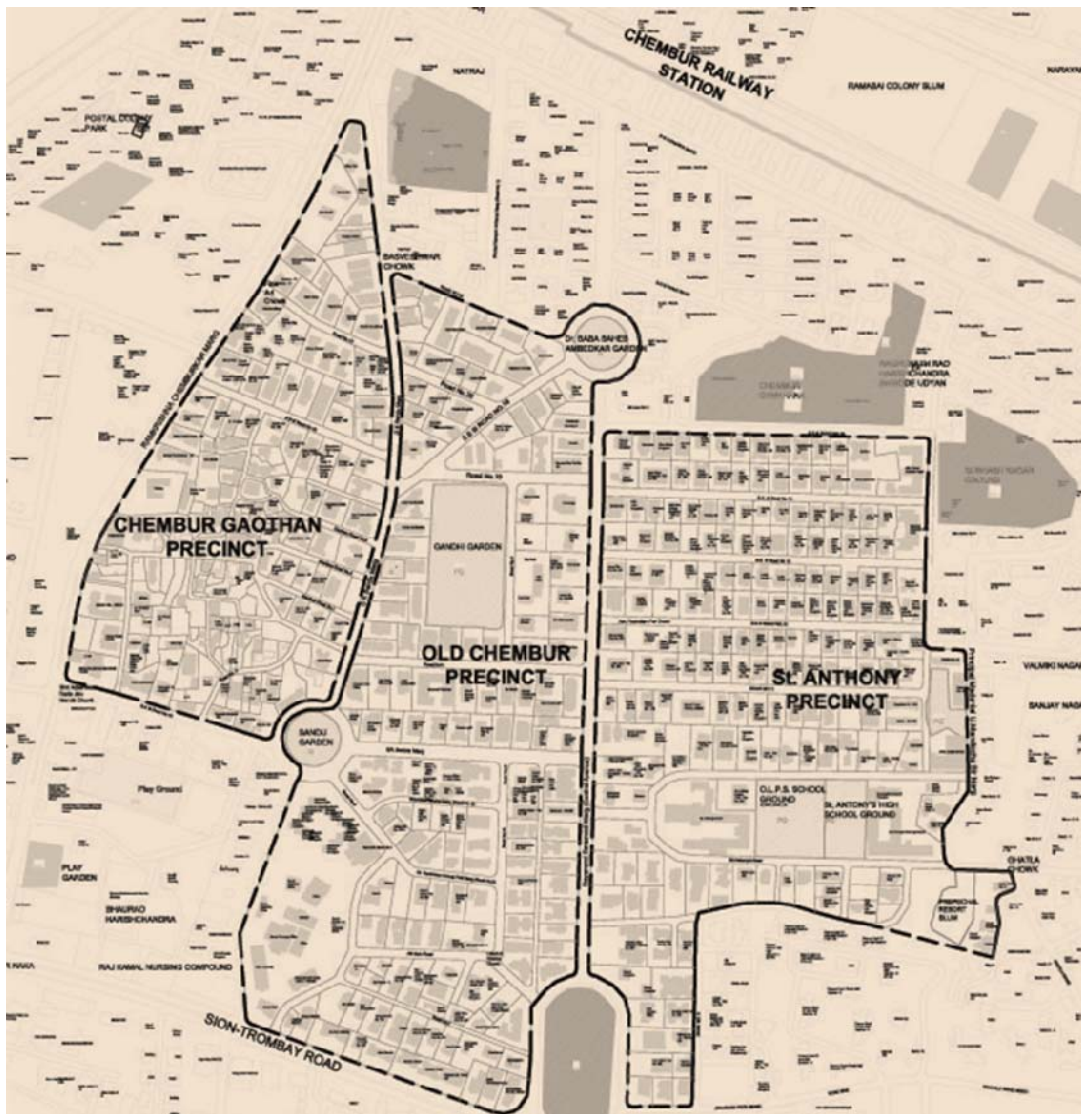


ACTION PLAN FOR CONSERVATION OF HERITAGE PRECINCTS IN MMR

CHEMBUR PRECINCTS GAOTHAN OLD CHEMBUR ST ANTHONY

STAGE – II REPORT

AUGUST 20, 2010



CONSULTANTS

Adarkar Associates

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1.0 Background:

Preparation of Action Plan for conservation of Heritage Precincts in Chembur

MMR-HCS has selected three Sub Precincts of Chembur for the above project.:

Chembur Gaothan ,

Old Chembur,

St.Anthony's Society.

