

# Auroville Outreach



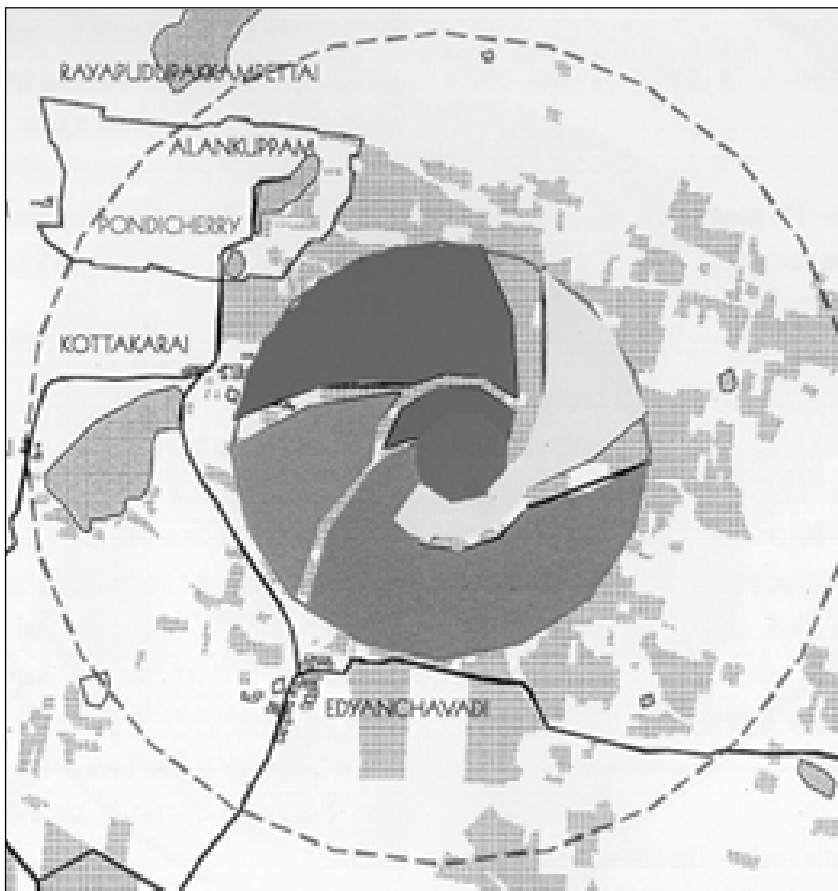
A newsletter from Auroville international township

October 2000

## The Auroville Township Integrated Master Plan

As long ago as 1968, at the time of its inauguration, Auroville already had a simplified town plan, based on a spiral galaxy shape endorsed with The Mother's blessings. However, it was only conceptual. Today Auroville finally has a well developed "Master Plan" which has been accepted at the highest levels of the Govt. of India.

Some people may wonder why Auroville waited more than 30 years before coming up with a proper town plan. The answer lies partly in the fact that Auroville has lacked the land, the manpower, the expertise and the money to date to draw up and implement any agreed plan. However, there have also been ongoing conflicting views as to whether the original concept remained viable or should be replaced with a totally new approach, and there



*Township with surrounding Green Belt*

Auroville is an international township in Tamil Nadu, South India, founded in 1968.

Inspired by the vision of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, about 1,500 people from India and some 30 other nations are building a township dedicated to an experiment in human unity, with the eventual hope of contributing to international understanding and the evolution of human consciousness. Nearly 5,000 of the 40,000-plus local people living in the dozen-or-more villages that comprise the Auroville bio-region are also involved in the project, providing their skills and labour.

The township, projected for 50,000 people, will radiate out from the central Matrimandir and its surrounding gardens in 4 zones, the International, Cultural, Residential and Industrial. A large forested area, the Green Belt, will eventually surround the entire township area.

Present activities in Auroville include wasteland reclamation and reforestation, organic farming, village development, education, health care, renewable energy, appropriate building technology, arts and culture, handicrafts and small-scale industries, architecture and town planning.

As described by its founder, Auroville aspires to be "a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities."

For more general information visit the website: [www.auroville.org](http://www.auroville.org)



*Collective housing in Residential Zone*

have been many other problems requiring attention day to day by those involved in Auroville planning.

