CHAPTER XV

PLANNING OF GAUHATI TOWN:

What is meant by Planning?

"Planning according to V.B. Stanbery of the U.S.A., is merely the process of thinking ahead and predetermining the ways and means for bringing about a desired result. Planning implies three fundamentals: a motive, an objective and a means for its accomplishment, namely the plan. Forethought and selection are essentials of planning, which imply a conscious choice from among various alternatives."

Major Problems Of Planning:

1) Problems of the City:

(a) Guwahati, as in any other city contains a number of important functions: residences, retail business, wholesale business, milling, manufacture, administration, education, cargo handling (water & land), passenger transportation, institutional activities and recreation. Each of these activities and function is quite different in social environment which creates and which it needs a distinct area for its purpose, separated from the other land use areas. Because of the fact that the Guwahati town since its beginning has been developing without any plan, the urban land-use units mentioned above, have not been kept separated. They encroach upon one another, destroy one another's values. This also creates many kinds of chaos and confusion.

(b) Because of the fact that the city has had no plan, there has been a continuous contest for possession of land by
various forms of land use. As a consequence there has been a considerably large amount of waste through the incessant tearing down and rebuilding of various parts of the city.

(c) This same unplanned way of the town often occasion a partial or in some cases an almost complete breakdown in transportation. Street congestion in this town, due to increase in the number of vehicular traffics, has become fantastic. The original streets of Gauhati are too narrow and have insufficient space for parking and for transit lines and terminals.

(d) Of recent, again there has been a growing tendency of speculation in urban land in Gauhati and this has produced over valuation of land.

(e) Further results of over valuation of urban land are:

(i) Housing congestion, tenement living and slums.

It is already noted that the existing houses of Gauhati are crowded together on a minimum space. Due to lack of plan the houses are without the essential amenities of air, light and sanitation. These back-to-back-house type with only one side exposed to light and air are mainly found in the central region i.e. Panbazar, and 'wholesale grain zone' of Fancybazar. The houses generally form a long double row and backed on to each other under one gable roof and usually abutted on to the pavement at the front and have courtyard behind.

Besides these there are most unhygienic hutments where industrial, commercial, railway and municipality labourers, scavengers and cobblers live and these are mainly found along the railway line in the southern part of the town, and
Athgaon area. These residences actually constitute the slums of the town.

(ii) Inadequate park and Open Spaces :-

A city needs ornamental parks for giving it a decent appearance and for recreational and open spaces for public utilisation, such as holding meetings etc. But unfortunately due to over valuation of urban land in Gauhati there are few ornamental parks and open spaces in the newly settled regions such as Silpukhuri, Chandmari, Ulubari and Rehabari areas. Only one decent ornamental park in Gauhati is the Tarun Ram Phukan Park which has been recently developed at Machkhowa. The Public open spaces are found only in some limited parts i.e., at Panbazar, Machkhowa and Daltanbazar. These are insufficient for such a growing city like Gauhati.

(iii) Inadequate areas for play and recreation :-

Except the existing old Judge's Field, New Field and the proposed site of the Stadium no other play ground has yet been developed. Due to the same reason as already mentioned in the above para, there are no room for establishment of such play ground in its present Municipal boundary.

Except some commercial recreation centres such as Cinema, Play houses and restaurant there are no other facilities which are essential needs for healthy living in great urban agglomeration of Gauhati.

Facilities for recreation, however, are an outstanding deficiency in the modern city. Owing to the specialization of the urban way of life which gives the workers enough time in the night for relaxation. In a city-environment leisure begins
at home, but, this elementary need has been entirely ignored by the speculative builders and the Municipal authorities of Gauhati town. The great majority of tenements in Gauhati cannot give even the most elementary human comfort in the shape of adequate room space, adequate access to air and sunlight and adequate number of play grounds for children and adults.

(iv) Removal of man from contact with nature :-

The surrounding of Gauhati has a good natural scenery and is most attractive. The green hills embossed with gems of wild flowers, blue rivers and low areas which are wanned by the green grasses provide the city with decent appearance. These beautiful landscapes not only provide the town dwellers with recreational facilities but also vastly influenced their mental approach towards things. But due to lop-sided and un-planned growth of the town and specially due to the over valuation of land this balanced landscape is now being destroyed with ever increasing speed.

