers commuting to the fab and its ancillaries, business travellers moving between Ahmedabad and the SIR, and visitors to Lothal's heritage complex. It also connects the airport to Ahmedabad directly, which matters because an airport 80 kilometres from the region's main city needs a fast fixed-rail link to be more than a remote airstrip. Two older rail propositions sit in the background and should not be confused with this one: a Bhimnath-Dholera freight line proposed under the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor around 2013 and long pending, with its board approval dated 21 September 2021 but no current construction timeline, and an Ahmedabad-DSIR mass-transit scheme reported approved around January 2021 whose status is now unclear and likely overtaken by the 2026 semi-high-

speed approval. The line that carries the corridor's future is the one the Cabinet cleared in May 2026, and its target of 2030-31 places it firmly in the category of approved-but-unbuilt.

REACH BEYOND THE SIR

One under-appreciated feature of the rail approval is how far its benefit is designed to spread beyond the industrial zone itself. The official material frames the line as enhancing connectivity to roughly 284 villages with a combined population near five lakh, which reframes the project from a dedicated industrial shuttle into a piece of regional public infrastructure. That framing matters for how the line should be judged. A purely industrial connector succeeds or fails with the fab and the data centres. A regional line that also serves hundreds of villages and links a major heritage site at Lothal has a broader base of use and a broader base of justification, and it fits the PM Gati Shakti logic of integrating industrial, passenger, and regional movement on shared corridors rather than building single-purpose links. The inclusion of Lothal is not incidental either. Lothal, the Harappan dockyard site excavated in the 1950s and commonly cited around 36 kilometres from Dholera, is being developed as a national heritage complex, and a fast rail link between Ahmedabad, the SIR, the airport, and Lothal knits tourism, industry, and aviation into one alignment. The line's indigenous-technology billing, described as India's first semi-high-speed rail on domestic technology, is a claim worth noting as reported rather

than independently verified, but the alignment and its multi-purpose reach are in the approved project description.

THE GAP BETWEEN APPROVAL AND STEEL

The sober counterweight to all of this is that the rail line, unlike the expressway, is not built. A Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs clearance and a sanctioned cost of roughly Rs 20,667 crore are real and significant milestones, but they are the beginning of a construction programme targeted to run to 2030-31, not the end of one. Dholera's own history counsels patience here: the Bhimnath-Dholera freight line was approved at board level in September 2021 and still has no construction timeline, a reminder that approval and steel on the ground are separated at Dholera by years and sometimes by silence. The semi-high-speed line has stronger backing, a clearer cost, and a national framework behind it, so it is reasonable to treat it as more likely to proceed than the older freight proposal. But until earthworks begin and progress can be measured, it belongs firmly in the approved-and-funded column and not in the built one, and its most-quoted specifications, the speed and the journey time, remain press figures awaiting an official specification.

WHY RAIL CHANGES THE CEILING

The deeper significance of the rail approval is that it raises the ceiling on what Dholera can become. Roads and airports move people and goods, but the daily mass movement that lets an industrial city of hundreds of thousands of workers actually function, the ordinary

commute repeated tens of thousands of times a day, is carried most efficiently by rail. Without a high-capacity fixed line, a city of the intended Dholera scale would be capped by road congestion and by the practical limits of bus and car commuting across 100-plus kilometres. A double-line semi-high-speed railway lifts that cap. It is the difference between a large industrial estate that people drive to and a metropolitan-scale city that people live in and move through on a schedule. This is why the rail line, despite being the least physically advanced of the corridor's movement engines, may be the most consequential for the SIR's final form. It is also why its 2030-31 target is so load-bearing: the fab and the early industry can run on the expressway, but the population the master plan ultimately envisions, on the order of a million residents at full build-out, is a rail-dependent city rather than a road-dependent one. The approval is a statement that the state intends to build toward that larger ceiling. The construction, still ahead, is where the intent will be tested against the ground.

CHAPTER 21

The Sun

Dholera's power engine is a solar park that is genuinely operational, genuinely large in ambition, and genuinely much smaller today than the headline number suggests. All three of those things are true simultaneously, and the honest telling holds them together rather than choosing the flattering one.

The Dholera Ultra-Mega Solar Power Park carries an ultimate announced target of 5,000 megawatts, five gigawatts, by around 2030. That figure is a target, not installed capacity, and it is the number most likely to be misquoted as if the park already generated it. The official position, drawn from the Central Electricity Authority's quarterly report as of September 2025, is more grounded and more useful. Phase-I of the park is sanctioned at 1,000 megawatts, with Gujarat Power Corporation Limited as the implementing agency. Of that, roughly 300 megawatts had been commissioned, with a further 700 megawatts under development targeted for March 2027, awarded across Tata Power, Vena, ReNew, SJVN, and TEQ Green, and delayed in part by tariff and regulatory disputes before the Gujarat Electricity Regulatory Commission.

A solar photovoltaic array, illustrative of the ground-mounted solar that anchors the Dholera Ultra-Mega Solar Park. Illustrative image. Photo: Sarvajanik Puralekh, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 23. Reading the solar numbers honestly. Source: CEA Sept 2025; Tata Power.

The most concrete piece of the operational capacity is Tata Power's contribution. Tata Power commissioned a 300 megawatt plant at Dholera built from 873,012 monocrystalline modules across 1,320 acres, using what the company describes as India's largest single-axis solar tracker. Whether this 300 megawatts is exactly the same

300 megawatts the Central Electricity Authority counts as commissioned is not cleanly reconcilable from the public record, and that ambiguity should be flagged rather than smoothed over. The bottom line is a three-tier figure that should always be quoted together: roughly 300 megawatts operational, 1,000 megawatts sanctioned as Phase-I, and 5,000 megawatts as the long-range target. Quoting any one of those three without the other two produces a distorted picture, and the distortion usually runs in the optimistic direction.

The park's history helps explain the gap between the target and the delivery. It was approved around April 2018, which means that after roughly seven years the operational figure had reached about 300 megawatts, or around 6 percent of the ultimate 5,000 megawatt target. That pace is not a scandal; ultra-mega solar parks are multi-year, multi-developer undertakings, and the 700 megawatts under development toward a March 2027 milestone would, if delivered on schedule, roughly quadruple the operational figure and complete Phase-I. But the pace is a corrective to any impression that five gigawatts is imminent. The delays on the 700 megawatts have specific, documented causes in tariff and regulatory disputes before the Gujarat Electricity Regulatory Commission, which is the ordinary friction of Indian renewable procurement rather than a Dholera-specific failure. The park is a working asset expanding at the real-world speed of large solar procurement, and its target is a destination a decade out, not a description of today.

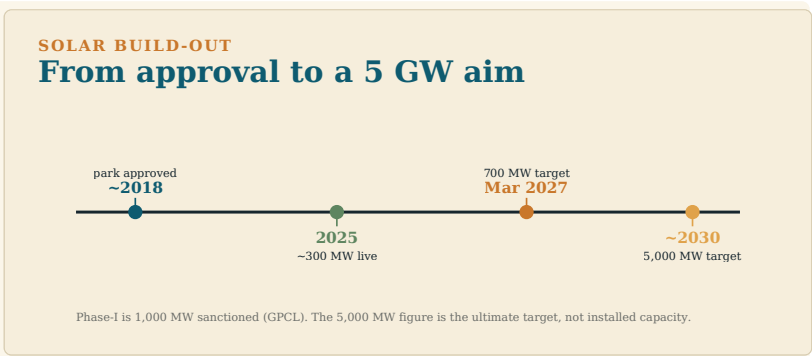


Figure 45. The solar park on a timeline. Source: CEA Sept 2025; Tata Power.

The roster of developers behind Phase-I is itself a signal worth reading. The 700 megawatts under development toward March 2027 was awarded across Tata Power, Vena, ReNew, SJVN, and TEQ Green, a mix of a large private conglomerate arm, a central public-sector undertaking in SJVN, and established renewable independents. That spread of credible, well-capitalised developers is a stronger indicator of the park's seriousness than any single headline capacity number, because these are firms with track records in delivering utility-scale solar rather than speculative entrants. The implementing agency, Gujarat Power Corporation Limited, is a state body, which keeps the park inside public accountability rather than a purely private venture. The single largest visible piece, Tata Power's commissioned 300 megawatt plant, is described in unusually concrete physical terms: 873,012 monocrystalline modules across 1,320 acres on what the company calls India's largest single-axis solar tracker. Those specifics are the kind of detail that distinguishes a built asset from an announced one, and they are the strongest evidence that Dholera's

operational solar is real hardware in a field rather than a line in a policy document. The unresolved question, flagged rather than hidden, is whether Tata Power's 300 megawatts is precisely the same 300 megawatts the Central Electricity Authority counts as commissioned or an overlapping but not identical figure. The public record does not cleanly reconcile the two, and an honest account leaves that seam visible instead of stitching it shut with a guess.

THE BACKBONE THAT TIES THE ENGINES TOGETHER

The solar park is not a standalone asset. It is the energy tier of the same multimodal-and-power backbone that the road and the rail form for movement, and its significance grows precisely because of what the other engines demand. A semiconductor fab is an enormous and uninterruptible power consumer. A data-centre cluster, the subject of the next chapter, is larger still and comes with a policy mandate to source at least 51 percent of its electricity from green energy. The solar park is the reason that mandate is even plausible at Dholera, and the adjacency of a five-gigawatt-target solar park to a semiconductor fab and a planned data-centre hub is the physical basis of the city's digital-industrial cluster claim.

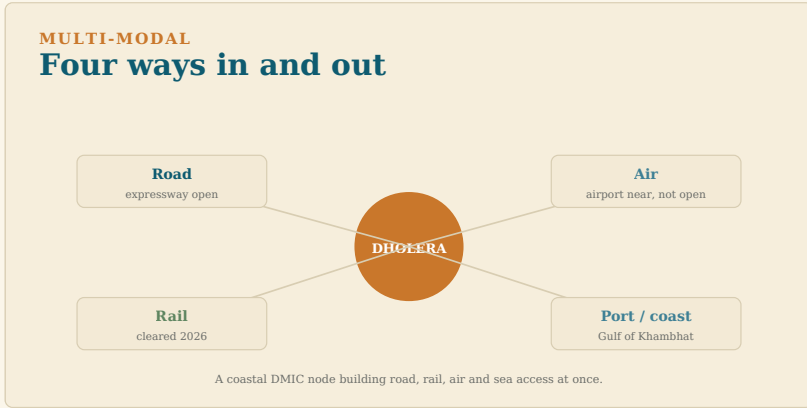


Figure 24. The multi-modal connectivity Dholera is built around. Source: fact pack, sectors.

The energy tier also has a symbolic weight the others lack. A greenfield industrial city built next to a five-gigawatt-target solar park can credibly describe itself as a low-carbon manufacturing destination, and in a decade when semiconductor and data-centre customers increasingly demand green power in their supply chains, that adjacency is a commercial asset and not merely an environmental one. The solar park is the reason the data-centre policy's 51 percent green-power mandate is discussed at Dholera as achievable rather than aspirational, even though, as the arithmetic below shows, achievability at full scale is far from settled. It is also the clearest example in the whole SIR of an engine that is genuinely operational rather than approved or announced. Electrons are flowing from Dholera solar into the grid today. That cannot be said of the fab's chips, the airport's flights, the rail line's trains, or the data centres' servers. Among the six engines, the road and the sun are

the two that actually work now, and of those two the sun is the one that scales toward the city's defining industrial demand.

That said, the honest arithmetic is unforgiving and belongs in the same breath. The 300 megawatts operational today is a fraction of what a mature fab-plus-data-centre load would draw, and the gap between current on-site generation and the multi-gigawatt demand implied by the data-centre policy has to be closed by large new renewable build-out and grid capacity, not by the solar park alone. The connectivity and energy backbone, the expressway that carries goods, the rail line that will carry people, the airport that will carry both over distance, and the solar park that will carry the electrons, is coherent as a design. As a delivered system it is partial: one tier finished, one tier operational at a fraction of target, one tier approved, one tier nearly built. The coherence is real and so is the incompleteness, and the city is best understood as the live assembly of these tiers rather than as any single one of them.

CHAPTER 22

The New Frontier

The last engine is the youngest, and it is the one where the distance between announcement and asset is widest, which makes it the sternest test of honest reading in the entire book. Dholera's data-centre and artificial-intelligence story is real, it rests on a genuine policy and at least one confirmed agreement, and it is surrounded by some of the largest and least substantiated rupee figures attached to the SIR. Both facts have to be held at once.

The anchor of the sector is policy. The Viksit Gujarat Data Centre Policy 2026-29 was launched on 9 July 2026 as Gujarat's first dedicated data-centre policy, and it names Dholera as the state's primary location for the sector. The policy targets over Rs 6 lakh crore of investment and 7.5 gigawatts of data-centre capacity, classifies data centres as an essential service, and mandates that they source at least 51 percent of their electricity from green energy. Every one of those numbers is a state-wide target, not Dholera-committed capital, and the framing rule is strict: the Rs 6 lakh crore and the 7.5 gigawatts describe an ambition for Gujarat, not money deployed at Dholera. The Deputy Chief Minister's description of Dholera aiming to become the world's largest data-centre city is an aspiration and should be labelled as one.

Figure 25. The data-centre layer: one real anchor, big targets, one flag. Source: fact pack; newsonair.gov.in.

Figure 48. The real constraints on the data-centre dream. Source: sector data-centre file.

What is actually signed is narrower and more credible. The clearest real anchor is the L&T-Vyoma AI data centre at Dholera, whose agreement is confirmed through a government source, News on Air, dated 20 February 2026. Its reported size is around 250 megawatts and roughly Rs 25,000 crore, with an operational target of around 2028, though those size and cost figures are press-tier rather than government-confirmed and the money is an MoU

amount, not deployed capital. Beyond it the figures degrade quickly in reliability and must be flagged hard. A Tillman Global claim of around Rs 83,000 crore at Dholera is single-sourced and most likely conflated: Tillman's traceable India data-centre project is around Rs 15,000 crore and located in Andhra Pradesh, not Dholera, so the Rs 83,000 crore figure should never be headlined. A Tsingshan Holding Group steel-and-EV-battery plant of around Rs 21,000 crore is reported but not confirmed. An AdaniConneX data-centre hub of reportedly around Rs 3 lakh crore and up to 7.5 gigawatts is an announcement, not built capital, and its 7.5 gigawatt figure notably mirrors the entire state policy target, which is itself a reason for caution.

THE CONSTRAINTS THAT DECIDE THE STORY

The data-centre case cannot be told honestly without leading, not trailing, with its two physical constraints. The first is water. Data centres need large volumes of cooling water, and the policy pushes captive desalination so they do not draw down local freshwater. Current Dholera desalination capacity is around 20 million litres per day, enough only for the existing Activation Area. On 9 July 2026, the same day the policy launched, DICDL issued a tender to appoint consultants for a much larger 200 million-litre-per-day seawater desalination plant. That is a real and concrete step, but it is at the consultant-appointment stage, not built, and officials have admitted the final SIR-wide water requirement is still unknown. The pace of desalination build-out has been described as a decisive factor in whether the 7.5 gigawatt target is

achievable at all. The coastal Gulf of Khambhat location is a genuine advantage for seawater cooling, but there is no basis for any unlimited-water claim.

The second constraint is power, and it loops back to the solar park. A 7.5 gigawatt data-centre load is vastly larger than the roughly 300 megawatts of solar operational at Dholera today. The green-power mandate that makes Dholera attractive is also the mandate that exposes the gap: meeting it at scale requires new renewable generation and grid capacity far beyond what exists, and the solar park's five-gigawatt target is itself years and thousands of megawatts away from delivery. The honest shape of this frontier, then, is a days-old policy, one confirmed agreement, a set of large and mostly unbuilt announcements, a small existing water capacity with a much larger plant only tendered, and a green-power promise that current generation cannot yet keep. The plug-and-play trunk infrastructure of the Activation Area is real, the coastal siting is a real advantage, and the co-location of a semiconductor fab, a solar park, and a data-centre cluster is a coherent digital-industrial story with sourced components. But the capital is mostly announced, the water and power are mostly future, and the execution track record for data centres at Dholera is measured in months. This is the newest engine, and it is running on the least fuel that has actually been delivered. That is not a reason to dismiss it. It is the reason to read every figure attached to it with the label it has earned, and to wait for the foundations that the fab, the road, and the runway have already taught this city to demand before belief.

