**Urban Renewal by introducing Local Area Plan ( LAP ) in India**

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INTRODUCTION The economic growth in the past couple of years and the emphasis on infrastructure improvements for the Commonwealth Games have seen a flurry of urban development management ideas and reforms take hold in Delhi. The push from its residents, business, community and political leaders has pressured National Capital Territory (NCT) government to overhaul the traditional methods of managing urban development. The JNNURM† carrot of funding infrastructure improvements for cities and states, with the caveat to reform urban development agencies and related legal provisions, may have been the instigator for the present emphasis on changing the traditional top down approach to Urban Planning, into being more participatory in methods, wherein the local community has a the largest stake in deciding what their community needs, and what it wants to be.    In order to fulfill this admirable vision, the NCT Delhi  government initiated the ‘bhagidari’ process, where in the government provided personnel, forums and opportunities for communities and residents to bring forward their issues and suggestions, and at the same time to be informed about municipal management policies, to bring people and government closer. The national government’s ‘Right to Information’ Act has also furthered the agenda of forcing bureaucracy to find ways of bringing transparency to their work.  Other government bodies such as the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), have established the Unified Traffic and Transportation Infrastructure Center (UTTIPEC), a clearing house for all projects wherein the body is mandated to get public feedback on all development projects authorized by the DDA.   In keeping with this trend, and the desire of the Delhi government to establish itself as a ‘World Class’ city, it announced that it would adopt a new approach to urban development management wherein the City’s municipal bodies are to develop ‘Local Area Plans’ for each of the municipal wards in Delhi, under the Master Plan Delhi 2021 and its Zonal plans. Thus, amidst much media coverage, the Lt. Governor announced that his office has given  the green light to the process of preparing the ‘Local Area Plans’ (LAPs) for all of Delhi’s 272 municipal wards. The Lt. Governor stated, "The LAP will help rationalize the usage of land in the local areas and take the land use plan closer to the grassroots level of planning and governance, " 1 indicating that public participation would be the corner stone of this process wherein, local residents would have their say in what they would like to see developed in their communities.      With this announcement, it seems that the City has finally started to understand the need for public participation in their communities’ development and management process. It would seem prudent to expect that development authorities and municipal bodies would develop a strategy on how to fulfill the mandate of public participation. The Lt. Governor’s media conference referred to a process that would kick off with a series of meetings with the stakeholders, namely the local MLA, the municipal councilor, and the local RWA representatives.2   However, it did not specify on how the participatory process would be managed through the entire planning process, or for that matter what would be the different components of the Local Area Plan.                                                                  \* Bharat Singh is an Urban Planning and Urban Design Consultant at Community Design + Architecture, Inc.(CD+A) in Oakland, California. At CD+A, he has been involved in numerous community planning processes and urban/regional development projects wherein public involvement is an integral part of the process.(www.community‐design.com) † Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (http://jnnurm.nic.in/) THE COMPONENTS FOR THE MCD LOCAL AREA PLANS The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) recently awarded the contract for developing Local Area Plans for the wards in twelve municipal zones, to a few agencies such as the School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), Delhi, and the Association of Metropolitan Development Authorities (AMDA). The intent is to have the best experts outside the private sector to develop these plans.  The development of the plans will be monitored by a committee headed by EFN Ribeiro, a well known town planner and professor of planning.   Each of these agencies is to handle three zones, and their teams should include the following: • An Urban Designer/Architect • Conservation/Landscape Architect • Public Health Engineer with Municipal Experience • Planner with local level transportation and idle parking systems experience • Land Surveyor; and,   • An expert in Municipal Governance and promotion of participatory development and transparency. These experts will have to carry out the following tasks listed in the contract award document3 : 1. Phase I: Technical Inputs Mapping covering ‐  • Base Maps based upon Survey of India (SOI) data, imagery, revenue maps, approved layout maps etc. • Supplementary up to date basic maps of services – (e.g. manholes, lines) in terms of water, sewerage, drainage, electricity, fire, telecom, etc. • Submittal of mapping to Monitoring Committee and ward Councilor 2. Phase II : Secondary Mapping to cover ‐  • An overlay of the Base Map with up‐to‐date Master Plan (MP)/Zonal Development Plan (ZDP) land use proposals; • The mapping of heritage buildings, sites and landscapes, of national and regional importance to be protected and those to be conserved as per  the list of INTACH and/or