

AVSIS: Executive Summary

The Auroville Sustainability Indicator System (AVSIS) aims to establish guidelines that can be followed when planning for future development in Auroville or to assess existing development. The guidelines, considerations and recommendations within this document reflect the values of Aurovilians and the Vision for Auroville. The overarching goal of this project is to lay out guidelines for sustainable development within Auroville to create a dialogue amongst Aurovilians with the hope that the Vision of unity may be achieved through sustainable practices.

Prior to arriving in Auroville background research was conducted by studying several sustainability performance assessment systems presently in use in North America (LEED-ND), Europe (BREEAM Communities), and India (TERI GRIHA). The project team also conducted several case studies to clearly understand the workings of the various performance indicator systems. Using findings from the background research, the team developed an interim system of indicators.

While in Auroville, the project team undertook site observations, interviews with resource persons, and a preliminary presentation to members of the community in order to receive feedback and to guide the project towards the aforementioned goal. The various research methods utilized ensure that the created developed indicator system reflects the Aurovillian perspective on sustainable development.

Inspired by work begun by Helen Eveleigh (for L'Avenir) in January 2013, Auroville's Master Plan and the Auroville Charter, the Auroville Sustainability Indicator System was developed. Six sustainable development objectives were identified based on interviews and a review of the Master Plan, which form the body of AVSIS. They are: sustainable design, accessibility, physical connectivity, integration, human resource management, and physical resource management. For each of these six objectives, a number of assessment indicators were created based on a nuanced, mixed method approach. This approach focuses less on standard assessment checklist, and instead takes the form of a series of qualitative and quantitative questions or indicators meant to enable a critical review on sustainability within Auroville.

AVSIS was then applied to the development surrounding, and including, Auroville's Town Hall. For the purposes of this project this area is referred to as the Town Hall Complex. Our study found that the Town Hall Complex is excelling in sustainability aspects such as sustainable design and physical resource management. However, although it features a few positive physical connectivity and local integration initiatives, it is lacking some instrumental features, and is completely falling behind when it comes to accessibility.

Three considerations were also identified through this project. Although these topics are not implicitly included within the Indicator System, they are important enough to warrant further discussion. They are, food security within Auroville, the development planning and building process, and how to foster further innovation within Auroville and beyond.

Additionally, the project team has developed a set of recommendations for Auroville to consider when planning new development within Auroville, or when evaluating existing development. These recommendations are:

1) **Planning Design Process.** *Actively engaging all Aurovilians in the planning and development process will go a long way to ensure a diversity of knowledge and local expertise, which can produce innovative solutions that maximize all interests and promote sustainability.*

2) **Sustainable Design.** *Future development in Auroville should reflect the use of appropriate building material, architectural design and construction methods, while reflecting the needs of users.*

3) **Accessibility.** *The Auroville Accessibility Code should become a mandatory official planning document that is consulted by all future developments. Where possible, existing buildings should be retrofitted in a way that is consistent with the Code.*

4) **Physical Connectivity.** *Additional infrastructure should be implemented to improve connectivity between buildings and developments while encouraging active transportation.*

5) **Integration.** *Auroville should make communication a priority within Auroville, the surrounding region, and on an international level.*

6) **Human Resource Management.** *Auroville should continue to promote equitable access to education, employment, knowledge, and skills training, which are key benchmarks of happiness, pride and self worth.*

7) **Physical Resource Management.** *Auroville should continue to pursue innovative methods to reduce its physical impact on the environment.*

AVSIS provides an important tool for Aurovilians to rethink what sustainably means within Auroville, and how it may be achieved to a greater degree. As the population of Auroville grows, sustainability will be a paramount factor in achieving unity and the Vision set out in Auroville's Charter.