THE VERY LARGE NUMBERS, HANDLED WITH CARE

No sector attached to Dholera attracts larger rupee figures than data centres, and none demands more scepticism per rupee. Several are worth naming precisely so that a reader who encounters them elsewhere knows how to weigh them. A Reliance Industries memorandum with the Gujarat government for renewable energy and green hydrogen has been reported at figures as large as around Rs 5.95 lakh crore across the state, spanning Dholera, Kutch, and Banaskantha, with a 100 gigawatt ambition. That is a state-spanning memorandum, not Dholera-committed capital, and its Dholera share is undefined. The AdaniConneX data-centre figure of reportedly around Rs 3 lakh crore and up to 7.5 gigawatts, already noted, echoes the state policy target so closely that it reads more like the policy's ambition restated than an independent commitment. A Jabil memorandum for silicon-photonics and high-technology manufacturing has been reported at around Rs 1,000 crore. Each of these is an announcement or a memorandum, and the discipline is identical in every case: state the reported figure, attach the word announced or memorandum and the date, and never let it migrate into the column of delivered investment. The retired broker headline of around Rs 2.5 lakh crore committed to Dholera belongs to no verifiable ledger and should not be used at all. When a genuine government ledger does exist, it is far smaller and far more specific than any of these: the NICDC delivery-monitoring report of mid-2026 records government-approved activation-area infrastructure packages of around Rs 2,784.83 crore with

matching equity released, land transferred to the developer, and a named set of allotted plots. That is what deployed, government-tracked money at Dholera actually looks like, and the distance between that figure and the lakh-crore announcements is the single most important thing a reader of Dholera's data-centre coverage can internalise.

THE CLUSTER THESIS, STATED HONESTLY

The reason the data-centre chapter belongs at the end of this part is that it is where all the other engines are supposed to converge. The thesis is a digital-industrial cluster: a semiconductor fab making the chips, a solar park supplying the green power, an expressway and a rail line and an airport moving the people and goods, desalinated seawater cooling the servers, and a data-centre and artificial-intelligence campus consuming the compute at the centre of it. As a design that thesis is coherent, and every one of its components is sourced rather than invented. As a delivered reality it is early. The fab has made no chip. The airport is not open. The rail line is approved and unbuilt. The solar park generates a fraction of what the cluster would need. The desalination plant that would cool the data centres is at the consultant-appointment stage. The single confirmed data-centre agreement, L&T-Vyoma, targets operation around 2028. The cluster is a real plan assembled from real parts, most of which are unfinished, and the correct posture toward it is neither the promoter's certainty nor the cynic's dismissal. It is patience. The parts that have been finished, the road and the operating solar capacity, were finished on roughly the timeline that large infrastructure

follows, and they are genuinely in service. The parts that remain announcements should be believed when they become foundations, and not before. That is the whole discipline of this part, and the new frontier is simply the place where the discipline is hardest to keep and most necessary.

PART VI

The Economy

> *Follow the money and the jobs, and keep the announcements apart from the anchors.*

Dholera was drawn on paper as an industrial city before it was anything on the ground. Its economy, therefore, exists in two registers at once. There is the economy that has been built or is visibly being built, a small and concrete set of facts. And there is the economy that has been planned, invited, promised, and forecast, a much larger set of intentions with varying degrees of firmness behind them. A neutral account of the Dholera economy has to keep these two registers apart at every step, because the promotional literature around the region routinely blends them, presenting a target as an achievement and an announcement as a delivery. The four chapters that follow describe the sectors the region is designed to host, the companies actually investing versus those that have merely announced intent, the employment the project is

forecast to create, and the public schemes and money standing behind it. Wherever a number appears, its status is stated: built, sanctioned, announced, or targeted.

CHAPTER 23

The Sectors Dholera Is Built For

THE OFFICIAL SECTOR LIST

The Dholera Industrial City Development Limited (DICDL), the special-purpose vehicle building the city, publishes a list of the industrial sectors the Special Investment Region is planned to accommodate. That list is the correct starting point, because it defines the intended shape of the economy without claiming that any of it yet exists. The named sectors are Defence, Aviation, Electronics and Semiconductors, High-Tech and Emerging industries, Pharmaceuticals and Biotechnology, Heavy Engineering, Automobiles and Auto Ancillary, General Manufacturing, Agro and Food Processing, and Metals. Alongside these manufacturing categories sits renewable energy, chiefly solar, which functions both as an industry in its own right and as the power base for the rest.

Figure 26. The industries the master plan invites. Source: DICDL sector list; sector file.

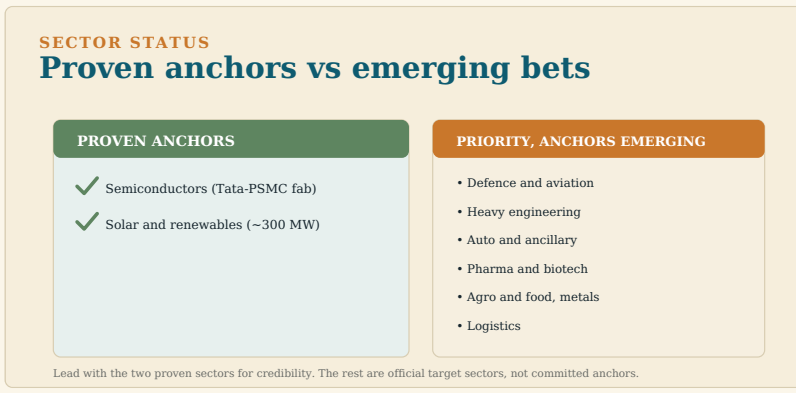


Figure 51. Which sectors are real today. Source: DICDL sector list; anchor-investors file.

This is a wide net. It spans light electronics assembly at one end and heavy metals and defence engineering at the other, and it reflects an ambition to make Dholera a

general-purpose manufacturing city rather than a single-industry town. The breadth is deliberate. A greenfield Special Investment Region of roughly 920 square kilometres of planning envelope, with about 422 square kilometres judged urban-developable and around 11,000 hectares zoned for industry, needs a large menu of possible tenants to fill its plots over a thirty-year horizon. But breadth on a zoning map is not the same as breadth in the ground. Of the ten-plus sectors named, only two have a proven anchor tenant that has committed capital and begun building. The rest are, in the authority's own framing, priority or target sectors: invited opportunity zones with infrastructure advantages, not yet places where a named company has broken ground. An honest sector portrait keeps that distinction in the foreground.

THE TWO PROVEN SECTORS

Semiconductors and electronics is the flagship, and it is flagship because of a single project. Tata Electronics, in partnership with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC), is building India's first major commercial semiconductor fabrication plant at Dholera, a Rs 91,000 crore investment for a 300mm fab with a planned capacity of up to 50,000 wafers per month at mature nodes between 28 and 110 nanometres. This project, approved by the Union Cabinet in February 2024 under the India Semiconductor Mission, is what turns the electronics line on the DICDL list from an aspiration into a live anchor. A fab of this scale is a magnet for an ancillary ecosystem of packaging, specialty materials, gases, and component suppliers, which is the mechanism by which one anchor is expected to seed a wider cluster. Chapter

24 treats the fab in full. The point here is narrower: the electronics sector is proven because one large, well-sourced, under-construction commitment sits inside it.

Solar and renewable energy is the second proven sector. Tata Power has commissioned a roughly 300 MW solar plant at Dholera, using what the company describes as India's largest single-axis solar tracker, and this plant is operational rather than announced. It sits within the larger Dholera solar park, whose Phase-I capacity of 1,000 MW is sanctioned to Gujarat Power Corporation Limited, with about 700 MW beyond the commissioned block still under development and targeted for March 2027, awarded across developers including ReNew, SJVN, Vena, and TEQ Green. The ultimate announced figure for the park is 5,000 MW, or 5 GW, by around 2030, but that is a target and not installed capacity, and it should never be quoted as if the park already generates at that level. What is durable is the operational 300 MW and the sanctioned 1,000 MW Phase-I. Solar therefore doubles as an industry and as the clean-power supply for the manufacturing base, which is part of the region's pitch to power-hungry tenants such as data centres and fabs.

THE TARGET SECTORS, NAMED HONESTLY

Everything else on the list is intent. Defence, aviation, and heavy engineering are grouped by the authority as priority sectors suited to the large contiguous land parcels and the international airport under construction nearby. The logic is real. Aviation manufacturing wants runway access, defence and heavy engineering want big flat plots and power, and Dholera can offer both on paper. But no committed, reliably sourced anchor has been

named in these categories, so they are correctly described as planned opportunity rather than active industry. The much-discussed Embraer and Adani memorandum of understanding to explore a civil-aircraft final-assembly line at the Dholera airport, targeted for around 2028, belongs to the announced-and-exploratory tier and not to the built one; its site was not finalised at the time of writing.

Automobiles and auto ancillary, general manufacturing, and metals are likewise target sectors, positioned to draw on Gujarat's existing manufacturing depth, the plug-and-play serviced plots, and competitive power tariffs. They are invited opportunity zones. Named investors in these categories should be confirmed against a primary source before being listed as committed, because industry momentum lists tend to fold in interest and intent as though they were signed. Pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, and agro and food processing, complete the set. Gujarat has genuine strength in pharma, and the SIR's clean, planned zoning is a plausible fit, but here too the anchors are not yet reliably sourced and the correct label is opportunity, not delivery.

A SECTOR THAT ARRIVED AFTER THE PLAN

One category has grown into a first-class Dholera sector without appearing prominently on the original DICDL manufacturing list: data centres. The shift followed the Viksit Gujarat Data Centre Policy 2026-29, which sets a state-wide target of Rs 6 lakh crore of investment and 7.5 GW of capacity with Dholera named as the primary location. That headline is a state-wide target and not Dholera-committed capital, and it must be read as such.

The proven-anchor tier in this sector is thinner: an L&T (Vyoma) AI-ready green data-centre campus at Dholera, with an agreement reported as firm, at a scale of around 250 MW and roughly Rs 25,000 crore, with an operational target near 2028. Larger figures circulate, including a Tillman Global hyperscale plan cited at around Rs 83,000 crore, but that number is single-sourced and appears likely conflated with a smaller traceable project elsewhere, so it should not headline. Data centres also carry an honest constraint the manufacturing sectors do not foreground, namely water for cooling, which the region's current supply does not obviously meet and which a desalination tender floated in mid-2026 was meant to address. The sector belongs on the list now, but with its anchor tier kept small and its target tier clearly flagged.

THE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT UNDERWRITES THE SECTORS

A sector menu is only credible if the region can physically serve the industries on it, and this is where Dholera's economic case rests less on any single tenant and more on connectivity and utilities. Logistics and trade function almost as a sector in their own right at Dholera, because the region is positioned as the flagship node of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and is meant to move goods by several modes at once. The 109 km Ahmedabad-Dholera Expressway, a four-lane greenfield access-controlled road expandable to eight, was reported inaugurated in March 2026 and cuts the drive from Ahmedabad to somewhere between about 40 minutes and an hour depending on the source. The Dholera

International Airport, roughly 20 km from the SIR, was reported around 80 percent complete in mid-2026 with a first calibration landing on its 3,200 metre runway on 4 June 2026, though it was not yet open and its opening date has slipped repeatedly over the years and should never be stated as achieved. The Ahmedabad-Dholera semi-high-speed rail line received central approval in May 2026 at a cost of about Rs 20,667 crore for roughly 134 km, with completion targeted around 2030-31. Together these give the manufacturing sectors a multimodal position, road open, airport near, rail cleared, on the Gulf of Khambhat coast, which is a genuine advantage even before a single new factory tenant signs.

Utilities matter as much as transport for the industries on the list. The activation area has been built with underground power, information-and-communication ducts, piped natural gas, potable and recycled water networks, and a water-treatment plant of around 50 million litres per day, all managed through an Integrated Command and Control Centre in the ABCD building. For a fab, a data centre, or a specialty-gas plant, this plug-and-play servicing is the difference between a plot and a viable site. Land itself is part of the offer: roughly 11,000 hectares are zoned industrial, with Phase-1 industrial gross area around 3,000 hectares and parcels ranging from half a hectare to 150 hectares, sized for everything from an ancillary supplier to a heavy-engineering campus. The honest qualifier is that a large share of the wider region falls in the Coastal Regulation Zone and that low-lying tidal land makes drainage a real planning constraint, so not every hectare on the map is equally buildable. Still, the infrastructure spine is the reason the target sectors

are described as opportunities rather than fantasies. The region can serve industry; the open question is which industries come.

The composite picture is a wide zoning menu with a narrow proven core. Two sectors, semiconductors and solar, carry real anchors. A third, data centres, has one firm agreement and a large policy target behind it. The remaining sectors are genuine planning priorities backed by infrastructure and land, but they are opportunities the region hopes to fill, not industries it already hosts. That is the accurate shape of the Dholera economy by sector, and it is the shape the next chapter fills in with the specific companies.

CHAPTER 24

Who Is Investing

THE DURABLE ANCHORS

The single most important fact about Dholera's investor base is that a small number of commitments are real and building, and a much larger number are announcements. Sorting the two is the whole task of this chapter. The durable tier, meaning capital that is confirmed by government or company sources and either built or under construction, is short and it is led by one project.

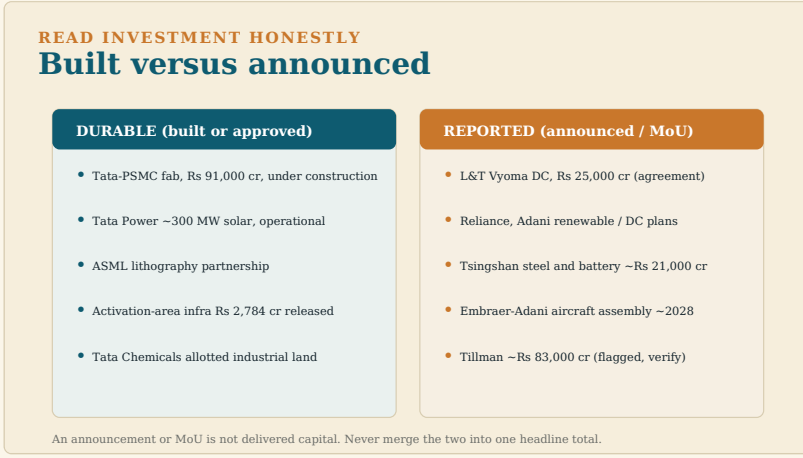


Figure 28. Anchors versus announcements. Source: anchor-investors file; fact pack.

Figure 53. Why the big cumulative numbers mislead. Source: anchor-investors file.

The Tata Electronics and PSMC semiconductor fab is the anchor of anchors. The entity is Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Private Limited, the investment is Rs 91,000 crore (the PIB Fiscal Support Agreement cites Rs 91,526 crore), and the plant is a 300mm fab targeting up to 50,000 wafers per month at mature and specialty nodes from 28 to 110 nanometres, making products such as power-management integrated circuits, display drivers, microcontrollers, and high-performance-computing logic. Union Cabinet approval came on 29 February 2024 under the India Semiconductor Mission, which covers 50 percent of eligible project cost, and the Fiscal Support Agreement was signed on 5 March 2025. Ground-breaking was in March 2024, and by the middle of 2026 civil construction was reported past the halfway mark, with cleanroom installation and equipment calibration underway. A lithography partnership with ASML of the Netherlands, initially a reported memorandum in May 2026, was subsequently reflected on Tata Electronics' own press page, moving it from rumour to confirmed partnership. On timeline, honesty matters: a Tata

Electronics spokesperson indicated the plan was always to start at mature 90nm and 55nm nodes before 28nm, first silicon or trial production is targeted around December 2026, and commercial production has reportedly been pushed to mid-2028. No source confirms a chip has been produced. The correct present-tense description is a large fab under construction with a first-silicon target, not an operating plant.

