

Why Greenfield Cities Succeed or Fail: A Comparative Analysis of Seventeen New Cities and the Outlook for India's Dholera Special Investment Region

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Abstract

Governments and developers have announced dozens of built-from-scratch cities since 1980, and most of them are emptier than their planners promised. This paper asks why some greenfield new cities fill up while others stall, and what the comparative record implies for India's largest greenfield experiment, the Dholera Special Investment Region. It assembles a verified dataset of seventeen master-planned new cities announced between 1980 and 2019 across eleven countries, spanning administrative capitals (Sejong, Putrajaya, Nusantara, Amaravati, Naya Raipur, New Clark City), real-estate-led ventures (Songdo, Forest City, King Abdullah Economic City, Eko Atlantic, Lavasa, NEOM's The Line), and industry-anchored projects (Shenzhen, Masdar, GIFT City, Konza, Yachay), with every quantitative claim tagged by confidence level and conflicting figures reported rather than averaged. Three findings emerge. First, population attainment is bimodal: cities whose demand anchor was actually delivered reach a median of 35.7 percent of their population target, while cities with pending or failed anchors sit at a median of 1.16 percent, and announced capital spending does not predict traction. Second, sequencing matters through delivery, not through labels: administrative relocations that moved the state (Sejong, Putrajaya) and industrial zones that opened factories (Shenzhen) populated, while presale-financed real estate cities recorded the weakest outcomes regardless of location. Third, on the paper's eight-dimension Greenfield City Viability Index (GCVI), Dholera scores 3.10 of 5, ranking eighth of the seventeen cases plus itself, with the field's most committed industrial anchor still under construction and zero measurable population traction, a profile the index reads as high-commitment, pre-delivery. The paper derives five propositions on greenfield viability, applies them to Dholera's road to its 2042 horizon, and states the honest arithmetic between a fabrication plant's roughly 20,000 jobs and a promotional target of one million residents. All data carry source tags; unsourced numbers are declined rather than invented.

Keywords: *greenfield new cities; Dholera SIR; anchor tenant; comparative urbanism; special economic zones; megaprojects; land pooling; semiconductor fabrication; smart cities; India*

1. Introduction

In 2026 a traveller can drive the new expressway from Ahmedabad and, in about an hour, reach a place where the twenty-first century's strangest urban wager is being settled. Roads sit in a neat grid over roughly 22.5 square kilometres of coastal plain. Underground ducts carry power, fibre, gas and treated water to plots where almost nobody lives. A few kilometres away, one of the largest single private investments in Indian history, a semiconductor fabrication plant, rises past its halfway mark. The place is the Dholera Special Investment Region, and the wager is the same one being run, with local variations, on the reclaimed mudflats of Incheon, the tidal shallows of Johor, the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia, and the forest edge of Borneo: that a state or a developer can build the container of a city first and the contents, people and firms and daily life, will arrive to fill it.

The author's earlier paper on Dholera set down the project's record chronologically, from corridor concept to semiconductor anchor (Sarkhedi, 2026). That survey answered the question of what happened. It could not answer the harder question a chronicle never reaches: is this working, by the standards of everything else that has been tried? Dholera's boosters compare it to Shenzhen; its critics compare it to a mirage. Both comparisons are usually made with adjectives. This paper makes them with data.

The paper does three things. First, it assembles a comparative dataset of seventeen greenfield master-planned cities announced between 1980 and 2019, selected under explicit criteria and documented to a uniform schema: announcement and construction dates, planned area, population target, latest credible actual population, investment announced and spent, governance and financing model, primary demand anchor and its delivery status, connectivity, land assembly method and disputes, and current status in 2025 or 2026. Every figure carries a confidence tag, official, reported, or target, in the tradition of the confidence register used in the earlier survey; where sources conflict, both figures are reported, and where no credible figure exists the entry says unknown. Second, it proposes and applies a measurement instrument, the Greenfield City Viability Index (GCVI), which scores each case on eight dimensions covering demand, delivery, connectivity, location, finance, land, governance and traction, and tests the ranking's stability under four weighting schemes. Third, it places Dholera inside that comparative frame, dimension by dimension, and derives what the record of its sixteen siblings implies for the years between now and its 2042 build-out horizon.

Three research questions organise the analysis:

RQ1. How do greenfield new cities announced since 1980 actually perform against their own population targets, and how is that performance distributed?

RQ2. Which factors, sequencing type, anchor delivery, location, financing structure, land assembly, governance continuity, best separate the cities that populated from the cities that did not?

RQ3. Where does Dholera SIR sit in that comparative field in mid 2026, and what does the field's record imply about its plausible trajectories?

The headline answer to RQ1 is that the distribution is brutally bimodal. Of the thirteen cases with both a population target and a credible actual count, three have crossed a third of their target (Sejong at 78.9 percent, Songdo at about 75.3 percent, Putrajaya at 35.7 percent) and eight sit below 3 percent. The middle is nearly empty. The answer to RQ2 is that the dividing line is not age, ambition, or money. It is whether the city's demand anchor, the thing that was supposed to give people a reason to be there, was actually delivered. Cities with a delivered anchor show a median attainment of 35.7 percent; cities whose anchor is pending, partial or failed show a median of 1.16 percent. NEOM has absorbed more than 50 billion US dollars and houses no conventional residents; Putrajaya cost about 8.1 billion and houses about 120,000 people. The answer to RQ3 is that Dholera scores 3.10 on the GCVI, eighth of eighteen entries, above every failed real-estate city and every stalled peer, below everything that has actually delivered an anchor and gained a population. Its profile is distinctive: the strongest contracted industrial anchor in the sample's pending class, near-complete connectivity, durable financing and governance, and, as of mid 2026, no measurable population traction at all, because its anchor has not yet switched on.

The paper's contributions are, in order of importance: a uniform, source-tagged comparative dataset of seventeen new cities, which did not previously exist in one place at this level of sourcing discipline; the anchor-delivery finding, which reframes the sequencing debate in the new cities literature from a question of type (state-led versus market-led) to a question of delivered demand; the GCVI instrument, offered with its rubric, scores and sensitivity tests so that any reader can re-score any case; and the first placement of Dholera in a systematic comparative frame, replacing adjectives with positions on distributions. The paper is written by an independent researcher, not a booster; Section 11 discloses the author's interests, and the treatment of Dholera's weaknesses in Section 8 is as unsparing as the treatment of its strengths.

A note on what this paper is not. It is not a prediction that Dholera will succeed or fail; with the anchor undelivered, the index reads the case as genuinely undecided. It is not an evaluation of any private developer or plot seller operating in or around the SIR, and nothing here is investment advice. And it is not a moral audit of greenfield urbanisation, although the land assembly dimension carries the consent disputes, displacements and, in one case, a killing, that this model of city-building has produced, because a viability index that ignored the land question would be measuring the wrong thing.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews four literatures the analysis draws on. Section 3 builds the conceptual framework: a sequencing typology and the GCVI. Section 4 details the methodology. Section 5 profiles the seventeen cases. Section 6 reports cross-case findings. Section 7 reports GCVI results and sensitivity. Section 8 applies the framework to Dholera. Section 9 discusses five propositions and their implications. Section 10 states limitations and future work, and Section 11 concludes. Appendices carry the master data

table, the scoring rubric, and the data confidence register.

2. Literature review

Four bodies of work frame this study: the new cities literature in urban studies and geography; the economics of special zones, agglomeration and anchor firms; the megaproject performance literature; and the smart city critique, including the small academic corpus specifically about Dholera. The review is selective and instrumental. Its purpose is to extract what each literature predicts about greenfield viability, so that the comparative findings in Section 6 can be read against those predictions.

2.1 New cities, new towns, and speculative urbanism

Building cities from scratch is old. Ebenezer Howard's garden city programme produced Letchworth and Welwyn; the twentieth century's high-modernist state produced Brasilia and Chandigarh, projects James Holston (1989) analysed as attempts to use the plan itself as an instrument of social transformation, and James C. Scott (1998) folded into his broader account of how states simplify territory in ways that make it legible to administration and illegible to life. Scott's diagnosis, that schemes fail when they suppress the local, improvised knowledge a functioning settlement runs on, is the oldest standing prediction about places like Dholera: a city designed entirely before its residents exist has, by construction, none of their knowledge in it.

What is new since about 2000 is the scale, the geography and the business model of the phenomenon. Moser and Côté-Roy (2021) count more than 150 new city projects announced in the Global South in two decades and identify the type's signature: state land, master developer, international consultants, spectacular renderings, and an economic promise that runs ahead of any demonstrated demand. Watson (2014) read the African wave of such projects as urban fantasies, plans whose imagery answers investor desire rather than resident need, and van Noorloos and Kloosterboer (2018), surveying Africa's new cities, foresaw the outcome pattern the present dataset confirms: enclaves for the few, delay for the many, and a persistent gap between announced and delivered scale. Côté-Roy and Moser (2019) document the seductive rhetoric that keeps the model selling despite that record. Shatkin (2017) supplies the political economy: for many states, the real product of a new city is monetisable land, the transformation of rural or reclaimed territory into a saleable financial asset, what he calls the real estate turn. Balakrishnan (2019), studying India's corridor regions, shows how agrarian landowners themselves become shareholders in that transformation, which is precisely the mechanism Gujarat's town planning schemes formalise at Dholera.

Individual case studies supply the texture behind the pattern. Shwayri (2013) traces how Songdo was engineered as an export product, a city built to be replicated and sold. Cugurullo (2016, 2018) dissects Masdar as an experiment that quietly abandoned its own eco-city premises when finance tightened, coining the phrase Frankenstein urbanism for cities assembled from disconnected

experimental fragments. Keeton and Provoost (2019) compile the African new town record into a history and a manual. This literature's collective prediction for the dataset: new cities will systematically undershoot their targets, the undershoot will be worst where the business model is land and property sales, and the projects will nonetheless keep being announced, because the announcement itself does political and financial work.

2.2 Zones, agglomeration, and the anchor tenant

If the new cities literature predicts undershoot, economic geography explains the exceptions. Cities exist because proximity pays: Marshall (1890) identified the externalities, shared labour pools, specialised suppliers, knowledge spillovers, that make firms cluster, and Krugman (1991) and Fujita, Krugman and Venables (1999) formalised how increasing returns and transport costs make settlement patterns self-reinforcing. Porter (1998) and Saxenian (1994) turned cluster formation into policy doctrine. The implication for a greenfield city is stark: a new settlement must buy its way past the self-reinforcement that every existing city already enjoys, and the entry ticket is a demand source strong enough to start the loop.

The special economic zone literature records how states have tried to buy that ticket. Farole (2011) and Zeng (2010), reviewing African and Chinese zones for the World Bank, converge on the finding that zones succeed where they connect to real trade routes, real labour markets and real firm demand, and fail where they are fiscal enclaves in empty land. Aggarwal (2012) reaches parallel conclusions for India's SEZs. Shenzhen, the one unambiguous city-scale success in this paper's dataset, is the limiting case: an enormous zone placed against the world's most successful trading city at the exact moment that city's manufacturers needed cheap land and labour, with migration rules loosened so workers could actually come. Its designation-era population is disputed by boundary definition, roughly thirty thousand in the market town, about one hundred thousand in the area that became the zone, around three hundred thousand in the wider county, but by the 2020 census the municipality held 17.56 million people. No other case in the dataset has one tenth of that trajectory.

Agrawal and Cockburn (2003) give the mechanism a name this paper borrows: the anchor tenant. In their study of regional innovation systems, the presence of a large, local, R&D-intensive; firm lifts the productivity of the whole regional ecosystem around it. Mathews (1997) and Saxenian and Hsu (2001) document the urban version in Taiwan: the Hsinchu Science-based Industrial Park, seeded by state institutes and one anchor foundry model, compounded into a city-region of fabs, suppliers and returned-migrant engineers. Castells and Hall (1994) catalogue the world's technopoles and note how rarely the formula transfers. The contemporary semiconductor buildouts echo the same logic at higher capital intensity: TSMC's Phoenix complex (TSMC, 2024; US Department of Commerce, 2024) and Samsung's Pyeongtaek campus (Samsung Electronics, 2017) are anchor tenants deliberately planted by industrial policy, with cities expected to thicken around them. Dholera's Tata fab is India's entry in exactly this genre. The literature's prediction: anchor commitment is necessary but not sufficient; what converts an anchor into a city is delivered

operation plus supplier attraction plus a labour market within reach.

2.3 Megaproject performance

Flyvbjerg's megaproject research programme supplies the base rates. Across samples of large infrastructure projects, nine in ten suffer cost overruns, benefits shortfalls are routine, and the causes are systematic, optimism bias and strategic misrepresentation rather than bad luck (Flyvbjerg, Bruzelius and Rothengatter, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2014). Flyvbjerg's iron law, over budget, over time, under benefits, over and over, was derived mostly from single-asset projects, bridges, rail lines, plants. A new city is a portfolio of megaprojects wrapped in a real estate pro forma, and should therefore be expected to underperform its promises by more, not less. Hirschman (1967) offers the optimistic counter: his Hiding Hand argues that underestimating difficulty is sometimes what lets valuable projects start at all, with creativity summoned by trouble making up the gap. The dataset allows a crude adjudication: it contains projects where trouble summoned creativity (Sejong survived a constitutional court defeat and a hostile administration; Amaravati survived a five-year political freeze) and projects where trouble simply won (Lavasa, Yachay). The megaproject literature's prediction: expect every population target in the dataset to be missed; treat the size and pattern of the miss, not its existence, as the information.

2.4 Smart cities and the Dholera corpus

Dholera is marketed as a smart city, so the smart city critique applies. Kitchen (2014) and Mattern (2017, 2021) argue that the real-time, data-driven city is largely a vendor's imaginary, and Halpern and colleagues (2013) show, through Songdo, how test-bed urbanism treats residents as an afterthought to instrumentation. Datta (2018) traces India's translation of the smart city idea into a hundred-city mission (Ministry of Urban Development, 2015) whose flagship greenfield case was Dholera itself.

The specifically Dholera scholarship is small, sharp and uniformly critical. Datta (2015) read Dholera as entrepreneurial urbanisation, a state using speed and spectacle to convert farmland into investable product ahead of any demonstrated demand. Sampat (2016), in a special issue of the Economic and Political Weekly on greenfield urbanism, documented the land pooling contestation, farmers discovering that the town planning mechanism could take effective control of their land while formally leaving them owners. In the same issue, Kennedy and Sood (2016) placed Dholera-type projects in a rescaled governance frame where state governments create exceptional spaces exempt from ordinary planning, and Anand and Sami (2016) mapped the corridor-scale rescaling of the DMIC that produced Dholera in the first place. Ballaney (2008) and Patel and Ballaney (2009) explain the town planning scheme mechanism itself, Gujarat's land pooling instrument, which is both Dholera's central innovation over acquisition-based models like Amaravati's and its central point of legal contestation. The Dholera corpus predicts, in short, that the project serves capital before residents and will be slower and more contested than announced. Ten years on, this paper can test the slower and the contested claims against the delivery record,

and does so in Section 8.