(v) Almost no facilities for children to have natural play and work experiences which they need for character development :-

Except Lokapriya Bordoloi Park on the south bank of the Dighali Tank there is no play ground at all for children to play. On the other hand the need of such children's parks in the midst of residential areas, where the children can play close to their homes and enhance their mental efficiency and also build their character is beyond question in a growing town.

(vii) Fear of increase in crime, child delinquency and other Social Problems :- Due to phenomenal increase of popula-
tion in unplanned and congested Guwahati town there is fear of increase in crime among the different sections of people. The crime may occur from property or economic destitution, from unemployment and modes of living incompatible with traditional social norms.

According to Police information unsocial activities such as theft, burglary, dacoity, kidnapping etc. are in an upward trend in Guwahati and from the same source it has been gathered that persons involved in these unlawful activities are mostly persons without having economic stability.

As in other cities of India some section of youth of Guwahati is restless. In the schools and colleges some young boys are becoming susceptible to a diversity of conflicting influences, which far from helping them to evolve into harmonious and integrated personalities, are making them disoriented and discontented.

There occurs small numbers of incidents in recent years in Guwahati committed by the teen agers. The teen agers are generally annoying girls in the streets and laugh at them in the most insulting term. But no other juvenile delinquency has yet been found in the town. Such behaviours are committed by the teen agers not because they are criminal minded but because of the lack of the affection and security that their family can provide. So preventive measures should be taken by city authority in order to eliminate some of the root causes constraining a normal child to deviate into a path of delinquency. To day Guwahati is in need of family welfare services, facilities of healthy recreations and others.
A FEW REMEDIES FOR MAJOR PROBLEM OF PLANNING OF GAUHATI TOWN.

(a) Zoning laws, tenement regulations, smoke ordinances and housing projects:

With the growth and expansion of the Guwahati town there has been a growing demand for town planning. This problem must accept the large agglomeration and the interdependence of adjacent town and rural areas as basic facts of our civilization. This consideration should be the spring broad of modern planning. The town has got to rebuild so that the civic amenities are available to all its dwellers. It is one of evolving a lay-out, of streets, open spaces, houses, and such-a industrial and commercial quarters, in such a way as to allow the city as a whole to function and develop as an entity. The rebuilding of the city much obviously be based on the existing pattern that has developed through natural growth process.

The rebuilding of the city is a main aspect of this overall programme. Most of the buildings that are found in the central region, Athgaon area are of lower standard. So principles must be emerge for the reconstruction of these areas. This also involves the reconstruction and expansion of these areas and erection of new residential buildings around them.

The Municipal authority should pay some special attention to "the zoning of land, prescribing building regulations for existing built up areas." The residential areas should be separated from the obnoxious non-residential area-controlling the height of buildings, within the built up areas and reserving
outer unbuilt areas for future uses. Both residential and non-residential houses should be constructed in a stand of housing project.

(b) City Planning depicts towards the following 7 basic elements of a city plan:

1. Definite zones or districts for different land uses legally enforced by a zonning law.

Planning must be based on thorough knowledge of the actual character of urban land uses and the way in which they have come into being. The existing land uses of Guwahati as described previously should be readjusted properly into a definite zone.

2. Improved pattern of streets - The importance of improved pattern of streets in a city needs no explanation. We have already discussed that the existing road system of Guwahati town is far from satisfactory. The demands of road transport in Guwahati may be ideally met with by two sets of roads - one set running radially from the centre, the other set forming two or three concentric belts, one around the city centre, the second one on the borders of the compact middle zone, and the third through the outer sub-urban-fringe, interlinking its main industrial and residential complexes.


The waterfront of the Brahmaputra river offers one of the greatest opportunities in town planning from the aesthetic as well as the economic point of view. The Strand Road which runs along the bank of the river can be developed into a major beautiful avenue by remodelling. The volume of traffic by the road should be controlled to a limit and the beauty of the road should be maintained as it is the only river bank road.
from where one can see the panoramic views of the mighty Brahmaputra and the evening sun set.

The waterfront of the Brahmaputra and the roads play main role in the growth of the town, since these are the arteries of trade and intercourse. Most of the roads of Gauhati town run at right angles to the riverfront and others run parallel to the waterfront. These two sets together may form an approximate grid plan, either natural or plan growth. Wharf, storage and ware houses may be planted on the river bank and the present system of loading and unloading should be removed to those wharf and storage.