The other durable entries are in power. Tata Power's roughly 300 MW solar plant at Dholera is operational, and it is the clearest example in the whole story of announced capacity that actually generates. The renewable EPC players awarded Phase-I solar park capacity, including ReNew, SJVN, Vena, and TEQ Green under Gujarat Power Corporation Limited, are building against a 700 MW under-development block targeted for March 2027; they are firm awards rather than mere interest, though not yet fully commissioned. ASML, through its lithography partnership with the fab, rounds out the durable tier as a world-tier equipment maker genuinely engaged with Dholera. That is the honest extent of what is built or building: a fab, an operational solar plant, awarded solar EPC, and a confirmed equipment partnership.

HOW ONE ANCHOR IS MEANT TO BUILD A CLUSTER

The strategic logic behind the whole investor case is that a single large fab does not stay single. Semiconductor manufacturing runs on a deep supply chain of ultra-high-purity gases, chemicals, wafers, photomasks, packaging, testing, and precision equipment, and fabs the world over pull that chain physically close to the plant because the

materials are fragile, time-sensitive, or hazardous to ship far. Dholera's bet is that the Tata-PSMC fab will act as a gravitational centre, drawing an ancillary ecosystem into the surrounding industrial plots and turning one anchor into a cluster. Some of the announced tier reads exactly this way. INOX Air Products' reported specialty-gas hub and air-separation unit is explicitly framed to supply ultra-high-purity gases to the fabs and to solar-cell production, which is the ancillary pattern in action. Jabil's reported silicon-photonics interest and the ASML lithography partnership sit in the same orbit, upstream and downstream of the anchor rather than unrelated to it.

Whether the cluster materialises is the central economic question hanging over Dholera, and it cannot yet be answered from the record. Clustering is a plausible mechanism with strong precedent in Taiwan, Korea, and the United States, but it is a forecast here, not an observation, and it depends on the anchor actually reaching production. A fab that reaches commercial output around mid-2028 would give suppliers a reason to commit; a fab that slips further would leave the ancillary announcements without a pull. The honest position is that the ingredients of a cluster are visible in the announced tier, the mechanism is real, and the outcome is unproven. Presenting the ancillary announcements as a delivered ecosystem would repeat exactly the error this chapter is built to avoid.

THE ANCHOR THAT ALREADY SHIPS PLOTS, AND THE ONE THAT COLLAPSED

Two footnotes to the durable tier are worth stating because they are frequently misread. The first is Tata Chemicals, named in the NICDC Delivery Monitoring Unit report as the industrial anchor against the 545 acres allotted in Dholera, of which 476 acres are industrial. This is a different Tata entity from Tata Electronics, and it is a reminder that the group's footprint at Dholera spans more than the fab. The point is not the size of any one Tata Chemicals commitment, which the record does not quantify in headline terms, but that the greenest public ledger names a specific industrial allottee against specific allotted acreage, which is a firmer kind of fact than a memorandum.

The second footnote is the project that is not there. From 2022, the dominant Dholera semiconductor story was a Vedanta and Foxconn joint venture, widely cited at around 19.5 billion US dollars, signed as a memorandum with Gujarat in September 2022. That figure was a project value that never built anything, and Foxconn withdrew in July 2023, ending the venture. A restructured solo Vedanta Dholera fab has since been reported at around Rs 1.54 lakh crore for a 40nm process with a first chip around 2027, but this is an announced and restructured claim, not a confirmed build, and it should never be presented alongside the Tata-PSMC fab as an equal. The bankable, ground-breaking fab is Tata plus PSMC. The Vedanta-Foxconn history matters mainly as a caution: a very large announced number attached to Dholera can

evaporate entirely, which is exactly why the durable-versus-announced split is the organising principle of this chapter.

THE REPORTED AND ANNOUNCED TIER

Around this small durable core sits a much larger cloud of announcements, memoranda of understanding, and industry-list mentions. These are not fictional, but they are not delivered capital either, and each should be stated with its announced figure, its date, and the word announced or MoU attached.

The largest names appear here. Reliance Industries is reported to have signed a memorandum with the Gujarat government for a large renewable-energy and green-hydrogen plan spread across the state including Dholera, Kutch, and Banaskantha, with figures as high as Rs 5.95 lakh crore and a 100 GW ambition; this is a state-wide MoU and not a Dholera-specific build. Adani, through AdaniConneX, is reported to have announced an AI-ready data-centre hub at Dholera of up to 7.5 GW and figures near Rs 3 lakh crore, again at announcement stage. Jabil is reported to have signed an MoU for silicon-photonics and high-tech manufacturing at around Rs 1,000 crore. INOX Air Products is reported to be planning an electronic-specialty-gas hub and air-separation unit of around Rs 500 crore to supply ultra-high-purity gases to the fabs and to solar-cell production, a claim that is relatively specific, with a cold-box structure reported erected. L&T's Vyoma data-centre campus of roughly 250 MW and Rs 25,000 crore has the firmest footing of the announced set. Tsingshan Holding Group is reported to be planning a steel and EV-battery plant at around Rs 21,000

crore. The Embraer and Adani aircraft-assembly exploration sits here too, at MoU stage and targeted around 2028.

Two additional semiconductor units cleared by the Union Cabinet on 5 May 2026, one at Dholera and one at Surat, together worth more than Rs 3,900 crore and more than 2,200 jobs, belong to a firmer sub-tier than the loose MoUs but must be kept entirely separate from the Rs 91,000 crore fab; they are not part of that project and combining the figures would misstate the fab's scale. A longer list of names appears in industry momentum coverage, including Tillman Global, NextGen Semiconductors, Grew Energy, Mahindra Lifespaces, and Torrent, and these should be treated as momentum only until a primary source confirms them. Two corrections recur often enough to state plainly: Micron's fab is at Sanand, not Dholera, and the Vedanta-Foxconn project that dominated 2022 headlines collapsed in July 2023 when Foxconn withdrew, so it is history and not an active Dholera investment.

READING THE INVESTMENT FIGURES WITHOUT INVENTING A TOTAL

Figure 29. The confidence labels behind every figure. Source: fact pack, investment section.

Because the announcements are so large and so numerous, there is a strong temptation to add them into a single grand Dholera investment total. That temptation should be resisted, because no reliable SIR-wide total exists and any figure presented as one is invented. The honest approach is a tiered ladder of confidence. At the top, the greenest primary tier, is the NICDC Delivery Monitoring Unit report dated 30 June 2026, filed to DPIIT: Government-approved activation-area infrastructure packages of Rs 2,784.83 crore across five packages, matched by an equal Rs 2,784.83 crore of equity released, with 48.31 square kilometres transferred to DICDL, 14 plots covering 545 acres allotted (476 of them industrial), Tata Chemicals named as the industrial anchor, and environmental clearance dated 19 September 2014. These are the most solid money figures in the entire record.

The anchor-project tier is the Tata-PSMC fab at Rs 91,000 crore, the only large single commitment that is both well-sourced and building. Below that is a grounded cumulative headline that must be phrased carefully: over Rs 1.5 lakh crore of confirmed private investment across the Dholera and NICDC pipeline, a figure that includes anchors like the fab, NX Logistics at around Rs 86 crore for 400 jobs, and Toyota's more than Rs 1,700 crore spread across multiple corridor nodes. The key words are pipeline and across, because attributing the full figure to Dholera alone would overstate it. An older broker headline of around Rs 2.5 lakh crore committed to Dholera has no traceable ledger behind it and should be retired, not repeated. And the India-wide semiconductor context, roughly a dozen sanctioned projects worth about Rs 1.64 lakh crore, describes the national programme, not Dholera, and must never be attributed to the region. The safe summary is that Dholera has one very large bankable anchor, a real cluster of firm activation-area public spending, and a wide field of announced private intent whose eventual delivery is the open question.

CHAPTER 25

The Jobs Question

THE HEADLINE AND ITS STATUS

Almost every account of Dholera reaches, sooner or later, for a single employment number: more than 8,00,000 jobs. It is worth being precise about what that figure is and is not. It is a target for employment at full development of the Special Investment Region, meaning the endpoint of a roughly thirty-year build-out, not a current headcount and not a near-term forecast. It is now sourced to the official portal dholera.gujarat.gov.in, which upgrades it from the broker-tier claim it once was to a government-stated target, but a government-stated target is still a target. Nobody works at a Dholera that does not yet exist at full scale, and the honest framing is that the region is designed, at completion, to support employment on this order.

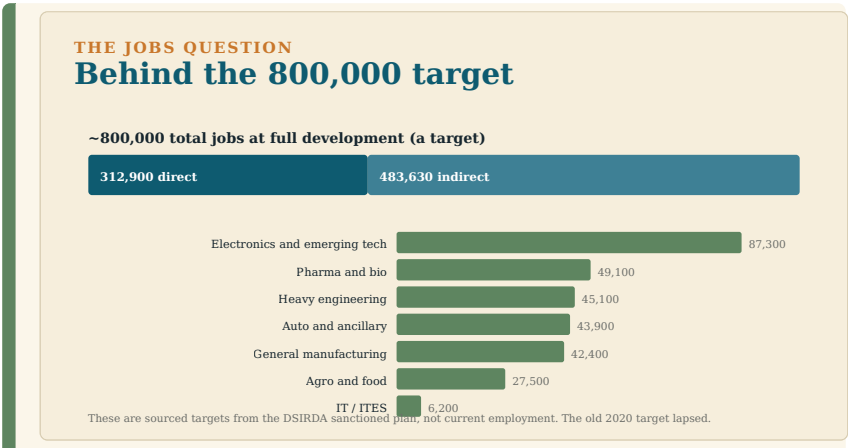


Figure 27. The employment target, decoded. Source: DSIRDA sanctioned DP; fact pack.

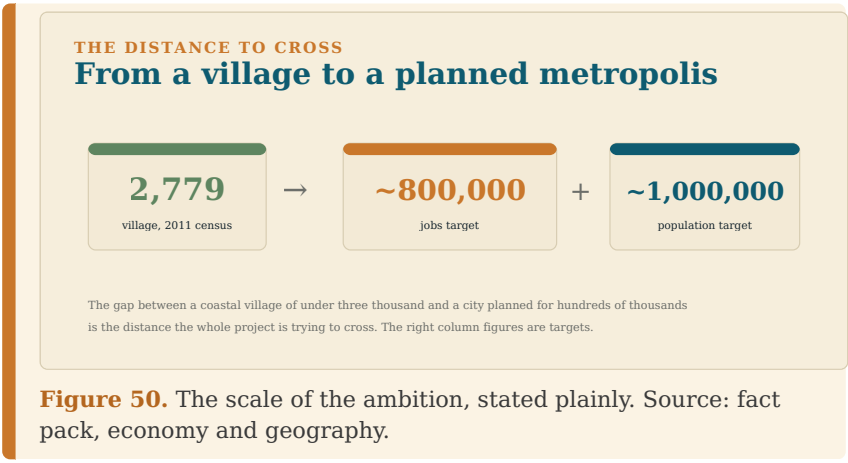


Figure 50. The scale of the ambition, stated plainly. Source: fact pack, economy and geography.

The 800,000 figure also has a real structure behind it, which is what separates it from a round promotional number. According to the DSIRDA Sanctioned Development Plan, the target decomposes into roughly 312,900 direct industrial jobs and roughly 483,630 indirect jobs. The direct-to-indirect ratio, a little over one to one and a half, is a standard planning assumption: for

every worker inside a factory, the model expects around one and a half more in the surrounding economy of logistics, services, construction, retail, and housing that a working industrial city generates. Whether that multiplier holds in practice depends entirely on whether the direct industrial base materialises, because indirect jobs are a consequence of direct ones and not an independent source. So the load-bearing number is the 312,900 direct industrial jobs, and the 483,630 indirect follows from it.

THE SECTOR SPLIT BEHIND THE DIRECT JOBS

The Sanctioned Development Plan goes further and distributes the direct industrial employment potential across sectors, which is useful because it shows where the plan expects the jobs to come from rather than leaving 312,900 as an undifferentiated block. Electronics and emerging technology carries the largest allocation at 87,300, consistent with the fab-led flagship positioning of the region. Pharmaceuticals and biotechnology follow at 49,100. Heavy engineering is put at 45,100, automobiles and auto ancillary at 43,900, and general manufacturing at 42,400. Agro and food processing accounts for 27,500, and IT and IT-enabled services for 6,200. These are employment-potential figures within the plan, not filled positions, and they should always be read with that qualifier.

Two things stand out when the split is laid beside the reality on the ground. First, the plan's largest job category, electronics and emerging technology, is also the one sector with a genuine building anchor, which gives the top allocation more credibility than the others. Even there, the fab's own direct-plus-indirect employment is

stated by its backers as more than 20,000, with a much larger figure of around 100,000 attached only to a multi-fab long-term vision, so a single fab does not by itself deliver the 87,300 electronics figure; that number assumes an ecosystem of many electronics and ancillary employers around the anchor. Second, the sectors carrying the next-largest allocations, pharma and biotech, heavy engineering, auto, and general manufacturing, are precisely the target sectors from Chapter 23 that do not yet have named committed anchors. Their job numbers are therefore forecasts resting on tenants the region hopes to attract, not on employers already present. The employment plan, in other words, is front-loaded onto the one sector that is real and spread across several that are still invitations.

WHAT THE SECTOR SPLIT DOES AND DOES NOT TELL YOU

There is a temptation to treat the sector table as a schedule, as though electronics will deliver its 87,300 jobs first because its anchor is building, then pharma its 49,100, and so on. The plan does not support that reading, and neither does the timeline of the anchor itself. The fab's own commercial production has reportedly slipped to around mid-2028, with trial silicon targeted near the end of 2026, which means the electronics jobs ramp is a matter of years even in the best-anchored sector. The IT and IT-enabled services figure of 6,200 is a useful sanity check in the other direction: it is small precisely because Dholera is planned as a manufacturing city rather than a services campus, and a plan that honestly assigns a modest number to office work is more

credible than one that inflates every line. The distribution, in short, tells you where the planners expect employment to concentrate, and it tells you that the concentration follows manufacturing rather than services, but it does not tell you when any category fills, and it should never be quoted as a dated forecast.

The indirect figure deserves one further note. At roughly 483,630, indirect employment is the larger half of the 800,000 and the softer half, because it is entirely derivative. It represents the shops, schools, transport, construction, healthcare, and domestic services that a working city of hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs would pull into being. If the direct base underperforms, the indirect number does not merely shrink proportionally, it can fail to materialise at all, because a half-built industrial city does not generate a full-service urban economy. This is why the responsible way to present the headline is to lead with the direct figure and treat the indirect as a modelled consequence rather than an independent promise. The multiplier is a standard planning device, not a measured outcome, and Dholera has not yet run the experiment that would test it.

WHAT ACTUALLY EXISTS, AND THE TARGET THAT LAPSED

Against these forecasts, current employment is modest and mostly construction-phase. The fab under construction, the solar plant in operation, the expressway and airport works, and the activation-area trunk infrastructure all employ people now, but this is building the city, not running its industries. Named operating commitments remain small in headcount terms: NX

Logistics is cited at around 400 jobs, and the two additional semiconductor units cleared in May 2026 are put at more than 2,200 jobs combined. Real on-the-ground employment today is therefore a small fraction of the target, concentrated in construction and early industrial fit-out, which is exactly what one would expect of a project at this stage and is not in itself a criticism.

It is important, though, to record that Dholera has missed an employment target before. An earlier plan set roughly 80,000 jobs and about 1.2 lakh (120,000) residents in the activation area by 2020. That target lapsed; it was not met, and it has quietly been replaced in the promotional literature by the longer-horizon 800,000 figure. This history is the strongest reason to treat the current headline as a target and not a schedule. The 2020 milestone was also a government-associated projection in its day, and its lapse shows that such projections for Dholera have slipped before. None of this means the 800,000 figure is dishonest. It means the figure describes a designed capacity at full completion, dependent on a thirty-year sequence of tenants arriving, and that the responsible way to cite it is with its full label attached: a target at full development, decomposing into about 312,900 direct and 483,630 indirect jobs, sourced to the plan, and not a description of the Dholera that exists today. Read that way, the jobs question has a clear answer. The ceiling is high and it is documented. The floor, so far, is a construction site with a fab rising on it.