What finally focussed the community on the need to come up with a Master Plan, and galvanised the then Development & Planning Group into action, was the escalating purchase of land in the Auroville area by outsiders, including outright speculators and developers. In particular, the purchase of a large 50-acre plot in the southern sector of the Green Belt by a Pondicherry-based real estate agency, for up to 700 houses in a barbed wire compound named 'Peaceful City', drew the attention of the whole community. It became clear that unless Auroville acquired all the remaining land needed for the township and surrounding Green Belt in the very near future, it would be too late to lay down the infrastructure for an international township for 50,000 people, or to protect it from direct encroachment by parties lacking any commitment to or interest in its Charter and ideals.

Because of continuing shortage of funds to quickly purchase the remaining land, a decision was made by the community, in consultation with legal advisers and the Secretary to the Auroville Foundation, to try to have the land needed for Auroville safeguarded

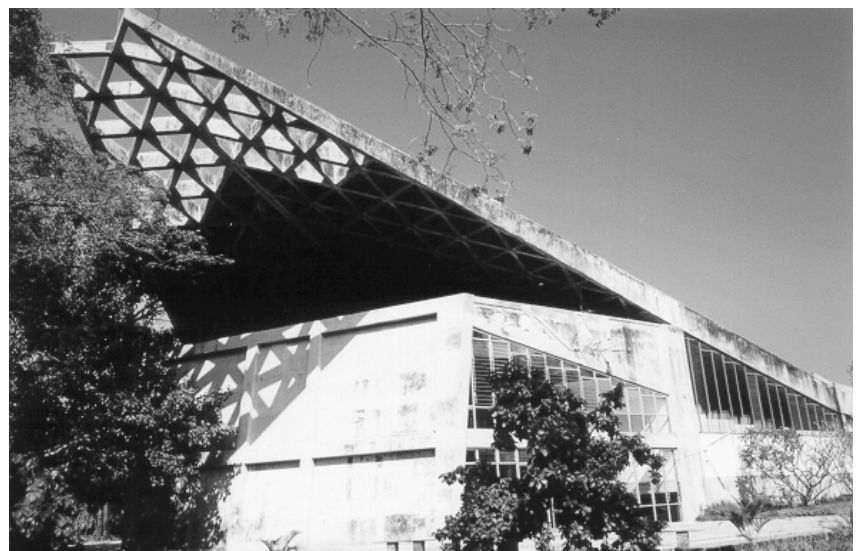
from further outside acquisition or exploitation by obtaining a legally recognised status for the Auroville township area. For this purpose, it was necessary to prepare a Master Plan; have it approved by the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation; and then have it notified in the official gazette of the Government of India. This is what has been happening in an ongoing process over the past 18 months, guided by Auroville's Land Use Coordination committee. Meanwhile, in parallel, a concentrated effort has been going on to raise funds for purchase of the remaining land (some 89 hectares in the city area and another 316 in

the Green Belt area).