(iv) A system of parks connected by parkways:

The following suggestions may be given for the development of parks and play grounds.

1) The site now occupied by the D.C.'s and S.P.'s quarters can be converted into a park. The attitude of the site will provide panoramic view of the Brahmaputra.

2) The existing police reserve in ward No. 4 is to be shifted to somewhere at Chandmari site. So this site may also be utilized for the location of attractive children park and play ground connected with highways.

3) The cremation ground of the Navagraha Hill should be shifted to other suitable place. Because its surrounding is inhabited by people. When the cremation ground will be shifted, the present site occupied by it may be developed into a good park.

4) As the Veterinary College has been shifted to Kahanera, its present site also can be converted into a good park.

5) After reclamation of the Chalabil area (Rehabari), a very large park can be developed around it with good parkways.
(v) Public Reservations - public parking areas, adequate play grounds closely integrated with residential areas, a town forest, air port etc. should built in a planned manner.

(vi) Define routes for public utilities - a well knit sewage system, bus lines, railways (for local or shuttle trains), water, gas, electric and telephone lines.

A great sewage disposal unit has been installed at Pandu and the nland supplies compost manure to some local vegetable gardens. But in Gauhati no sewage disposal unit have yet been installed. Gauhati needs a sewage disposal unit like that of Pandu from where compost manure can be obtained. In this respect a huge canal can be built in Gauhati to turn the purified sewage into the Brahmaputra river. The bus line or other public or private road, street or passage should be at least 20 feet wide. All streets less than 20 ft. wide shall have equal permanent alignments on both sides to make up the deficiency ultimately.

The railway is concerned with the transport of both passengers and freight. As regards the former, it must provide (a) for the transport of the sub-urban worker to and from the city and the factory, with marked concentration of traffic at two specific 'rush-hour' period and (b) main line services to other places, the main stations being at 'dead ends' or located on routes which pass through the city. From this point of view, the railway plan should consist of a series of routes radiating from the city, with branches on its outskirts serving the suburbs. For movement of employees, students and other people from one corner to another shuttle trains should be flying over these routes.
The Municipal authority should take over the control of markets, the cleansing of streets, the provision of water, gas and electricity supply and protection against fire by building regulations, and organized fire services, against disease and against food.

(vii) A permanent "Green belt" surrounding the city which will limit the expansion of the city and prevent its encroachment upon suburbs and rural areas and will maintain the permanent contact of the city with the country. (Further population increase will therefore result not in an unwieldy larger city in the development of tangential satellite cities.)

The growth of the Gauhati town is very rapid so apart from the existing city the development of the other areas should be on the principle of neighbourhood units. These new area units near the old town should be separated by considerable "Green belt" areas. The "Green belt" development is the main urban features of the Western Cities.

(a) Self-help Co-operatives for urban unemployable classes, based upon handicraft and salvage industries. This should replace as far as possible the present beggers problem and public relief organization.

The number of unemployed persons in Gauhati is increasing gradually. The unemployed persons are mostly uneducated. They are outsiders and most of them are beggers. This bulk of population creates begger problem of the town. Therefore a co-operative organization is needed in Gauhati to employ these bulk of population. They should be facilitated with some small scale industries such as pottery, blacksmithy, carpentry, handicraft
industries etc. If these bulk of people can be employed in different sets of industries as mentioned the present unemployment problem and of the uneducated people will be vanished and this will replaced the present beggar problem and public relief organisation.

(d) The Main Entrance and Exit Route of the city:

The transport bottle neck to and from Gauhati has always been remained the limiting factor in its normal growth. Now the greatest need of the city in its process of development is to expand the transport facilities either by railways or by road-ways. At present, the entire bulk of the traffic is shouldered by the Bharalu Bridge in the west and the Shillong-Gauhati Road on the east. In order to release the pressure of this increasing volume of traffic Gauhati requires alternate exit and entrance route. In this connection it may be suggested that another through traffic road can be constructed from Ajara through the under developed areas of the southern part of Gauhati and backward region of the western part of the Nowgong district to Morigaon. Thus a road may be constructed connecting Nowgong and Morigaon. If this route as suggested is constructed then it will serve as another gateway of the city and also help in developing the western part of the Nowgong district.