

Documenting the planning heritage of a city and its catalysts - the Change from silent Naduvakkarai to a busy and bustling Annanagar

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Abstract

The locality of Annanagar (a neighbourhood in the metropolitan city of Chennai ,India) was developed by the TamilNadu Housing Board in the early 1960s.The board developed residential plots, apartments, commercial complexes, wide roads, school zones, bus terminus and large parks. The government and the board initiated subsidised development schemes which made people prefer Annanagar despite its deserted outlook and silent nature. They took steps to make people move in with ease and made sure the hesitation which was due to fear, was overcome.

Following the World Trade Fair in the area in 1968, more people were drawn towards the locality and development gained momentum. However, a lot of people are not aware of the Fair or know little about it or how the locality changed from a silent village to a most sought after residential and commercial locality. It is important to know about such catalysts which trigger development. This shows the importance of documentation which is an integral part of the urban planning and conservation process. Because, what is new today, is the history of tomorrow and what is new and what is old is relative to time.

Keywords: Planning development, documentation, development catalyst, growth indicators, Annanagar, Naduvakkrai. Social history

1) The Change from silent Naduvakkarai to Busy and Bustling Annanagar

The scheme was first named as the – West madras neighbourhood scheme. Then, it was named as Aringar annanagar. The evolution and the development of Annanagar is an interesting as well as an important example of how the government and the board initiated a lot a subsidy and development schemes which made people choose Annanagar despite it deserted outlook and silent nature, they took steps to make people move in with ease and made sure the hesitation which was due to the fear was overcome.

The Name change

- a) Naduvakkarai – Earlier Name –The Suburban village
- b) The West Madras neighbourhood plan – The Official Name of the Scheme proposed by the government
- c) Aringar Annanagar – The Name changed in memory of Aringar Annadurai (Ex-Chief Minister of Tamilnadu)
- d) AA Nagar – The name was used for a short period of time, but didn't sustain for a long period.
- e) Annanagar – The Name commonly used now.

2) Before 1950's:

Annanagar originated from a suburban village called Naduvakkrai. It was called Mullam Village and is still referred to as that by the Land and revenue Department for all official purposes. In the early 1950's, the village of Naduvakkarai had a truly rural flavour, with paddy fields and a serene river flowing nearby. Impressed by the true rural essence in the otherwise busy characterised by Mount road and parrys, a

few people settled down here appreciating its silence and serenity. People who wished to be in the metropolis but at the same time preferred a silent and serene option started settling here.

3) 1968: The Indian international trade & industries fair:

The Indian international trade and industries fair (1968), was one of the important catalyst for development as well. Following the World Trade Fair in the area in 1968, more people were drawn towards the locality and the development gained momentum. But lot of people are not aware of the fair or know little about it or how the locality changed from a silent village to a most sought after residential and commercial locality. It is important to know about such catalysts which trigger development.

Then Indian international trade and industries fair, was scheduled to open in 1967 but was inaugurated on the twenty-first of January, 1968. The IITIF was sponsored by the all India manufacturers' organisation with. The aim was to show India's industrial development over the past two decades, and of offering to foreign concerns opportunities to open new industries in India.

The Theme: "Prosperity through Partnership"

It was planned to be the largest International trade fair in Asia, but according to the visitors the number of stalls were less for the enterprise. Approximately twenty-three public sector industries (apart from the eleven ministries) participated along with the state governments and a large number of the private sector industries.

- Europe: the foreign entrants were mainly the east European communist bloc countries led by the USSR with West Germany as the only western representative. USSR. And the east European countries displayed a variety of machines.
- Asia: Thailand was the Asian entrant .Thailand displayed her culture and her relatively few exports.
- From India itself, Maharashtra with its biggest industrial complex, appeared to have the best pavilion. Inside was a web of small booths and stalls displaying a large number of consumer items manufactured in the state . Mysore's display is said to be considered second to that of Maharashtra. It had an impressive pavilion where the exhibits were arranged very sensible.
- Madras focused attention on agriculture, showing a variety of crops grown in plots near the entrance of the stall. Inside, they boasted of some of the highest yields per acre of agricultural products in the country. The pavilion was a blend of modern and ancient architecture, with its entrance shaped like a temple door. Behind this, on a platform lay a festival chariot. The roof of the Gujarat pavilion appeared to have been made up of numerous miniature flying saucers anchored to the earth.
- Amongst the ministries of the government of India, the ministry of commerce had a pavilion bulky and unattractive on the exterior; inside, it was shared by a number of agencies, including the state trading corporation of India. They displayed numerous varieties of wigs made from human hair obtained from temples in the south.
- Air-India, a major government undertaking, highlighted its pavilion with a larger, mogul-style dome. It was open on all four sides, giving visitors an unrestricted view of their miniature display and the maharajah with his hostesses.