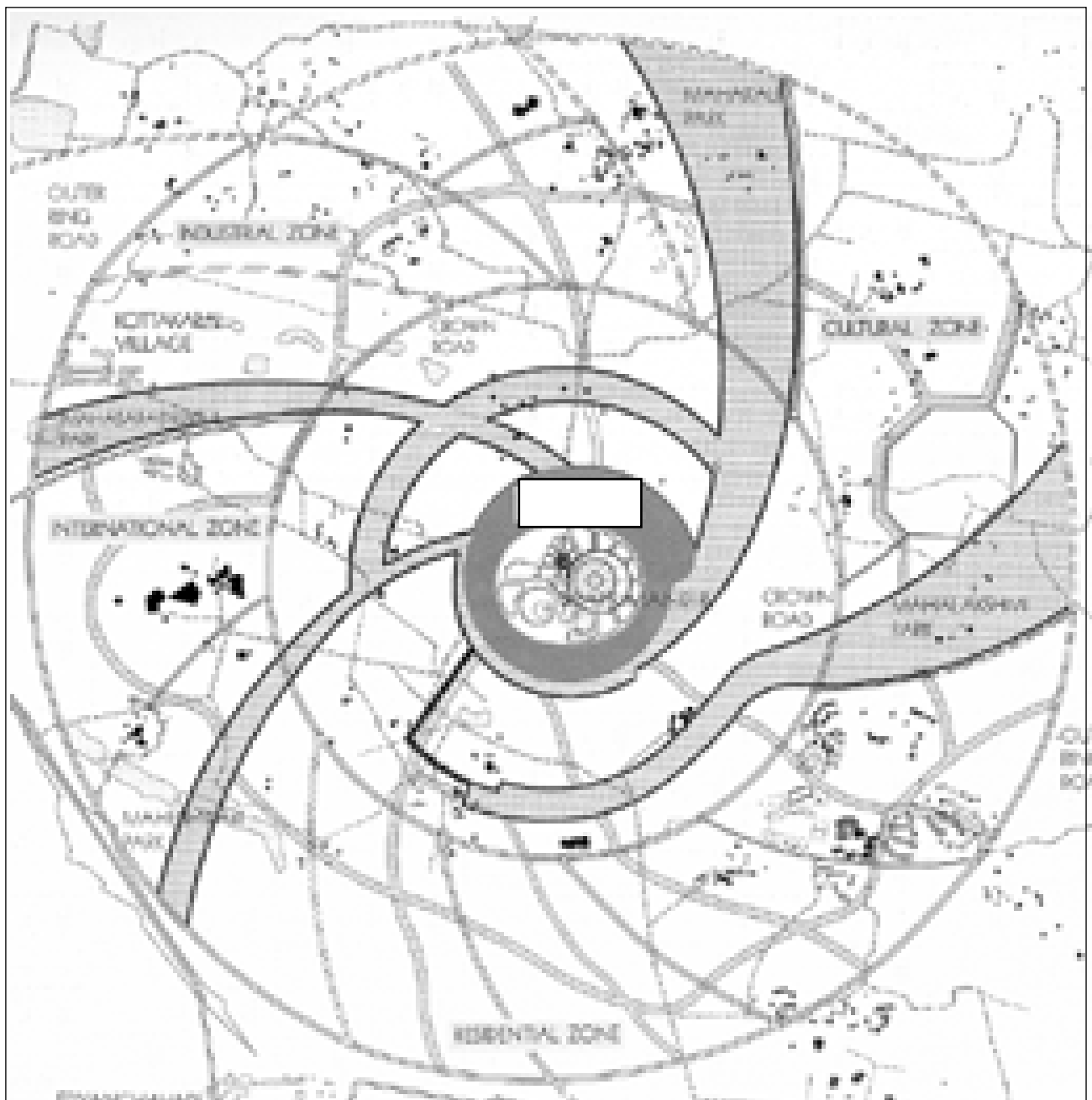
So, what is the Master Plan? Essentially, after a first section on the vision and concept of Auroville, the 68-page document gives an outline of the overall development plan, describing the central 'Peace' area, the 4 radiating zones of the township with their physical and social infrastructure plus adjacent 'Crown Road' areas, and the surrounding Green Belt. The document ends with a concise section on implementation and management of the whole plan. Although labelled as a "Master Plan", it is in fact more of a land use plan, avoiding details such as the precise identity or location of actual buildings or infrastructure at this stage. Nevertheless, it is comprehensive in its vision of the future township, giving a clear picture - zone by zone - of how each area of land will be used.

For the central 7-hectare 'Peace' area, land usage is restricted to development of the Matrimandir and surrounding lake and gardens, plus any essential utility and transport related infrastructure, including visitor facilities.

For the 167-hectare Residential Zone, development will be primarily limited to residential community buildings, community meeting spaces, crèches and lower age group



