

SCHOOL OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE, VIJAYAWADA

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

SESSION: JUNE 2017 – DECEMBER 2017

3rd SEMESTER, STUDIO BRIEF AND PROPOSAL

Brief

The concept of the neighbourhood was given by Clarence A Perry in 1929. In his view, the neighbourhoods are the building blocks of any city, just the way the organs are to a body. In the year 2015, the Indian government had launched its flagship program of developing certain cities as 'smart cities'. With the increasing concerns towards the protection of the engulfing environment, provision of adequate physical and social infrastructure along with the inclusion of all the sectors of the society brought together with the provision of the latest ICT solutions, it can be ascertained that the development of the city has to be holistic in nature. A city cannot merely evolve in isolation. It has to be driven by the evolution of its fundamental blocks as well. Although in India, the neighbourhood per se has not existed as an independent unit administratively, but it still holds consummate importance in terms of functionality and can be argued as a unit in planning itself. However, with a focus on the 'area based developments' under Smart City Guidelines, the need for a proper planning at a lower settlement hierarchy level (i.e. at neighbourhood level) as increased significantly. In this context a studio exercise on planning smart neighbourhoods in Indian cities becomes expedient.

Pedagogy

The present studio exercise intends to develop the students with skills of understanding the built environment and plan for it accordingly. Neighbourhoods being the fundamental unit of a city are taken for the study in this context. For the purpose of the academic study, the neighbourhood criteria given by Perry is going to be considered. It is thus, a site with a population of approximately 5000 people, a primary school, commercial centre, a hospital and most importantly, is a site with distinct characteristic (as widely seen in the Indian context).

The students would initially be imparted with a knowledge of site analysis. It involves an understanding of topography, geomorphic approach to site development, soils, slopes, and drainage systems, implications of planning and development of a neighbourhood. Additionally, factors and concepts related to a built environment aka a neighbourhood unit such as climate, site characteristics, landform, visual elements, behavioural factors and space utilisation would be taught as well.

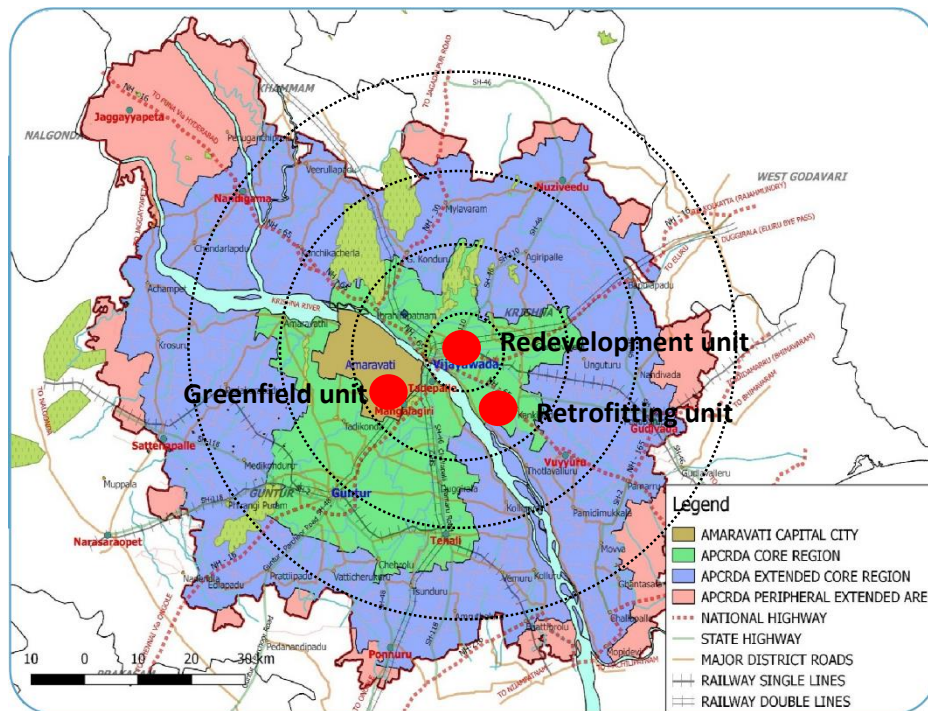
In the second stage, the students would be equipped with the knowledge of the importance of a neighbourhood in the city. Given the Indian government's vision on developing 98 'smart cities', the focus of the studio exercise shall be to teach the students, the importance of having such neighbourhoods that incorporate, 'smart city' development concomitantly. In other words, the focus shall be on 'smart neighbourhoods', as previously discussed. For this purpose, a concept of 'smart growth' as prevalent in many diverse-multi-ethnic American cities (like Los Angeles, Nashville etc.) which have the characteristics resonating with that of many Indian cities, shall be applied in the study. Indicators of 'smart growth' are infill redevelopment, street connectivity, location near transport corridors, walkable streets, compact development, mixed use, housing diversity and adequate infrastructure. In addition, a knowledge of the application of ICT based resources (to enhance safety, security and welfare of residents) such as sensors, optical fibres in planning shall also be considered and taught accordingly. The students would be required to study a neighbourhood in the city and critically gauge its performance based on the parameters to the indicators of the 'smart growth'. In

this way, they shall be able to develop the skills which are required by them as planners when they plan at a neighbourhood level.

In the final stage, the students would be given the freedom to choose a site and based on their understanding of 'smart neighbourhoods', plan for the same. In this way, they will be able to test their theoretical learning and apply it to the real case scenario.

Neighbourhoods taken for study

For the purpose of the academic exercise, the three criteria as given under Smart City Development Guidelines shall be taken for the study of the neighbourhoods. In this way, a neighbourhood unit with an area of 50 acres (redevelopment unit), 500 acres (retrofitting unit) and 250 acres (Greenfield unit) shall be considered. The students would be divided into groups of three, and be made to gauge the performance of the neighbourhoods and plan for it accordingly.



The redevelopment unit with an area of 50 acres shall be identified within a core city area of either Vijayawada, Amravati, Guntur or Tenali, depending upon the need of the study. The retrofitting unit shall be identified from an existing colony in Vijayawada or Guntur. The Greenfield unit for the study shall be identified from the upcoming residential areas either in Vijayawada, Amravati or Guntur. On these neighbourhood units, a performance test based on 'smart growth' parameters would be conducted and their assessment is gauged accordingly. On the basis of this theoretical learning, the students would be required to plan for the same areas consequently. This will enable them to apply and test their theoretical skills in the real case scenario.

Outcome

The outcome (which is in form of a spatial plan) of this studio exercise envisions in developing a sound theoretical base about the importance of a neighbourhood and its relevance in the city. It endows students with necessary concepts for planning smart neighbourhoods in view of smart cities. It also develops in them technical, analytical and decisive skills needed by a spatial planner keeping in view socio-economic and politico-ethical requirements in the city.