2.5 The gap this paper fills

Each literature offers a lens; none offers a scoreboard. The new cities literature is rich in critique and thin in comparable numbers; its census-style contributions count projects, not outcomes. The zone and cluster literature measures firms and exports, rarely resident populations. The megaproject literature has base rates for bridges and rail, not for whole cities. And the Dholera corpus, the present author's earlier survey included, is single-case. What is missing is a uniform, sourced, multi-case comparison of announced targets against delivered outcomes, with an explicit instrument for reading a live case against the field. That is the gap this paper fills.

3. Conceptual framework

3.1 Three sequencing types

Every greenfield city answers one question before any other: what arrives first? The dataset suggests three answers, which this paper formalises as sequencing types.

Administrative-led projects move the state first. Government offices, and the salaries attached to them, are the seed demand: Putrajaya moved Malaysia's ministries beginning in 1999; Sejong moved 44 central agencies and about 14,000 civil servants from 2012; Nusantara, Amaravati, Naya Raipur and New Clark City are attempts at the same move at different stages of delivery. The state is a peculiar anchor tenant: it cannot go bankrupt, but it can change its mind, and the type's failure mode is political discontinuity, as Amaravati's five frozen years demonstrate.

Real-estate-led projects sell the city first. Homes, offices and serviced land are pre-sold to finance construction, and the jobs are expected to follow the rooftops: Songdo's private developer financed itself through pre-sales; Forest City sold apartments to mainland Chinese buyers before any employment base existed; KAEC was floated on the stock exchange as a land development company; Eko Atlantic sells reclaimed freehold plots; Lavasa sold second homes; The Line, in product terms, is a residential megastructure. The type's failure mode is a demand shock to property sales, capital controls in Forest City's case, a debt crisis in Lavasa's, at which point the city has no second engine.

Industry-led projects place production first. A factory, port, cluster or institutional complex is the seed, and housing follows employment: Shenzhen's export manufacturing, Masdar's cleantech cluster and university, GIFT City's regulatory-tax financial enclave, Konza's technology park ambition, Yachay's university, and Dholera's fabrication plant. The type's failure mode is anchor non-delivery or anchor insufficiency, an anchor that operates but employs too few people, or pays them too little, to populate a city.

The typology is descriptive, not evaluative. Section 6 shows that no type guarantees success; the variable that separates outcomes inside every type is whether the promised anchor, of whatever

kind, was actually delivered.

3.2 The Greenfield City Viability Index

The GCVI is an eight-dimension composite scored 0 to 5 per dimension. The dimensions were derived jointly from the literature's predictions (Section 2) and the recurring differentiators observed while assembling the dataset. They are:

DA, Demand Anchor Realism (weight 0.20). Is there a committed, external, revenue-generating source of demand for presence in this specific place, a plant with a signed fiscal support agreement, a statutory relocation, a port with shipping lines, and how binding is the commitment? Scored on commitment strength, not delivery.

AD, Anchor Delivery (0.15). How much of the promised anchor is actually operating today?

CI, Connectivity Integration (0.10). Are the expressway, rail and airport links that the plan assumes actually operational?

PM, Proximate Metro Gravity (0.10). How large and how close is the nearest existing labour and consumption market? Shenzhen borders Hong Kong; NEOM borders nothing.

FD, Financing Durability (0.10). Can the funding survive a market cycle? Sovereign budgets and statutory allocations score high; presale-dependent structures score low.

LA, Land Assembly Durability (0.10). Does the land model minimise unresolved conflict? Reclamation and empty state land score high; contested expropriation and litigation-laden pooling score lower; documented forced displacement scores lowest.

GC, Governance Continuity (0.10). Has the delivery institution survived political turnover with its mandate intact?

PT, Population Traction (0.15). Banded score of the actual-to-target attainment ratio.

The base weights sum DA and AD to 0.35, embedding the framework's central claim that demand, promised and delivered, dominates viability; PT at 0.15 rewards realised outcomes; the remaining five dimensions carry 0.10 each. Because any weighting is contestable, Section 7 re-scores every case under equal weights, a delivery-heavy scheme and a demand-heavy scheme, and reports rank stability. The full rubric with scoring anchors per level is Appendix B.

Two design choices deserve defence. First, the index scores commitment and delivery separately (DA versus AD) precisely because the dataset's central pattern is the gap between them; collapsing the two would hide the variable that matters most. Second, PT is included even though it partially overlaps the outcome the index explains. The GCVI is a diagnostic scoreboard, not a causal model: it is meant to summarise where a case stands, and a standings table that ignored the score so far would mislead. Readers who want the index as a pure ex-ante instrument can consult the delivery-heavy and demand-heavy variants in Table 5, and the PT-excluded reading in Section 7.3.

4. Methodology

4.1 Case selection

Cases were selected against five criteria: (1) greenfield, built substantially on land, reclaimed or rural, without a pre-existing city, allowing small pre-existing villages; (2) master-planned as a named city or city-scale district by a state or master developer; (3) announced between 1980 and 2019, giving every case at least seven years of record; (4) city-scale ambition, a planned population of roughly 45,000 or more, or an explicit city-building mandate; and (5) documentation sufficiency, enough official and credible secondary sourcing to fill the schema without invention. Within those criteria, selection maximised variation on sequencing type, region, income level and outcome, because the analysis is comparative rather than statistical and needs the full range of the phenomenon. Shenzhen is included deliberately as the historical baseline and best case, with its definitional ambiguities reported; Dholera is the focal case. The roster is Table 1.

Table 1. Case roster: eighteen entries, seventeen comparison cases plus the focal case, ordered by announcement year.

Case	Country	Ann .	Type	Planned area (sq km)	Target pop (horizon)	Latest actual (yr)	Primary anchor
Shenzhen SEZ	China	1980	Industry	~327.5 (2010: citywide)	none formal	17,560,000 (2020)	Export manufacturing, HK adjacency
Putrajaya	Malaysia	1995	Admin.	49	335,000	119,700 (2024)	Federal government relocation
Songdo IBD	South Korea	2003	Real estate	53.36 (city); 6 IBD	265,611 (2030)	~200,000 (2023)	International business hub (aspirational)
Naya Raipur	India	2003	Admin.	237 planning; 80 core	560,000 (2031)	~64,353 (2025, unofficial)	State capital relocation
Eko Atlantic	Nigeria	2003	Real estate	~10 (reclaimed)	250,000-300,000	unknown (sparse)	Reclaimed freehold land sales
Sejong	South Korea	2005	Admin.	72.91 (MAC)	500,000 (2030)	394,630 (2024)	Central government relocation
KAEC	Saudi Arabia	2005	Real estate	173-181 (conflict)	2,000,000 (2020)	~10,000 (2024)	Red Sea port and industrial valley
Masdar City	UAE	2006	Industry	6	45,000-50,000	5,000 res. (2023)	Cleantech cluster and university
Lavasa	India	2006	Real estate	32-100 (conflict)	200,000-250,000	<2,000 (2026)	Tourism and second homes
GIFT City	India	2007	Industry	3.6, expanding ~13.4	none (1M jobs, 2025)	~28,000 jobs (2025)	IFSC financial services enclave
Konza	Kenya	2008	Admin.	20.2	200,000+ (2030)	~0 residents (2025)	Tech/BPO cluster and data centre
Dholera SIR	India	2009	Industry	920 plan; ~422 urban	~1,000,000 (2040-42, promo)	~0 new-city (2026)	Semiconductor fab (Tata-PSMC)
Yachay	Ecuador	2012	Admin.	44.6	unverified (~80,000)	~2,000 students (2025)	Research university and tech cluster
Forest City	Malaysia	2014	Real estate	~14-30 (conflict)	700,000 (2035)	~10,000 (2024)	Second homes for Chinese buyers
Amaravati	India	2014	Admin.	217	3,500,000 (2050)	~100,000 pre-existing (2024)	State capital relocation

Case	Country	Ann .	Type	Planned area (sq km)	Target pop (horizon)	Latest actual (yr)	Primary anchor
New Clark City	Philippines	2016	Admin.	94.5	1,200,000 (2065)	~229 students (2025)	Govt administrative centre + sports
NEOM The Line	Saudi Arabia	2017	Real estate	26,500 (zone); Line 170 km	9,000,000 (Line)	0 (2026)	State vision: tourism, tech, megastructure
Nusantara	Indonesia	2019	Admin.	~2,561 (delineated)	1,910,000 (2045)	147,430 delineated (2025)	National capital relocation

Cases considered and excluded include Naypyidaw (announced 2005 but effectively secret until occupation, defeating the announcement-to-delivery measurement), Rawabi in Palestine and Duqm in Oman (documentation sufficiency), and China's ordinary new districts (too numerous and too continuous with existing metros to be greenfield in this paper's sense).

Seventeen cases plus the focal case is not a census of the phenomenon. It is a structured sample built for range, and the statistics reported for it are descriptive and exploratory, a point Section 10 returns to.

4.2 Data protocol

Data were gathered in July and August 2026 by structured web research against a fixed schema per city, with a hard sourcing rule inherited from the author's earlier Dholera survey: every number carries a source and a confidence tag. OFFICIAL means a government, master plan, census, multilateral or first-party company figure. REPORTED means credible journalism or academic work. TARGET means a forward promise not yet delivered. Where two credible sources conflict, both figures are reported side by side and the conflict is carried into the analysis rather than resolved by preference; examples include Sejong's total project cost (22.5 trillion versus 45.7 trillion won across sources), Forest City's planned area (14 to 30 square kilometres by definition), Shenzhen's baseline population (30,000 to 310,000 by boundary), KAEC's planned area (173 to 181 square kilometres) and Lavasa's concession area (32 to 100 square kilometres). Where no credible figure exists, the cell reads unknown; Eko Atlantic's resident population, Konza's resident population and any cumulative-spend figure for several projects are recorded as unknown rather than estimated. Numerators with known definitional problems are used only with explicit caveats: Nusantara's official 147,430 count covers a delineated territory that is mostly pre-existing villages, and Amaravati's roughly 100,000 residents are the pre-existing villagers of the capital footprint, so both enter the attainment analysis flagged and are discussed as caveated in the text.

Currency figures are kept in their original denomination in the master table. Where a US dollar comparison is unavoidable (Figure 10), conversions use the figure most commonly reported in dollars by the sources themselves, or an approximate period conversion, and the figure is labelled approximate; no analysis in the paper turns on a conversion.

The population attainment ratio, the paper's core outcome measure, is defined as the latest credible actual population divided by the planned target population, using the most recent credible actual (2023 to 2026 in all cases) and the headline plan target. Where targets changed over time, the

original headline target is used, because the announcement is the promise against which delivery is measured; NEOM's serial target reductions are reported in its profile. Jobs-based projects without a population target (GIFT City) are analysed on their jobs metric and excluded from the population ratio set. Dholera is excluded from the comparative ratio statistics because its target year (2042) has not arrived; it is placed on the charts as a labelled point, not counted in the medians.

4.3 Scoring and sensitivity

GCVI scoring was performed by the author against the Appendix B rubric, using only evidence present in the sourced dataset; every score of every case carries a one-line justification in the released scoring table. Single-rater scoring is a real limitation, acknowledged rather than hidden: no second rater was available, so inter-rater reliability cannot be computed. Three mitigations are applied. The rubric anchors each level of each dimension to observable conditions (operating versus under construction versus announced, statutory versus discretionary funding, litigation record categories). All scores and justifications are published, making re-scoring by any reader possible. And the ranking's dependence on both weights and scores is stress-tested: four weighting schemes in Section 7, plus a check of Dholera's rank under one-point perturbations of its most debatable scores. Statistics are computed with standard nonparametric methods (Spearman rank correlation; Mann-Whitney U with normal approximation) and reported with exact n ; with thirteen ratio cases they are exploratory descriptions of this sample, not population inference.

4.4 The focal case protocol

Dholera data come from the author's continuously maintained, source-tagged Dholera fact base, current to late July 2026, cross-checked for this paper against primary documents (the Gujarat SIR Act 2009; the sanctioned Development Plan; Press Information Bureau releases on the fab, the rail approval and the semiconductor mission) and a news sweep to 3 August 2026. The same confidence discipline applies: the one million population and 800,000 jobs figures are TARGETS on a 2040 to 2042 horizon (the official jobs target appears on the state authority's site; the population figure is promotional and is treated as such); the fab's investment, approval and fiscal support agreement are OFFICIAL; its December 2026 first-silicon date and mid-2028 commercial production are TARGETS; the expressway opening and the airport trial landing are dated deliveries.

5. Seventeen cases in brief

This section compresses each case to its analytical essentials; the master table with full figures, tags and per-cell sourcing is Appendix A. Profiles are grouped by sequencing type. Ratios cited are the latest credible actual against the headline target as defined in Section 4.2.

