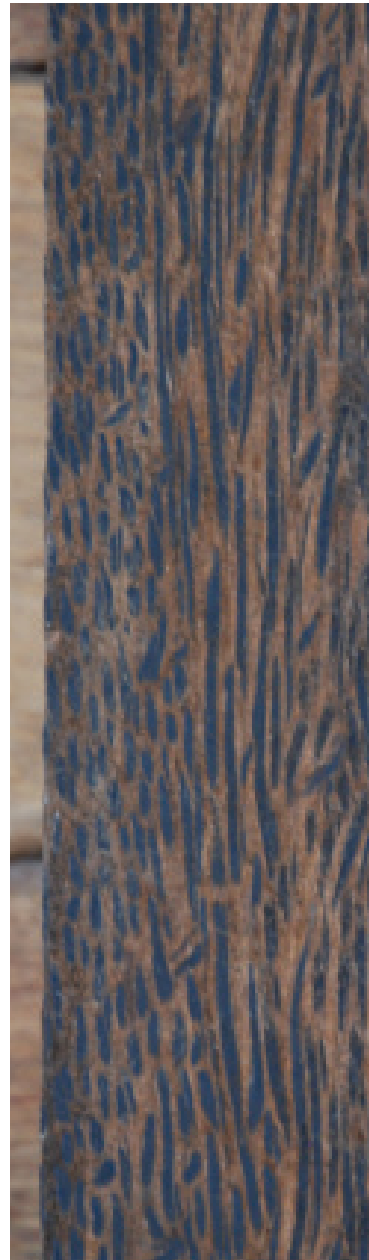
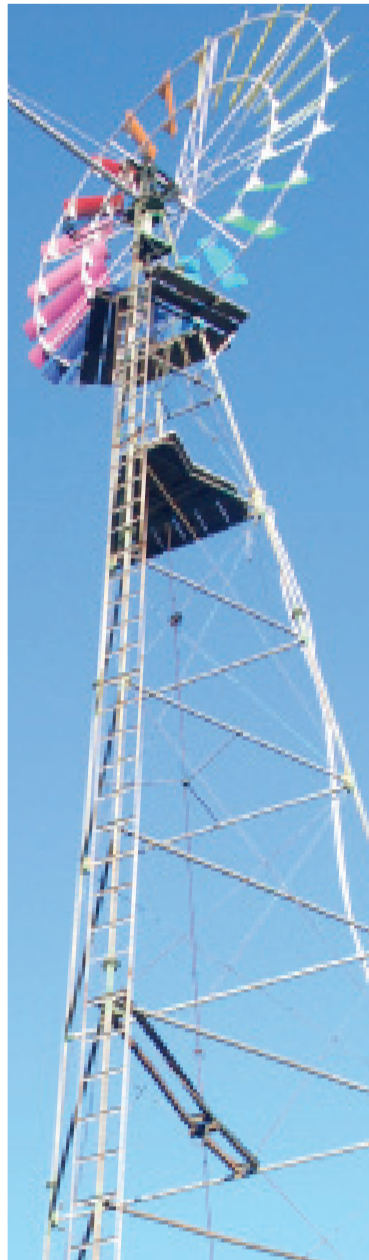
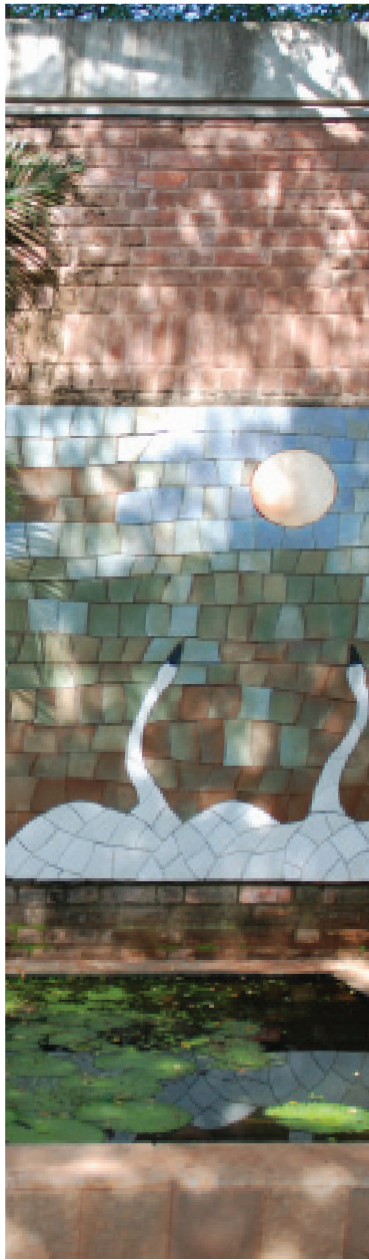


Capturing the Spirit of the Crown:

Considerations for Social Spaces in Auroville



Executive Summary

Capturing the Spirit of the Crown: Considerations for Social Spaces in Auroville aims to establish high-level guidelines that can be followed when planning for social spaces along the Crown Road, particularly the residential zone. The principles and considerations in the document reflect the values, vision, and future of Auroville. The overall goal of the project is to set out guidelines for social spaces that are realistic, affordable, and applicable to the variety of needs of Aurovillians.