MCD; • Mapping of BPL sites, earmarked for in‐situ upgrading/reconstruction; • Mapping of Lal Dora boundaries of urbanized villages; and, • Mapping of any other approved Land Use commitments. • Submittal of mapping to Monitoring Committee and ward Councilor 3. Phase III:  Draft LAP to include ‐  • Process draft ward level proposals (redevelopment wards, re‐densification wards, densification wards as the case may be) w.r.t MP/ZDP, the 12th schedule of the CA Act ’92, and other primary and secondary data as necessary. • The incorporation of land use proposals, permissible uses matrix and Development Control Regulations. • Weightage to the consultative /participatory process. • Submittal of mapping to Monitoring Committee and ward Councilor 4. Phase IV:  Final LAP –   • Consider comments, suggestions and objections to Draft LAP and then submit for acceptance.   The above description constitutes all the directives given to the agencies in the ‘Award of work of Preparation of Local Area Plans for the Municipal Wards of Delhi’ document. The contents outlined in the letter seemed to indicate that MCD is primarily looking at the LAP process  as a survey, and the eventual Plan would be a little more than an elaborate land use mapping exercise. The directive does not give a clear indication on when, where and how the public input would be solicited; how would they like the participatory process to be conducted, and most, importantly what is the objective and the actionable items that should materialize out  of the LAP exercise.   It is clear that the Lt. Governor’s intent to ‘rationalise the usage of land in the local areas and take the land use plan closer to the grassroots level of planning and governance’4 , and that the ‘missing link in the urban planning process in Delhi is the LAP wherein whatever planning needs to be done on land use must be in keeping with the needs of the residents,’5 is missing in the directive given to the consulting agencies by MCD. MCD has neither made the effort to provide guidance on participatory processes to indicate a desired methodology, nor has asked the project awardees to develop the process. This would lead to a varied level of standards of public participation done by the different agencies (many of whom may not have the required expertise) , or worse, the participation relegated to showing a bunch of technical maps to the public without providing the participants any understanding of how the information is to be read or understood. Furthermore, the lack of detail on what elements would be needed to put together a LAP has not been specified. The directive asks for a mapping of the proposed land use changes (mainly densities) along with the mapping of other elements; a list of permissible uses;, and the development controls. These items are also listed without any reference or standard that they would like to follow.   Clearly, these LAPs if conducted in this fashion would not lead to much public buy‐in and reflect their wishes and desires.   A Local Area Plan should be much more than a land use map and development controls. It should be a comprehensive understanding of the existing conditions; the community’s needs in terms of amenities, services, utilities and transportation; a market assessment of what is feasible in terms of redevelopment, and, whether the community‐desired improvements could be achieved by the real estate market; traffic and environmental impacts of improvements; and lastly, an implementation strategy to make sure the plan can be executed in a timely manner. All of these aspects should be presented to the community so that they have clear and comprehensive information to make the right choice of what they want and how they can get it, in a given timeframe. THE GENESIS OF THE LOCAL AREA PLAN PROCESS IN DELHI The Delhi Master Plan defines a Local Area Plan as ‘the plan of a Ward / Sub Zone to be prepared and approved by the concerned local body.’6 It also mentions that a focal point of the Master plan is ‘Public Participation and Plan Implementation’ to be achieved through “Decentralised local area planning by participatory approach, and; Performance oriented planning and development, with focus on implementation and monitoring.”7 Therefore,  the Master Plan doesn’t provide guidance other than having a meaningful public participatory component in the Local Area Planning process. To further help in identifying the components one has to look into the genesis for the Local Area Plan concept.   The idea for the Local Area Planning concept in Delhi came from the Indo‐US Financial Institutions Reform and Expansion Project – Dept Market Component (FIRE (D)), an agency funded by USAID. It worked with the Central and State Governments to strategize an approach to address the unplanned and illegal urban development rampant in India Cities.8 In 2003, after MCD was facing impending court cases regarding development irregularities and an impossible regulatory situation prescribed by the Master Plan9 , it approached USAID FIRE (D) to analyze the inadequacies in Delhi’s existing building byelaws, recommend regulatory reform, and pilot an alternative method for localized planning.10    FIRE (D) began its assessment in 2004 and quickly became aware of the top down approach to development in Delhi, wherein, the DDA was responsible for planning at the Master Plan and Zonal Plan levels, which were mandated for implementation by the MCD. Furthermore, MCD only had one building code for the entire city of Delhi making no consideration for the wide variety of urban community built‐forms such as urban villages, the Walled City, or the newer planned areas. 