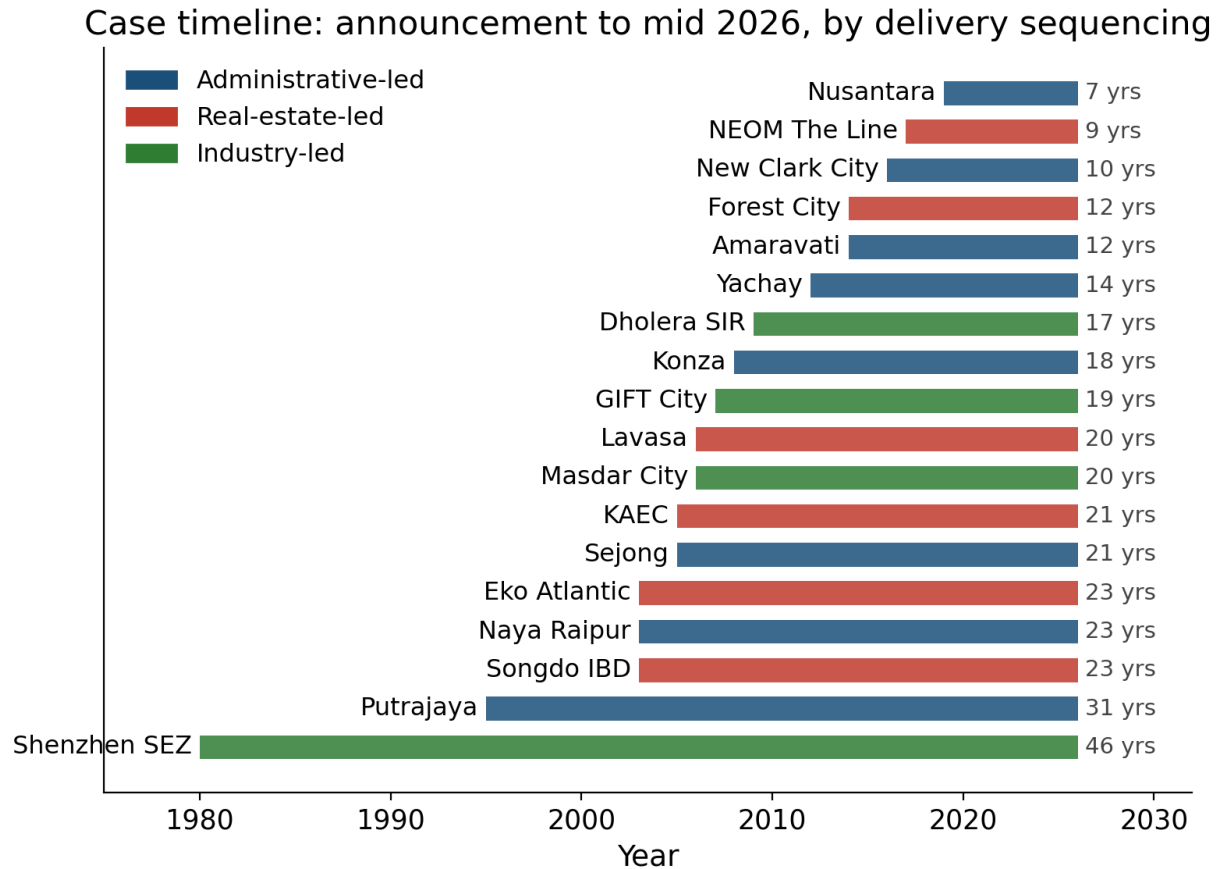


Figure 1. The seventeen comparison cases and the focal case: announcement to mid 2026, coloured by delivery sequencing type. Data: Appendix A.

5.1 Administrative-led

Sejong, South Korea (announced 2005, 78.9 percent attainment) is the type's success, and it earned the position the hard way. The 2003 relocation law was struck down by the Constitutional Court in October 2004, which ruled Seoul the customary capital; the project was rebuilt legislatively in March 2005 as a Multifunctional Administrative City on 72.91 square kilometres, with a statutory cap of 8.5 trillion won of direct state funds inside a project reported at 22.5 trillion won (a later 45.7 trillion figure also circulates; both are carried in Appendix C), with Korea Land and Housing Corporation fronting land compensation and site works. It then survived a second political assault, the 2009 to 2010 attempt to convert it into a business city, before opening in July 2012. Delivery was real: 44 central agencies and about 14,000 civil servants moved, a second presidential office is under construction for 2027, and a National Assembly branch was approved in 2021. Population reached 394,630 by mid 2024 against a 500,000 by 2030 target, though growth has slowed enough that even 400,000 is now discussed as an effort, and the 2025 political debate about completing the capital's move restarted precisely because the city's momentum needs it. The lesson: a statutory anchor, delivered, populates a city even after constitutional defeat and hostile revision.

Putrajaya, Malaysia (1995, 35.7 percent) delivered its anchor completely and quickly. The site was chosen in 1993, construction began in August 1995, the prime minister's office moved in 1999, and by 2005 every ministry but three had followed; the territory was ceded to federal jurisdiction in 2001. The financing is the type's cleanest: Putrajaya Holdings, the developer, is 40 percent owned by the state oil company Petronas alongside the sovereign fund Khazanah, so the estimated 8.1 billion US dollar cost was carried by oil-backed corporate equity rather than the annual budget, insulating delivery from the Asian financial crisis that made the project a lightning rod for critics. Connectivity arrived in layers, an express rail link in 2002 and a full metro line in 2023. Thirty years on it holds about 119,700 people against a 335,000 plan: a fully functioning seat of government at about a third of its intended size, demonstrating that even total anchor delivery does not guarantee target attainment, only escape from the sub-3-percent floor.

Naya Raipur, India (2003, 11.5 percent, unofficial numerator) moved Chhattisgarh's secretariat into Mahanadi Bhawan in November 2012 and accumulated institutions steadily, a 65,000-seat international cricket stadium, IIM Raipur, a national law university, an IIIT, a bus rapid transit system from 2016, yet by its own authority's admission spent two decades allotting land to government departments instead of selling to private demand, and state industrial-development data recorded only eight functioning manufacturing units between 2012 and 2024. The result is roughly 64,000 people against a 560,000 by 2031 target. A revival is now genuinely under way, investment memoranda above Rs 4,500 crore in eighteen months, a Rs 1,100 crore semiconductor-adjacent chip plant, a Rs 1,000 crore artificial-intelligence data centre, the state assembly itself relocating, but the case already teaches its lesson: anchor delivered, ecosystem not, produces a civil-service town, not a city.

Amaravati, India (2014, 2.9 percent, numerator is pre-existing villagers) is the type's cautionary tale on continuity. About 33,000 acres were pooled from farmers across some 29 villages under a 2014 scheme that promised each acre's owner developed residential and commercial plots, annuities and pensions; the foundation stone was laid in 2015, an interim secretariat functioned from 2016, and then the 2019 change of state government repudiated the capital in favour of a three-capitals plan, freezing works for five years while farmers who had surrendered land agitated continuously and litigation ran up to the Supreme Court. The 2024 election reversed the reversal: the World Bank approved 800 million US dollars and the Asian Development Bank 788.8 million in December 2024, the prime minister relaunched 74 projects worth about Rs 49,040 crore in May 2025, and works worth Rs 57,821 crore were reported in progress by April 2026, with ministers claiming farmers ready to pool a further 36,000 acres for a second phase. The World Bank's own appraisal expects about 50,000 jobs over five years against a 3.5 million by 2050 population plan. The anchor is only now being built, and the case demonstrates the type's structural risk in a competitive democracy: the anchor is a political promise, and political promises can be un-promised by one election.

Nusantara, Indonesia (2019, 7.7 percent, numerator mostly pre-existing villages) is the newest large administrative bet, and its first official population count is a lesson in numerator honesty: the 147,430 people enumerated in 2025 live in the delineated territory, but only 6.03 percent arrived within the previous five years, so the count is mostly the pre-existing villages the capital was drawn around. The state spent about 4.63 billion US dollars in 2022 to 2024, opened an airport now certified for government and charter flights with commercial service targeted for 2026, and postponed the civil-servant relocation from 2024 toward 2028; the new administration cut the five-year allocation to about 2.9 billion dollars, the new sovereign wealth fund declined to prioritise the project, and private money remains a trickle against a plan that assumed it would carry 80 percent of a 32.5 billion dollar cost. A 2025 presidential regulation recommits Nusantara to political-capital status by August 2028, and construction of the legislative and judicial districts began in December 2025, while Indonesia's Constitutional Court confirmed in May 2026 that Jakarta legally remains the capital until a decree says otherwise. Anchor pending; verdict pending.

New Clark City, Philippines (2016, effectively zero) built its physical showpieces at speed, a stadium and aquatics centre in eighteen months for the 2019 Southeast Asian Games, then a National Government Administrative Center designed for 3,000 employees, backed by a 2021 executive order directing agencies to open field offices there, and a 516-unit apartment complex. Almost nobody came: as of early 2025 the permanent population is essentially the 229 students of a sports academy, most of the roughly 80 sold apartments serve as officials' vacation homes, and the one committed institutional mover of scale, the central bank's currency production complex, targets 2028. The land was a state military reservation occupied by generations of farmers and Ayta indigenous communities; evictions proceeded on contested consent, with reporting that tens of thousands could ultimately be displaced, against which the developer cites hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance. Investment pledges reached about 2.5 billion US dollars by mid 2024. An anchor built is not an anchor occupied.

Konza Technopolis, Kenya (2008, effectively zero) and Yachay, Ecuador (2012, city effectively dead) show the type's low end, where the anchor is real but radically undersized. Konza's delivered assets are a national data centre (built from 2019 on a Chinese concessional loan of about KSh 17.5 billion, operational since 2020), a first university cohort in 2025, a rehabilitated commuter rail service since 2021, and Phase 1 horizontal infrastructure on a KSh 50.4 billion state commitment, on land whose 2009 purchase from a ranch company became a criminal fraud case; its own chief executive frames progress in decades. Yachay expropriated 4,462 hectares from more than one hundred owners for a university-anchored knowledge city under an oil-boom presidency, opened the university in 2014, and then outlived its patron: the delivery company was liquidated in 2021, five campus buildings stand unfinished, and the functioning remnant is a respected small university of about 2,000 students inside a city that never arrived. Neither project has a resident population worth the name; both prove that a data centre or a campus is an institution, not an economy.

5.2 Real-estate-led

Songdo IBD, South Korea (2003, about 75.3 percent) is the type's best case and the exception that proves the location rule. A 35 billion US dollar privately financed district was built on reclaimed tidal flats fifteen minutes from Incheon airport inside the Seoul megaregion, funded by developer equity, Korean bank debt, presales and, by 2012, international green bonds. Its aspirational anchor, a Northeast Asian headquarters hub for multinationals, underdelivered for a decade, and the district filled anyway, because location substituted: registered population climbed from about 20,500 in 2007 to 167,000 by 2020 and roughly 200,000 by 2023, with the Green Climate Fund's headquarters (selected 2012), a university campus cluster, and a globally significant biopharmaceutical manufacturing corridor (Samsung Biologics, Celltrion, a Lotte plant building toward 2027) arriving ten to fifteen years behind the apartments. The delivery vehicle itself did not survive intact: the Gale-POSCO partnership collapsed in 2018 over project-finance defaults, and Gale's multi-billion-dollar claims against its ejection were dismissed by an ICC tribunal in 2022. Jobs, about 33,000 by 2023, run at 65 percent of plan and far behind rooftops. Songdo is what a presale city looks like when everything around it is a megaregion; none of its four failed type-siblings had that cushion.

Forest City, Malaysia (2014, 1.4 percent) is the type's collapse case, and its sequence is worth spelling out because each step was a market signal, not an accident. Reclamation began in January 2014 without the legally required detailed environmental assessment; Singapore protested, a stop-work order followed in June 2014, and the January 2015 assessment forced the project down from one 1,600 hectare island to four smaller ones with 81 compliance directives, while Tanjung Kupang fishermen documented destroyed livelihoods over the buried seagrass beds. The official 2016 launch sold a 100 billion US dollar, 700,000-person second-home city almost entirely to mainland Chinese buyers; demand was then destroyed in sequence by China's 2017 capital controls, Malaysia's 2018 visa politics, the pandemic's border closures, and developer Country Garden's own 2023 offshore default. About 4.3 billion dollars had been spent and 28,000 units built for roughly 9,000 to 10,000 residents, most of them tenants. The state's response, a 2024 Special Financial Zone with zero to five percent tax rates and a January 2025 flagship slot in the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone, is an attempt to retrofit an employment anchor onto a built dormitory; its first two approved family offices in 2025 are the seed of that experiment, not yet its vindication.

King Abdullah Economic City, Saudi Arabia (2005, 0.5 percent) is the paper's cleanest natural experiment on anchor type, because its anchor worked. Launched as the first and only survivor of six planned economic cities, floated in a 2006 IPO that more than half the Saudi population subscribed to, KAEC delivered King Abdullah Port to trial operations by 2013, and that port has since ranked at the top of the World Bank's global container port performance index; a Haramain high-speed rail station followed in 2018. The city still houses only about 10,000 people, up from 7,000 in 2018, against a 2 million plan, and its listed master developer had to be rescued, the sovereign wealth fund converting debt into a quarter of its equity. The mechanism is arithmetic, not mystery: a port is a throughput anchor, and the world's most efficient container terminals

employ hundreds of operators, not hundreds of thousands of residents. Capital intensity does not convert into payroll density, a lesson Section 8 applies directly to semiconductor fabrication.

Eko Atlantic, Nigeria (2003, no credible count) manufactures its own land: about 10 square kilometres dredged out of the Atlantic behind a Great Wall of Lagos revetment (about 8.5 kilometres planned, six-plus built), by a private family conglomerate's project company with Chinese contracting, financed by banks and recovered through freehold sales of serviced plots beside Victoria Island. A handful of towers stand inhabited, the seawall and first-phase infrastructure are complete, and the city remains an ultra-prime enclave rather than a settlement, while the adjacent coastline's erosion grievances and a 2012 surge that killed swimmers at Kuramo Beach remain the project's contested externalities. It is the purest case of Shatkin's real estate turn, the anchor is the land itself, rescued analytically by the one thing the model cannot manufacture elsewhere: a fifteen-million-person metro next door.

Lavasa, India (2006, under 1 percent) is the type's terminal case and India's cautionary tale for private cities. A listed construction group's hill city near Pune, styled on Portofino, presold villas and second homes and had one town partially alive by 2009; a central environment ministry stop-work order in November 2010, for building without clearance, froze it at the worst moment of its debt cycle, and the conditional clearance of late 2011 came too late. Two IPO attempts died, insolvency arrived in 2018 with admitted claims above Rs 6,642 crore, the approved 2023 resolution plan (Rs 1,814 crore) collapsed unfunded, and the rerun auction's leading bid values the city below Rs 1,000 crore, roughly 85 percent value destruction measured claims-to-bid, with fewer than 2,000 residents remaining amid decaying assets and 837 homebuyers still owed houses. Every structural weakness of the presale model, cyclical finance, regulatory exposure, no employment engine, expressed itself in one project.

NEOM's The Line, Saudi Arabia (2017, zero) is the type's limiting case in the other direction: the largest announced envelope in urban history (a 500 billion US dollar programme; The Line alone once projected above a trillion), more than 50 billion reportedly spent by early 2025, and serial target amputations, from 1.5 million Line residents by 2030, to under 300,000 in 2024, to about 100,000 people across all of NEOM by 2030 in 2026 reporting. After a leadership change in late 2024 and a strategic review, work on the megastructure is halted until after 2030 and the design itself is being reworked; mountain and island tourism assets are postponed; and the surviving pragmatic core is Oxagon, the port and industrial zone, plus data centres, drawing about 3 billion dollars of continued investment, the project quietly pivoting from spectacle toward the one anchor type with a delivery record. NEOM also carries the sample's gravest land-assembly record: the displacement of the Huwaitat tribe and the 2020 killing of Abdul Rahim al-Huwaiti, who refused eviction. As a data point, NEOM is the reductio of the announcement-led model: infinite capital, sovereign will, and zero residents, because no one ever demonstrated why nine million people would need to be there.