*Bharat Nivas, the Indian national pavilion in International Zone*

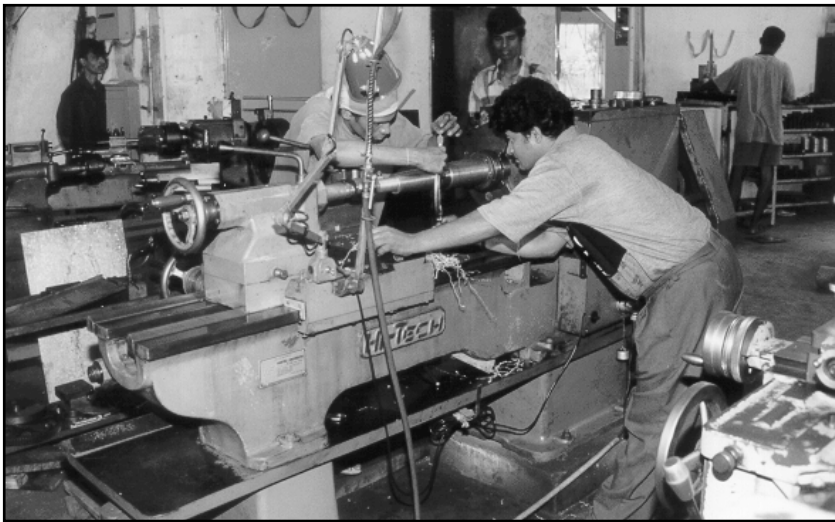


educational needs, work studios, first aid centres, parks, playgrounds, landscaping elements, eco-friendly parking areas, kiosks and convenience stores, with the additional possibility of small handicraft ateliers. The adjacent Crown Road area is planned for dwellings and city level retail stores, display areas, communication and recreation centres, restaurants, libraries and reading rooms, health

centres, essential utility needs, city management sub-offices for services such as fire, water, sanitation and post/telecom, parks & green areas and eco-friendly parking. There could also be guest houses, department stores, some small professional offices, utility maintenance centres and essential transport related infrastructure and conference facilities.

For the 69-hectare International

Zone, primary development will be limited to national and international pavilions, conference and exhibition halls, communication centres, visitor information centres, parks and green areas, playgrounds, hostels, guest houses, restaurants, kiosks and convenience stores, with the further possibility of medical centres, public transport facilities and some staff quarters. The adjacent Crown Road area will be used for shopping



*Industrial Zone*

arcades, restaurants, guest houses, hostels, dwellings and staff quarters, indoor recreation facilities, banking and financial services, parks and green areas.

For the 145-hectare Industrial Zone, primary development in the 'economic area' will be limited to manufacturing services and other non-polluting industries, professional consultancy offices, retail and wholesale distribution outlets, vehicle parking, industrial display areas, R&D staff quarters, related welfare facilities, parks and playgrounds, plus a crèche, canteen, rest rooms, kiosks and convenience stores. In the 'administrative area' there will be a town hall and city level admin offices, and in the 'vocational & research area' there will be vocational training centres and related laboratories. The adjacent Crown Road area will be devoted to hostels, dwellings and guest houses, post and communication centres, retail stores and zonal level medical facilities.

For the 103-hectare Cultural Zone, primary development will be limited to institutions and research centres related to education, arts and sport, city level cultural uses including

auditoriums and exhibition halls, parks and playgrounds, green areas, kiosks and convenience stores. There will also be the possibility of major transport related infrastructure, a stadium and large spaces with sports facilities. The adjacent Crown Road area will be used for the same range of development as in the Residential Zone.

Lastly, for the 1,472-hectare Green Belt Zone, primary land use will be for agriculture (specially organic) and rural development activities applicable to developing countries, specially to Tamil Nadu;

facilities for education and research, including applied research in all areas of sustainable integrated rural development, including energy farms, water and waste management stations; traffic and transportation; forests, dairies, fruit orchards and horticultural centres; poultry and agricultural food production; and botanical gardens, gene pools, sanctuaries and bio-reserves. There will be active co-development and partnership with the village settlements located in this area, in the fields of reforestation and restoration of the tropical indigenous forest, and water management and ground water recharging. In the 'utility zone' of the Green Belt there will also be staff quarters, and public services and utilities.

Richly illustrated with maps and colour photos, the Auroville Township Master Plan, which in essence defines the existing and future land use in the 20 sq.kms planned for the City and Green Belt areas, addresses the Government of India with an appeal to take all possible steps to safeguard the land for the realisation of the Plan: not just for Auroville, but - as stated in the Charter - for "humanity as a whole".



*A classroom in the Cultural Zone*

Enquiries or feedback relating to this newsletter and its contents are always welcome, and can be communicated to:  
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