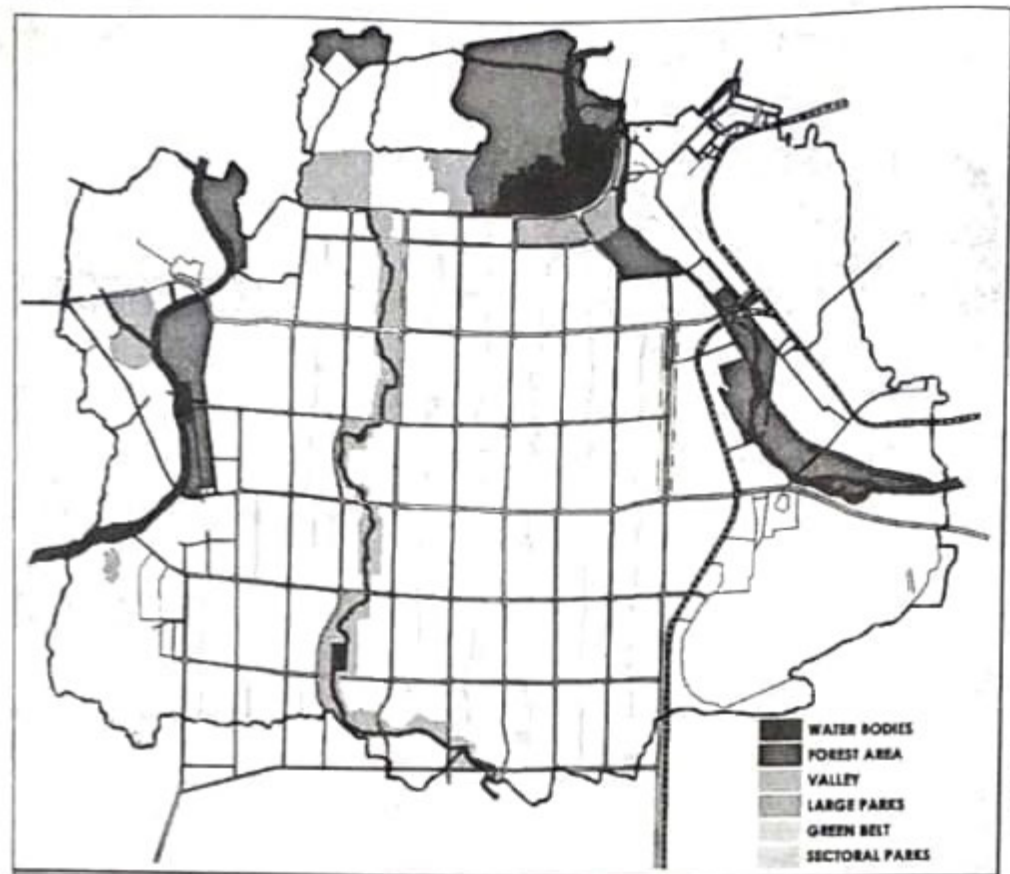


Corbusier and the green belts of UT



The hierarchy of green spaces in Chandigarh.

Making of CHANDIGARH

MONIKA

CHANDIGARH, MUCH like Canberra, is one of the best examples of merging the Garden City and the City Beautiful concepts of urban planning, where the existing physical attributes are beautifully interlaced with the planning of the city without any obscurity. Le Corbusier's intention was the "care of the mind and body" which was meant to reflect the relationship between the man and the cosmos. He believed that isolation from the natural environment will degrade the health of humans. His concept was not only reflected in the buildings that he designed, but also in the landscaping of the city.