5.3 Industry-led

Shenzhen, China (1980, baseline) is the reference trajectory: designation by the National People's Congress in August 1980, a 50.6 percent share of all FDI entering China by 1981 (the other three original zones combined took 9.2), censuses of 449,500 (1982), 875,000 (1990), 7.0 million (2000), 10.4 million (2010), 17.56 million (2020). The institutional record explains the curve as much as the geography does: the zone was two orders of magnitude larger than its siblings (about 330 square kilometres against Xiamen's 2.5, Shantou's 1.6, Zhuhai's 6.1), which gave it room to run China's first urban land auction (1987), open its first stock exchange (1990), and acquire provincial-level economic autonomy (1988); and it became the first Chinese city to let rural hukou holders migrate in, converting the workforce other cities deported into its labour supply, roughly 70 percent of its boom-era population being migrants without local registration. Its three levers, adjacency to Hong Kong's exporters at the exact moment their costs forced relocation, a zone large enough to legislate within, and migration rules that let workers actually come, are the standing checklist against which every later industry-led project, Dholera included, must be read. No later case has all three, and the baseline population dispute (30,000 in the market town, about 100,000 in the zone's area, about 310,000 in the wider county) changes the curve's start, not its verdict.

Masdar City, UAE (2006, 10.5 percent on residents) planted a university, IRENA's headquarters, Siemens' regional office and a cleantech free zone on empty state desert next to Abu Dhabi's airport, on Mubadala sovereign capital first budgeted at 22 billion US dollars. The 2008 crisis rescoped it honestly: the budget fell to about 19.8 billion, the completion date slid from 2016 toward 2030, the celebrated personal-rapid-transit system was frozen as a prototype in 2010, and the off-grid purism was abandoned when the city connected to the utility network in 2016. What survived is real: a functioning specialised district of about 15,000 people living and working, 5,000 of them residents, and a free zone whose tenant count keeps growing. Masdar is the type's honest mid-case: an anchor delivered small produces a city delivered small, and a project that trims its promises can stabilise where one that doubles down (NEOM) cannot.

GIFT City, India (2007, jobs metric) is India's quiet industry-led partial success and Dholera's nearest-neighbour lesson, twenty minutes from Ahmedabad's airport with a metro link running. Conceived at the 2007 Vibrant Gujarat summit, it crawled through its first decade (first tower 2013, IL&FS's half of the venture bought out by the state in 2020) until its anchor switched on: a statutory International Financial Services Centre with a unified regulator (operational 2020) and a ten-year tax holiday, which by late 2025 hosted more than 1,000 registered entities, 38 banks with just over 100 billion US dollars of asset book, exchange turnover above 100 billion dollars a month on GIFT Nifty, and dozens of aircraft and ship leasing entities, with about 28,000 people working on site against a million-job target and an expansion under way from 886 to more than 3,300 acres. What it has not produced is a resident city: evenings empty it, and its residential estimates (unofficial, roughly 15,000 to 20,000) trail its payroll. The lesson for Dholera is double-edged: the same state can deliver a functioning economic enclave; and an enclave, even a nationally significant one, does not automatically become a city.

Konza and Yachay appear under 5.1 by their delivery institution; their intended anchors were industrial-institutional, and both illustrate anchor insufficiency, a data centre and a university being real but far too small to seed a city.

5.4 The focal case in brief

Dholera SIR, India (declared 2009 under a 2009 state act, on a corridor conceived 2006 to 2007) is profiled fully in Section 8. In one paragraph: a 920 square kilometre planning envelope of which about 422 is urban-developable across three phases to about 2042; a delivered 22.5 square kilometre Activation Area of trunk-serviced land; a delivered expressway (March 2026), a near-delivered airport (trial landing June 2026, operations targeted late 2026), an approved semi-high-speed rail (2030 to 2031 target); about 300 MW of an intended 1,000 MW solar park operating; and the anchor, a Tata Electronics and PSMC semiconductor fabrication plant, Rs 91,000 crore, 50,000 wafers per month at maturity, past 50 percent civil completion in mid 2026, first silicon targeted December 2026, commercial production reported for mid 2028, with more than 20,000 direct and indirect jobs promised, inside an SIR whose official full-build jobs target is more than 800,000 and whose promotional population target is about one million by 2040 to 2042. Its pre-existing base is 22 villages; no credible count of new residents exists, and for this paper's purposes its new-city population is treated as effectively zero.

6. Cross-case findings

6.1 The attainment distribution is bimodal

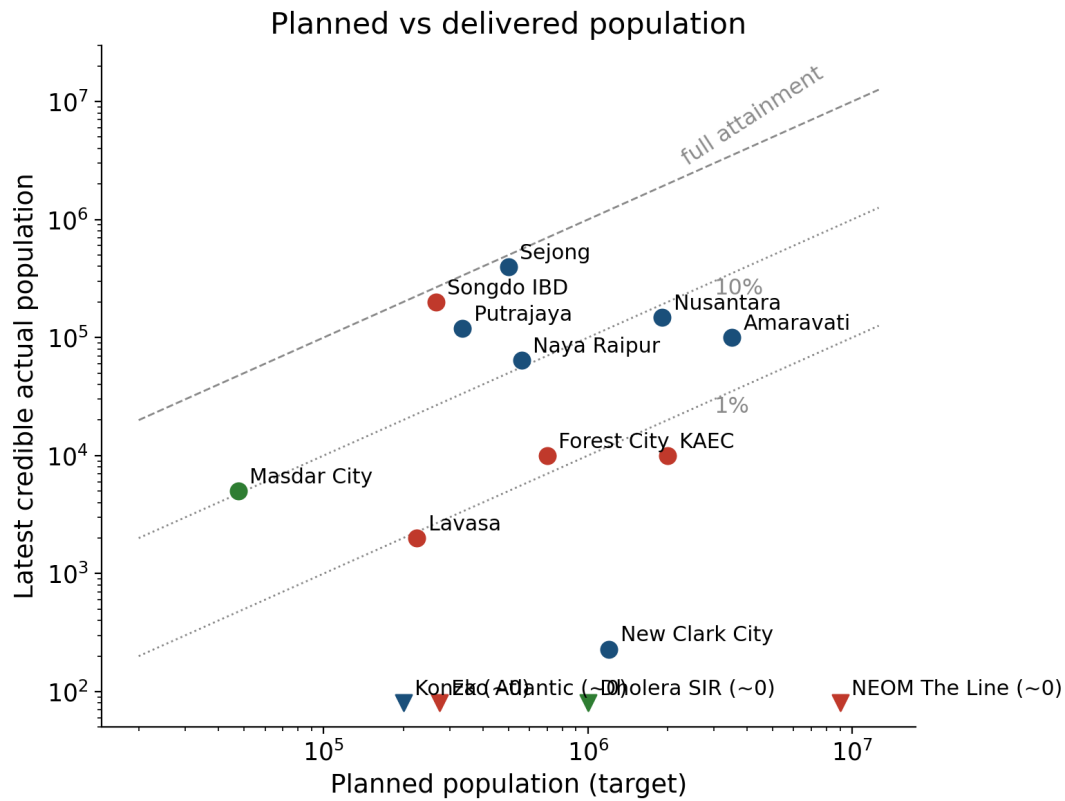


Figure 2. Planned versus delivered population, log scales. The dashed line is full attainment; triangles mark cases with effectively zero population. Data: Appendix A.

Figure 2 plots planned against delivered population for every case with both numbers. The vertical distance below the full-attainment line is the broken promise, and for most of the field it is one to two orders of magnitude. Figure 3 turns the same data into ratios.

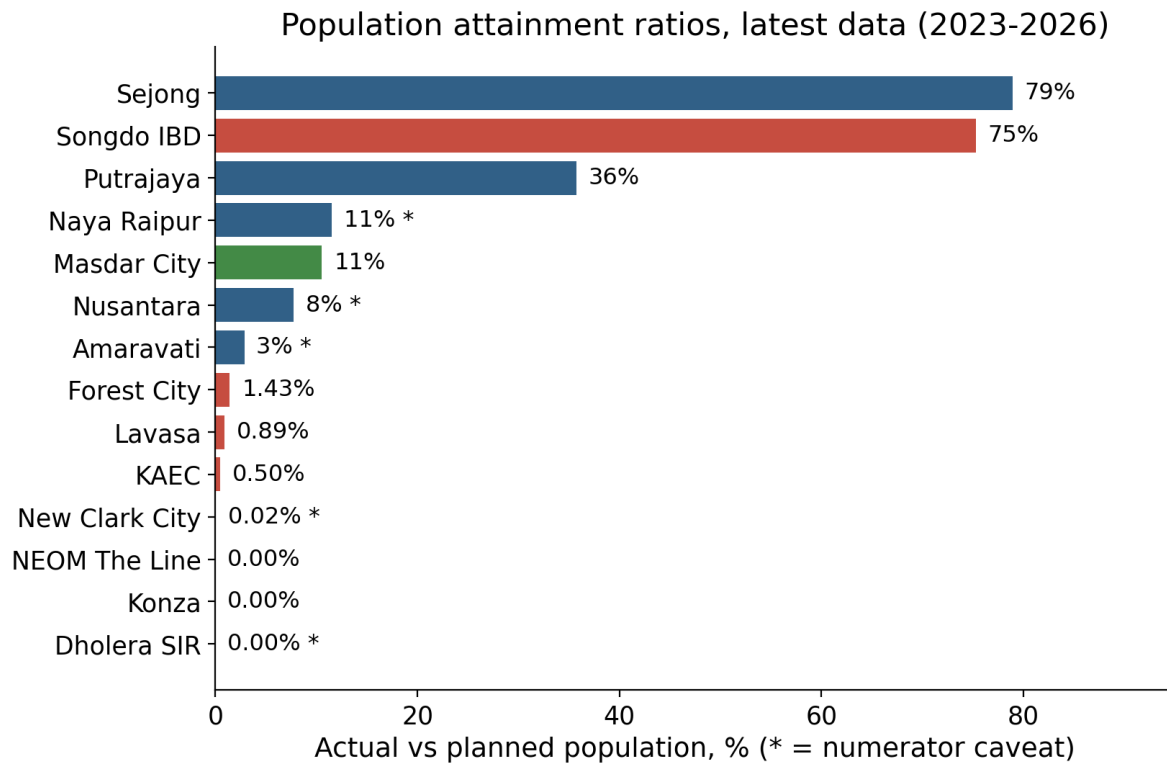


Figure 3. Population attainment ratios, latest credible actuals (2023-2026) against headline targets. Asterisks mark caveated numerators (Appendix C).

Of thirteen ratio cases, three sit above one third of target (Sejong 78.9 percent, Songdo about 75.3, Putrajaya 35.7), two sit in a thin middle (Naya Raipur 11.5 with an unofficial numerator, Masdar 10.5), and eight sit at or below about 8 percent, six of those below 3 percent even with generous, caveated numerators. The distribution has almost no middle: a greenfield city in this sample either found its engine or idles near empty. The pattern van Noorloos and Kloosterboer (2018) predicted for Africa generalises to the whole field.

6.2 Age matters, but delivery divides

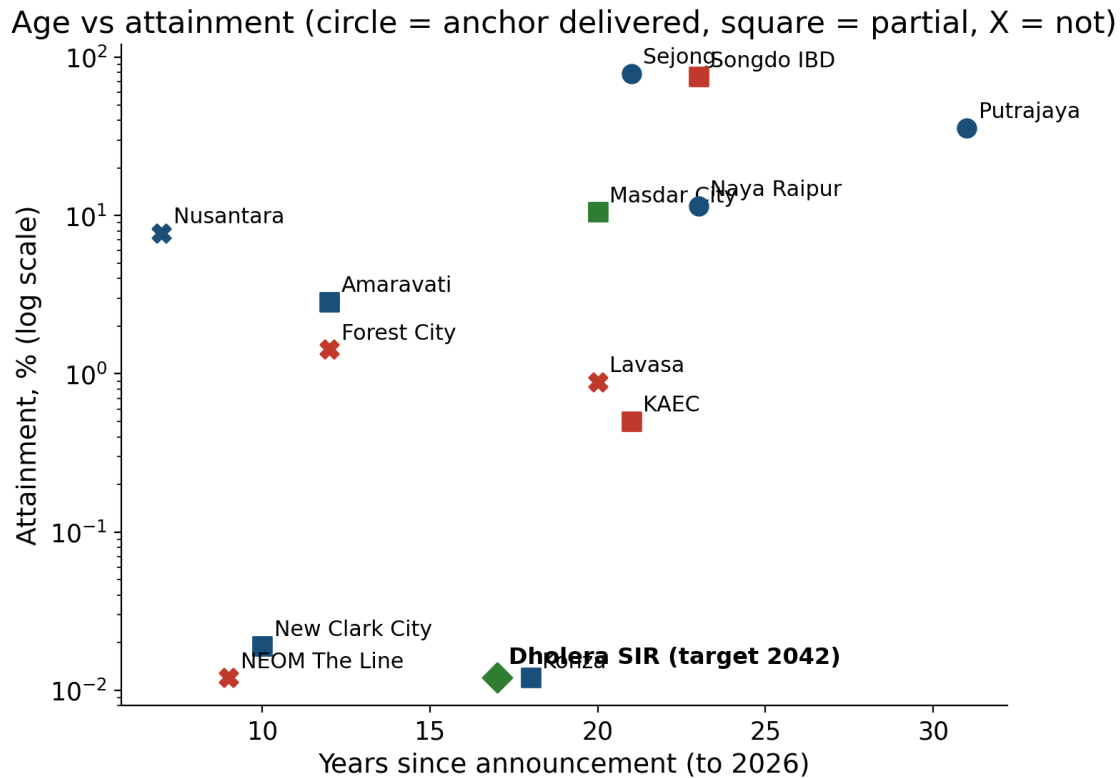


Figure 4. Age versus attainment, log scale. Circle = anchor delivered, square = partial, X = not delivered. Diamond: Dholera, whose 2042 target year is unexpired.