CHAPTER 26

Schemes, Policy and Public Money

THE CENTRAL SCAFFOLDING

The Dholera economy does not stand on private investment alone. Behind it is a stack of central and state schemes, policies, and budget lines that fund the infrastructure, subsidise the anchor industries, and set the terms on which investors are courted. Understanding the economy means understanding this public scaffolding, because much of what has actually been built at Dholera was built with public money or made viable by public subsidy.

Figure 30. The policies and public money around Dholera. Source: fact pack; Gujarat govt ecosystem.

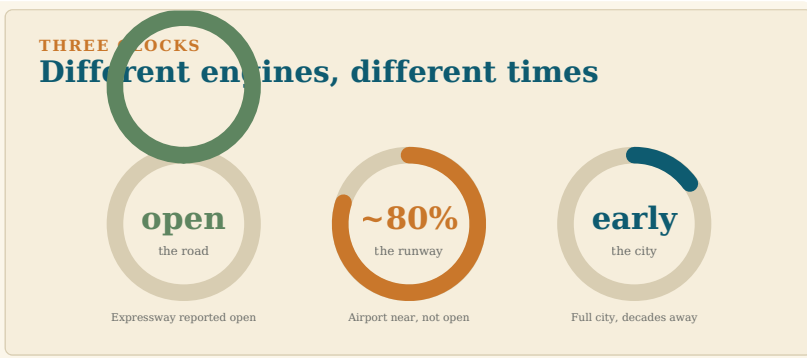


Figure 52. The road, the runway, and the city run on different clocks. Source: fact pack status, mid 2026.

At the centre sits the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), the programme under which the Tata-PSMC fab was approved. Its financial significance is direct and large: ISM covers 50 percent of the eligible cost of an approved fab, which is the mechanism that made a Rs 91,000 crore plant bankable for its promoters. The Fiscal Support Agreement for the Dholera fab was signed on 5 March 2025 under this scheme. It is worth stating clearly that the ISM is a national programme, not a Dholera programme; across India it has supported roughly a dozen semiconductor projects worth on the order of Rs 1.64 lakh crore, and only one large fab of that national portfolio is at Dholera. The India-wide figure must never be presented as Dholera's.

It is worth understanding what a 50 percent subsidy on eligible cost means in practice, because it reframes the anchor's headline figure. If the Government meets half the eligible cost of the Dholera fab, then a large share of the Rs 91,000 crore that appears in every account of Dholera is public money or publicly underwritten, not purely

private capital at risk. This is not a criticism of the project; fabs are subsidised this way worldwide because no country builds domestic chip capacity on market terms alone. But it means the single largest number in the Dholera story is a public-private figure, and reading it as a pure private commitment overstates the private conviction behind it. The ISM subsidy is the reason the fab exists, and acknowledging that is part of describing the economy accurately.

The second central pillar is the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP). In August 2024 the Union Cabinet greenlit 12 new industrial cities under this programme, and Dholera is the flagship node of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor that the wider corridor effort is built around. The corridor architecture matters for Dholera because it is the channel through which central trunk-infrastructure money flows to the node, coordinated by the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC), the central nodal agency, which holds 49 percent of DICDL alongside the Gujarat government's 51 percent. It is through this structure that the activation-area infrastructure packages of Rs 2,784.83 crore, with matching equity of the same amount, were approved and released, the greenest and most concrete public-money figure in the entire Dholera record.

THE STATE LAYER

Above the plot level and below the central programmes sits the Gujarat state policy layer, which supplies incentives, single-window facilitation, and its own budget contributions. The governing industrial policy for most of

the region's active build-out was the Gujarat Industrial Policy 2020, in force from 7 August 2020 with an expected annual outlay in the region of Rs 8,000 crore, thrust on next-generation sustainable manufacturing, capital subsidy for large and thrust-sector industries, and MSME incentives. A successor, reported as a Gujarat Industrial Policy 2026 announced around June 2026 under the Viksit Gujarat 2047 vision, has been referenced in state communications, but its final gazette should be confirmed before any specific incentive figures from it are quoted, because a reported policy is not yet a settled one.

The state machinery around these policies is worth naming because it is what an investor actually deals with. iNDEXTb, the Industrial Extension Bureau, is Gujarat's investment-promotion and single-window facilitation agency. GIDC, the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation, builds industrial estates and allots land. GIDB, the Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board, is the apex approval authority for infrastructure and is now integrated with PM Gati Shakti. The Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit is the flagship promotional platform, and Dholera featured heavily at its 2024 edition. These bodies do not themselves invest, but they set the terms, clear the approvals, and market the node, and they are the official interface behind the announcements catalogued in Chapter 24.

THE OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE THAT CHANNELS THE MONEY

The vehicle through which public money actually reaches the ground is worth setting out, because it explains why Dholera can draw on both central and state funds at once.

DICDL, the company that builds the city, is owned 51 percent by the Gujarat government through DSIRDA and 49 percent by the central government through the NICDC Trust. It was incorporated on 28 January 2016. This joint ownership is not a formality; it is the reason both the central activation-area infrastructure packages and the state budget lines flow into the same entity. The Rs 2,784.83 crore of central infrastructure packages and the matching equity of the same amount were released into this structure, and it is against this structure that land is transferred, 48.31 square kilometres to DICDL as recorded in the June 2026 monitoring report, and then allotted to industrial tenants. The governance sits above DSIRDA, the statutory planning and land authority, and NICDC, the central nodal agency that markets Dholera as its flagship node. For an investor, the practical meaning is a single-window structure backed by two tiers of government, which is part of what the region sells.

THE ECONOMIC TERMS AN INVESTOR ACTUALLY MEETS

Beyond subsidies and budget lines, the schemes stack includes the rules that govern how land is bought and built on, and these are economic facts in their own right. Land transactions in Gujarat carry an effective stamp duty of 4.9 percent, made up of a 3.5 percent basic rate and a 1.4 percent surcharge, plus a 1 percent registration fee, and a documented registration-fee waiver applies where property is held in a woman's sole name. Agricultural land must be converted to Non-Agricultural status before legal construction, though land inside an approved Town Planning scheme is treated as Non-Agricultural by Gujarat

rule. Plotted developments, like other real-estate projects, must register with GUJRERA, the Gujarat Real Estate Regulatory Authority, before they are marketed, which is the buyer's principal protection against the speculative selling that surrounds the region. None of these terms is a Dholera incentive as such; they are the standing legal architecture of property in Gujarat. But they belong in an economic account because they set the friction and the safeguards for anyone deploying capital into the SIR, and because the promotional narrative that surrounds Dholera tends to skip them.

BUDGET LINES AND POLICY TARGETS, KEPT HONEST

On direct public spending, the most recent concrete state line is the Gujarat Budget 2026-27, which earmarks Rs 610 crore for Dholera SIR trunk and logistics infrastructure in Phase-1, partly routed through the Developed Gujarat Fund. This is a real, Dholera-specific allocation and can be cited as such. It should not be confused with the broader semiconductor and Gujarat Semiconductor Policy budget lines, on the order of Rs 40,000 crore and Rs 1,100 crore respectively, which are state-wide figures spanning Dholera and Sanand together and are not Dholera-only money. The distinction is exactly the kind that promotional writing tends to erase, and keeping it is the difference between an accurate figure and an inflated one.

Finally, the newest policy instrument, the Viksit Gujarat Data Centre Policy 2026-29, sets a state-wide target of Rs 6 lakh crore of investment and 7.5 GW of capacity with Dholera as the primary intended location. This is the

clearest example in the whole scheme stack of a headline that must be labelled as a target and as state-wide, not as Dholera-committed capital. The policy signals ambition and directs data-centre investment toward the node, and it has one firm anchor beneath it in the L&T-Vyoma agreement, but the Rs 6 lakh crore figure is a policy aspiration for the state, not money in the ground at Dholera. The same discipline that governs the investment figures in Chapter 24 governs the scheme figures here. Public money and public policy have done real work at Dholera, most visibly the activation-area infrastructure packages, the ISM subsidy behind the fab, and the state budget line for trunk infrastructure. Around that real work sits a layer of large policy targets that describe intent. Reading the two apart, the built subsidy from the announced ambition, is the last piece of an honest account of the Dholera economy.

THE ECONOMY IN SUMMARY

Set the four chapters side by side and a consistent structure appears. In sectors, a wide official menu of ten-plus manufacturing categories rests on a proven core of two, semiconductors and solar, with data centres joining as a policy-driven third. In investors, a short durable tier led by the Rs 91,000 crore Tata-PSMC fab, an operational Tata Power solar plant, and firm activation-area allotments stands in front of a long cloud of announced memoranda from Reliance, Adani, Jabil, INOX, L&T, and others that are intent and not delivery. In jobs, a documented target of more than 800,000 at full development, decomposing into about 312,900 direct and 483,630 indirect, sits above a present reality of

construction-phase employment and one lapsed 2020 milestone. In schemes, a genuine spine of central subsidy and public infrastructure funding underlies the whole effort, wrapped in state policy targets that describe ambition rather than committed capital.

The through-line is the gap between the built and the announced, and the size of that gap is the honest measure of where the Dholera economy stands. The built side is small, concrete, and real: a fab rising, a solar plant generating, roads and rail and utilities in place or approved, public packages released against transferred land. The announced side is vast, and its eventual conversion into built capacity is the open question that will decide whether Dholera becomes the manufacturing city its plan describes. Neither dismissing the anchors as vapour nor treating the announcements as achievements would be accurate. The record supports a narrower and more durable claim: Dholera has crossed from a plan into a place with real industrial anchors, and the distance from those anchors to the full economy on paper remains to be travelled.

PART VII

The People and the Place

> *A place is more than its infrastructure. Here is the land, the life, and the ledger.*

Every city is two cities at once. There is the city on the drawing board, rendered in daylight and confidence, its avenues already lined with trees that have not been planted. And there is the city on the ground, which is slower, muddier, and more honest, where the trunk lines are laid but the doorbells have not yet been wired. Dholera is unusual only in how wide the gap between those two cities currently runs. This part of the book walks that gap deliberately. It looks at what living in Dholera is designed to feel like and what it actually is today, at the older India that sits within a short drive of the new one, at the neutral mechanics of how land and ownership work in this region, and finally at an honest ledger of the myths, disputes, and delays that trail the

Dholera name. Nothing here is written to sell a plot or to promise an appreciation curve. The aim is portrait and reference, not persuasion.

CHAPTER 27

Life in Dholera

THE VISION ON THE BOARD

Dholera is being built around a specific idea of how a day should flow. The design intent is a calm, connected, sustainable settlement where residential, commercial, and recreational zones sit close enough together to shrink the daily commute rather than stretch it. The plan reaches for solar power and energy-efficient green buildings, for water that is recycled rather than spent once and discarded, for wide roads carrying dedicated pedestrian and cycle lanes, and for a digital nervous system that watches over the whole thing in real time. At the centre of that nervous system sits the ABCD building, the Administrative cum Business Centre for Dholera, which houses the Integrated Command and Control Centre. The ICCC is meant to be the city's brain, monitoring water, power, street lighting, surveillance, traffic, and environmental readings from a single room. Connectivity is the other half of the promise. With the expressway open, the airport works advancing, and the semi high-speed rail cleared for construction, the ambition is that both the short commute and the long-haul journey feel seamless.

It is important to hold that entire paragraph at arm's length and label it correctly. This is the master-planned vision, the state the city is being built toward, not a description of a place you can move into today and find fully alive. The distinction matters because a great deal of

promotional writing about Dholera quietly slides from the future tense into the present, describing a populated smart city that does not yet exist. This book does not do that.

Wind turbines in India. Illustrative of the renewable base around Dholera's solar ambitions. Illustrative image. Photo: Yahoo! Blog from Sunnyvale, California, USA, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

The vision itself is worth understanding on its own terms, because it is coherent and it explains why so much of the money and effort has gone underground before anything visible rose above it. A grid city built around the ICCC is meant to run on data. Water flow, energy draw, street lighting, traffic density, waste collection, and environmental readings are all designed to feed back into one control room, so that the city can be tuned like a machine rather than patched like an afterthought. The

claim behind the design is that a settlement planned this way, from a blank coastal plain, can avoid the congestion, the tangled utilities, and the retrofitted drainage that older Indian cities carry as permanent scar tissue. Whether that claim holds is something only decades of occupancy will prove. But the intent is legible in the choices already made on the ground, from the reserved rapid-transit corridor to the leak-detecting smart water meters.

WHAT THE GROUND ACTUALLY CARRIES

The honest present-tense statement is narrower and more interesting. The Activation Area, a phase-one demonstration zone of roughly 22.5 sq km inside Town Planning Scheme 2, is where the trunk infrastructure has actually been put in the ground. According to the development company's own account, that zone carries underground utilities for power and for information and communication ducts, piped natural gas, potable water fitted with smart meters and leak detection, a recycled-water network, wastewater and effluent lines, and stormwater channelled into a man-made canal running several kilometres. There is a water treatment plant with reservoirs, and an internal road network on the order of 72 km, built at widths from 18 to 70 metres, with pedestrian and cycle lanes and a reserved corridor set aside for future rapid transit. The ICCC in the ABCD building is reported operational.

That is a serviced, wired, drained, and paved foundation. What it is not, yet, is a neighbourhood. Habitation is early. The old 2020-era target of roughly 120,000 residents and 80,000 jobs in this phase has lapsed and should be treated

as history rather than as a current headcount. A person standing in the Activation Area in 2026 sees the skeleton of the livability vision, the pipes and the smart meters and the cycle lanes, far more than they see the daily life those systems were designed to support. Some promotional material also describes a common walkable utility tunnel; that feature is not officially confirmed and should be read as aspiration.

The road network is a good example of the timing gap in physical form. Roughly 72 km of internal roads have been built at generous widths, from narrow neighbourhood streets to arterial corridors up to 70 metres across, complete with pedestrian and cycle lanes and a strip reserved for a future rapid-transit line. Those are the proportions of a city expecting hundreds of thousands of people. Today they carry a fraction of that. The effect, for a visitor, is a landscape of wide, well-drained, largely empty avenues waiting for the traffic they were sized for. This is normal for a greenfield build and it is not evidence of failure, but it is also not the bustling smart city of the renderings, and describing it as one would be dishonest. The stormwater canal, running several kilometres and feeding into the drainage system, is another piece of the foundation that matters enormously on this flood-prone coastal plain and yet is invisible to anyone imagining a finished skyline.

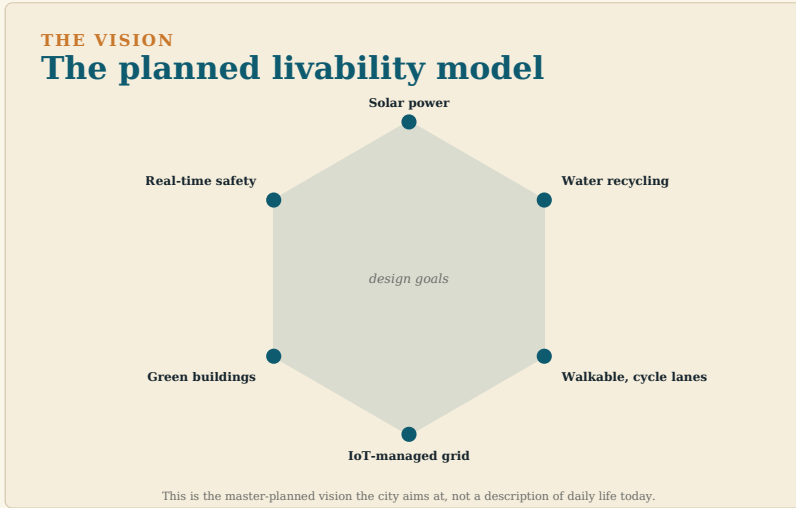


Figure 32. The livability the plan aims at. Source: lifestyle and tourism file.

