

# journal of landscape architecture

PRICE | ₹125.00

**DIGITAL  
VERSION  
NOW AVAILABLE**

## **LANDSCAPE PLANNING** ARTICULATING MORPHOLOGY CHANDIGARH DYNAMICS OF CULTURE & SPACE CREATION



GOA 2100 RURBANISM CHOREOGRAPHY OF VIBRANT OPEN SPACES  
THE SHAPE OF CITIES SENSE OF PLACE S K DAS



**LA!29**  
MONSOON | 2010



PHOTO CREDIT: Sumit Arora | LA, Journal



# interview

*In conversation with **Savita Bhandari**, Director (Landscape), Delhi Development Authority (DDA)*

*The Delhi Development Authority DDA was created in 1955 under the provisions of the Delhi Development Act to promote and secure the development of Delhi. In 1957, DDA acquired its present name and its role as the builder of the grand city of Delhi. With large areas under its jurisdiction, DDA has played a vital role in the rapid development of Delhi over the years, that includes preparation of Master Plan for the city.*

## On CWG 2010

Delhi has grown through the ages. The Commonwealth Games (CWG) 2010 has made Delhi a sports city though DDA had already taken the initiative by taking sports to the doorstep of the public. It has generated awareness. DDA has provided the city all the facilities such as sports centers, gymnasiums and even the fitness trails in most of the city parks. It is the health consciousness created by the CWG 2010 that has created such an infrastructure.

I would also like to add here that DDA did not start this sports and recreation related development solely for CWG 2010. We started the works after the Asian Games in 1982. So the process was already in place for decades.

For the CWG 2010, DDA took up development of Siri Fort Sports Complex for Badminton and Squash, Yamuna Sports Complex for Archery, Practice Venue of Saket Sports Complex and Commonwealth Village. There have also been infrastructure projects like Barapullah Nalla. It is not directly related to the sports but is a project related to the development of the area, because of the elevated road, which was made by the PWD that runs above the Nalla.

International tendering was done for most of the projects and there were consultants from India and abroad except for Barapullah

Nalla. Our departmental staff worked as coordinator, providing details to consultants and also intra-departmental coordination among departments of DDA. The execution works were done by the Engineering and Horticultural divisions of DDA.

## Landscape Department

The Landscape Department in DDA was initially created in 1978 as part of the Horticulture Department of DDA. The first landscape architect working in the department was Mr. R. K. Jhingan. In 1980, work on the 2001 Master Plan started in which a separate chapter on Environment was introduced. There was a need, therefore, to have more landscape professionals. At the same time, the Asian Games were due to take place in two years. DDA had 12,000 acres of green area under its ownership at that time. A few departmental positions were created to serve these needs. After this, it came under the Planning Department. In 1988, a full fledged separate Landscape Department was created with Mr. R. K. Jhingan as Director.

When DDA completes its development works like housing, infrastructure, colony, parks etc., then the ownership and maintenance of the areas are transferred to the concerned civic agency. The Master Plan Greens remain with the DDA. With the exception of areas under New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), Mu-

nicipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) such as Nehru Park or Roshanara Gardens, every public green area in the city is under the ownership of DDA.

For various landscape projects taken up by the department, the request comes from Engineering Department or from the concerned Resident Welfare Associations. The land use is first verified by us and vetted from the Planning Department. Conceptual plans are then prepared which are approved by a Screening Committee for any area more than 5 acres. The screening committee has members from all the departments of DDA and is chaired by Vice Chairman DDA. After obtaining approval, working drawings are prepared that are then sent to Engineering and Horticulture Departments for preparing a feasibility report and preliminary estimates.

In the recent past, the Landscape Department has taken the initiative of developing sports complexes all over Delhi which are in great demand and are being actively used throughout the city.

All the landscape and recreational areas developed by DDA are inclusive in nature – these are not ticketed. These are democratic spaces for all. The drawback is that being free of cost for the public, it is difficult to maintain such large public greens which are so extensively used.

### Multiplicity of Authorities

This is a very tricky issue. Even in a huge organization like DDA, we have to co-ordinate with many departments such as engineering, horticulture, finance etc. But overall it is a single department. In the city of Delhi, there are many departments – PWD for roads, Delhi Jal Board for water supply, BSES for electricity, MTNL for phone lines and so on. With coordination come the issues of delays and accountability – who is accountable for a project in which so many agencies are involved? There are lots of problems associated with a multiplicity of authorities.

A better model is one with a project-wise division – for example, for large projects, there could be a single authority taking care of all the aspects. It would appear that a multiplicity of agencies is a problem in Delhi only, and not anywhere else. Even in cities such as Bombay and Hyderabad, there are not many such agencies. The Greater Noida Authority is a good example, where they have tried to address this issue by having a smaller number of agencies involved in large projects.

As far as an understanding of landscape, or what our department achieves – there is hardly any sensitivity in departments in or outside the DDA towards landscape among

decision makers and other agencies that are dealing with development related to construction projects. Even today, there is no distinction between landscape and horticulture, where ‘greening’ means putting lawns/turf areas even if it is the most unsustainable way of planting. This needs to change in a big way.