Attainment correlates with age (Spearman rho 0.625, p 0.008, n 13): cities announced in the 1990s and 2000s have had time the 2010s cohort has not, and the sample's successes are all old. But age is not the divider, because old failures abound: KAEC (21 years, 0.5 percent), Konza (18 years, no residents), Lavasa (20 years, dying). The divider in Figure 4 is marker shape: whether the promised anchor was delivered. The three cases with fully delivered anchors (Sejong, Putrajaya, Naya Raipur) show a median attainment of 35.7 percent; the ten cases with partial, pending or failed anchors show a median of 1.16 percent (Mann-Whitney U 28.0, p 0.014, exploratory given n). Songdo, the one near-success without a fully delivered original anchor, substituted location for it: the Seoul megaregion supplied the demand its business hub never fully generated, and even then its jobs run at 65 percent of plan.

Sequencing type alone separates less cleanly: administrative-led cases show a median of 7.7 percent (n 7, spanning 0 to 78.9), real-estate-led 0.9 percent (n 5, spanning 0 to 75.3), and the single scored industry-led ratio case (Masdar) sits at 10.5 percent. The type's spread is the point: each type contains both its success and its corpse, which is why the framework scores delivery, not label.

6.3 Money does not buy residents

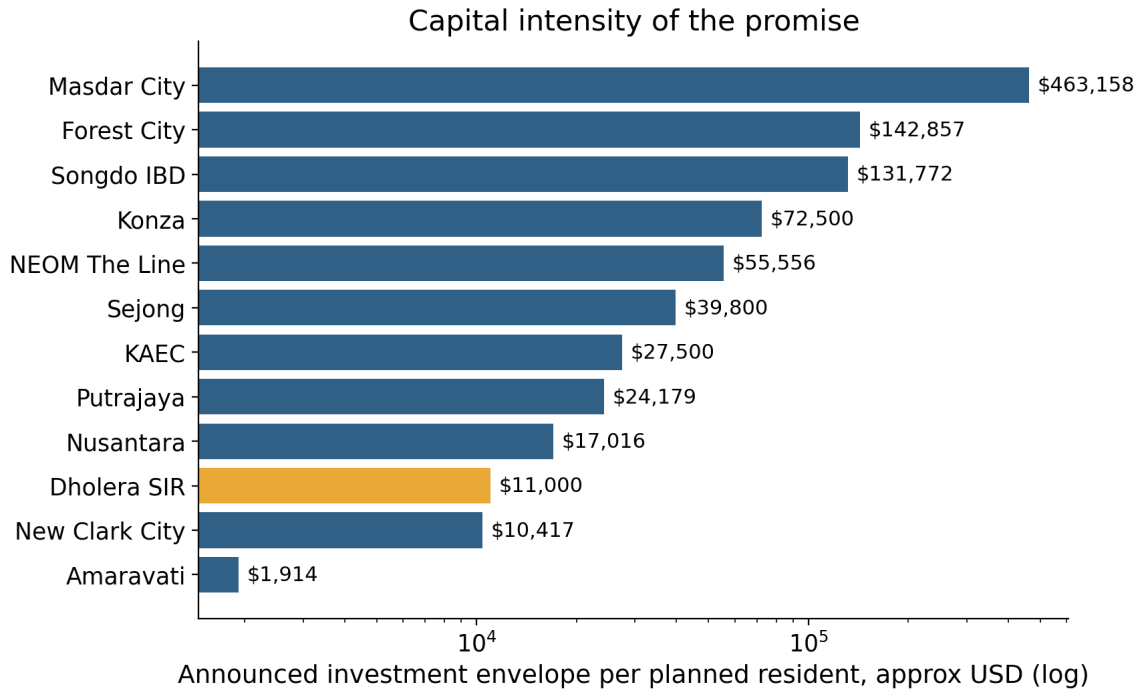


Figure 5. Capital intensity of the promise: announced investment envelope per planned resident, approximate USD conversions of source figures, log scale.

Figure 5 plots the announced investment envelope per planned resident, in approximate US dollars, against no outcome at all, deliberately, because there is no relationship to plot. Masdar promised about 440,000 dollars per planned resident and reached 10.5 percent; Putrajaya promised about 24,000 and reached 35.7 percent; NEOM promised about 56,000 per Line resident, spent more than 50 billion in aggregate, and houses nobody. Within this sample, capital intensity of the promise predicts neither traction nor its absence. Spending is a necessary input and a meaningless signal.

6.4 The land ledger

Ten of seventeen non-focal cases carry documented land conflict: contested expropriation (Yachay, Sejong's compensation politics mildly, Amaravati's pooling agitation and litigation, Lavasa's clearance battle and tribal land record, New Clark City's Ayta evictions without completed consent process, Nusantara's adat community grievances, Konza's purchase fraud), reclamation externalities (Songdo's tidal flat, Forest City's seagrass and fishermen, Eko Atlantic's erosion dispute), and in NEOM's case a documented killing. The two cleanest records (Masdar, KAEC) are empty-desert cases. The pattern matters analytically because land conflict is not noise; in Amaravati and Lavasa it materially stopped delivery. A viability index must price it, and the GCVI's LA dimension does.

6.5 Trajectories, honestly plotted

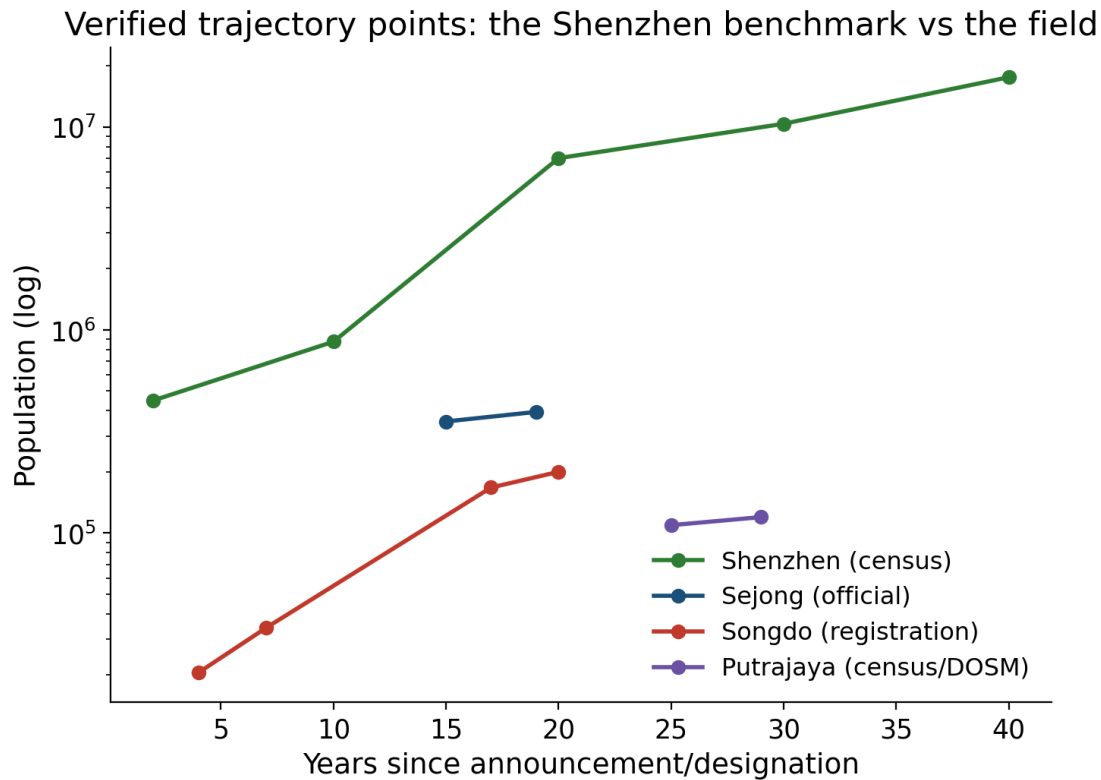


Figure 6. Verified population trajectory points only, log scale: the Shenzhen census series against the sample's other verified series.

Figure 6 plots verified population points only, on a log scale, against years since designation. Shenzhen's curve is not a benchmark any current project should be sold against; it is the ceiling of the phenomenon, achieved with three levers no other case has assembled. The realistic success curves are Sejong's and Putrajaya's: two to four hundred thousand people, two to three decades, anchored by the state itself. Any Dholera trajectory argument must choose which curve family it claims, and Section 8 does.

6.6 Jobs without residents: the enclave pattern

A second-order pattern cuts across the types and deserves its own name. Three cases have delivered functioning economies without delivering towns: GIFT City runs a hundred-billion-dollar banking book on 28,000 workers who overwhelmingly sleep elsewhere; Masdar's daytime population outnumbers its residents three to one; KAEC operates a world-ranked port beside near-empty residential districts. Call it the enclave pattern: when an anchor's workforce can commute from an existing city, or is simply small, the anchor generates economic statistics without generating urbanisation. The pattern matters for Dholera more than any other pending case, because Dholera sits at commuting-plus distance from Ahmedabad, close enough that an expressway and a 45-minute rail link make residence optional for the fab's professional workforce, far enough that the plan's economics assume they will not exercise the option. The enclave pattern says the burden of proof is on the plan: by default, well-connected anchors near big cities produce

commuter sheds, and turning a shed into a city requires the things enclaves skip, schools, hospitals, housing depth, and an urban labour market for the households' second earners. The sequencing typology says what arrives first; the enclave pattern warns what may never arrive at all.

7. GCVI results

7.1 Scores

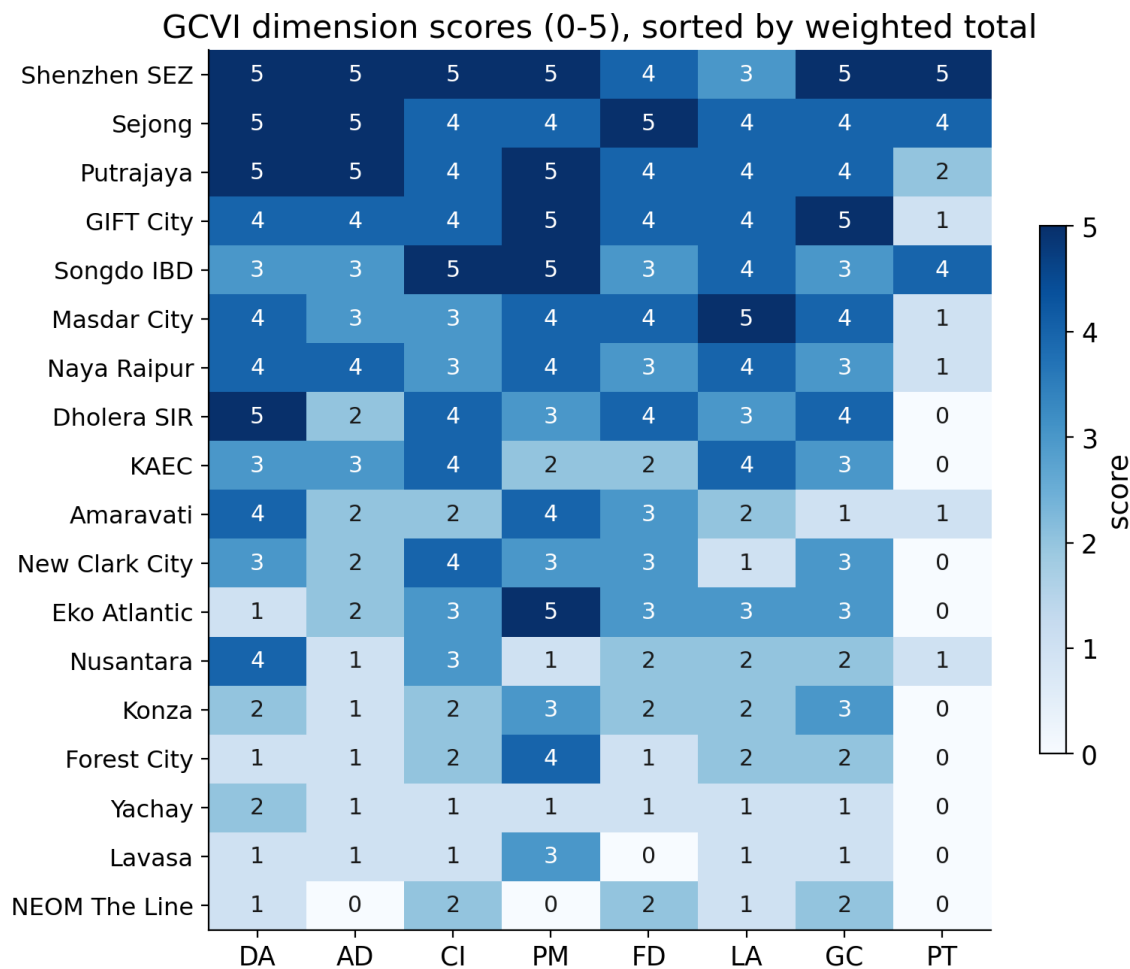


Figure 7. GCVI dimension scores (0 to 5) for all cases, sorted by weighted total. DA demand anchor, AD anchor delivery, CI connectivity, PM metro gravity, FD financing durability, LA land assembly, GC governance continuity, PT population traction.

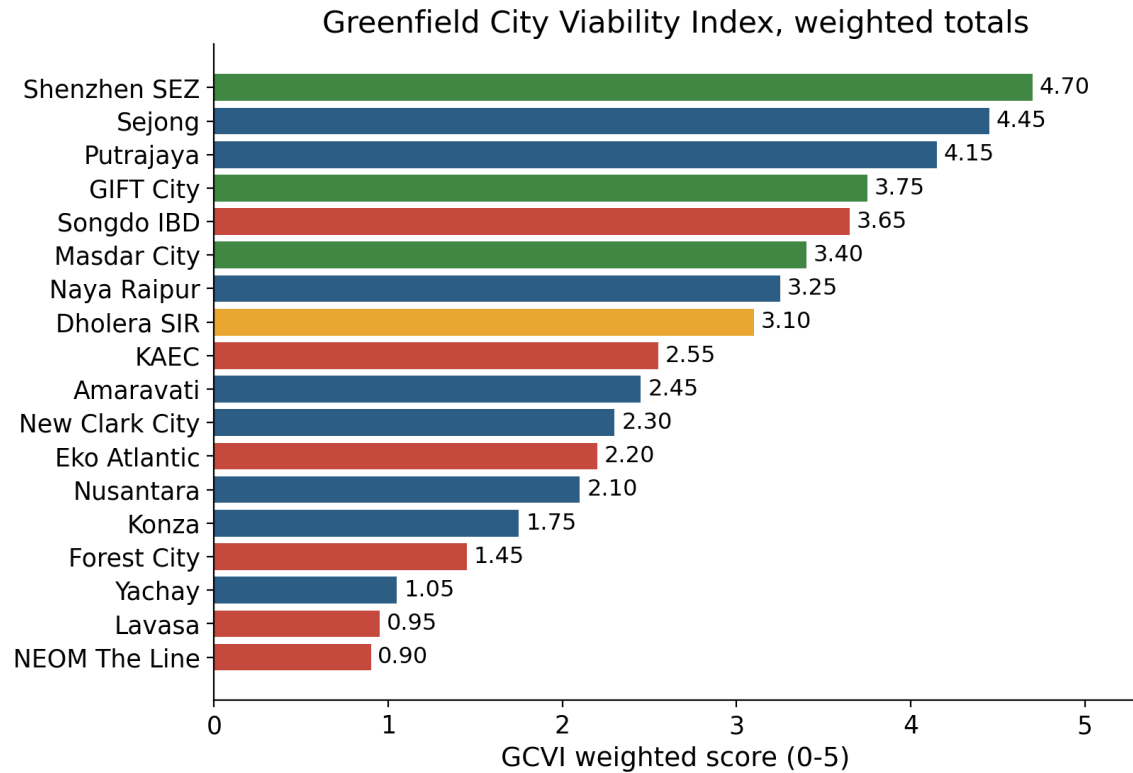


Figure 8. GCVI weighted totals (base weights); Dholera highlighted in amber.