- The railways' display was one of the biggest attractions at the fair. They had on view locomotives, engines and a model railway network. Their mini-rail train, which covered part of the fair grounds, passed this open display.
- The gently curved dome of the atomic energy establishment sheltered a simple, informative display which reminded one of the consequences of pushing the vital button.
- Situated close by was the fertilizer industry's pavilion, a replica of a south Indian temple. Inside were shown the uses of various fertilizers. A tribute to the gods for the year's plentiful harvest.
- Benny's pyramid in the private sector, won acclaim for its well-designed interior.
- Parry had on display an automatic sweet wrapping machine and some of their latest vitreous waxes.
- Bata's stall resembled a zoo with painted animals holding the company's shoes in their paws.
- The transportation for touring the grounds gained a lot of international attention in magazines. It was with two very unusual Leyland buses, ordered for the purpose on comet chassis by madras state transport. One was an open-top double-decker seating 66. But the other was a single decked bus with its body shaped like a picturesque Kashmiri houseboat, with a capacity for 50 people.
- Most engineering industries, both public and private are said to have, displayed either too much or too little. A very few, like Voltas, came to a reasonable compromise.
- One of the main attractions was the tall tower- Panchsheel tower (now called the Annanagar tower) from which a panoramic view of the fair-site could be seen for a rupee or less than that. The Annanagar tower used to give people the excitement of going up the ramp, to the summit that afforded a splendid view of the open green around and also the distant LIC 'Skyscraper' on Mount road. This 38 feet (42 feet) tall, is now officially known as the Visveswaraya Tower.

4) Early 1960's – Overview of the Planning

During the early 1960's, the industrial estates in Ambattur and Guindy started to develop and people from all over the state were beginning to move in. That was when the housing board was constituted to bring the situation under control and to provide necessary housing facilities. Then the first step – a land use survey was done. The blueprint of contemporary Chennai was beginning to emerge. The idea of an integrated system of housing, meant for all classes possibly for the first time in the country, was initiated. The board developed residential plots, apartments, commercial complexes, wide roads, school zones, bus terminals and large parks, besides a bathroom and toilet in every house, the exhaust fans in kitchens were also to be provided.

The roads in Annanagar are designed based on matrix structure similar to roads in developed countries in the western world; and uses a standardised Naming nomenclature. In Annanagar 2nd, 4th and 6th avenues run east-west and 1st, 5th and 7th avenues run north –south. All the streets are interconnected to these avenues. Annanagar is the first township in Chennai to follow a standard addressing system followed in the western world. Areas that expanded after the formation of the initial layouts do not follow the standard nomenclature.

Later in course of time, the development gained momentum and the locality is one of the most happening and well developed locality in Chennai; the change from a silent and serene village to a place which is completely contrast.

The evolution and the development of annanagar is an interesting as well as an important example of how a post-independence development settlement was conceived, evolved, exhecuted and welcomed. It is important to know about how developments have progressed and evolved though time and document them. Not only as professionals but we as individuals also need to know about the history and heritage of ourselves and pour surroundings (Social history, economic history, labour history, development history etc) for us to understand where we stand as individuals in this society.