11 This condition was identified as the essential cause of the gross irregularities in the city’s building stock. FIRE (D) recommended that the building byelaws be separated into three components – Procedure byelaws, Building performance byelaws, and Planning byelaws.   The Procedure byelaws addressed the assigning of roles and responsibilities of the different agencies that are involved in the approval process for construction, right from proposal to final inspection. The Building performance byelaws would address the actual construction process and building standards. The Planning byelaws would address the urban design principles such as built‐up area controls and their relationships to open spaces.    The design and density elements would stem from demand determined for real estate and land use at the neighborhood level. Hence the need for a Local Area Planning tool to facilitate neighborhood‐level development.12 FIRE (D) believed the Local Area Planning process would be able to inject a market‐oriented approach to development that would significantly reduce building violations and ensuring the supply of legitimate real estate kept pace with demand.13 The FIRE (D) team and MCD identified five diverse areas in Delhi where they would implement a pilot project of the LAP strategy. The MCD was also responsible for identifying the stakeholders and partners for the process, as well as appointing local consultant to conduct the planning process. FIRE (D) provided technical assistance to conceptualize the methodology and facilitate implementation for the LAP process.    The objective of the pilot process was to incorporate key learning for replication.14 The methodology determined for the pilot LAP process was conceptualized with three key steps: 1) Preparatory Work including base maps; 2) urban planning studies; and 3) design proposals.   The first step was crucial to the process as it would determine the boundary for the LAP area and establishing existing conditions. It is evident that the City did not have adequate survey information of all the physical features, services, utilities and details of plot boundaries. Establishing these would help get a better idea of ground realities that is crucial to match the city’s information with the community’s perception of conditions of their surroundings.   The second step of conducting planning studies was to understand the localized development and building pattern; social, economic, demographic conditions; cultural attributes; and traffic and transit conditions. It would also provide key information on how the area links with surrounding neighborhoods to encourage overall urban cohesion.15 The FIRE (D) also indicated that this step would require capturing a collective vision of the whole LAP area 16 by a participatory process that included local stakeholders. The process would share all the study findings with the stakeholders from the community and solicit feedback. The public process would also seek to understand the diverse aspirations of the stakeholders to create a collective vision for the area. 17 The final step would bring forward the design interventions and proposals for the LAP area. The issues and potentials identified by the previous two steps would now be addressed either by design interventions, or policy updates to effect localized changes that would facilitate long‐term implementation in a legal and safer manner. 18 These alternatives then would be vetted to reflect market demand, implementation cost feasibility and the community vision.   The three steps are a sound methodology for conducting an LAP process, but as per the FIRE (D) Project note (Project Note No.41), the circumstances in Delhi at the time of the pilot projects hindered the last two stages. At the time of the pilot projects (2005), the MCD was implementing the court’s directive to demolish and seal unauthorized buildings and properties throughout Delhi, therefore conducting public participation processes were seen as futile as they would only bring up the public’s displeasure with the ongoing demolitions and sealing. The FIRE (D) outlined the lessons learnt from the pilot projects which were – 1) Lack of institutional capacity in MCD: They point out that the MCD’s town planning department was understaffed, who at the time of the pilot projects were consumed with enforcing the court orders and other bureaucratic responsibilities. 2) Delineating the LAP boundary: The FIRE (D) team believed that in order to facilitate urban cohesion the Zonal Plans should delineate the LAP boundaries base on socio‐cultural homogeneity, land use or built typology characteristics. 3) Base map preparation: The existing base map information available was inaccurate and outdated, since urban settlements have not been re‐surveyed since independence. As a result, MCD added the task to the LAP’s scope of work. The FIRE (D) team believed that this task should have been a separate activity done for the entire City. 4) Stakeholder consultation: The FIRE (D) team perceived that the stakeholder consultations are complex because the diverse views need to be reconciled to form a clear vision for the LAP area. It would require strong outreach and multiple public meetings, with the government agency (MCD and DDA) taking a proactive leadership role.   5) Limitations to the LAP: the FIRE (D) team recognized that the LAPs were part of the three tiered planning system wherein they came after the Master Plan (First Tier) and Zonal Plans (Second Tier), therefore needs to conform to the other two tiers to be effective. It cannot be utilized to substitute or compensate for shortcomings in the other two tiers. The pilot process report‡ details the pilot studies and provides several examples for the different aspects of the LAP process. It is clear that situational constraints limited the full implementation methodology and, added elements that should be done at the city level. None the less, the pilot project provides a substantial springboard to help identify the purpose and components of a Local Area Planning process.   