The total number of structures in these precincts is 575.

Project Brief

These heritage precincts had a unique character and significance on account of their distinctive architectural character, social characteristics, cultural practice, tradition, historical context, functionality, natural setting, economic activity, etc. However Many of the aspects of these precincts especially the Old Chembur precinct, are rapidly transforming and facing danger of being extinct due to several kinds of pressures like lack of regulations to control/ guide development, shortage of infrastructure, management of resources.

Objective:

It is intended to prepare an action plan for conservation of these precincts . This project will be undertaken as a pilot to articulate steps that needs to be included in the conservation of precincts.

1. To evaluate current status and condition of the precinct through detailed documentation and analysis of key issues.
2. To identify schematic projects, programmes for conservation of precincts through participation of local communities and stakeholders.
3. To formulate financial, institutional and regulatory strategies for project implementation, phasing, operation and maintenance.

4. To prepare draft guidelines for conservation of the heritage precinct.

The Project work is divided into 6 stages.

stage 1: review of available data and inception report

stage 2: detailed condition assessment

stage 3: evaluation of significance

stage 4: identification of issues

stage 5: preparation of action plan

stage 6: drafting guidelines

Stage 1 Inception Report:

Inception Report for Stage 1 has been already submitted. It highlighted in the history of Chembur during the colonial and post independence period, and established its context with respect to the recent and proposed transport infrastructure in the MMR, like the monorail and metro. A reconnaissance survey of the three precincts was undertaken establishing contact with a few prominent persons from communities of all the three precincts. It revealed the patterns of both the built forms and of the socio-cultural activities.

It was observed that while St. Anthony Precinct and Old Chembur being part of suburbs TP had very similar building typologies and street hierarchies; Gaothan represented a more village like settlement located at the crucial intersection of current real estate development and its traditional living patterns. The reconnaissance data on heritage building when compared with the data collected by M/s Designer in 2004 revealed replaced by high rise buildings. Such transformations accentuated by the TDR are more in Old Chembur Precinct

Important Public / financial Institutions were identified to explore options for partnering with the local communities in the implementation of the precinct interventions when proposed.

2.0 Introduction to Stage 2 Report :

Scope of Work : Detailed Condition Assessment

Detailed documentation of the precinct in consultation with the local community. The output of this phase will include:

1. Detailed plan of the precinct showing existing condition (neighbourhood landmarks, nodes, street shrines, public spaces, open spaces, cultural practices, existing infrastructure, demographic characteristics, transformations, major activities)
2. Other drawings like elevations, axonometric views, etc showing the heritage characteristics (special architectural features, special buildings)
3. Establishing the common characteristics, features and elements

Physical Documentation

This stage shall review in particular all physical data in detail of the Chembur precinct in consultation with the local community so as this documentation and analysis of this data shall help arrive at the identification of strengths and opportunities to the heritage and further help articulate an action plan to help conserve the characteristics of the given Chembur precinct.

The documentation of the physical data of the precincts portrays the very basics of land uses, portrayal of various typologies of built forms and its transformation over a period of time, densities through its built and unbuilt masses, street hierarchy and its supporting infrastructure and finally the existing and appreciable heritage structures with their special characteristics along with its adjoining green cover which lend the very identity of green Chembur.

The portrayal of the physical also throws extensive light on the socio cultural attributes of the precinct largely seen through its nodes and neighboring landmarks, shrines, public gathering and open spaces which provide a glimpse of the major and minor activities which largely is the essence of the precinct.

The process of physical documentation also helped in providing a glimpse to the demographics of the community of the precinct and socio economic characteristics of the same thereby helping in understanding the local community along with their prejudices and preferences.

The exercises taken up during this stage have helped identify the major transformations that are impacting the precinct to a very large extent along with consultation of the local community thereby helping in identifying the key issues that need to be addressed through an action plan comprising of community campaigns, strategies for projects and programmes and finally development guidelines and notification.

Finally the physical documentation is distinctly classified with information and set of base maps and drawings portraying the following:

- Settlement and Demographic Patterns
- Hierarchy of Streets and Open Spaces
- Ownership and Landuse Patterns
- Built form Typologies, Growth and Transformation Patterns
- Amenities and social infrastructure
- Heritage and its special characteristics

3.0 Chembur Gaothan

Physical and Demographic Documentation:

Settlement and Demographic Patterns:

The Chembur gaothan is one of the seven original villages of the settlement dating back to 300 years portraying evolved organic development depicting vernacular character of built form which is ground and two storied structures with common side wall concept. The gaothan now occupies an area of 11.5 Ha. and has a population of about 3340 residing in 708 dwellings with a density of 290 persons per hectare.