As the first stage to completing this project, best practices research was conducted prior to departing Canada. The research identified four qualities vital to public space development: access and linkages, comfort and image, uses and activities, and sociability. These elements of public spaces served as a base for the project team's research post arrival in Auroville.

In addition to research on best practices using secondary data the project team undertook site observations, stakeholder interviews, and a public consultation workshop to ensure the guidelines

reflect the Aurovillian perspective on the development and use of social spaces. The project team identified eight social space typologies that can be incorporated into a social space network along Auroville's Crown Road. Typologies such as parkettes, squares, sidewalks and pathways, and courtyards all facilitate a variety of uses and a mixture of social interactions among residents.

From the research, guiding principles were developed. These guiding principles include affordability, environmental consciousness, aesthetics, and leveraging of community assets. The overarching principles should be considered within all themes and aspects of social space. Ensuring that social spaces follow these principles will aid in the production of sustainable, community driven social spaces.

In addition to the guiding principles, five main themes were established in order to create vibrant, active, and strong community social spaces. These themes are: functionality, adaptability, connectivity, safety, and maintaining local character.

Auroville is a town with unique goals, direction, and needs. The inclusion of a network of social spaces along the Crown Road, particularly adjacent to the residential zone can serve as a hub of activity for Aurovillians young and old to meet, share ideas, and interact outside in a formal setting. In order to achieve this, a number of considerations under each of the five themes can be applied to any future social spaces developed along the Crown Road.

A combination of primary, secondary, and tertiary nodes should be used to create a network of social spaces throughout the Crown Road. This network will be integral to the development and incorporation of social spaces into Auroville's growing infrastructure.

The 'primary node' is the largest of the 5 nodes purposed. The location of this node was selected based on its proximity to a crossroads and entrance to Mahalakshmi Park. This location can act as a natural hub of activity. Additionally, the nature of the space could provide a future opportunity for a mobility hub.

Secondary nodes can vary in physical size; they are smaller than a ‘primary node,’ but larger than ‘tertiary nodes’. Their location will be determined based on links to current concentrations of activity such as the Solar Kitchen and the library. In terms of activity, a ‘secondary node’ has programming potential and provides physical amenities. Examples of such amenities could be a gazebo or games tables; physical objects which provide activity potential while being flexible in nature. A key feature of a ‘secondary node’, and all nodes, is the provision of shade by trees.

A ‘tertiary node’ is small in size and provides an area for resting, people watching, or linking pedestrian users along the network. The form of tertiary nodes is similar to the ‘pathway typology’ defined within the Guidelines and Considerations, section. Crucial features which could be included in a tertiary node are benches and natural shade. Additional features within these physically smaller spaces could be public art, information boards and art walls.

Creation of these activity nodes can act as ‘third places’ to attract people to use and congregate within social spaces. By drawing more people to Crown Road, these nodes can enhance the sense of

safety, provide comfort, and create more opportunities for informal and spontaneous interactions.

The project team has developed a set of recommendations for Auroville to consider as social spaces further develop along the Crown. These recommendations include:

Recommendation 1 – Include residents in the development process of social spaces along the Crown.

Recommendation 2 – The management and design of the roadway must take into account the needs of a well-balanced and multi-modal transportation system.

Recommendation 3 – As the Aurovillian population grows, special attention should be given to expanding social space networks.

Recommendation 4 – Prioritize and designate land for social spaces along the Crown Road.

Recommendation 5 – Concentrate development along a single hub of the Crown, with expansion occurring adjacent to current development, in an effort to avoid scattered growth.

Recommendation 6 – Incorporate mixed land uses adjacent to social spaces.

The proposed guidelines and conceptual plan provides a representation of themes, elements and qualities that could potentially be incorporated throughout the study area to increase activity, linkage, and vibrancy concentrated within a hub of social spaces. As the population grows, social spaces will be integral to the well being of Auroville’s residents and maintaining the *Spirit of the Crown*.