CONNECTIVITY AS THE SPINE OF THE LIVABILITY PROMISE

Much of the "seamless life" pitch for Dholera rests not on the city's internal design but on how it connects to the world, and here the reality has moved further than anywhere else. The 109 km Ahmedabad-Dholera Expressway is reported inaugurated and operational as of March 2026, a four-lane access-controlled greenfield road designed for 120 km per hour and expandable to eight lanes. That road is the difference between Dholera as a remote coastal experiment and Dholera as a satellite within reach of a major metropolitan economy. The airport works are advancing, with a runway already proven by a trial landing, though the airport is not open. The semi high-speed rail between Ahmedabad and Dholera has been cleared with confirmed cost and length, targeted for

completion around 2030 or 2031, and is designed to link Ahmedabad, the SIR, the airport, and the Lothal heritage complex on one line.

The honest reading of all this is that the connectivity leg of the livability vision is the most mature leg. A resident of a future Dholera is being promised both a short daily commute inside a compact mixed-use grid and a fast link to Ahmedabad and, eventually, to the world through the airport and the rail. Today the expressway delivers the first half of that promise in a way that is real and drivable. The airport and the rail deliver the rest only as targets. So the connectivity story is genuinely ahead of the habitation story, which is itself the point: the enablers of a good daily life are being built before the daily life, and a reader should weigh the calendar of the enablers rather than the confidence of the brochure.

HOLDING THE VISION AND THE REALITY TOGETHER

The useful way to think about life in Dholera is as a design goal with a partially built substrate. The solar power, the water recycling, the walkable mixed-use blocks, and the IoT-managed grid are genuine planning commitments, several of them backed by real installed infrastructure rather than by rendering alone. The recycled-water network exists. The command centre exists. Roughly 300 MW of solar capacity is commissioned nearby, which is real electricity even if it sits far below the 5,000 MW long-range target for the wider solar park. So the vision is not vapour. It is simply ahead of the population that would make it feel like a city.

The phasing plan makes this timing explicit rather than accidental. Dholera is designed to build out over roughly three decades and three phases, with the Activation Area and its trunk infrastructure as the first move, the airport and industry as the second, and the fuller city, reaching toward a promotional long-range target of around a million residents and eight hundred thousand jobs, as the third. Those population and employment figures are targets tied to full development around 2040 or later, not current counts, and the end-year has itself been stated inconsistently across sources, which is a reason to treat the far horizon as aspiration. What a resident experiences today sits at the very front of phase one. The gap between "an IoT grid city of a million people" and "a serviced demonstration zone awaiting occupants" is not a contradiction in the plan; it is the plan, viewed at year one of thirty. Writing about livability honestly means keeping that clock visible at all times.

For anyone weighing Dholera as a place to live rather than as a line on a map, that timing is the whole story. The infrastructure-first sequence is deliberate; greenfield cities are built empty and filled later, and Dholera has chosen to lay the expensive underground systems before inviting residents on top of them. Whether and how quickly people arrive depends on the industrial anchors maturing, on the airport opening, and on the rail connecting, all of which live in the realm of targets rather than accomplished dates. The livable, connected, sustainable Dholera is a coherent and largely funded design. It is not a place you can currently describe in the present tense without misleading the reader, and the fair way to write about it is exactly this: the bones are in, the

body is early, and the calendar belongs to the anchors, not to the brochure. What Dholera offers today is proximity to that unfolding, a front-row seat to a city assembling itself, which is a very different proposition from moving into a finished one, and readers deserve to hear it framed that way rather than dressed up as arrival.

CHAPTER 28

Around Dholera

A REGION OLDER THAN THE SMART CITY

One of the quiet pleasures of Dholera is that the newest thing in the district sits beside some of the oldest things in the subcontinent. Drive out from the Activation Area and the timeline runs backward: an under-construction semiconductor fab, then salt flats and bird wetlands, then a 5,000-year-old port from the Indus Valley civilisation. For a reference book this matters because the region reads as more than a construction site. It has a tourism and heritage circuit that stands on its own, best explored in the cooler months from October to March, when the coastal Bhal country is pleasant rather than punishing.

A blackbuck in Gujarat. Velavadar Blackbuck National Park lies about 110 km from Dholera. Photo: Mahmadanesh, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

The anchor of that circuit is Lothal, roughly 36 km away. Lothal is one of the most important sites of the Indus Valley or Harappan civilisation, a port city with a dockyard, a bead factory, and a fort, excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India between 1955 and 1960 and often described by the ASI as the site of the world's earliest known dock. It sits in the same Ahmedabad district as Dholera, and the two are bound by geography as much as by proximity: both are creatures of the Gulf of Khambhat and its tides, one a port that thrived five thousand years ago and one a city betting on the same coast today. That rhyme across millennia is part of what makes the region worth writing about. It is not a minor detour. The Government is building the National Maritime Heritage Complex here, a project reported at around Rs

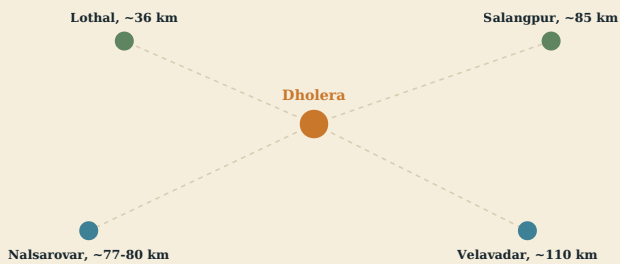
4,500 crore, which is set to turn Lothal into a major heritage destination sitting almost on Dholera's doorstep. A visitor can stand at a Bronze Age tidal dock in the morning and a twenty-first-century fab district in the afternoon, which is a genuinely unusual pairing. The planned semi high-speed rail line is even routed to connect Ahmedabad, the Dholera SIR, the airport, and the Lothal heritage complex on a single corridor, which would stitch the ancient port and the new city into one journey.

Dholera itself carries a thread of history that is worth recording accurately rather than romantically. There is a traditional claim, repeated on some reference pages, that Dholera was itself a historic port town; that claim is not firmly sourced and is best presented as tradition rather than established fact. What is durable is the Swaminarayan temple at Dholera, counted among the nine temples built by Swaminarayan himself. More vivid still is the Dholera Satyagraha of April 1930, a real episode of the salt-law civil disobedience movement. Days after Gandhi broke the salt law at Dandi on 6 April 1930, a salt satyagraha unfolded at Dholera port. According to the Gujarati Vishwakosh, Amritlal Seth led a group of roughly twenty-one satyagrahis around 6 April, Balwantrai Mehta led a larger contingent about a week later, and the poet Jhaverchand Meghani was among those who recruited for the cause through his song "Sindhudo." So the flat coast that developers now describe as a blank slate is not, historically, blank at all. It held a Census 2011 village of a few thousand people and a place in the freedom movement long before it held a command centre.

The Sun Temple at Modhera, part of the Gujarat heritage landscape within reach of Dholera. Photo: Bernard Gagnon, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

AROUND DHOLERA

A day-trip circuit



Lothal's Maritime Heritage Complex, a major bird wetland, and a blackbuck park are all within reach.
Best season to visit: October to March.

Figure 31. The heritage and nature circuit around Dholera. Source: lifestyle and tourism file.

THE WIDER DAY-TRIP CIRCUIT

Rani ki Vav at Patan, a UNESCO World Heritage stepwell in Gujarat. Photo: Snehrashmi, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

Beyond Lothal the circuit widens into wetlands, grassland, and pilgrimage. Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary lies roughly 77 to 80 km away, about an hour and thirty-five minutes by road. It is Gujarat's largest wetland bird sanctuary and comes alive with migratory birds in winter, which makes it a natural companion to the October-to-March window; the same cool months that make Dholera comfortable are the months the migratory flocks arrive, so the region's best travel season and its best wildlife season coincide. Further out, at roughly 110 km, is Velavadar Blackbuck National Park, a grassland reserve famous for its blackbuck, its wolves, and its winter harrier roosts, a landscape of open savanna that looks nothing like the coastal flats around Dholera itself. Between the Harappan dock at Lothal, the wetland at Nalsarovar, and the

grassland at Velavadar, a visitor can sample archaeology, ornithology, and open-country wildlife inside a single weekend radius, which is an unusually varied offering to sit beside an industrial construction zone.

For pilgrims, Salangpur Dham sits about 85 km away in Botad, home to the revered Shri Kashtbhanjan Dev Hanumanji temple, a major devotional destination in its own right. And then there is Ahmedabad, roughly 100 km to the southwest, which the new expressway has pulled dramatically closer in time even though the distance on the map is unchanged. The drive that once took well over two hours, on the order of two to two and a quarter hours, is now reported at roughly 40 minutes to an hour along the 109 km access-controlled expressway. Ahmedabad is a UNESCO World Heritage City, with the Sabarmati Ashram, the Adalaj Stepwell, and its old textile markets, so the day-trip logic runs both ways: Dholera is a short hop from a major city, and that city is a short hop back. This is the single most concrete change the infrastructure has already delivered for anyone thinking about the region as a place to visit or live. The heritage and wildlife circuit was always there; what is new is that the expressway has folded it into a comfortable radius from a base at Dholera, and folded Dholera into a comfortable radius from Ahmedabad.

THE SPOTS EMERGING ON DHOLERA'S OWN DOORSTEP

Closer in, a set of local leisure spots is beginning to appear around the Activation Area, listed by local guides rather than by any heritage authority, and they should be read as early and modest rather than as established

attractions. They include the Maritime Park at Bhimtalav, the Silk Route Park and River Front Road at Bavaliary, the S Curve Point, and a handful of waterbodies including Pipli Lake and Fedara Lake, along with Pirasar Talav, Raa Darbargadh, and the Ramapir Temple. These are green and recreational pockets taking shape as the city's landscaping and roadwork advance. None of them is a reason to travel across the country, but together they signal something real: the beginnings of a leisure fabric around a settlement that is otherwise still mostly infrastructure. A visitor should calibrate expectations accordingly. These are places to stop for an hour on a drive through the SIR, not destinations in themselves, and their names appear on local listings partly because there is not yet a dense built environment to compete with them. That will change as the city fills, and the honest way to describe them today is as the first green shoots of a recreational landscape rather than as a finished one.

For a resident or a weekend visitor, the honest picture is a strong regional circuit anchored by Lothal and Ahmedabad, a couple of excellent seasonal wildlife destinations within a two-hour radius, and a set of very young local parks that will mean more in a few years than they do now. The best time to see any of it remains the winter stretch from October to March, when the birds are at Nalsarovar, the blackbuck are visible at Velavadar, and the coastal heat has eased enough to make the Bhal comfortable. A well-shaped two-day itinerary almost writes itself: Lothal and the emerging maritime heritage complex on one day, paired with the local waterbodies and the S Curve Point on the drive; Nalsarovar or Velavadar on the second, depending on whether the traveller prefers

wetland birds or grassland antelope, with Salangpur Dham folded in for those on a pilgrimage circuit. Ahmedabad, now within an hour by expressway, functions as either the arrival point or the base. The pairing that gives the region its character remains the same one Lothal offers on its own: the oldest dock in the world at one end of a short drive, and a city betting on the same tidal coast at the other.

CHAPTER 29

How Land Works

This chapter is neutral reference. It explains the mechanics of how land, ownership, and registration function in and around Dholera, so that a reader can understand the system and ask the right questions. It does not quote a price as a fact, does not recommend buying, and does not promise that any rupee will grow. Treat every figure below as mechanism, not as inducement. The reason land gets its own chapter in a book that is otherwise a portrait is simple: land is the single subject on which the most people are misled about Dholera, because it is where money meets a name with a powerful halo. Understanding the machinery is the best defence against the marketing, and the machinery is not secret. It is a matter of public records, standard conversions, a state regulator, and a fixed set of documents.

UNITS, AND THE ONE NUMBER NOBODY CAN HONESTLY GIVE YOU

Land in this region is quoted in several units at once, and confusing them is the first way people get lost. Developed plots are usually priced per square yard or per square foot; raw or agricultural land is usually spoken of in bigha or acre. The safe conversions are worth committing to memory because they are fixed: one acre equals 4,840 square yards equals 43,560 square feet, and one square yard equals nine square feet. The bigha is the trap. In Gujarat a bigha is commonly around 2,500 square yards,

roughly half an acre, but the bigha is not standardised and varies by region, so it should always be confirmed locally rather than assumed.

Unit	Equals	Also	Note
1 acre	4,840 sq yd	43,560 sq ft	standard, fixed
1 sq yard	9 sq ft		fixed
1 bigha (Gujarat)	commonly ~2,500 sq yd	~half an acre	NOT standardised, confirm locally

Figure 33. Land units used in Dholera, and the one that varies. Source: fact pack, land mechanics.

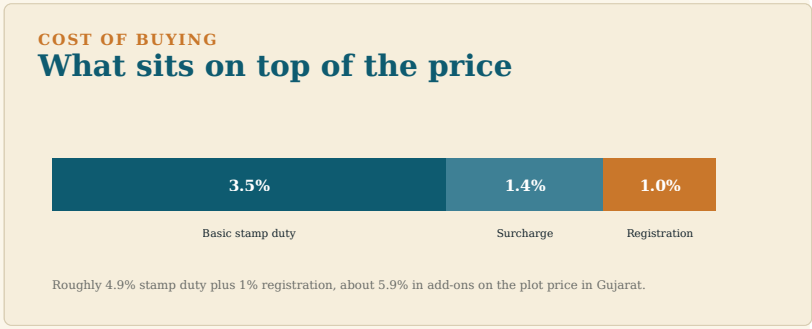


Figure 47. The transaction add-ons a buyer pays. Source: fact pack, land mechanics.

Now the honest part about price. There is no official government per-unit market price for Dholera plots. The Government publishes a land-pricing policy and a base allotment framework, not a live market rate for a given plot. Any specific rupee-per-unit figure a reader encounters is a broker or portal listing, unverified and highly variable by location and time. If an indicative range

is mentioned at all, it must be labelled as exactly that: brokers in 2026 quote roughly Rs 6,000 to 12,000 per square yard, which works out to something like Rs 650 to 1,350 per square foot, and which is unverified, indicative only, not an official rate, and varies widely by TP scheme, road width, and proximity to the Activation Area, the expressway, and the airport. That sentence is a description of what brokers say, not a valuation. It should never be printed as "the price of Dholera land," only as "brokers currently quote roughly this range; confirm the exact all-in price in writing for the specific plot." The correct way for a buyer to get a real number is to ask the developer for the full all-in price and payment schedule in writing, to consult the official land-pricing policy for base allotment guidance, and to compare a few registered projects rather than roadside land marketed as being "in the SIR."

What actually moves the price is worth stating as direction rather than amount, because it is the part a reader can reason about without a rupee figure. Serviced, N.A. plots inside a sanctioned TP scheme command more than raw or agricultural land, for the obvious reason that they are legally buildable and physically connected to utilities. Within that, proximity matters: nearness to the Activation Area, to the expressway, to the central spine road, to the planned rail, and to the airport all push in the same upward direction, as does a confirmed Final Plot number and clear TP-scheme status. None of this tells anyone what a plot is worth. It tells them why two plots that look similar on a map can be quoted very differently, and it points them at the attributes to check rather than the number to trust.

RERA, N.A., AND THE PAPER TRAIL

Two acronyms govern whether a Dholera plot is real in the legal sense. The first is GUJRERA, the Gujarat Real Estate Regulatory Authority, which operates under the national Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act of 2016. Plotted developments above a certain size must register with GUJRERA before they can be marketed, and the buyer's job is to verify that registration number and its status before paying anything. Registration gives the buyer a public record of the sanctioned layout, the promoter, the plot count, and the validity period, which is precisely the information a fraudulent scheme cannot produce. The second is N.A. status. Agricultural land must be converted to Non-Agricultural before legal construction, and by Gujarat rule, land that falls inside an approved Town Planning scheme is treated as N.A., though the effective date of that treatment is worth confirming for a specific parcel. A plot's position relative to a sanctioned TP scheme, its Final Plot number, and its N.A. status are therefore not paperwork trivia; they are the difference between a buildable asset and a field with a story attached. A great deal of the mischief around Dholera lives in exactly this gap, where raw agricultural land is dressed up in the language of the smart city without ever having crossed the legal threshold that would make it buildable.