Table 2. GCVI scores by dimension and weighted totals (base weights: DA 0.20, AD 0.15, PT 0.15, others 0.10).

Case	DA	AD	CI	PM	FD	LA	GC	PT	Total
Shenzhen SEZ	5	5	5	5	4	3	5	5	4.70
Sejong	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4.45
Putrajaya	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	2	4.15
GIFT City	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	1	3.75
Songdo IBD	3	3	5	5	3	4	3	4	3.65
Masdar City	4	3	3	4	4	5	4	1	3.40
Naya Raipur	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	1	3.25
Dholera SIR	5	2	4	3	4	3	4	0	3.10
KAEC	3	3	4	2	2	4	3	0	2.55
Amaravati	4	2	2	4	3	2	1	1	2.45
New Clark City	3	2	4	3	3	1	3	0	2.30
Eko Atlantic	1	2	3	5	3	3	3	0	2.20
Nusantara	4	1	3	1	2	2	2	1	2.10
Konza	2	1	2	3	2	2	3	0	1.75
Forest City	1	1	2	4	1	2	2	0	1.45
Yachay	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1.05
Lavasa	1	1	1	3	0	1	1	0	0.95

Case	DA	AD	CI	PM	FD	LA	GC	PT	Total
NEOM The Line	1	0	2	0	2	1	2	0	0.90

Figure 7 shows the full score matrix, Figure 8 the weighted totals. The index orders the field: Shenzhen 4.70, Sejong 4.45, Putrajaya 4.15, GIFT City 3.75, Songdo 3.65, Masdar 3.40, Naya Raipur 3.25, Dholera 3.10, KAEC 2.55, Amaravati 2.45, New Clark City 2.30, Eko Atlantic 2.20, Nusantara 2.10, Konza 1.75, Forest City 1.45, Yachay 1.05, Lavasa 0.95, NEOM 0.90. The top seven are every case with a substantially delivered anchor; the bottom five are every case whose anchor failed or was never real. The index, built dimension by dimension from sourced evidence, reproduces the delivery finding of Section 6, which is what a valid summary instrument should do.

7.2 Sensitivity

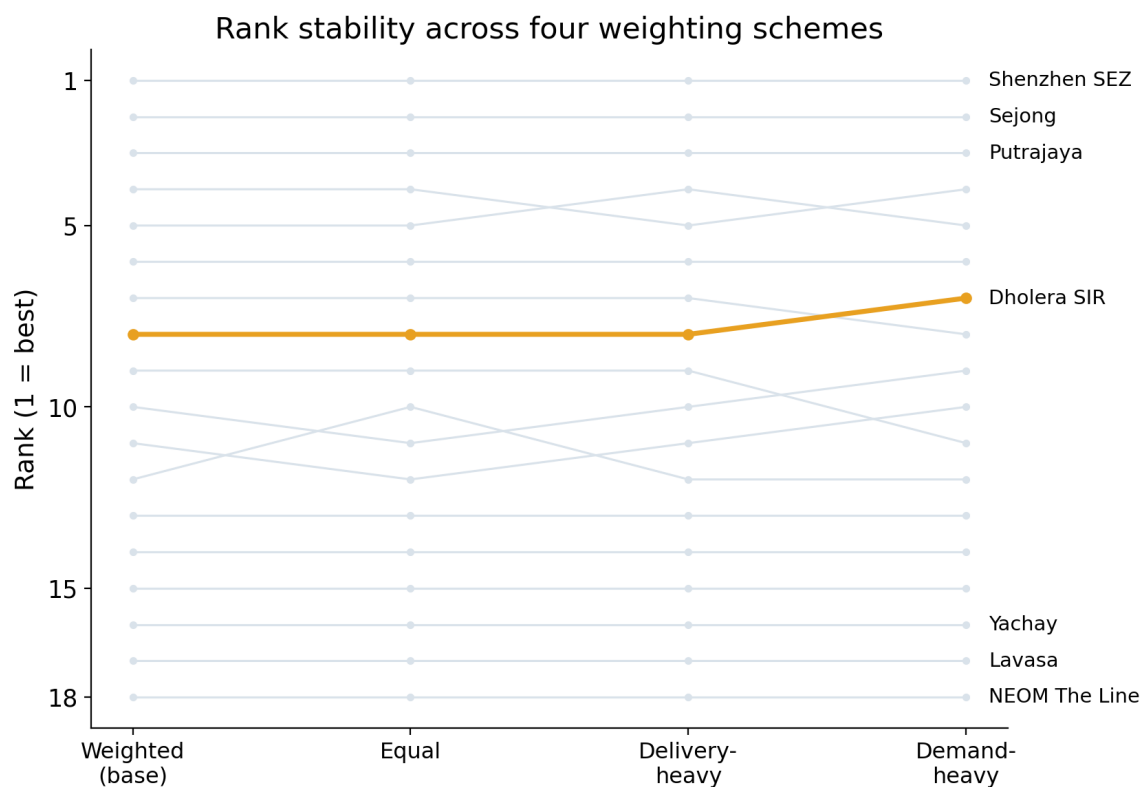


Figure 9. Rank stability of the GCVI ordering under four weighting schemes.

Table 3. Weighting schemes and Dholera's score and rank under each.

Dimension	Base	Equal	Delivery-heavy	Demand-heavy
DA Demand anchor realism	0.20	0.125	0.10	0.30
AD Anchor delivery	0.15	0.125	0.25	0.10
CI Connectivity integration	0.10	0.125	0.10	0.10
PM Proximate metro gravity	0.10	0.125	0.05	0.20
FD Financing durability	0.10	0.125	0.10	0.10
LA Land assembly durability	0.10	0.125	0.10	0.05

Dimension	Base	Equal	Delivery-heavy	Demand-heavy
GC Governance continuity	0.10	0.125	0.05	0.10
PT Population traction	0.15	0.125	0.25	0.05
Dholera score / rank	3.10 / 8	3.12 / 8	2.45 / 8	3.65 / 7

Under equal weights, a delivery-heavy scheme (AD and PT at 0.25 each) and a demand-heavy scheme (DA 0.30, PM 0.20), the top three and bottom three never change membership, and no case moves more than two ranks (Figure 9). Dholera ranks eighth, eighth, eighth and seventh. The ordering is a property of the scores, not the weights.

7.3 Reading Dholera's 3.10

Dholera's score decomposes into the field's most lopsided profile: DA 5 (the only pending case with a contracted, fiscally supported, under-construction industrial anchor of national-mission scale), CI 4, FD 4, GC 4, LA 3, PM 3, against AD 2 and PT 0. Excluding PT entirely and renormalising the remaining seven dimensions, Dholera scores 3.65, level with Naya Raipur, marginally above Songdo, and still below Masdar and the delivered-anchor leaders, which is the honest statement of its position: everything about the case is strong except the two things that only delivery can supply. Under the delivery-heavy weighting its score falls to 2.45 and its rank holds at eight, because the cases below it are weaker still on the same dimensions. Perturbing its two most debatable scores by one point each (DA to 4 if one discounts the fab's timeline risk; PM to 4 if one credits the expressway with functionally shrinking the Ahmedabad distance) moves the total to between 2.90 and 3.30 and the rank between seven and nine. The placement is robust: Dholera in mid 2026 is the best-positioned undelivered city in the sample, and it is undelivered.

8. Dholera through the framework

This section reads each GCVI dimension against the Dholera evidence, then states the arithmetic the promotional material avoids. Table 6 summarises the scores and their one-line justifications; the subsections carry the full evidence.

Table 4. Dholera SIR: GCVI scores and justifications.

Dimension	Score	Justification (evidence in Sections 8.1-8.7)
DA Demand anchor realism	5	Rs 91,000 crore fab with Cabinet approval, signed fiscal support agreement (Mar 2025), construction past halfway; plus SEZ notification, second semicon unit, 300 MW solar operating. Strongest commitment in the pending class.
AD Anchor delivery	2	Solar operating and expressway open, but the load-bearing anchor produces nothing yet; first silicon is a December 2026 target, commercial production reported mid 2028.
CI Connectivity integration	4	Expressway operational (31 Mar 2026); airport trial landing done (4 Jun 2026), operations targeted late 2026; rail approved (Rs 20,667 crore) but unbuilt.
PM Proximate metro gravity	3	Ahmedabad (~8 million metro region) is ~100 km, one hour by expressway: near a major market but outside its daily labour shed. Between Konza and GIFT on this dimension.
FD Financing durability	4	Sovereign at both tiers: DICDL SPV (state 51, centre 49), central mission financing, annual state budget line; zero presale dependence in the core model.

Dimension	Score	Justification (evidence in Sections 8.1-8.7)
LA Land assembly durability	3	TP-scheme pooling avoided mass acquisition, but the 2013-2016 farmer litigation and consent critique (Sampat 2016; Datta 2015) are a real, partially resolved record.
GC Governance continuity	4	DSIRDA (2009) and DICDL (2016) intact across 17 years; national flagship status. Not 5: continuity never tested by hostile state government, unlike Sejong.
PT Population traction	0	No credible count of new residents; pre-existing villages excluded under the paper's own rule. City-scale habitation has not begun; target year 2042 unexpired.

8.1 Demand anchor: the strongest commitment in the pending class (DA 5, AD 2)

Dholera SIR: from corridor node to semiconductor anchor (grey = pending)

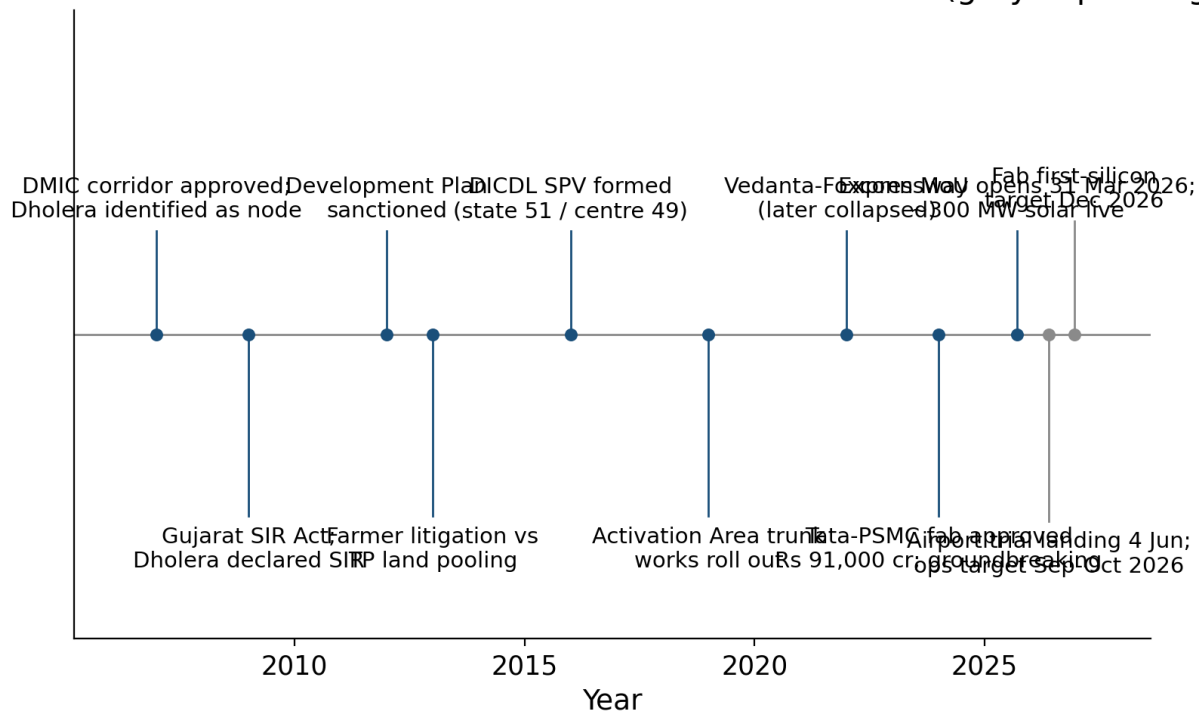


Figure 10. Dholera SIR milestone record, corridor approval (2007) to the December 2026 first-silicon target; grey markers are pending targets. Sources: Section 8 and Appendix C.

Dholera's anchor history is a study in the difference between announcement and commitment. The Vedanta-Foxconn fab announced for Gujarat in 2022 collapsed without a shovel. What replaced it is categorically different: the Tata Electronics and PSMC fabrication plant carries Union Cabinet approval (February 2024), an investment of Rs 91,000 crore, about 11 billion US dollars, a signed fiscal support agreement under the India Semiconductor Mission covering half of eligible cost (March 2025), civil works past the halfway mark with cleanroom installation under way (mid 2026), an ASML lithography partnership (May 2026), and a first-silicon target of December 2026 with commercial production reported for mid 2028. Around it: a notified 66-hectare semiconductor SEZ with about 21,000 projected jobs, a second Cabinet-cleared semiconductor unit, about 300 MW of operating solar capacity, an L&T; data-centre agreement of Rs 25,000 crore, and a cumulative Dholera and corridor pipeline officially described above Rs 1.5 lakh crore, a figure this

paper reports with its official attribution and does not endorse as Dholera-specific. The anchor also sits inside a policy machine rather than a press release: the December 2021 semiconductor programme created a Rs 76,000 crore fiscal framework, the mission covers half the fab's eligible cost under a signed agreement, a second Dholera semiconductor unit cleared Cabinet in May 2026, and Fujifilm signed an exploratory materials-manufacturing MoU for the region in June 2026, exploratory being the operative, tagged word. On commitment strength, nothing in the dataset's pending class matches this; it is why DA scores 5. On delivery, the fab is a construction site: AD 2 reflects an operating solar park, an open expressway, and an anchor that does not yet produce anything.

