

THE ARKA RESIDENTIAL CENTRE: A PROFILE

"Auroville wants to be a place of an unending education, of constant progress and a youth that never ages."

From the Auroville Charter

Auroville, an experimental, international township dedicated to the ideals of human unity, integral growth, and harmonious, sustainable living, came into existence in 1968. It is situated 10 kms north of Pondicherry along the coast of the Bay of Bengal, in Tamil Nadu, South India.

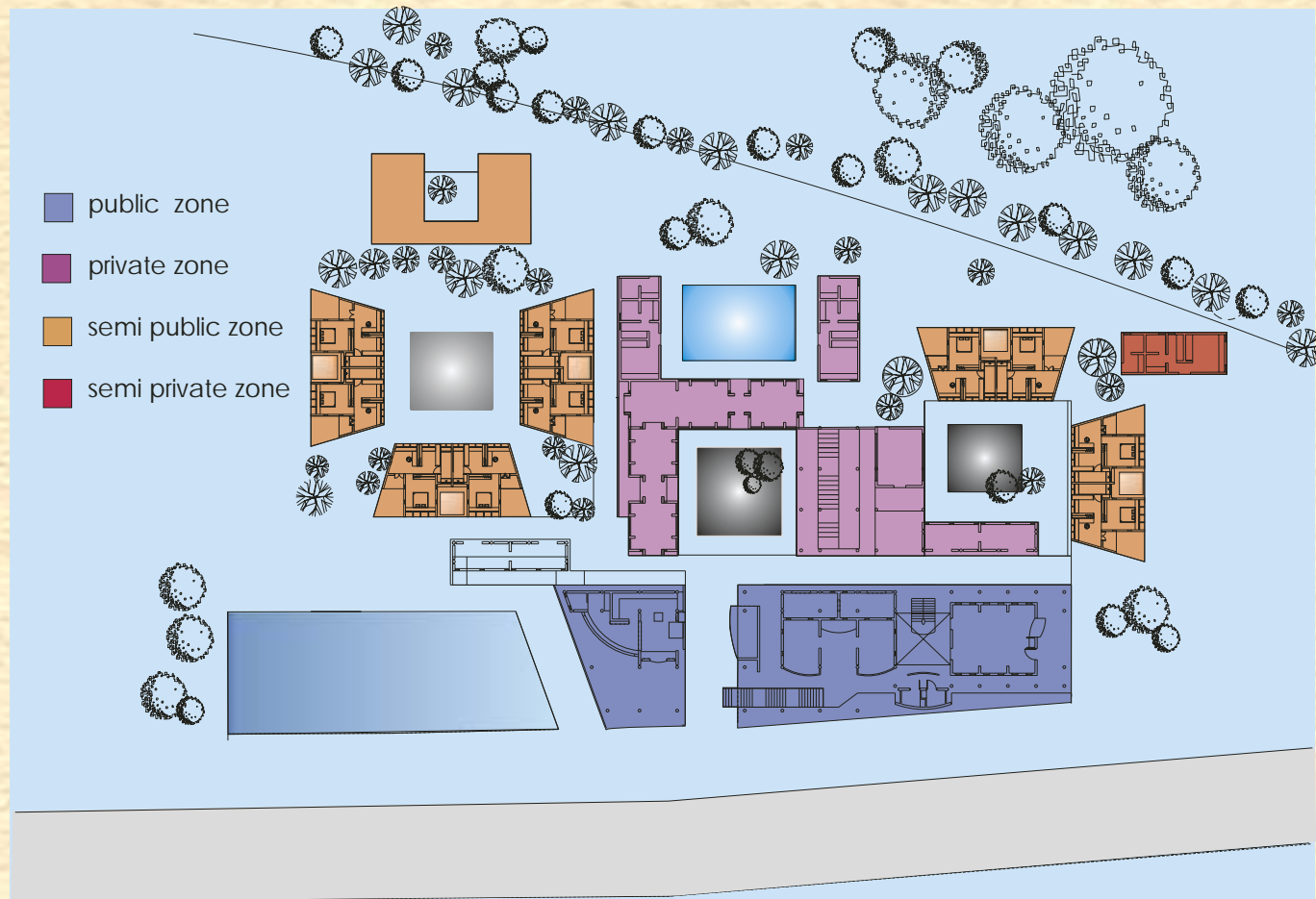
With a current growing population of 1800, drawn from various parts of the world including India, Auroville has a number of older residents who have helped to shape the evolving city along the lines of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's vision.

In the coming five years, 10% of the Auroville population will have reached retiring age. This means that about 170 members of the community, who have given their all to Auroville, may need to have access to a protective environment in order to continue living a progressive, integral life within the community.

ARKA wants to be the place that will offer a lifestyle supported by centralized services qualitatively sensitive to the needs of this group of senior Aurovilians.

The ARKA project

Dedicated to the Mother's vision of Auroville as a place of "unending education and a youth that never ages", ARKA is committed to the Auroville ideals of human unity and collectivity in its conception of an innovative project that wants to redefine the notion of aging and the conventional responses to it.



Meaning 'ray of light' in Sanskrit, ARKA wants to become a self-sufficient centre for senior Aurovilians who wish to continue living an active, integral life in spite of possible physical challenges that may occur with age.

The centre will create an environment in which the residents can dedicate themselves to the inner work pertaining to their particular stage in life, while sustaining a healthy, balanced and harmonious lifestyle. ARKA will provide them with all necessary support in terms of a centralized facilities infrastructure: residency, first-aid, therapy treatments and physical & cultural activities - on short-term, mid-term and long-term basis.