### Organizing Design Competitions and Working with Consultants

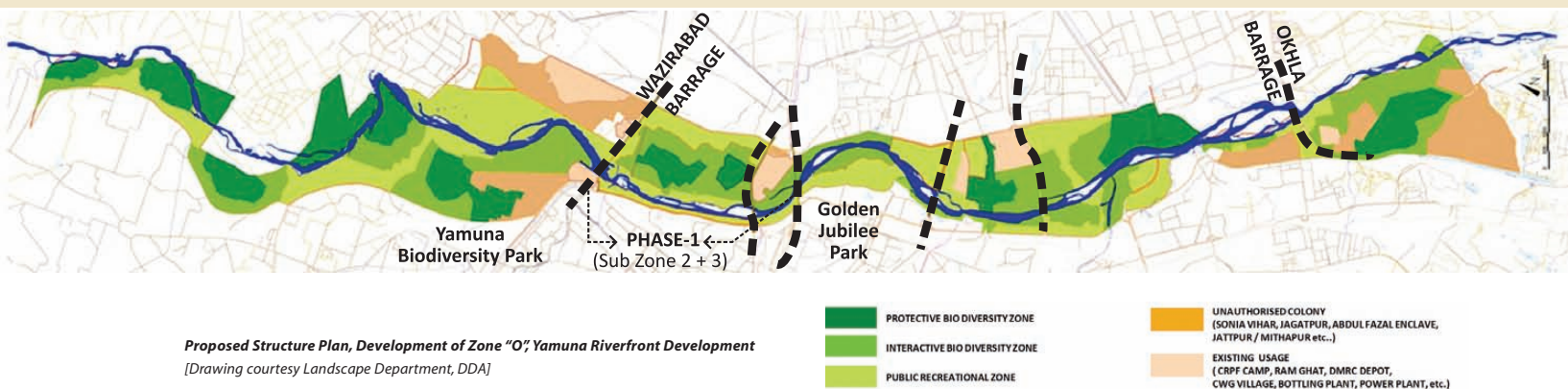
DDA is the only agency which has to its credit many design competitions, especially related to landscape and urban design. No other agency has floated so many competitions for the city of Delhi. In 2002, we organized an urban design competition ‘Bharat Vandana Prangan’ about 400 acres of site at Dwarka of mixed land use.

In the case of Astha Kunj – the competition that was organized by us for a 200 acre spiritual park near Nehru Place, we had an eminent jury including Fariburz Sahba, the designer for Bahai’s Temple, New Delhi. Unfortunately, due to technical reasons, we were not able to award the work to the winner. So, the project was completed in-house with our own design staff.

We have had a wonderful, yet stressful, due to the time constraints, experience of working with consultants in CWG 2010 on development projects and also on our previous biodiversity projects. We hope to continue to engage consultants when we require for any type of special development. We are also open to the idea of organizing more competitions if the need arises.

### Development of Zone “O”, Riverfront Development

This is a complex development scheme. There are agricultural fields, part of the land is given on lease and a large area is being encroached upon. There is also a transport corridor being developed. A DMRC station also exists on the land. There was a notification by the Lieutenant Governor’s office stating that there will be no further construction on the riverbed and all the areas on both the banks (western and eastern) will be developed as greens and biodiversity parks. So accordingly, we started work on the area. The total area is around 9,770 hectares. This is a large area and it is a long term project. Keeping in mind the brief given, we have developed a Landscape Structure Plan. Areas with high biodiversity potentials are proposed to be developed as biodiversity





parks while others as recreational areas for the city. For example, areas near the Ring Road have high utility value for the city. So such areas would be a recreational zones. The proposed zoning has already been approved by the higher authorities. The approving authority includes a combination of bureaucrats and technocrats. It also has representatives from the developing agencies dealing with the city. The entire proposal was uploaded on the DDA website for inviting public opinion and comments in April this year. We have received feedback and are presently working on it.

In our landscape department, we have five landscape architects. We also have five environmental planners on contract basis, especially for the riverfront development projects. Six more landscape architects are being recruited in the Department on permanent basis. We also have the Scientific Unit of Delhi University (with whom we had collaborated for Yamuna Biodiversity Park and Aravalli Biodiversity Park earlier) as consultant. All the planting concepts and details are being conceived by them. Our department does the landscape design and the Engineering department of DDA executes the work at sites under the supervision of Landscape officers.

### Ongoing projects

There are five new biodiversity parks in the city that are being developed in collaboration with the Botany Department, University of Delhi at locations in Vasant Kunj, Neela Hauz, Tilpath Valley which is near Sangam Vihar, Northern Ridge and Sanjay Lake. Also, there is Coronation Park, near Northern Ridge that we are developing in consultation with INTACH Delhi Chapter. It is 49 hectares in area and is to be inaugurated next year in 2011 when the Centenary year of the coronation of King George in India will be celebrated. Other works include development of greens in urban extension areas of Dwarka and Rohini.



*Newly designed Silver Oak Park | Photo courtesy Landscape Department, DDA*