The comparative record supplies both the hope and the warning. The hope is Hsinchu and, at municipal scale, Shenzhen: fabs anchor ecosystems, suppliers cluster, engineer households follow, and the state that plants the anchor harvests a city-region over twenty years (Mathews, 1997; Saxenian and Hsu, 2001). The warning is KAEC: a world-class delivered anchor that was capital-intensive and labour-light produced a port and no city. A modern fab is closer to the port than the boosters admit: highly automated, employing thousands rather than hundreds of thousands. The question Section 8.8 quantifies is whether Dholera's anchor, even delivered, is big enough for its promise.

8.2 Anchor delivery risk, stated plainly

Between now and AD 4 or 5 stand: the December 2026 first-silicon target (a target, publicly reiterated, not yet achieved as of 3 August 2026); the ramp from trial to 50,000 wafers per month (Tata's own communication has shifted first production to mature nodes, 55 and 90 nanometres before 28, and commercial production to mid 2028); global semiconductor cycle risk; and the execution record of first-of-kind fabs generally, TSMC Arizona's schedule slips being the cautionary contemporary example. None of this is a criticism of the project; it is what pending means. The paper simply declines to score a promise as a delivery.

8.3 Connectivity: nearly assembled (CI 4)

Dholera's connectivity spine is the part of the promise that 2026 has largely redeemed: the 109 kilometre access-controlled expressway to Ahmedabad opened 31 March 2026; the greenfield airport recorded its first trial landing on 4 June 2026 with commercial operations targeted for late 2026 and an Embraer assembly line agreement attached; and the Rs 20,667 crore semi-high-speed rail to Ahmedabad received Cabinet approval in May 2026 with a 2030 to 2031 horizon. In the comparative field only Songdo and GIFT assembled their links this completely, and both did so after their districts opened rather than before. An operating airport would move CI to 5; a built rail line would make Dholera's connectivity the best pre-population endowment in the dataset.

8.4 Metro gravity: the honest middle (PM 3)

Dholera is roughly 100 kilometres from Ahmedabad, an hour by the new expressway, 45 to 48 minutes by the promised rail. That is not Shenzhen against Hong Kong or Eko Atlantic against Lagos (adjacent), and it is not NEOM against nothing (remote). It is Konza's category, near a major metro but outside its daily labour market, upgraded by genuinely delivered infrastructure. The gravity question will be decided by whether fab engineers live in Dholera or commute from Ahmedabad. GIFT City's experience 30 minutes from Ahmedabad, 28,000 workers and a commuter district's evenings, is the near-term realistic scenario the plan must out-run.

8.5 Financing durability (FD 4)

Dholera's financing is sovereign at both tiers: a state-centre SPV (DICDL, 51 to 49) capitalised for trunk infrastructure, central mission financing for the anchor, annual state budget lines (Rs 610 crore in 2026-27), and multilaterally clean books, with no presale dependence anywhere in the core model. The dataset's lesson (Lavasa's insolvency, Forest City's default, KAEC's rescue) is that presale-financed cities die of market cycles; budget-financed cities die only of politics. Which brings the analysis to governance.

8.6 Governance continuity (GC 4)

The delivery institutions, DSIRDA (2009) and DICDL (2016), have survived seventeen and ten years respectively, across changes of government at the centre and continuity in the state, and the project has been consistently owned as a national flagship. The score is not 5 because the deep risk in every administrative-led and industry-led case in the sample is a change of political sponsor, and Gujarat's political continuity since the project's birth means that resilience has never actually been tested, unlike Sejong's, which survived open hostile revision. Amaravati is the standing demonstration of what one election can do to a greenfield capital; Dholera's central-plus-state, mission-embedded structure is more insulated than Amaravati's was, and less proven than Sejong's.

8.7 Land assembly (LA 3) and population traction (PT 0)

Dholera's land model, Gujarat's town planning scheme mechanism, pools land rather than acquiring it: owners cede a share for infrastructure and receive serviced, appreciating remainder plots (Ballaney, 2008; Patel and Ballaney, 2009). Against Amaravati's consent-based pooling frozen by politics, Lavasa's contested purchases, or NEOM's displacement, it is a comparatively durable instrument, and the SIR's 22 villages were never mass-evicted. But the record is not clean: farmer agitation and litigation from 2013 onward, documented by Sampat (2016), forced procedural rounds and exclusions of village settlement areas, and the scholarly record (Datta, 2015) stands as the consent-side critique of the entire model. LA 3 prices a mechanism that avoided catastrophe and generated real, partially resolved conflict.

PT is 0 because it must be: there is no credible count of new residents, the pre-existing village population is excluded by this paper's own rule (as it excludes Nusantara's and Amaravati's), and the honest statement is that city-scale habitation has not begun. Dholera differs from the

sub-3-percent failures in one respect only, and it is a real one: its target date (2042) has not passed, while KAEC's (2020) and Forest City's (2035, with 1.4 percent at the two-thirds mark) are spent or spending. The index does not award points for unexpired time, but the discussion must note it.

8.8 The arithmetic of the promise

The paper's discipline requires stating the gap between the anchor and the target in numbers. The delivered-plus-committed jobs base at Dholera today is: a fab promising more than 20,000 direct and indirect jobs, an SEZ notification citing about 21,000, a second semiconductor unit above 2,200, a data centre (data centres employ hundreds), solar operations (similar), plus construction employment, which is transient by definition. Call the committed permanent base 25,000 to 45,000 jobs on generous overlap assumptions, against an official full-build jobs target above 800,000 and a promotional population figure of about one million by 2040 to 2042. The anchor as committed is roughly 3 to 6 percent of the jobs promise. For the promise to hold, Dholera requires not one anchor but a compounding sequence of them, the multi-fab vision (a target of about 100,000 semiconductor ecosystem jobs appears in mission-adjacent material), suppliers, and the service economy that follows factory payrolls, at Hsinchu-like attraction rates sustained for fifteen years. The comparative base rate for that compounding, one case in seventeen (Shenzhen), with a partial (Masdar, at one-tenth scale) and a jobs-only enclave (GIFT), is the single most important number a reader should carry away from this paper. The realistic mid-case, if the fab delivers and compounds moderately, is not a million-person metropolis by 2042 but a Sejong-or-smaller industrial city of one to a few hundred thousand, which would still make Dholera the most successful greenfield industrial city outside China in this dataset. That sentence is simultaneously the strongest defensible bull case and the honest deflation of the brochure.

8.9 What is not priced

Two Dholera-specific risks sit outside the GCVI's dimensions and must be stated. First, water and flood: the SIR occupies low-lying coastal Bhal land on the Gulf of Khambhat, and the earlier survey's review of the coastal risk literature applies unchanged; a city bet on a 2040s horizon is a bet within the climate-adaptation window. Second, single-anchor concentration: the case's demand story currently has one load-bearing column, and semiconductor demand is cyclical. Both risks are acknowledged by the project's phasing; neither is resolved by it.

Dholera GCVI profile vs comparison medians

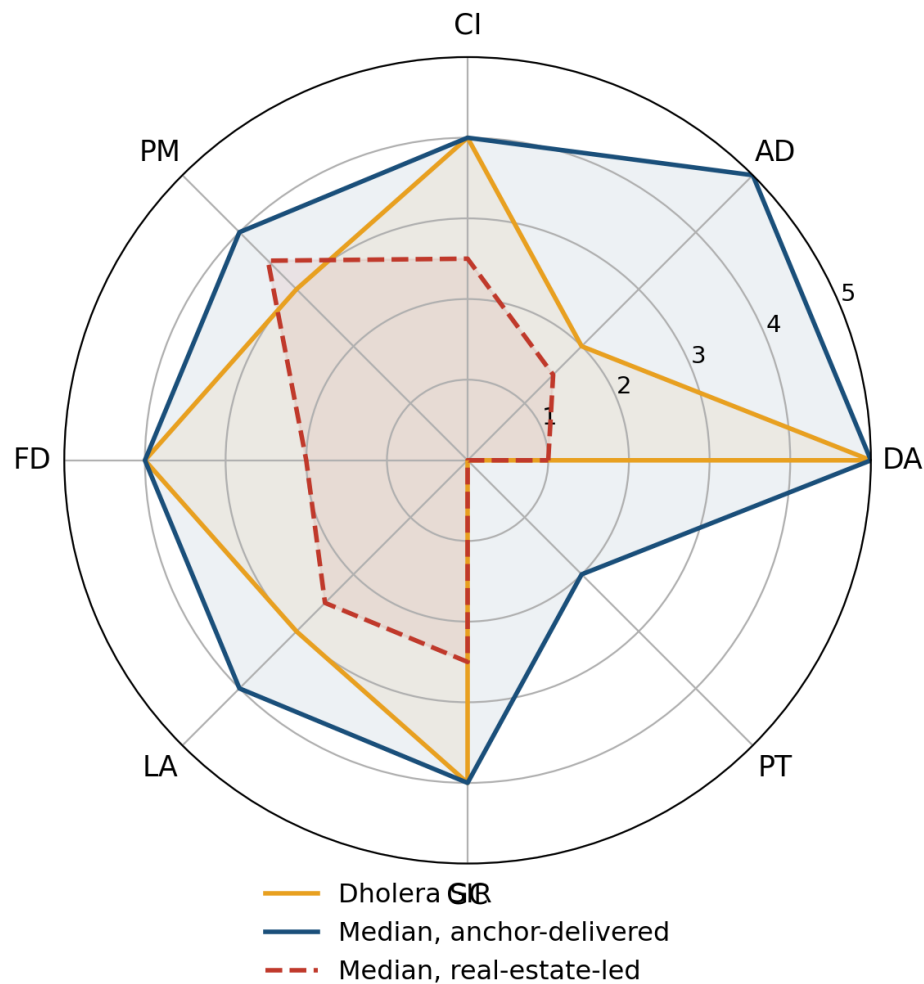


Figure 11. Dholera's GCVI profile against the medians of the anchor-delivered and real-estate-led groups.

Figure 11 summarises the section: Dholera's profile against the medians of the anchor-delivered and real-estate-led groups. The shape is the finding, commitment without delivery, spine without population.

9. Discussion: five propositions

The comparative record supports five propositions, stated as testable claims for the literature rather than laws.

P1. Delivered anchors, not sequencing labels, separate greenfield outcomes. Median attainment 35.7 percent with a delivered anchor versus 1.16 percent without, across types. The new cities debate's state-versus-market framing (Moser and Côté-Roy, 2021; Shatkin, 2017) dissolves, on this evidence, into a delivery question: the state is simply the anchor tenant most capable of binding itself to show up, and even it sometimes does not.

P2. Presale-financed real estate is the weakest greenfield engine. Four of the five worst outcomes are presale models, and the mechanism is structural: presales require the promise to be sold before it is tested, so demand shocks arrive as construction-phase insolvency (Lavasa, Forest City). Songdo's exception rests on megaregion location, which presales cannot buy.

P3. Throughput anchors do not populate; payroll anchors might. KAEC's port is delivered and world-class, and the city is empty, because containers do not shop for groceries. The relevant anchor metric is resident payroll per unit of capital, which is why an automated fab must be read cautiously (Section 8.8) and why administrative relocations, which are payroll-dense, over-perform.

P4. Time-to-city is a generation even in success. The sample's successes took 20 to 31 years to reach one- to four-fifths of target, and Shenzhen took 40 to its superlatives. Announcement-decade judgments of greenfield cities, triumphant or dismissive, are category errors; Dholera at seventeen years from declaration is at the median age of the sample's still-pending cases.

P5. Land conflict is a delivery variable, not an externality. In three cases (Amaravati, Lavasa, and arguably Nusantara's pace) land conflict materially stopped or slowed the city; in none did a project with unresolved mass conflict reach high attainment. The ethics and the engineering point the same way.

For policy, the propositions compress into a sentence each. Commit anchors contractually before selling land narratives (India's fiscal support agreement model is, on this evidence, best practice). Do not finance cities out of apartment presales. Count the payroll, not the capex, of every promised anchor. Publish thirty-year phasing and be judged on phase delivery, not brochure horizons. And treat land consent as critical path, because the dataset says it is.

For theory, the paper's contribution is to put a number on the entrepreneurial urbanisation critique: Datta (2015) argued Dholera-type projects sell speed and spectacle ahead of demand, and the field's median attainment of a few percent says the critique generalises, while the delivered-anchor median of 35.7 percent says the critique is escapable, by exactly one route.

10. Limitations and future research

The limitations are real and stated without decoration. The sample is seventeen cases selected for range, not a census; the statistics are exploratory descriptions of this sample. Attainment ratios inherit their numerators' weaknesses, two are explicitly caveated as mostly pre-existing populations, two rest on unofficial estimates, and two cases are excluded for having no credible count at all; all caveats are carried in Appendix C. GCVI scoring is single-rater against a published rubric; the mitigation is transparency and sensitivity testing, not inter-rater reliability, which future work with a second coder should supply. The sequencing typology assigns one primary type per case, compressing hybrids (KAEC is real-estate-financed around an industrial anchor; New Clark City is administrative with an event anchor). Currency comparisons are approximate and no

finding depends on them. And the focal case analysis is written by a researcher with disclosed adjacent interests (Section 11), mitigated by the confidence-tagging discipline and by scoring Dholera's traction at zero.

Future research follows directly: annual re-scoring of the dataset as a public panel, which would turn the GCVI into a longitudinal instrument; a second-rater reliability study; extension to the excluded and marginal cases (Naypyidaw, Duqm, Nusantara's post-2028 record); a payroll-per-capex study of anchor types, which P3 predicts would be the strongest single predictor in the field; and, for Dholera specifically, a December 2026 to mid 2028 natural experiment: the fab's first-silicon and commercial-production milestones give the framework two dated, falsifiable checkpoints, and the author commits to re-scoring the case against them.

11. Conclusion

Seventeen cities that were going to exist by now mostly do not, and the ones that do share one property: somebody delivered the reason to be there before, or at least alongside, the real estate. That is the whole finding, and it is enough to reorganise how greenfield projects should be promised, financed and judged.