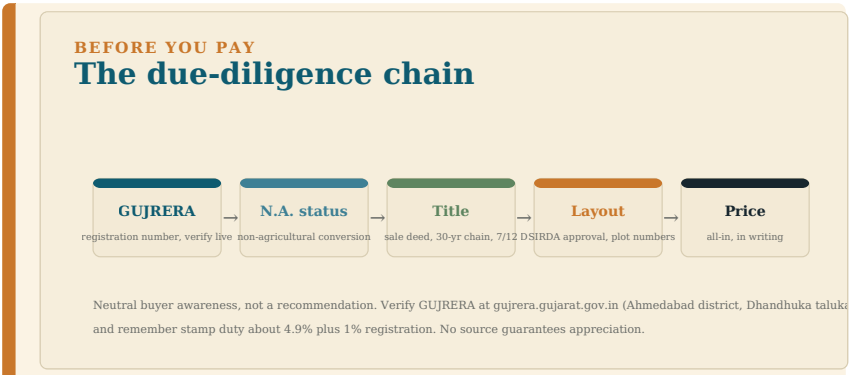


Figure 34. The checks a careful buyer runs. Source: fact pack; price and land file.

The due-diligence sequence, stated as prose rather than a sales checklist, runs like this. Confirm the GUJRERA registration number and check it live on the official portal. Confirm the DSIRDA layout approval and the N.A. status. Verify the title through the sale deed, the mother deed, a 30-year Encumbrance Certificate, the 7/12 extract, and the tax receipts, and confirm the 30-year 7/12 chain on the AnyROR Gujarat system. Only then does execution follow: the deed registers at the Dhandhuka Sub-Registrar, with biometric verification, after which the buyer obtains the Khata. The costs to budget are an effective stamp duty of 4.9 per cent, made up of 3.5 per cent basic plus 1.4 per cent surcharge, plus 1 per cent registration.

Two points of nuance belong here so that the reference is complete rather than tidy. A registration-fee waiver for property held in a woman's sole name is documented in Gujarat, which can shift the arithmetic modestly for such buyers. A separate, conflicting claim of a "1 per cent stamp-duty concession" on the same basis is not reliably

corroborated and should not be relied on without checking the current rule. The larger caution is simply that duty and registration are real, non-trivial add-ons to any headline price, and a buyer comparing plots should fold roughly 5.9 per cent of transaction cost into the comparison rather than reasoning from the plot price alone.

READING A REAL GUJRERA NUMBER, AND WHO MAY BUY

A genuine Dholera RERA registration number has a recognisable shape. It reads along the lines of PR/GJ/AHMEDABAD/DHANDHUKA/…/PAAxxxxx/DDMMYY, where the unique project code carries a PAA prefix and the trailing digits encode the registration date, sometimes followed by an expiry date. Dholera SIR villages fall under Ahmedabad district and Dhandhuka taluka, though some newer projects tag DHOLERA or DSIRDA in the path instead. To make this concrete without endorsing any project, real registration numbers surfaced for named Dholera developments follow exactly this pattern: strings of the form PR/GJ/AHMEDABAD/DHANDHUKA/Others/PAAxxxxx/ followed by a date, or PR/GJ/AHMEDABAD/DHOLERA/DSIRDA/PAAxxxxx/ followed by a date. The point of showing the shape is not to recommend a builder but to let a reader recognise a well-formed number from a vague one. The verification route is fixed: go to gujrera.gujarat.gov.in, open Registration and then Project Search, select Ahmedabad district and Dhandhuka taluka, enter the number or the developer name, and confirm that the sanctioned layout, the FSI, the plot numbers, and the expiry date all match the brochure in hand. Registration is

generally required for plotted projects above roughly 500 square metres or with more than eight plots. A blanket claim of "RERA approved" is not a registration number; the buyer's task is to get the actual number and check it live. One caveat: pure plotted layouts without construction commitments may not always carry a GUJRERA number, but they still require DSIRDA layout approval, N.A. status, and clear title.

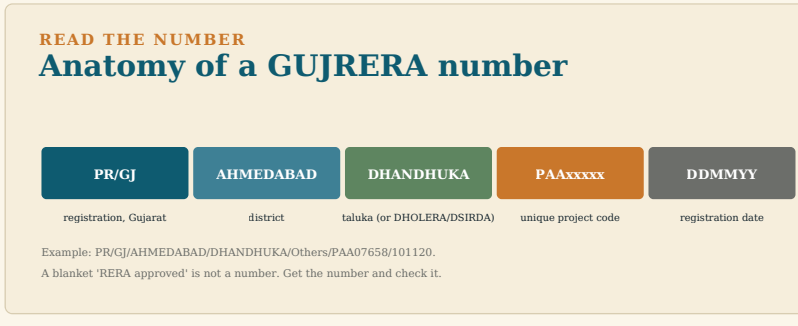


Figure 35. How to read and verify a real registration number. Source: price and land file.

On eligibility, the rule for non-resident buyers is specific and consequential. NRIs and OCIs can purchase residential and commercial property in India, but they cannot buy agricultural land. Since a good deal of land around Dholera begins its life as agricultural, the N.A. question and the residential-or-commercial classification carry particular weight for overseas buyers, for whom a plot that has not been properly converted is not merely risky but potentially outside what they are legally permitted to own. An overseas buyer therefore has an even stronger reason than a domestic one to insist on documented N.A. status and a clean classification before any money changes hands.

The documented red flags follow directly from all of the above and are worth naming plainly as buyer awareness rather than as alarm. The recurring ones are agricultural land marketed as being "in the SIR" without N.A. conversion, plots located far outside the Activation Area but sold on the halo of the Dholera name, projects that are unregistered or non-RERA yet advertised as "RERA approved" without a checkable number, and any situation where the title chain is unclear or the 7/12 record does not reconcile. Each red flag maps onto a specific document that resolves it: N.A. conversion order, GUJRERA number, layout approval, Encumbrance Certificate, 7/12 extract. None of these observations is advice to buy or to avoid. They are the neutral grammar of how land ownership is established in this jurisdiction, offered so that a reader can tell a well-formed transaction from a poorly formed one, and the same grammar applies whether the buyer intends to build a home, hold an asset, or simply understand how the system works.

CHAPTER 30

The Honest Ledger

A neutral portrait owes the reader a clear accounting of what is disputed, exaggerated, delayed, or simply false in the Dholera story, set beside what is genuinely happening. This chapter is that ledger. It takes the loudest claims in circulation and marks each one honestly, without either boosting the project or dismissing it.

THE SUPERLATIVES THAT DO NOT SURVIVE CHECKING

Start with the phrase that appears most often. Dholera is frequently called "India's first smart city," and that claim is imprecise and disputed. The title of first operational greenfield smart city belongs to GIFT City near Gandhinagar, which was established on 10 April 2015 and functions today as an international financial centre, home to hundreds of registered entities, two international exchanges, and India's first international bullion exchange. GIFT City and Dholera are often confused in casual conversation, but they are different animals. GIFT is a compact financial district of a few hundred hectares near Ahmedabad, regulated as an International Financial Services Centre, and it is operational now. Dholera is a sprawling industrial and manufacturing city on the coast, roughly 100 km southwest of Ahmedabad, focused on semiconductors, solar, logistics, and heavy manufacturing, and it is in early build-out. Dholera's accurate description is therefore different from the slogan and still substantial:

it is the flagship greenfield industrial smart city and the largest node of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor. The word "first," attached to Dholera, is marketing rather than fact.

The size claim needs the same treatment. Dholera is often headlined as a 920 sq km city, the biggest greenfield city in India or even the world. The 920 sq km figure is an official planning envelope, but only around 422 sq km of it is urban-developable, and that build-out is phased across roughly 30 years. Of the roughly 580 sq km that is developable at all, about a third sits within the Coastal Regulation Zone, and the flat, low-lying Bhal terrain makes flooding and drainage a real and documented planning constraint rather than a footnote. The Activation Area that gets most of the attention is only about 22.5 sq km, a little over four per cent of the developable land, which puts the scale of what is actually built today in proportion against the scale of what is planned. "Biggest in India or the world" is an unverified superlative. The correct way to state the scale is as a large planning envelope with a considerably smaller developable core, built out slowly, with a small demonstration zone completed first. Stated that way, the number stops being a boast and becomes a useful fact about phasing.

A related habit worth flagging is the blending of milestones into a single smooth story of inevitability. The Dholera idea has roots reaching back to the late 1990s, took statutory form with the Gujarat SIR Act in 2009, gained public momentum around the 2013 announcement, and saw its development company incorporated in 2016, followed by years of land transfer, litigation, and slow

trunk construction. Each of those is a real and separable event. Promotional timelines tend to compress them into an unbroken arc of progress, which erases the stay orders, the lapsed targets, and the collapsed ventures along the way. A neutral account keeps the milestones distinct and lets the gaps between them show.

The claim	The honest reading
India's first smart city	Disputed marketing. GIFT City is the first operational greenfield smart city. Dholera is the flagship greenfield industrial node.
920 sq km, biggest city	920 is the planning envelope. Only about 422 sq km is urban, phased over ~30 years.
Guaranteed appreciation	No government source guarantees returns. This is speculative marketing.
Airport opening this year	The opening date has slipped repeatedly since about 2010. State it as a target with a date.
Nothing is happening	Real anchors exist: the Tata fab under construction, ~300 MW solar, the open expressway.

Figure 36. Myths and their honest readings. Source: fact pack, myths and fact-check.

RETURNS, LITIGATION, AND THE AIRPORT THAT KEEPS SLIPPING

The most consequential myth for anyone spending money is the promise of guaranteed appreciation or assured returns. This is speculative marketing, not fact. No government source guarantees that land in Dholera will appreciate, and any brochure that implies otherwise is

making a claim it cannot back. Appreciation may happen, or it may not, and the honest position is that nobody can promise which. Selling a plot on a guaranteed-returns pitch is a claim about the future dressed as a fact about the present, and it is exactly the kind of statement a neutral reference exists to flag. The historical record is a useful corrective here, because the land beneath the project has itself been contested. Land acquisition for the SIR was litigated, and in 2015 the Gujarat High Court stayed the acquisition after petitions from farmers. A 2017 report in Business Standard found that only around 290 of the more than 900 sq km envisaged had by then been secured, and described the wider Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor as "a tale of abandonments and delays." Those are not reasons to condemn the project, but they are part of its honest biography.

The clearest single example of how far confident announcements can diverge from outcomes is the Vedanta-Foxconn episode. In September 2022, Vedanta and Foxconn signed a memorandum with Gujarat that was widely cited at around 19.5 billion US dollars, a figure that entered headlines as if it were committed capital heading for Dholera. In July 2023, Foxconn withdrew, and that joint venture never built anything. The 19.5 billion dollar number was a project valuation attached to a partnership that dissolved, not money that arrived. It is important to keep this straight for two reasons. First, it is the honest counterpart to the very real Tata fab that followed: one large semiconductor announcement collapsed, and a different, better-sourced one is now under construction, and conflating the two flatters the record. Second, it is a caution against treating any

announced mega-figure as settled. Memoranda of understanding are intentions, and intentions in this sector have a documented habit of changing.

The delay theme is broader than the airport and it is documented rather than alleged. The Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor was announced years before ground moved, land transfers ran from roughly 2011 to 2015 and then hit the High Court stay, and the 2017 Business Standard assessment was blunt in calling the corridor a tale of abandonments and delays. The fair way to write about Dholera's timeline is to cite specific milestones rather than blend them into a single triumphant arc: the early conception in the late 1990s, the Gujarat SIR Act of 2009, the SPV incorporated in 2016, and the public push associated with the 2013 announcement. Each is real; stringing them together as if progress were continuous would flatter the record.

The airport is the standing example of the timeline problem. An operational Dholera airport has been "opening next year" on a recurring, slipping schedule since roughly 2010. The current position, as of mid-2026, is that a first trial landing did take place, an aircraft calibration and trial landing on the completed 3,200 metre runway in June 2026, with a water-cannon salute. Runway, taxiways, and the ATC tower are reported complete, and the passenger terminal is reported around three-quarters finished. That proves the runway is usable. It does not mean the airport is open. Operations are reported as targeted for later in 2026, but a target is not an achievement, and this book states airport dates only as targets with their date attached, never as accomplished

facts. The same discipline applies to the semiconductor fab's first-chip timeline, where trial silicon is targeted around the end of 2026 and commercial production at a mature node is reported pushed to roughly mid-2028, and to the semi high-speed rail line, whose approval and cost are confirmed but whose completion is targeted only up to 2030 or 2031. In every one of these cases the honest verb is "targeted," not "done."

THE COUNTERWEIGHT, AND A NAMED CAUTION

Against all of this sits the fair counter to the opposite myth, the claim that "nothing is happening" in Dholera. That is also false. Real anchors exist on the ground. The Tata semiconductor fab is genuinely under construction, with civil works past the halfway mark by mid-2026 and a committed investment on the order of Rs 91,000 crore, the single largest and best-sourced commitment in the project. Roughly 300 MW of solar capacity is commissioned and generating. The 109 km Ahmedabad-Dholera Expressway is reported inaugurated and operational. The Activation Area carries its trunk infrastructure. A reader who concludes that Dholera is purely vaporware is as mistaken as one who believes it is a finished city.

It is worth dwelling on that counterweight because the two myths, "everything is done" and "nothing is happening," are equal and opposite errors, and a neutral book has to refuse both. The Tata fab is the strongest single piece of evidence that Dholera is real. It carries a Union Cabinet approval, a fiscal support agreement, and an investment on the order of Rs 91,000 crore, with civil construction visibly past the halfway mark and cleanroom

and equipment work reported underway in 2026. Around it sit a commissioned solar plant of roughly 300 MW, an operational expressway, a transferred and serviced Activation Area, and a growing list of announced anchors from data centres to logistics. None of that adds up to a finished city, and this book will not pretend it does. But it decisively refutes the lazy claim that Dholera is a mirage. The accurate word is unfinished, not fictional.

Finally, the ledger should record a documented caution attached to the Dholera name. The Nexa Evergreen land scheme rode on the Dholera brand and became a documented land scam, cited here factually and without embellishment as a reminder that a well-known project name attracts fraudulent operators who borrow its credibility. The lesson is not that Dholera is a scam; it is that the name has been misused, which is precisely why the verification mechanics in the previous chapter, the RERA number checked live, the N.A. status confirmed, the 7/12 chain traced, exist and matter. A scheme trading on the Dholera name is not the same thing as the Dholera project, and the way an ordinary reader tells them apart is exactly the paper trail this part has laid out.

The honest reader leaves this part holding both halves at once: a serious, partly built, heavily funded industrial city with real anchors and real infrastructure, and a marketing cloud around it thick with superlatives, promised returns, and slipping dates that deserve to be read with a cool eye. The livability is a vision with its foundations poured. The tourism circuit is old and genuine. The land system is knowable and rule-bound if a buyer does the work. And the loudest claims are the ones most in need of checking.

That combination, neither cynical nor credulous, is the fairest portrait of the place, and it is the one this book has tried to hold throughout.

PART VIII

The Road Ahead

The city is a decades-long sentence. This is where it points.

CHAPTER 31

The Road to the 2040s

Every account of Dholera eventually arrives at the same fork. One path leads into the brochure, where a finished metropolis of a million people already gleams under a coastal sun, its solar fields humming and its semiconductor lines running at full tilt. The other path stays on the ground, where a two-decade-old plan is roughly one fifth built, where anchor projects are under construction rather than in production, and where almost every impressive number carries a date that has not yet arrived. This closing part of the book tries to walk the second path honestly. Dholera is best understood not as a promise kept or a promise broken, but as a very long project in the early middle of its life, measured against a clock that runs in decades rather than quarters.