Moreover, Arka is committed to encouraging its residents to formulate an ordered way of life that includes pleasant and meaningful interaction with people from both inside and outside the centre.

The presence of children in the recreational area within the ARKA grounds is one such possibility of interaction among others that will benefit the residents of ARKA as well as other parties. Our residents can, for instance, teach children simple arts and crafts. Regular workshops for painting, ceramics and embroidery will supplement cultural activities such as dance and music. A library, computer centre, concerts, lectures and other events will create a lively space for active participation for all ARKA residents.

A voluntary service programme for Auroville's youth will be given a special place in ARKA. The youth can find new possibilities to involve themselves in various fields such as nursing, general assistance, management, secretarial work, arts and crafts. In this way, they can also offer their practical help to elderly Aurovilians who live outside the ARKA complex.

Given its very accessible location within the city area itself, ARKA is a much needed centre of its kind in Auroville, since existing facilities relating to health and other essential services are presently mainly located on the outskirts of the city, and are neither centralized nor wholly sufficient.

One of its aims is, then, to provide a first-aid shelter equipped with convalescent facilities that will also be open to Auroville's general population.

ARKA will, moreover, also benefit friends and guests of Auroville as well as visiting expert therapists who will come and share their experience and knowledge. The local village people will benefit as well, particularly in terms of practical training, education, and employment.





Floor plan of apartments

ARKA: Layout and Services

With its first phase of construction already well on the way, ARKA is situated on Auroville's Crown Road in the Residential Zone, opposite the settlement of Surrender and adjacent to the Mahalakshmi Park bordering the gardens of Matrimandir, the spiritual heart of Auroville.

A low-density project on an area of about 2 acres, ARKA will consist of 50 residents' houses and 10-15 staff houses. It will also provide living space for the hosting of 20-25 short-term and long-term guests. The types of accommodation will vary according to the needs of the residents, and respect for international quality standards for buildings and equipment will be strictly adhered to. A typical residence, for single or double occupancy, will be constructed within a built area of 45 sq. metres. It will consist of two rooms with toilet and bath facilities. A small kitchenette will be provided, but residents will be encouraged to partake of the communal dining facilities that will

provide nutritiously-balanced meals on a regular basis.

In order to keep ARKA "connected" with life in the city, rather than being isolated from it, it is designed in the form of zones, public and private, that will offer the following services:

PUBLIC ZONE: Restaurant and Herbal Tea Room, Information Desk, Office, Workshops and Ateliers, Internet Point, Boutique, Pharmacy, Multi-purpose Hall, Storage and Services, Caretaker's House and Parking.

PRIVATE ZONE: Private Dining Hall, Dispensary, Office/Reception, Nursery, Massage Room, Guest Rooms, Staff Houses, Residences, Parking, Storage and Services.

SEMI-PUBLIC ZONE: Swimming Pool, Massage and Therapy, Beauty Salon, Gymnasium, Convalescing Rooms, First-Aid Shelter, Library, Meditation Hall, Guest Rooms.

SEMI-PRIVATE ZONE: Workers' Houses, Laundry, Common Kitchen, Storeroom, Water Tank, Electricity Room.

The ARKA project is scheduled to become wholly operational by 2007. With an initial donation given by a friend of Auroville from Europe, the first phase of ARKA construction began on January 1, 2002, and is due to reach completion in March 2003. The construction of the remaining phases/zones will take place over five years, with the public zone to be functional by early next year. The public facilities offered in this first phase are inherently self-supportive in terms of their financial sustainability. Accordingly, some recurring maintenance expenses could be recovered from these income-generating activities, but more funds have to be raised for the satisfactory completion of the project.

Financial sustainability

The overall estimated cost of the ARKA project amounts to US \$ 500,000. Success of the project depends on the number of participants at three different levels - Aurovillian inhabitants, donors from within Auroville and outside, and a body of human resource to run the centre.

The need for the ARKA centre has been recognized as urgent, realistic, and genuine. It has the full support of the city with many people conveying their willingness to contribute their energies towards full-time or part-time assistance in its management and functioning.

- The financial sustainability of the ARKA project will be measurable only when it reaches a certain stage of completion.
- The first phase of public activities is targeted to be self-supportive.
- Income from guests in terms of lodging and boarding will go towards the cost of maintenance.
- Semi-public facilities like the swimming pool, beauty salon, massage and therapy rooms will be offered to registered members at a monthly rate so as to meet the running costs of this zone.

The private residences, including staff houses, will be financed by individuals who feel the need to live and work in ARKA.

More funds, however, are needed for the completion of the project in its entirety. Donations, in cash and kind, are sought for and we sincerely appeal to community members, guests, and friends of Auroville.

Donations by cheque or draft can be paid to
SWIFT Code: SBININBBAFXD
State Bank of India, Branch Code: 03160
Auroville International Township Branch,
Kuilapalayam, Auroville - 605 101 INDIA
Auroville Fund Foreign A/c No. 01000060095
purpose "ARKA Residential Centre"

For further information, please contact:

Maria Grazia Garilli, Coordinator
New Creation, Auroville 605 101, Tamil Nadu, India.
Tel: 91 413 622 284 Email: mariagrazia@auroville.org.in

ARKA
ray of light



*Auroville sera le lieu de
l'éducation perpétuelle, son
progrès constant et d'une
science qui ne vieillit point.*