The urban form of Chandigarh was designed to completely adapt to the physical attributes of the site. The grid layout is in cohesion with natural streams, rivulets and topography of the land. The grid was oriented diagonal to the cardinal directions to align parallel to the water streams so as to maintain natural water flow, with the Shivalik foothills as a backdrop. The form of the city is further dictated by two seasonal choes i.e. Patiala ki Rao and Sukhna Choe Rivulets. The N choe, which runs through the centre of the site, was transformed into a continuous green belt called the Leisure Valley which along with being an active public green space retains the natural waterflow. Sukhna lake acts as a catchment area to collect the rain water runoff coming from Shivalik hills to prevent flooding conditions. Le Corbusier planned the city with biological similes, where the green spaces were identified as the lungs of the city beautiful. He laid down four basic functions for the city: living, working, circulation and care of the body and spirit. A hierarchy of green spaces can be seen in both the layout and design, ranging from city level public greens to semi-private and private greens.

CITY LEVEL PUBLIC GREENS

Gardens with themes such as

Botanical garden, Fragrance garden, Butterfly garden etc. have been developed over time to create awareness among the citizens, conserve habitats of the migratory species and enhance the existing flora. To retain the ecology of the city, the existing trees are preserved at various sites and native species of trees have been introduced to intermingle with the existing ones. The forest area is reserved along the periphery of the city. Also, the trees were planted in homogeneous and heterogeneous groups in the Green belts and open spaces of the city.

The various species of trees, with regard to colour of flowers, foliage, shape of crown etc. have been chosen for three urban elements such as roads, urban spaces and free spaces such as leisure valley and parks - a meticulous plan developed by Dr. MS Randhawa. The flowing leisure val-



ley, with its varied textures of trees and flowers appeals not only to city residents but also to tourists and professionals like city planners.

To discourage unplanned growth of the city and to retain the micro-climate, a green belt which includes the forest areas around Sukhna Lake, Sukhna Choe and Patiala ki Rao, is preserved through legislation. Aside from their aesthetic value, trees in urban areas provide an efficient buffer against dust and noise, especially along industrial belt where rows of mango trees are planted to act as wind breakers.

SEMI-PRIVATE GREENS

Chandigarh emerged as a perfect balance between architectural imagery and environmental design. Corbusier involved nature by providing open spaces in each sector at urban level which were to function as "lungs of the city". The parks were extended lengthwise to take a view of Shivalik hill from each sector as well as to join the adjoining sectors so that the dwellers may feel close to nature. Green belts near schools are placed

to enable children to reach their school from home safely without any traffic hindrance as far as possible and can spend some time while waiting for public transport. Housing within the sector was staggered in a manner that the view of the mountain is not obstructed even at ground level.

PRIVATE GREEN AREAS

Hierarchy of green open spaces are well structured at a neighbourhood level within housing, schools, colleges, markets and other institutions. In the first phase, low density with large size of plotted development were developed interspersed to merge with their existing surroundings. Whereas in the second phase, smaller plotted development took place with front and back yard open space. In the third phase, as per the zoning plan, group housing mandates 15% of community open spaces to retain closeness to nature.

UT Administration is constantly taking the initiative not only to combat increasing urbanization, but also to make it more environmentally friendly and healthy for people. Birdpark has recently been introduced in the city to house exotic bird species to create a new tourist spot and a place for bird lovers and aspiring ornithologists. As per State Action Plan on Climate Change report, hedges are being planted along urban trees on city roads to improve air quality. As per the Greening Chandigarh Action Plan 2020-21, the forest cover in the UT has increased by 0.47 sq.km in 2019 as compared to 2017. Some trees that were planted in 60's and 70's, perished on green avenues, were replaced with species as per the original plan. Removal of weeds like Lantana and Parthenium was taken up by the authorities as they were adversely affecting the growth of indigenous species. MC has introduced compost pits in nurseries, parks, etc., to convert dry leaves into compost to prevent malpractice of burning of dry leaves.

(The author is Assistant Professor in CCA. The article is edited by Ar Saumya Sharma, Assistant Professor, CCA. It is a part of the series of fortnightly articles by students and faculty of CCA on the Making of Chandigarh with the LCPJ forum)