THE THREE PHASES, AND THE FINE PRINT ON EVERY DATE

The official structure is a three-phase build spread over roughly thirty years. The phasing is real and it is documented in the sanctioned Development Plan, but the end dates have been stated inconsistently enough that any careful reader should treat them as targets rather than facts. That distinction is the single most important idea in this chapter, so it is worth stating plainly before the numbers arrive. Nothing in the Dholera timeline is a completion. Everything is an intention with a year attached.

Figure 37. The phased build to the early 2040s. Source: fact pack, phasing.

Phase 1, reported as running from roughly 2020 to 2025, centres on the Activation Area, a demonstration zone of about 22.5 sq km inside Town Planning Scheme 2. This is the plug-and-play core, the piece meant to prove that the model works at small scale before the city expands around it. The original 2020 target for this area, about 120,000 residents and 80,000 jobs, has lapsed. That lapse is not hidden in this book because it matters: the first population goal Dholera set for itself did not materialise on schedule, and the honest reading is that the physical infrastructure of the Activation Area advanced further than its human occupancy did. Trunk utilities, roads, and the command centre came before the residents.

Phase 2, reported as roughly 2025 to 2030, is the connectivity and industry phase. It is anchored by the Dholera International Airport and by the arrival of the large industrial tenants. Town Planning Schemes 3 and 4, together about 126 sq km, sit in this window in the

sanctioned plan, which dates them to 2023 through 2032. This is the phase in which Dholera is meant to stop being a demonstration and start being an economy.

Phase 3, reported as running from about 2030 to either 2040 or 2042, is the full build-out toward the complete 920 sq km envelope. Town Planning Schemes 5 and 6, together about 142 sq km, fall here, dated in the plan to 2033 through 2042. The promotional target attached to the finished city, roughly one million residents and about 800,000 jobs, belongs to this final horizon. The end year itself is a small but telling example of how loosely these dates are held: some official and reported materials say 2040, others say 2042. This book flags that inconsistency rather than choosing a side, because choosing a side would imply a precision the sources do not support.

READING THE TARGETS WITHOUT SWALLOWING THEM

Put the three phases together and the developable arithmetic lands near 422 sq km of urban land, phased across the schemes in three roughly equal thirds. That is a coherent plan on paper. What the plan cannot tell you is whether the calendar will hold, and the historical record counsels caution. Dholera's own biggest single milestones have a habit of slipping. The airport's operational date has moved repeatedly since around 2010. The expressway, reported as inaugurated in March 2026, arrived years after the corridor was first mapped. The semiconductor fab, approved in early 2024 and under construction through 2026, now reports first-silicon as a target and

commercial production as a later target still. None of these are failures. All of them are reminders that a target year in Dholera is a planning instrument, not a guarantee.

The 800,000-jobs figure deserves the same treatment, because it is often quoted as if it were an achievement rather than a projection. It is a target, and unusually for Dholera it is a target with a sourced breakdown behind it: roughly 312,900 direct industrial jobs and about 483,630 indirect, distributed across sectors led by electronics and emerging technology, pharmaceuticals and biotech, heavy engineering, and automotive. That the number can be decomposed sector by sector makes it more credible than a round promotional headline, but decomposition is not delivery. These jobs exist in a spreadsheet inside the Development Plan. Whether they exist in the labour market of the 2040s depends on tenants who are, in 2026, still pouring concrete.

FROM ACTIVATION AREA TO FULL CITY

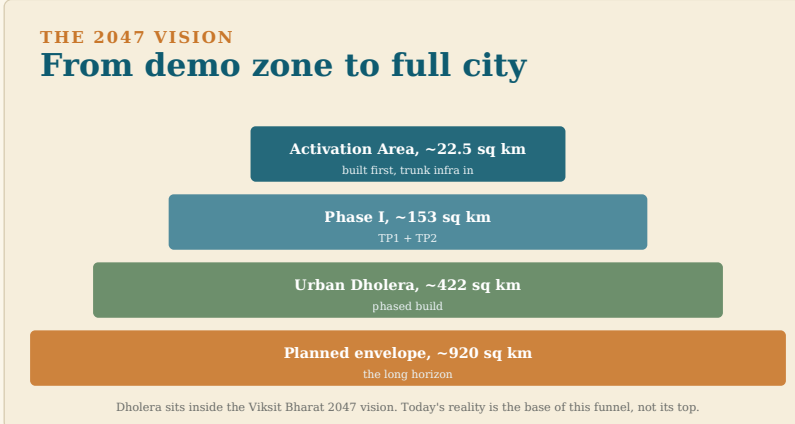


Figure 39. The scale-up the plan imagines. Source: fact pack; comparisons file.

The intended trajectory, stripped of adornment, is a widening ripple. It begins in the Activation Area, where the underground trunk utilities, the internal road grid, the water treatment capacity, and the Integrated Command and Control Centre in the ABCD building were installed first. It is meant to move outward through TP1 and TP2, the roughly 153 sq km of Phase 1, then into TP3 and TP4, and finally into TP5 and TP6 as the coastal land, much of it inside the Coastal Regulation Zone, is progressively brought into use. The vision frame that governs the whole sequence is national and political as much as it is municipal. Dholera is positioned inside Viksit Bharat 2047 and its state counterpart Viksit Gujarat 2047, the developed-nation and developed-state visions timed to the centenary of Indian independence. That framing is useful for understanding intent, and it should be read as intent. A vision dated to 2047 is a direction of travel, not a schedule of works.

The sober way to hold all of this together is to separate what is built from what is planned, in every sentence. Built, and reported as operational or near-operational: the Activation Area trunk infrastructure, the command centre, roughly 300 MW of commissioned solar out of a 1,000 MW sanctioned Phase 1 and a 5,000 MW long-range target, and the expressway. Under construction: the Tata semiconductor fab, past the halfway mark on civil works in mid-2026, and the airport, reported around 80 percent complete with a trial landing achieved in June 2026 and operations targeted for later that year. Planned, approved, or announced but not yet delivered: the semi high-speed rail approved in May 2026 with completion targeted to 2030-31, the full solar park, the data-centre commitments,

and the vast majority of the 920 sq km. The road to the 2040s is genuinely under construction. It is also, by any honest measure, mostly still ahead.

CHAPTER 32

Dholera in the National Picture

To judge Dholera fairly you have to place it beside its peers, because a greenfield city means little in isolation. India has attempted several from-scratch urban projects in the past two decades, and each one answers a different question. Comparing them is not a contest to be won. It is a way of seeing what kind of thing Dholera actually is, and what its particular bet on the future rests on.

FOUR CITIES, FOUR DIFFERENT BETS

Feature	Dholera SIR	GIFT City	Amaravati	Naya Raipur
Purpose	Industrial smart city	Finance / IFSC	Admin capital	Admin capital
Scale	~920 sq km (~422 urban)	359 ha	~217 sq km core	smaller
Driver	DMIC, semis, solar	Banking, fintech	Government	Government
Status 2026	Anchors building	Operational	Rebuilding	Low activity

Figure 38. Dholera among India's planned cities. Source: comparisons file; fact pack.

GIFT City, the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City near Gandhinagar, is the most useful comparison because it is the one that is furthest along. It is small and dense, about 359 hectares, and it is finished enough to be described accurately as operational. It carries a defensible superlative that Dholera does not: India's first operational greenfield smart city and International Financial Services Centre. Its bet is finance. It hosts banking, capital markets, insurance, funds, fintech, and India's first international bullion exchange, and by mid-2025 it counted several hundred registered entities and two international exchanges. GIFT is proof that an Indian greenfield city can be built and populated. It is also proof that doing so on a compact, single-sector, services footprint is a very different undertaking from what Dholera has set out to do.

Amaravati, the planned capital of Andhra Pradesh on the Krishna riverfront, is a bet on government. Its purpose is administrative, its core is around 217 sq km, and its recent history has been shaped by political change and delay, with the project rebuilding after a period of stalled work. Naya Raipur in Chhattisgarh is the same category executed more quietly: a state administrative capital with genuinely built infrastructure but comparatively low organic economic activity, a city whose roads and buildings arrived ahead of the private demand to fill them. Both illustrate a specific vulnerability. A city whose primary anchor is government tenancy depends on the state showing up and staying, and on private life accreting around public offices, which does not always happen on schedule.

Dholera is a different animal, and the difference is the whole point. It is the largest of these envelopes by a wide margin, roughly 920 sq km planned with about 422 sq km developable, and its declared driver is neither finance nor administration but manufacturing. Its status in 2026 is that its anchors are building rather than built. On the comparison matrix its row reads: industrial and manufacturing smart city, coastal Ahmedabad district, roughly 920 sq km planned, driven by the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor plus semiconductors, solar, and logistics, governed by DICDL under the Gujarat SIR Act of 2009, with anchors under construction. It sits at an earlier point on the curve than GIFT, at a larger scale than any of them, and on a thesis that none of the others share.

THE GENUINE EDGE, STATED WITHOUT INFLATION

What separates Dholera from the two administrative capitals is the nature of its anchor. Amaravati and Naya Raipur depend, in the first instance, on government occupancy. Dholera is anchored by real private industrial capital committed to a manufacturing thesis. The Tata Electronics and PSMC semiconductor fab, at roughly Rs 91,000 crore, is the single largest and best-sourced private commitment in the project, and it is a factory, not an office allotment. Tata Power's commissioned solar capacity is real generation feeding a real grid. Add plug-and-play infrastructure that was laid before the buildings, multi-modal connectivity now taking shape through the expressway and the approved rail line, and the simple fact of early-stage entry into a canvas this large, and you have a genuine and specific edge. It is worth stating that edge

without knocking the other cities, because their challenges are their own and Dholera's advantages do not require anyone else's failure to be true.

THE FIRSTS WORTH CLAIMING, AND THE ONE TO DROP

Dholera attracts superlatives the way all mega-projects do, and separating the defensible ones from the marketing is a service to the reader. The strongest and most durable is this: Dholera is home to India's first major commercial semiconductor fabrication plant. That is a real first, anchored to a real approval and a real construction site, and it is the claim on which the city's national significance most solidly rests. Three further firsts hold up with the right labels attached. The pre-installed underground trunk utility corridors, power, water, gas, and ICT ducts laid before above-ground construction, are a reported distinction credited to DICDL and the essence of the plug-and-play model. Being run by a City Integrated Operations Centre is a reported feature rather than a proven daily reality, but it is documented. And Dholera is the flagship node of the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, often called its largest, where the flagship-node status is durable and the word largest should be carried as a reported superlative rather than a measured fact.

One claim should be set down rather than repeated. The description of Dholera as India's first platinum-rated industrial smart city appears on third-party listings but is not verified against any primary rating authority or government source. This book does not call it a first, and neither should anyone writing carefully about the project. The broader label India's first smart city belongs to the

same cautious drawer: it is disputed marketing, and the operational-greenfield distinction sits with GIFT City. Position Dholera accurately, as India's flagship greenfield industrial smart city and the largest node of its national corridor, and the claim is both strong and true, which is more than inflation ever manages.

A Sober Portrait

Dholera, at the close of this book, is neither the finished miracle of its brochures nor the abandoned folly of its harshest critics. It is a genuine and unusually large public undertaking, roughly one fifth of the way through a plan measured in decades, carrying anchors that are real and mostly still under construction. A semiconductor fab is rising, a solar park is partly generating, an expressway is open, an airport has felt its first wheels, and a rail line has been approved. Alongside all of that sits a vast expanse of coastal land that remains planning envelope rather than city, a lapsed first population target, and a history of dates that slip.

Both things are true at once, and honesty requires holding them together. There is real momentum here, and there is real distance still to travel. Nobody reading this should expect a completed city, a guaranteed appreciation, or a promised year to arrive on time. What can be said fairly is that Dholera has moved from paper into concrete on more fronts than most Indian greenfield projects ever manage, and that whether it becomes the industrial capital it imagines will be answered not by any promotional figure but by the slow, unglamorous, and still unfinished work of the 2030s and 2040s.

The Dholera Fact Sheet

A single-page reference to the numbers that recur through this book. Every figure is labelled. Durable facts are settled. Reported figures come from credible public sources but may still be settling. Targets are goals, not achievements. Where no reliable figure exists, this sheet says so.

Item	Figure	Confidence
Full name	Dholera Special Investment Region, marketed as Dholera Smart City	Durable
Legal basis	Gujarat Special Investment Region Act, 2009	Durable
Total planned area	about 920 sq km	Durable envelope
Developable area	about 580 sq km	Reported
Urban-developable area	about 422 sq km	Reported
Activation Area	about 22.5 sq km (NICDC 22.54)	Durable
Location	Ahmedabad district, Dholera taluka, Gulf of Khambhat coast	Durable
Distance from Ahmedabad	about 100 km, about 40 min to 1 hr by expressway	Reported
Governing bodies	DSIRDA (authority), DICDL (city-building SPV), NICDC (central nodal agency)	Durable
DICDL ownership	Gujarat 51% via DSIRDA, Centre 49% via NICDC Trust; incorporated 28 Jan 2016	Durable

Corridor	flagship node of the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor	Durable
Town-planning schemes	six (TP1 to TP6), all draft schemes sanctioned	Reported
Semiconductor fab	Tata Electronics with PSMC, Rs 91,000 cr, up to 50,000 wafers/ month, nodes 28 to 110 nm	Durable approval, target status
Fab approval	Union Cabinet, 29 Feb 2024, India Semiconductor Mission	Durable
Expressway	109 km, reported inaugurated 31 Mar 2026	Reported
Airport	runway 3,200 m Code 4E, first trial landing 4 Jun 2026, operations targeted Sept to Oct 2026, not open	Reported / target
Semi-high-speed rail	Sarkhej to Dholera, Rs 20,667 cr, about 134 km, cleared 13 May 2026, targeted 2030-31	Durable approval, target completion
Solar park	about 300 MW operational, 1,000 MW Phase-I sanctioned, 5,000 MW ultimate target	Durable / target
Jobs at full development	more than 800,000	Target
Stamp duty and registration	effective 4.9% stamp duty plus 1% registration (Gujarat)	Durable
Per-unit land price	no trustworthy open-market figure exists	Not reliably sourced

Directory: The Builders Register

Dholera has drawn a large number of developers, brokers, and information portals. This directory exists so that a reader can see who is present and, more importantly, how to check any of them. It is a listing, not an endorsement. Dholerapedia takes no payment to include, rank, or recommend anyone, and a place in this register says nothing about the quality, title, or price of any specific plot.

Before paying anyone in this list, or anyone who quotes the Dholera name, verify three things independently. First, confirm the project's GUJRERA registration number live at gujrera.gujarat.gov.in by searching Ahmedabad district and Dhandhuka taluka, and check that the sanctioned layout and plot numbers match your brochure. Second, confirm the land is Non-Agricultural or sits inside a sanctioned town-planning scheme, and read the 30-year title chain and the 7/12 extract on AnyROR Gujarat. Third, get the full all-in price and payment schedule in writing. A blanket claim of "RERA approved" is not a registration number. Ask for the number and check it yourself.

The register below is drawn from a July 2026 build that combined a large keyword sweep, listicle and roundup crawls, the official Dholera SIR Developers Association roster, and a Google Maps scrape. Where a Google rating is shown, it is the publicly listed rating and review count

at the time of the scrape and may have changed. Where a field is blank in the source, it is marked "not listed" rather than guessed.

ASSOCIATION MEMBER DEVELOPERS

These developers appear on the official developers' association roster with a membership tier. Membership is an association status, not a government guarantee of any project.

