GROWTH MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

for Settlements in the Auroville Green Belt

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Finally, we thank family, friends, and significant others whose love and encouragement, from start to finish, helped us make this journey an enormous success.

meet the PROJECT TEAM

Front Row (left to right): Miles Weekes, Ajay Agarwal, Peter Huan, Meghan Robidoux, Joanna Rees
Back Row (left to right): Anna Geladi, Laurel Sharp, Jonella Evangelista, Jennifer Smyth, Sarah Ezzio, Alex Gordon, Michael Hanifi, Phillip Prell

This report was prepared by postgraduate students at Queen's University's School of Urban and Regional Planning in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. The international project team was comprised of 12 students in their second year of the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (M.Pl.) program,

The students come from diverse undergraduate programs, including journalism, criminal justice, music, geography, environmental sciences, visual arts, sociology, political science and education. Each team member is interested in varying areas of concentration in the field of urban planning. Both individually and collectively, the team is equipped with versatile skills that have contributed to the successful completion of this project.

Executive Summary

Project Summary

Auroville's Perspective Master Plan (2001) includes a Green Belt zone that is intended to be used as a tool to assist in managing development and future growth around Auroville. Within Auroville's Green Belt, there are six village settlements, all of which are experiencing growth. This is ultimately putting pressure on the Green Belt. While growth can offer economic development opportunities, these pressures can also cause environmental degradation and a loss of cultural heritage. The purpose of this document is to provide a Growth Management Framework for Settlements in the Auroville Green Belt to identify ways in which Auroville and the villages can grow together harmoniously.

Background

Greenbelt plans are widely used to manage growth pressures in urban settings while preserving environmentally sensitive areas. Auroville's Green Belt was initially created as a way to protect and promote the sustainability goals of the community. New developments in the nearby villages and throughout the Green Belt prompted the need to study the effects of growth and to develop a comprehensive strategy. Further, the research is timely due to the ongoing review of Auroville's Green Belt Development Plan (2011). The research conducted for this project is intended to inform changes to the Green Belt Development Plan and provide direction for future research.

Process

The research process began in September 2017 in Kingston, Ontario, Canada with 12 Master of Urban and Regional Planning students from Queen's University conducting background research and interviews. The project team worked for three months in Canada to establish a baseline of knowledge on greenbelts, growth management tools and to establish an understanding of the Auroville context. Two weeks in Auroville at the beginning of December provided the project team time to further research the growth pressures experienced in Auroville's Green Belt and gain a better understanding of the relationships between

stakeholders. The research that was conducted is intended to provide background so that recommendations for future action can be offered.

Different research methods were used to develop the Growth Management Framework outlined in this document. The first research method that was utilized was a policy and document review, which had two goals: 1) to research the social, cultural and political context of planning in Auroville; and 2) to research best practises in growth management tools and strategies. Next, six international greenbelt case studies were analyzed to understand greenbelts as a growth management tool in a variety of geographical, political and social contexts. The final research method used was a combination of interviews and focus groups. The majority of these were conducted in Auroville, however, a select few were conducted via Skype or telephone from Canada. These interviews provided insight into the views of various stakeholders on greenbelt growth management. The research collected allowed the project team to develop a variety of solutions to assist in future management within the Auroville Green Belt.

Findings

A number of noteworthy findings came out of the research conducted. The most common finding revealed was a need for better communication between all stakeholders. More specifically, communication channels between Auroville, panchayats, state governments, landowners and villagers could be strengthened. A number of other issues arose relating to growth management solutions that fall under four key themes: land use, market-based, environmental, and social.

From a land use perspective, there is incomplete data and information regarding development and infrastructure in the Green Belt. The need for data on infrastructure was a common concern from many stakeholders in the region. In the past, Auroville has undertaken various mapping and surveying initiatives, however, many are incomplete, inaccessible or unreliable.

Auroville owns lands within and around the Green Belt and is currently using a variety of soft approaches to further the objectives of the Green Belt. Research found that market-based initiatives can be effective for growth management and would support existing efforts. Furthermore, interviews highlighted a need to increase the utility of currently owned lands.

Environmental conservation is a priority for Auroville. Managing growth is important for the region to protect environmental systems such as watersheds, agricultural land and biodiversity. Moreover, local groups are aware of the need for better environmental land uses. However, there is a lack of guidance in this matter.

Many stakeholders highlighted the need for a bottom-up approach to developing a Growth Management Strategy for the Green Belt. Balancing growth management strategies while encouraging economic development was a common issue that was discussed. Auroville is currently working to build relationships with the Green Belt residents through social outreach programs.

Recommendations for Further Action

The research conducted by the project team is broad in scope and provides a framework for future research and study. An extensive checklist of recommendations and possible solutions is attached in Appendix B. These recommendations are categorized thematically and include: land use, market-based, environmental, and social.

The following report provides an in-depth analysis of greenbelt growth management strategies and their application to Auroville's Green Belt. Through the research, a series of solutions were developed to create a framework for the next 5-7 years. The end goal of this Growth Management Framework is to create a regional Growth Management Strategy for Auroville and the surrounding region.

Land Use Recommendations:

- Mapping
- Population Projections
- Infrastructure Assessment

Market-based Recommendations:

- Land Exchange
- Land Lease
- Development Rights
- Direct Purchase
- Planning and Design Guidelines

Environmental Recommendations:

- Data Collection and Mapping
- Rural Development Programs for Auroville
- Partnerships with Villages

Social Recommendations:

- A Collaboration Hub
- Activity Impact Assessment
- Community Asset Assessment