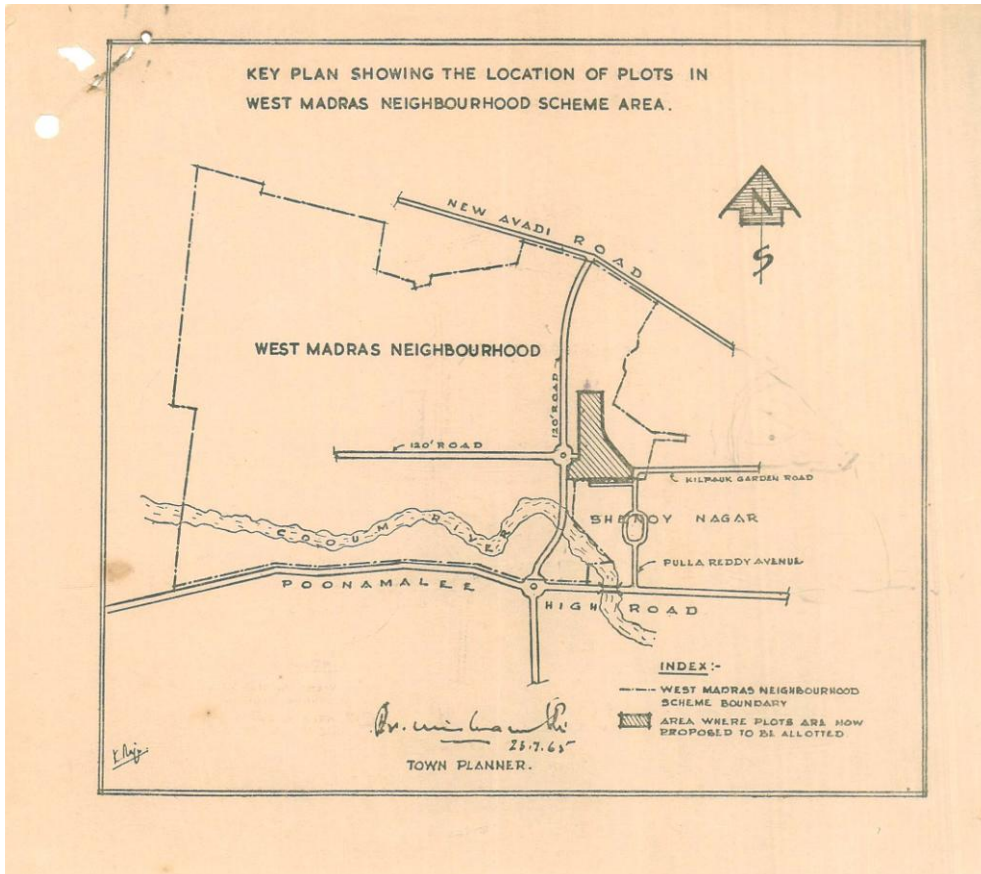


Fig. 1: Key Plan of the West Madras Neighbourhood Plan

Source: Mr and Mrs Roshanlal Handa IPS – as a contribution to the Annanagar social history group



Fig. 2: A) View of the Madras Pavilion (The Tower Can Be Seen Behind)

Source: Front cover of - The Madras information journal (1968. feb)

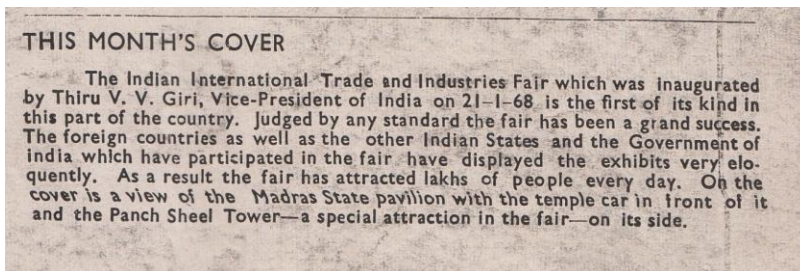


Fig. 3: A) Explanation to the front cover

Source: Front cover of - The Madras information journal(1968.,feb)

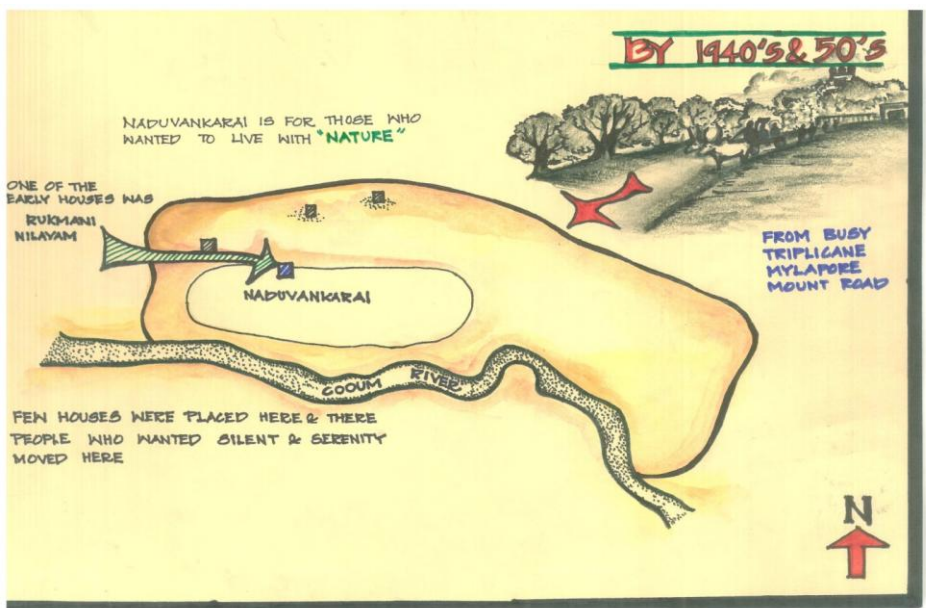


Fig. 3: A) A schematic sketch representing the evolution

Source: Sketch by, Akshaya Selvaraj , Architect ,volunteer for the Annanagar social history group

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