Developer	DSDA tier	Contact person	Website	Google rating (reviews)
7 Oak Developers	Diamond	Mr. Dharamdeepsinh Chudasama	7oakdholera.com	4.2 (135)
Alabhya Infra	Diamond	Mr. Narendra G. Joshi	not listed	not listed
Brijraj Infrastructure	Diamond	Mr.Shaktirajsinh Chudasama	brijraj.group	4.9 (29)
Chandani Enterprise	Diamond	Dhruvrajsinh Chudasma	chandanigroup.co.in	not listed
Chhabildas Developers (CT Developers)	Diamond	Mr. Bhavesh C Hakani	https://www.ctdevelopers.in/	5 (13)
Dholera Icon City Developer	Gold	Chandrajeetsinh Ashwinsinh Chudasama	not listed	not listed
Dholera Sir Infra	Diamond	Mr. Chandubhai Jasrajbhai Patel	not listed	not listed
Epsilon Infraprojects	Diamond	Pranavkumar Patel	not listed	not listed

GAP Group	Diamond	Mr. Ambrish Parajiya	gapgroup.in	5 (1)
Infinity Infra	Diamond	Mr. Ruturaj Chudasama	not listed	not listed
Infinium Rera Management	Gold	Mr. Priyank Patel	not listed	not listed
Manav Infra	Diamond	Yadurajsinh Chudasama	not listed	5 (4)
Nestoria Group	Diamond	Nitin Singh Tomar	nestoriagroup.com	not listed
Pacificus Infradeveloper	Diamond	Mr. Bhavik Joshi	not listed	not listed
Portland Infracon	Diamond	Mr. Abhishek Pradumansinh Chudasama	not listed	not listed
Pyramid Infra	Diamond	Mr. Prithvi Goswami	not listed	not listed
Samyak Buildcon	Diamond	Mr. Apurv Sanghvi	samyakbuildcon.com	not listed
Satyaja Infratech	Diamond	Mr. Kuldip Patel	satyajainfratech.com	not listed
Shyam Infrazone	Gold	Mr. Sudhir Patel	not listed	not listed
SmartHomes Infrastructure	Diamond	Mr. Rupinder Singh	smarthomesinfra.com	not listed
Tatvam Realty	Diamond	JIGNESH N THAKAR	not listed	not listed
Vasani Infracon	Gold	Mr. Manoj Vasani	not listed	not listed

THE WIDER DEVELOPER LISTING

A broader alphabetical listing of developer entities surfaced in the same build, with a website where one was found. Inclusion is not endorsement, and several names in the market are resellers or information portals rather than land-owning developers. Always trace a specific project back to its GUJRERA number and title chain.

Developer or entity	Website
7 Oak Developers	7oakdholera.com
77 Pillar	not listed
Aaiji Group	aaijideveloper.com
Aamani Group	not listed
Alabhya Infra	not listed
Angel Nova Group	angdholera.com
Arti Global	not listed
Avirahi (Avirahi City Dholera)	avirahi.com
Brijraj Infrastructure	brijraj.group
Chandani Enterprise	chandanigroup.co.in
Chhabildas Developers (CT Developers)	https://www.ctdevelopers.in/
Cube Infra	cubeinfra.com
DCC Buildtech	not listed
Deep Buildwell	deepbuildwell.com
Deltek Iconic Group	not listed
Destination Dholera	not listed
Dholera Capital City	dholeracapitalcity.com
Dholera Green Estate	not listed
Dholera Icon City Developer	not listed

Dholera Sir Infra	not listed
Dholera Worldmark LLP	not listed
DIDPL (Dholera Infra Development)	didpl.com
Drashti Infra Dholera	drishtiinfradholera.com
Ekaksh Ventures	not listed
Emara Developers	emaradevelopers.com
Epsilon Infraprojects	not listed
Ercha Developers	not listed
Eternal Group India	eternalgroupindia.com
Ethereum Infracon Group	ethereuminfracon.com
FMCG Lakeview	idholera.com
FMCG LAKEVIEW INFRASTRUCTURES - Dholera Property Flats and Retail Shops for Rent	http://www.idholera.com/
G9 Properties	g9properties.in
GAP Group	gapgroup.in
Garg Realty Group	gargrealtygroup.com
Gohil Developers	gohildevelopers.com
Govinda Estate India	https://yt.openinapp.co/Govinda-Real-Estate
Greentech Lifespace Dholera	greentechdholera.com
Iconic Buildcon	not listed
Indra Developers	indradeveloper.com
Infinity Infra	not listed
Infinium Rera Management	not listed
ISHIYANA REAL ESTATE	not listed
Ishree Builders & Developers	not listed

J Joshi Infra Projects	not listed
K&T Group	not listed
Kavvan Infra	not listed
Landbitt	landbitt.com
Magnanimous Infrastructure	not listed
Manav Infra	not listed
Mirrikh Group	mirrikh.com
Monteco Developers	montecodevelopers.com
Navkar (Navkar Dholera SIR)	navkardholerasir.com
Nestoria Group	nestoriagroup.com
Nirman Group	dholeranirmangroup.com
Only Dholera	not listed
Pacificus Infradeveloper	not listed
Palacio Estate	not listed
Portland Infracon	not listed
Pyramid Infra	not listed
Raksha Dholera Green City	not listed
RB Falcon Developers	rbfalcon.com
Realty Rise Group	realtyrisegroup.com
Riddhi Siddhi Real Estate	not listed
RK Group Dholera	rkgroupdholera.com
Royal Bharti Infraventures	not listed
RSC Group Dholera	rscgroupdholera.in
Samyak Buildcon	samyakbuildcon.com
Satyaja Infratech	satyajainfratech.com
SCRJ Developers	not listed

Seksaria Group	seksariagroup.com
Shagun Builders	dholerashaguncity.com
Shivgan Infratech	dholeraprime.com
Shyam Infrazone	not listed
SIR Projects	not listed
Smart Dholera	smartdholera.com
SmartHomes Infrastructure	smarthomesinfra.com
Sohit Dua Group	not listed
Tatvam Realty	not listed
The Dholera SIR	thedholerasir.com
Vasani Infracon	not listed
Vedansh Group	not listed
Vittaarch Group	vittaarchgroup.com
We9 Properties	we9properties.com

A note on projects. A separate build catalogued roughly 109 individual plotting projects marketed under the Dholera name. Those listings are not reproduced here, because a project listing without a live GUJRERA check and a title search is exactly the kind of unverified claim this book is built to avoid. Use the verification steps above for any project you encounter.

Directory: Major Projects and Anchors

Where the builders register lists the companies selling plots, this directory lists the large infrastructure and industrial anchors that actually give Dholera its shape. These are the projects referenced throughout the book, gathered in one place with their status label.

Project	Lead or agency	Figure	Status
Tata-PSMC semiconductor fab	Tata Electronics with PSMC	Rs 91,000 cr, up to 50,000 wafers/month	Under construction, no chip yet
Ahmedabad-Dholera Expressway	NHAI	109 km, 4-lane, expandable	Reported open, Mar 2026
Dholera International Airport	DIACL (AAI, Gujarat, NICDC)	3,200 m runway, Code 4E	First trial landing done, not open
Sarkhej-Dholera semi-high-speed rail	Central government, PIB cleared	Rs 20,667 cr, about 134 km	Approved May 2026, target 2030-31
Dholera Ultra-Mega Solar Park	GPCL; Tata Power and others	about 300 MW live of 5,000 MW target	Partly operational
Tata Power solar plant	Tata Power Solar	300 MW, 873,012 modules, 1,320 acres	Commissioned
L&T Vyoma AI data centre	L&T	Rs 25,000 cr, 250 MW	Agreement, target about 2028

ABCD building and ICCC	DICDL	about 9 ha plot, LEED Gold design	Reported operational
Activation Area trunk infrastructure	DICDL, NICDC packages	Rs 2,784.83 cr released	Built and released
Additional semiconductor units	Union Cabinet cleared	combined more than Rs 3,900 cr	Reported, May 2026

The following are announcements or memoranda of understanding, not delivered capital. They are listed separately and honestly: an MoU is an intention, not a building. Reliance renewable and green-hydrogen plans, Adani data-centre plans, Tsingshan steel and battery (about Rs 21,000 cr reported), Embraer and Adani civil-aircraft assembly (about 2028), Jabil silicon-photonics, and INOX Air Products specialty gases. A single-sourced Tillman figure of about Rs 83,000 cr is flagged as likely conflated with a smaller project elsewhere and should not be treated as a Dholera commitment.

Government and Official Sources

The bodies that govern, fund, promote, or connect Dholera, with their official portals. These are the primary records a careful reader should prefer over any broker page.

Body	Role	Portal
DSIRDA	Statutory planning and land authority	dholera.gujarat.gov.in
DICDL	Special purpose vehicle that builds the city	dholera.gujarat.gov.in
NICDC	Central nodal agency for industrial corridors	nicdc.in
GIDB	Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board	gidb.gujarat.gov.in
iNDEXTb	Investment promotion, single-window	indextb.com
GIDC	Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation	gidc.gujarat.gov.in
Industries Commissionerate	Gujarat industrial policy	ic.gujarat.gov.in
GUJRERA	Real estate regulatory authority	gujrera.gujarat.gov.in
DIACL	Airport special purpose vehicle	dholera.gujarat.gov.in/about_diacl
Vibrant Gujarat	State investment summits	vibrantgujarat.com

AnyROR Gujarat	Land records (7/12 extract)	anyror.gujarat.gov.in

The Milestone Timeline

A dated spine of the whole story, drawn from the sources in this book. Future dates are targets.

1. The Gujarat Special Investment Region Act is enacted, the legal foundation for Dholera.

2011 to 2015. Land transfers proceed and are then litigated; in 2015 the Gujarat High Court stays the SIR acquisition after farmer petitions.

28 January 2016. DICDL, the special purpose vehicle that builds the city, is incorporated with Gujarat holding 51 percent and the Centre 49 percent.

29 February 2024. The Union Cabinet approves the Tata Electronics and PSMC semiconductor fab, about Rs 91,000 cr, under the India Semiconductor Mission.

August 2024. The Cabinet approves 12 new industrial cities under the National Industrial Corridor programme, reaffirming Dholera as the flagship node.

5 March 2025. The Fiscal Support Agreement for the fab is signed, locking in central support.

31 March 2026. The Ahmedabad to Dholera Expressway is reported inaugurated, cutting travel time to about 40 minutes to 1 hour.

13 May 2026. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs clears the Sarkhej to Dholera semi-high-speed rail, about Rs 20,667 cr, targeted for 2030-31.

17 May 2026. A lithography partnership between Tata Electronics and ASML is reported.

4 June 2026. The first aircraft, an AAI calibration flight, lands on the Dholera runway. The runway is proven usable; the airport is not open.

Mid 2026. The fab is past the halfway mark in civil work with no chip produced yet; about 300 MW of solar is operational; the airport is reported about 80 percent complete with operations targeted for September to October 2026.

Glossary

Activation Area. The roughly 22.5 sq km demonstration zone inside town-planning scheme 2, built first with trunk infrastructure.

ABCD building. The Administrative cum Business Centre for Dholera, which houses the city's control centre and single-window offices.

Bhal. The flat, low-lying coastal tract of the Gulf of Khambhat on which Dholera sits.

Code 4E. An airport reference code for the runway class Dholera's single runway is built to.

CRZ. Coastal Regulation Zone, the protected coastal band that covers a large share of Dholera's developable land.

DFC. Dedicated Freight Corridor, the freight rail backbone of the industrial corridor programme.

DIACL. Dholera International Airport Company Ltd, the airport special purpose vehicle.

DICDL. Dholera Industrial City Development Ltd, the special purpose vehicle that builds the city.

DMIC. Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, the freight-anchored industrial belt of which Dholera is the flagship node.

DSIRDA. Dholera Special Investment Region Development Authority, the statutory planning and land authority.

Final plot. The serviced plot an owner receives back after land pooling, smaller than the original but with roads and utilities.

GIDB. Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board.

GIDC. Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation, which builds industrial estates.

GIFT City. Gujarat International Finance Tec-City, the state's operational finance and IFSC hub near Gandhinagar, distinct from Dholera.

GUJRERA. The Gujarat Real Estate Regulatory Authority, under the national RERA law of 2016.

ICCC. Integrated Command and Control Centre, the digital control room of the smart city.

iNDEXTb. The Industrial Extension Bureau, Gujarat's investment-promotion agency.

ISM. India Semiconductor Mission, the central scheme supporting the fab.

Land pooling. The mechanism by which owners contribute land, the authority services it, and each owner receives a serviced final plot.

Lothal. The Harappan port and dockyard site about 36 km from Dholera.

MLD. Million litres per day, a measure of water treatment capacity.

N.A. land. Non-Agricultural land, the status required before legal construction.

NICDC. National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation, the central nodal agency, formerly DMICDC.

Node (semiconductor). The process generation of a chip, quoted in nanometres; Dholera's fab targets mature nodes from 28 to 110 nm.

PSMC. Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation, the Taiwanese technology partner for the fab.

SIR. Special Investment Region, the legal category created by the Gujarat Act of 2009.

SPV. Special purpose vehicle, a company created for a single project, such as DICDL or DIACL.

Town-planning scheme. A sanctioned planning unit; Dholera has six, TP1 to TP6.

7/12 extract. A Gujarat land record showing ownership and rights, checked on AnyROR.

Wafer. A thin disc of semiconductor material processed into chips; the fab targets up to 50,000 per month.

Sources and Further Reading

This book is built from public sources, preferring primary and official records. The principal ones are listed here by category. Access dates fall in July 2026.

Government and official. dholera.gujarat.gov.in (DICDL about page, board, jobs, area split, gallery, land pricing); nicdc.in (Dholera SIR node); the Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board at gidb.org and gidb.gujarat.gov.in; the India Semiconductor Mission material via the Press Information Bureau; the Central Electricity Authority quarterly solar-parks report of September 2025; gujrera.gujarat.gov.in; census2011.co.in for Dholera village; the Gujarati Vishwakosh entry on the Dholera Satyagraha; the NICDC Delivery Monitoring Unit report of 30 June 2026; and the DSIRDA sanctioned development plan.

Company and project. tata.com and tataelectronics.com for the fab and the ASML partnership; tatapowersolar.com for the 300 MW solar commissioning; newsonair.gov.in for the L&T Vyoma data-centre agreement.

Press and reference. The Press Information Bureau release on the semi-high-speed rail (13 May 2026); national and trade coverage of the airport review, the fab node roadmap, and investment announcements, each labelled reported in the text; and the Wikipedia entries for

Dholera SIR, the airport, the expressway, the solar park, GIFT City, and Lothal, used as secondary orientation rather than primary fact.

Where this book states a figure as reported or target rather than durable, the reason is that the primary record either does not yet confirm it or gives a different number. That labelling is the point of the book.

Image Credits

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expressway-1.jpg (illustrative)	Delhi-Gurgaon Airport Expressway, 2007.jpg	V Malik from New Delhi & Pune, India	CC BY-SA 2.0
freight-1.jpg (illustrative)	A final look at the container train as it trundles along (49495691737).jpg	shankar s. from Poona (pune), India, India	CC BY 2.0

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About Dholerapedia

Dholerapedia is an independent reference project with one job, to be the clearest and most honest source of information about the Dholera Special Investment Region. It does not sell plots, does not act as a broker, and takes no payment to promote or rank anyone. Every figure it publishes is drawn from a compiled fact ledger and labelled by confidence, so a reader always knows a confirmed fact from a reported target. This is the third book in its Dholera series, following a guide to the investment question and a case for entering the region carefully. Where those books argued, this one describes. Learn more at dholerapedia.com.

Methodology and Confidence Labels

Everything in this book follows three rules. First, no invented data. Every number, date, capacity, distance, and name comes from a public source, and where no reliable figure exists, the book says so rather than guessing. This is why no per-unit land price appears as fact, because no trustworthy open-market figure exists. Second, honest confidence. Durable facts are settled. Reported figures come from credible but secondary or single sources and keep the word reported. Targets are goals and are always labelled as such, including the airport opening, the 5,000 MW solar capacity, the 800,000 jobs, and the full 920 sq km city. Third, neutrality. Dholera is described as the flagship greenfield industrial smart city and the largest node of the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, which is accurate, rather than the disputed marketing claim of India's first smart city. No named developer is praised or flagged; facts are listed and the reader is pointed to the official record to verify them.

The book was assembled from a maintained Dholera fact ledger current to July 2026, cross-checked against the primary sources listed above. Mega-project timelines move, and every future date here should be read as a target unless it is marked as done. If a fact in these pages later changes, the change will be in the record before it is in the marketing.