

Chapter 1 Introduction

The significance of the year 2011 for the city of Delhi, our national capital, is not lost on the historians, urban planners and architects dealing with this subject. It was at the historic Delhi Durbar of 12th December, 1911, exactly a century ago, that the British Emperor King George V announced the transfer of the capital of the “jewel in the Crown”, i.e India, from Calcutta to the original capital city of the sub-continent, Delhi. This led to the start of the process of planned growth of Delhi as we see it today, spearheaded by Sir Edwin Lutyens and his team of architects and planners. The growth and vitality of Delhi, or the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD), as it is now designated, has been unprecedented and the city now leads the nation’s efforts to find its rightful place among the superpowers of the 21st century world.

Given this background, as we celebrate the centenary of the modern capital city of New Delhi this year, it is perhaps an

opportune time to review the achievements of the planned growth of Delhi post-independence, especially after coming into force of the master plan-led process of urban growth which commenced in the '50s.

The Columbia Electronic Encyclopaedia, Sixth Edition, 2010¹ defines city planning as a process of planning for the improvement of urban centers in order to provide healthy and safe living conditions, efficient transport and communication, adequate public facilities, and aesthetic surroundings. In the simplest terms, a master plan is a planning document that serves to guide the overall character, physical form, growth, and development of a community. It describes how, why, where, and when to build or rebuild a city or town. It provides guidance to local officials when they are making decisions on budgets, ordinances, capital improvements, zoning and subdivision matters, and other growth-related issues. In a democratic set-up such as ours, a master plan also provides an opportunity for community leaders to look ahead, establish new visions and directions, set goals, and create plans for the future. Properly done, a master plan states where, how, and at more importantly, at what pace a community desires to develop

physically, economically, as well as socially. In terms of what it actually contains, a master plan is an official statement prescribing land use and development policies for future with objectives to create a functional, efficient, healthy, aesthetically sound, economically effective and synergetic environment. The important aspect of inter-generational equity is also a corner-stone of sound master plans.

The National Capital Region is the 6th largest urban area in the world with a population of about 16 million people, now classified as 'Mega City'. It is in dealing with such huge habitations and consequent problems that urban planning becomes crucial. At the very basic level, the problem also boils down to the single-most important issue of effective utilisation of available land.

Delhi, being the national capital, faces myriad challenges in its quest for development as a world-class metropolis. Hence planning for its systematic growth is of utmost importance. Over the last century, the city has seen unprecedented events, and its report card is a mixed one, with some major successes and several drawbacks/failures. While planned urban growth post-

independence has led to the highest green cover and good-quality physical and social infrastructure, the twin problems of unauthorised development and slums seem to haunt the city for decades.

The proposed study aims at tracing the overall history of planned growth of the city to improve our understanding of what goes into the making of a better city for future generations of Indians. The subject covered is as vast an area as the city itself, , but given the constraints of time and space, this paper attempts to focus only on the most significant sphere of the Master Plan for Delhi(MPD), i.e. the land use planning within the master planning process.

It has been found during the course of this exercise that not enough material/body of work is available on MPD. It is, therefore, hoped that this study will contribute, albeit in a small way, to understanding how this city has been evolving post-Independence.

1.2 A brief history of the Master Planning process

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European city areas were consciously planned to achieve circulation of the

populace and provide fortification against invasion. Such concepts were exported to the New World, where William Penn, in founding the city of Philadelphia, developed the standard gridiron plan — the laying out of streets and plots of land adaptable to rapid change in land use. The modern urban planning and redevelopment arose in response to the disorder and squalor of the slums created by the Industrial Revolution. City planning was taken up in order to provide for a healthy environment for the citizens, and as such, was administered by the department of Health, especially in Britain. City planners imposed regulatory laws establishing standards for housing, sanitation, water supply, sewage, and public health conditions, and introduced parks and playgrounds into congested city neighbourhoods.

In the 20th century, zoning - the regulation of building activity according to use and location- came to be a key tool for city planners in the United States. The practice of land use zoning, the principal form of urban land regulation employed by local authorities, began with the zoning ordinance, the legal framework for modern city planning practice based on the police power to control land use in order to balance the interests of the individual

and the community. This was introduced in the early decades of the previous century, with New York City adopting the first comprehensive zoning ordinance in 1916. In his famous paper² delivered at the Buffalo Conference on city planning(1920), Charles H. Cheney states, "once adopted, a well-worked out zone ordinance will guarantee a definite and safe place for industrial investment; protect home neighbourhoods, stimulate home ownership and assure more contented labour conditions; remove much of the suspicion and uncertainty from real estate, while stabilizing property values afford greater security for mortgage loans; form a surer basis for assessment; and provide the city for the first time with a firm foundation for the solution of the problems of congestion, traffic, paving, sewers, public utilities, housing, schools and recreation."