Comparing, the pilot project methodology and process to the directives given to the consultant agencies awarded the LAPs projects, many aspects seemed to have been either eliminated or not specified. The first two phases described in the award letter match the first step of the FIRE (D) pilot project. However, as mentioned in the FIRE(D) note, base mapping exercises and other data collections should be done separately, and should be done for the entire city. This is important, as the key element of database management is setting standards for collection, processing, management and presentation. By distributing the data collection to the different agencies without a clear guidance of data management standards, each agency would have base dataset of varied standards, which isn’t beneficial in the long run, as the city would need to maintain different documentation standards for all the different local areas.   The second and third steps that involved establishing a local vision through stakeholder involvement, and,   conducting of planning studies to establish, social, economic, demographic and market realities aren’t outlined in the directive to the agencies. Each one of these aspects are crucial to understand the community and its needs, and in involving them in the decision making planning process.    The final step outlined in the pilot project report too isn’t described in terms of what products would be required to be compiled as a Draft Plan in the directive to the awardees for the LAP process. All of the agencies will be developing their own standards and ideas for the different components of the plan. Again, this would lead to a varied set of LAPs which would be hard to reconcile as they may have different elements that may not correlate to each other, and the city would need unique mechanisms for each LAP area in order to implement the plans.                                                                    ‡ The report is available upon request from TCG International (website: tcgillc.com); email: beach@tcgillc.com. Fax: 301‐557‐ 1308 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LOCAL AREA PLAN PROCESS The FIRE (D) pilot project’s intensions and, the result of the effort were establishing an LAP process methodology. The project report outlines a set of guidelines for the LAP process that is quite detailed, which seems to have been mostly discarded by the current scope of work provided to the awardees agencies. It is unclear whether MCD and DDA officials were able to codify the processes tested in the pilot project since there are no publicly available documents indicating any such effort. During researching for this paper, there have been indications that DDA had developed guidelines for an LAP process; however they do not seem to be available for use by the agencies tasked with the LAPs. None‐the‐less the awarded scope of work is clearly short on methodology and approach to fulfill the mandate of public participation in the LAP process.   WHAT THEN SHOULD AN LAP PROCESS BE? The LAP process is the smallest component in the City’s planning process. It is the tool to execute the larger Master Plan and Zonal Plan objectives. It is also proposed as the interface for the local citizens to get involved in, and the avenue to understand and bring in ground realities, such as lack of infrastructure and market demand for space and services. The pilot project report confirms these ideas and provides some guidance on what should be done. However, the circumstantial situation during the pilot projects did not allow for MCD to have a comprehensive experience of some of the key aspects of the LAP process § . Therefore, the following section will outline key components, ideal scope of an LAP, the timeframe for an LAP process to be implemented; and most importantly, a public outreach and participation mechanism that could be used in the future.   SCOPE AND COMPONENTS: Before embarking on the LAP process, the scope and limitations of the planning process should be defined. This will help differentiate it from the zonal and master plans for the community as well as other stakeholders and development management agencies. The scope and limitations should be conveyed to all the stakeholders and agencies in order to streamline the planning and participatory process. This will also help MCD and the contract awardees identify the key agencies that would need to be involved.   The FIRE (D) project report outlines a scope for the LAP process that includes19 : 1. Identify context of LAP in the larger planning processes 2. Purpose of LAP 3. Delineation of LAP boundaries 4. Setting the objectives of the LAP 5. Preparation of base map 6. Compilation of database 7. Preliminary stakeholder consultations, studies and analysis 8. Articulating a vision for the area, formulating strategies and action plans through stakeholder consultations 9. Preparing a Conceptual Plan capturing the spatial implications of proposals 10. Consistency with Master Plan and Zonal Plan 11. Formulating projects for capital investment 12. Preparing and publishing a draft Local Area Plan 13. Responding to formal objections and suggestions from stakeholders 14. Finalization of the Local Area Plan, notification 15. Implementation 16. Review and revision                                                                  § As per the FIRE (D) report MCD was involved in Court mandated sealing of unauthorized uses and therefore could not conduct meaningful public processes in certain study areas