Dholera enters that record in a position no other pending case occupies. It has the field's most binding industrial anchor commitment, a connectivity spine that 2026 has substantially delivered, sovereign financing, institutional continuity, a land mechanism that bent without breaking, and no residents. The Greenfield City Viability Index reads that as 3.10 of 5, eighth of eighteen, the top of the undelivered class: too committed to dismiss as fantasy, too undelivered to celebrate as vindication. The chronological survey that preceded this paper ended by calling Dholera no longer nothing and not yet a city. The comparative analysis can now say what stands between those two states, and it fits in one line: a functioning fabrication plant, the payrolls that compound around it, and about twenty years of the patience every successful case in this dataset required. The December 2026 first-silicon target is therefore not a press event. It is the moment this paper's framework starts scoring the promise as a delivery, or as another entry in the dataset's larger column.

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Use of AI tools

In accordance with emerging editorial norms on transparency, the author discloses that AI-assisted tools (large language models) were used during the preparation of this manuscript for literature

search assistance, data organisation, drafting support and figure generation scripting. All data points were gathered from and verified against the cited sources; every score, judgment, finding and conclusion is the author's, and the author takes full responsibility for the content.

Conflict of interest

The author operates independent, non-transactional informational websites about Dholera SIR and provides personal branding and communications consulting commercially. The author holds no land, brokerage interest, developer equity or client relationship in or concerning Dholera SIR or any project or company named in this paper, sells no plots, and receives no compensation from any entity discussed. The focal case was scored under the same rubric as all others, including a population traction score of zero. Readers are invited to re-score any case from the published rubric and data.

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Appendix A. Master comparative table

All figures carry the tags defined in Section 4.2. Conflicting figures are shown side by side. Unknown means no credible published figure was found; nothing in this table is estimated.

Table A1. Master comparative table, part 1: plans, people and attainment. Asterisks mark caveated numerators.

Case	Announced / constr. start	Target pop (horizon)	Latest actual (year) [tag]	Attainment
Shenzhen SEZ	1980 / pre-1980 works	none formal	17,560,000 (2020 census) [OFFICIAL]	baseline
Putrajaya	1995 / Aug 1995	335,000 [TARGET]	119,700 (Q1 2024, DOSM) [OFFICIAL]	35.7%
Songdo IBD	2003 (IFEZ) / 2003	265,611 by 2030 [OFFICIAL-TARGET]	~200,000 (2023, IFEZ); 212,085 (2024, registration) [REPORTED]	~75.3%
Naya Raipur	2003 / mid-2000s	560,000 by 2031 [TARGET]	~64,353 (2025, GeoIQ, unofficial) [REPORTED]	~11.5% *
Eko Atlantic	2003 / Feb 2008	250,000-300,000 [TARGET]	unknown; sparse towers inhabited [UNKNOWN]	n/a
Sejong	2005 / Jul 2007	500,000 by 2030 [TARGET]	394,630 (mid-2024, Statistics Korea) [OFFICIAL]	78.9%
KAEC	2005 / 2006	2,000,000 by 2020 [TARGET]	~10,000 (2024) [REPORTED]	0.5%
Masdar City	2006 / Feb 2008	45,000-50,000 [TARGET]	5,000 residents; 15,000 live+work (2023, AP) [REPORTED]	10.5%
Lavasa	2006 / mid-2000s	200,000-250,000 [TARGET]	<2,000 (2026) [REPORTED]	~0.9%
GIFT City	2007 / Aug 2011	no pop target; 1M jobs by 2025 [TARGET]	~28,000 workers (2025, Bloomberg); residents thin [REPORTED]	2.8% (jobs)
Konza	2008 / Jan 2013	200,000+ (2030) [TARGET]	no resident count published [UNKNOWN, ~0]	~0%
Dholera SIR	2009 (SIR Act) / trunk 2018-19, fab 2024	~1,000,000 by 2040-42 [TARGET, promotional]; >800,000 jobs [OFFICIAL-TARGET]	no credible new-resident count; 22 pre-existing villages [UNKNOWN, ~0]	pending (2042)
Yachay	2012 / Apr 2012	no verified target (~80,000 unverified)	~2,000 students (2025) [REPORTED]	n/a *
Forest City	2014 / Jan 2014	700,000 by 2035 [TARGET]	>10,000 (2024, company); ~9,000 (2023, press) [REPORTED]	~1.4%
Amaravati	2014 / 2016 interim wks	3,500,000 by 2050 [TARGET]	~100,000 pre-existing villagers (2024, World Bank) [OFFICIAL]	~2.9% *
New Clark City	2016 / Apr 2016	1,200,000 by 2065 [TARGET]	~229 students; no permanent movers (2025) [REPORTED]	~0% *
NEOM The Line	2017 / Oct 2021	9,000,000; interim cut 1.5M to ~100k by 2030 [TARGET]	0 conventional residents (2026) [REPORTED]	0%
Nusantara	2019 / Jul 2022	1,910,000 by 2045 [TARGET]	147,430 in delineated area, mostly pre-existing villages (2025, BPS) [OFFICIAL]	~7.7% *

Table A2. Master comparative table, part 2: money, anchors, land and status. Currency figures in original denomination; full sourcing in the released dataset.

Case	Investment announced / spent	Anchor and delivery status	Land model and disputes	Status 2025-26
Shenzhen SEZ	FDI-led; 50.6% of China's FDI in 1981	Export manufacturing beside Hong Kong; delivered and compounded	State land; migrant hukou precarity	17.56M megacity (2020 census)

Case	Investment announced / spent	Anchor and delivery status	Land model and disputes	Status 2025-26
Putrajaya	~USD 8.1bn est. final cost	Federal relocation 1999-2005; delivered	Estate purchase from Selangor; fiscal criticism	Functioning capital, ~120k people
Songdo IBD	~USD 35bn private project	Business hub partial; GCF, biopharma late; jobs 65% of plan	Tidal reclamation; habitat objections; JV collapse 2018, ICC 2022	~86% complete; 2030 horizon
Naya Raipur	components only; cumulative unknown	Secretariat moved 2012; ecosystem thin; MoU revival 2024-26	~800 ha initial acquisition, claimed peaceful	Admin city, visibly underpopulated
Eko Atlantic	~USD 6bn reclamation reported	Land sales anchor; seawall + Phase 1-2 infra done	Ocean reclamation; erosion and surge disputes	Ultra-prime enclave, sparse
Sejong	22.5T won (45.7T also cited)	44 agencies, ~14,000 civil servants moved; delivered	LH expropriation with compensation; constitutional fight	~390k; growth slowing; capital debate 2025
KAEC	~USD 55bn frame; spend unknown	Port delivered world-class; industry thin; city empty	State coastal grant; no displacement documented	PIF-backed restructuring; ~10k people
Masdar City	USD 22bn cut to ~19.8bn	Cleantech cluster + university partial; PRT frozen	Empty state desert	Specialised district, ~15k live+work
Lavasa	claims Rs 6,642 cr admitted	Tourism anchor failed; one town partial	600 ha purchases contested; MoEF stop-work 2010; tribal record	Insolvency; Welspun bid in litigation
GIFT City	plan ~Rs 78,000 cr; spend unknown	IFSC delivered; 1,000+ entities, USD 100bn banking; commuter city	State-assembled land; low dispute	Expanding 886 to 3,300+ acres
Konza	est. USD 14.5bn; KSh 50.4bn Phase 1	Data centre live; university 2025; no city	Ranch purchase with fraud case	Horizontal infra; decades framing
Dholera SIR	fab Rs 91,000 cr; pipeline >Rs 1.5 lakh cr (official attribution)	Fab >50% civil; first silicon target Dec 2026; solar 300 MW live	TP pooling; 2013-16 litigation; villages retained	Expressway open; airport near; fab rising
Yachay	>USD 1bn public	University operating small; city dead; EP liquidated 2021	4,462 ha expropriated from >100 owners	Academic remnant
Forest City	USD 100bn plan; ~4.3bn spent	Homes-first failed; SFZ finance pivot 2024; 2 family offices 2025	Reclamation; DEIA violation; fishermen livelihoods	1-1.5% occupied; JS-SEZ flagship
Amaravati	Rs 57,821 cr works in progress; WB/ADB ~USD 1.6bn	Capital anchor under construction after 5-year freeze	33,000 acres pooled; agitation, litigation, freeze	Heaviest construction phase in India
New Clark City	P607bn plan; ~USD 2.5bn pledges	Sports delivered; NGAC built for 3,000, unfilled; BSP 2028	Military reservation; Ayta evictions, FPIC contested	Infrastructure-forward, population-empty
NEOM The Line	USD 500bn envelope; >50bn spent	Line halted past 2030; Oxagon port/data centres survive	Huwaitat displacement; 2020 killing	Strategic review; targets slashed
Nusantara	USD 32.5bn plan; ~4.6bn spent + 2.9bn approved	Capital relocation postponed to ~2028; airport partial	Adat land grievances; 51 communities in landscape	Recommitted; budget-squeezed

Appendix B. GCVI scoring rubric

Table B1. GCVI scoring rubric: observable anchor conditions per level.

Dimension	Score 0-1 (anchor conditions)	Score 2-3	Score 4-5
DA Demand anchor realism	No external demand source, or a purely speculative one (unsold second homes, renderings).	Announced anchor with partial commitment: MoUs, unfunded relocations, aspirational clusters.	Contracted or statutory anchor: signed fiscal support, statute-mandated relocation, operating-scale port/plant commitment.
AD Anchor delivery	Anchor failed, cancelled or halted.	Anchor partially operating or under construction with dated milestones.	Anchor substantially or fully operating as promised.
CI Connectivity integration	Road-only access; assumed links unbuilt.	One or two major links operational, others pending.	Expressway plus airport and/or rail operational and connected to a major network.
PM Proximate metro gravity	No major labour market within ~200 km.	Major metro 50-150 km: reachable, outside daily labour shed.	Adjacent to or within a megaregion labour market (commutable).
FD Financing durability	Insolvent, defaulted or wholly presale-dependent.	Mixed: state support with funding gaps, rescues or cyclical dependence.	Statutory or sovereign multi-year financing surviving market cycles.
LA Land assembly durability	Forced displacement, violence, or delivery-stopping conflict.	Contested assembly with litigation or unresolved grievances; reclamation with externality disputes.	Empty state land or consensual assembly; conflicts resolved without stopping delivery.
GC Governance continuity	Delivery institution dissolved, liquidated or repudiated.	Institution survives with mandate weakened, frozen periods, or leadership churn.	Institution intact across political turnover with mandate and funding preserved.
PT Population traction	Attainment below 3 percent of target (or effectively zero).	3-33 percent of target.	Above 33 percent (4) / above 60 percent (5) of target.

Appendix C. Data confidence register

Table C1. Data confidence register: key figures, tags, and conflicts carried rather than resolved.

Figure used in analysis	Value	Tag	Note
Dholera planning envelope / urban-developable	920 / ~422 sq km	OFFICIAL	Sanctioned DP; phases to ~2040-42
Dholera Activation Area	~22.5 sq km	OFFICIAL	NICDC 22.54
Dholera population target	~1,000,000 by 2040-42	TARGET	Promotional figure; treated as promo throughout
Dholera jobs target	>800,000	TARGET	dholera.gujarat.gov.in
Tata-PSMC fab investment	Rs 91,000 cr (~USD 11bn)	OFFICIAL	PIB PRID 2010135; FSA cites Rs 91,526 cr
Fab jobs promise	>20,000 direct+indirect	TARGET	Company/PIB; SEZ notification ~21,000
Fab first silicon / commercial	Dec 2026 / mid 2028	TARGET	Reiterated mid-2026; nodes 55/90nm first
Expressway opening	31 Mar 2026, ~109 km	OFFICIAL	Operational
Airport status	trial landing 4 Jun 2026; ~80%; ops Sep-Oct 2026	REPORTED/ TARGET	Ministerial review Jul 2026
Rail approval	Rs 20,667 cr, ~134 km, 2030-31	OFFICIAL	PIB PRID 2260624

Figure used in analysis	Value	Tag	Note
Dholera new-city population	no credible count (~0)	UNKNOWN	22 pre-existing villages excluded
Sejong population	394,630 (mid-2024)	OFFICIAL	Statistics Korea
Sejong project cost	22.5T won vs 45.7T won	CONFLICT	Both reported; not resolved
Songdo population	~200,000 (2023); 212,085 (2024)	REPORTED	IFEZ via academic; registration data
Putrajaya population	119,700 (Q1 2024)	OFFICIAL	DOSM
Masdar residents / live+work	5,000 / 15,000 (2023)	REPORTED	AP; NYT corroboration
Forest City residents	>10,000 (2024); 9,000 (2023)	REPORTED	Company claim; press count
Forest City planned area	~14 to 30 sq km	CONFLICT	Post-DEIA downsizing vs original
KAEC residents	~10,000 (2024)	REPORTED	7,000 in 2018 (FT)
KAEC planned area	173-181 sq km	CONFLICT	Both circulate
NEOM spend	>USD 50bn	REPORTED	Deputy CEO statement, Davos
NEOM population targets	9M; 1.5M-by-2030 cut to <300k (2024), ~100k all-NEOM (2026)	TARGET	Serial reductions reported
Nusantara delineated population	147,430 (2025)	OFFICIAL	Mostly pre-existing villages; 6.03% moved in <5 yrs
Nusantara state spend	Rp 75.8T (~USD 4.63bn) 2022-24	REPORTED	Reuters
Amaravati current population	~100,000	OFFICIAL	World Bank; pre-existing villagers
Amaravati works in progress	Rs 57,821 cr	OFFICIAL	CM review, Apr 2026
New Clark City occupancy	229 students; ~80 units sold	REPORTED	Grist/Pulitzer, Jan 2025
GIFT City jobs / entities	~28,000 workers; 1,034 entities; USD 100bn banking assets	REPORTED/ OFFICIAL	Bloomberg CityLab; PIB
Naya Raipur population	~64,353	REPORTED	GeoIQ platform; unofficial
Lavasa residents / claims	<2,000; Rs 6,642 cr admitted	REPORTED	Realty Plus; Moneylife
Shenzhen 1980 baseline	30,000 / ~100,000 / ~310,000	CONFLICT	Town / SEZ area / county definitions
Shenzhen census series	449,500 (1982) to 17,560,000 (2020)	OFFICIAL	Census via CEIC
Konza / Eko Atlantic / Yachay figures	see Appendix A	MIXED	Unknowns declared, not estimated