However, soon, the mismanagement in the application of zoning resulting in abuses and lack of direction caused the american courts to insist on an accompanying comprehensive master plan for future land use to provide guidelines for zoning. Thus, over the next few decades, during the 1920s and 1930s, the master plan came to be generally accepted as the official

document showing the pattern of future development for the city. As a corollary to this, the Standard City Planning Enabling Act³, promulgated by the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1927 greatly facilitated state laws authorizing planning authorities (commissions) to prepare and help administer master plans and to control land subdivision.

1.3 Master Plan for Delhi (MPD)

In the specific context of Delhi, immediately after Independence, consequent upon the partition of the country in August 1947, the city witnessed one of the largest immigrations of people in human history. Almost overnight, about half a million people sought shelter in Delhi. In fact, the population of Delhi almost doubled in the period between 1941 (0.91million) - 1951 (1.79 million).

TABLE- 1 Projected & Actual Population, 1981-2021:

Year	Projected Urban Population In Millions	Actual Population in Millions	Urban Population in Millions	Rural Population in Millions
1961	-	2.66	2.30	0.36
1981	5.10	6.25*	5.75*	0.50*
2001	12.80	13.76*	12.80*	0.96*
2021	22.50**	-	22.0**	0.50*

Source: MPD-2021

In response to the growth imperatives of the national capital during those times, with the passing of the Delhi Development Authority Act, 1957 by the Parliament, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) was set up as the apex agency for planning and development of the city. It was legally empowered to prepare a master plan, various zonal development plans, and to implement and enforce these plans, and to develop, manage and dispose of lands in Delhi.

Taking a leaf from the American book, the Ford Foundation⁴ was roped in for preparing the first master Plan for Delhi in 1962. Thus the MPD, which was first notified in 1962 (with a twenty year perspective i.e. of the year 1981), provided a basic policy frame for guiding future development of the city. This MPD was further modified in 1990 (perspective year 2001), and recently in 2007 (perspective year 2021). It may be stated here that MPD is a statutory document, and is notified by the central government under provisions of the relevant sections of the DD Act, 1957.

1.4 Objective of the study

The objective of this study is restricted largely to the study of land and planning for land-use in the three successive

MPDs, as the most crucial one for all the master planning process.

While examining the MPDs the study also makes an effort to identify the process of implementation and outcome thereon in the overall context of institutional framework of the city state.

Limitations

(The various other aspects such as housing, utilities, services and facilities, transport and circulation, industries and commerce, physical and social infrastructure, parks, playgrounds and open spaces, urban design, development regulations, etc. are not proposed to be studied in detail, except when these are important in the overall context of planned land use and other parameters.)

In the context of MPD, a very recent and important issue is that of 'mixed use', which has emerged out of the controversial "sealing" drive in the city from 2006. The sealing of non-conforming premises, (broadly speaking, residential premises being put to commercial use), started as part of the initiative taken by the courts, and reached crisis proportions in 2006 when innumerable

people lost their livelihood. The matter has already occupied a large space in the public domain and continues to be *sub-judice*⁵. This paper does not propose to go into the details of this matter. However, some reference to the issue would be required to be made in the context of the overall purpose of the study. Similarly, this paper does not aim to discuss the problem of unauthorized development, especially slums, in the city, in detail, as it is a topic worthy of a separate paper in itself.

Methodology

In order to study the land use planning, it is proposed to examine the various provisions pertaining to land and land use planning in the three successive MPDs, and to attempt to evaluate the achievements or otherwise of each. This evaluation would take into account the process of planning itself (including its flexibility) as laid down under the legal regime, the population projection, integration between spatial, economic and resource planning, and multiplicity of agencies. An attempt would also be made to examine whether the plans were able to identify a variety of future growth and development scenarios and in considering the advantages and disadvantages of each such future development scenario. Besides this, it would be necessary to see whether the

growth areas identified were indeed translated into preferred development schemes.

Notes:

- 1 The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2010 accessed at <http://www.encyclopedia.com/>
 - 2 Pacione, Michael (Ed.) (2002) The City- Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences- volume V (Charles H. Cheney- Zoning in practice). Routledge:
 - 3 Source: _____ accessed _____ at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Standard_State_Zoning_Enabling_Act
 - 4 MPD-1962 (acknowledgment)
 - 5 I.A. NO. 22 IN WRIT PETITION (C) NO. 4677 OF 1985, M.C. MEHTA V. UNION OF INDIA & ORS____accessed at <http://supremecourtfindia.nic.in>
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