Nearly 90% people are residing there for more than 40 years . Nearly 10% houses are rented, 40% are on pagdi basis and 50% are owned tenements in the gaothan area. The average household size in gaothan is 5 persons per household. Nearly 25% of the people are into business/trade C, while 15% are either retired or unemployed and 60% are into service sector for employment. There is a trend here that old people continue staying here while their children move out of the gaothan after they get married, mainly because of space constraint. Although the gaothan is dominated by SKP(Somavanshiya Kshatriya Pathare) community i.e. 85% are Marathas/ Maharashtrians 8% are Marwaris, 5% are Gujaratis and 2% are others.



Hierarchy of Streets and Open Spaces

The gaothan is now peculiarly located near the railway station and surrounded by a line of plots the town planning suburban scheme III thereby showing a stark contrasting in the two developments side by side. The organically evolved gaothan is bound by the Ramakrishna Chemburkar Marg on the west, 15th road to the north, D. K. Sandu Marg on the east and 10th Road on the south with a surprising nine entries to the gaothan, two from the west, one from the north, four on the east and two on the south all culminating to the core of the gaothan which is a vibrant community open space with is accentuated with wells and a temple complex. Other than the winding narrow roads or paths the settlement has very good flora and fauna and that is largely contributed by the high water table and numerous wells.

Ownership and land use patterns:

The land was owned by the original inhabitants who were farmers from the SKP(Somavanshiya Kshatriya Pathare) community along with Kolis, Agris and Suthars. As per our understanding 500 mtrs on all sides was reserved for agricultural use. Later when the Suburban Town Planning scheme III was introduced in the 1960's the land around the Gaothan was acquired by the Government. The land in Gaothan is privately owned by the successors of the original inhabitants though it has further got sub divided into much smaller plots portraying predominately residential landuse with convenient shopping along the ground floor of the builtforms along the periphery of the settlement.

The owners also restrict the tenants from undertaking any commercial activity or small scale production activity in the residential premise, hence there are no livelihood generating activities seen in the houses. There are only few shops such as provision and kirana store and a tailors shop seen here apart from some MS fabricating units and auto repair workshops. Predominantly it is a residential area and the periphery abutting the main roads is converting to commercial use.

Existing Builtform Typologies, Growth and Transformation patterns:

The gaothan portrays 217 structures ranging from low rise builtforms to ground and twelve storied building. Pre industrial vernacular character of which only 150 (85%) exists in their original condition with partial transformation. Most of these structures are rentals under the Rent Control Act there portraying poor conditions of the built forms which need to be attained to urgently to avoid them from being lost out due to heavy disrepairs.

Disrepairs and pressures of urbanization have led to 39 odd structures being transformed into ground and two storied Cooperative housing Societies whereas 11 nos i.e. 8% of the fabric being replaced by ground and seven upper storied RCC framed residential structures portraying alien character thereby marring the existing historic built form.

It was inferred from the local interaction that the old residents are very proud of their settlement and are happy to live in a village like environment and nearly 90% people don't want the texture of development to change. They just want their structures to undergo repairs and become stable. There are only a small % of residents who are willing to sell their properties to builders in lieu of better housing and cash, some of the properties have been redeveloped. Mixed reactions amongst its residents have led to disunity thereby not opposing to the new developments leading to disrepair and loss of original fabric of the vernacular settlement.

Amenities and social infrastructure

Social institutions such as two temples, Mitra mandals and gymnasias dot the gaathan serving various gender and age groups.

Socio Cultural Practices

The gaathan has a very strong socio-cultural outlook and the residents are strongly affiliated to the Bhulingeshwar temple. There are many religious and cultural activities which are special to the gaathan such as jatras, many religious talks organized at the Bhulingeshwar temple by various scholars and Gurus. The common festivals like Gokulashtami, Ganpati, Navratri, Diwali, Holi, etc are also celebrated with great fervor and enthusiasm by the locals. There are many Mitra mandals which involve the local youth for social work. There is no particular affiliation to any political party but the locals often go to the local corporator with their woes. The corporator has often helped the gaathan people with issues of water supply sanitation.

Heritage and its special characteristics

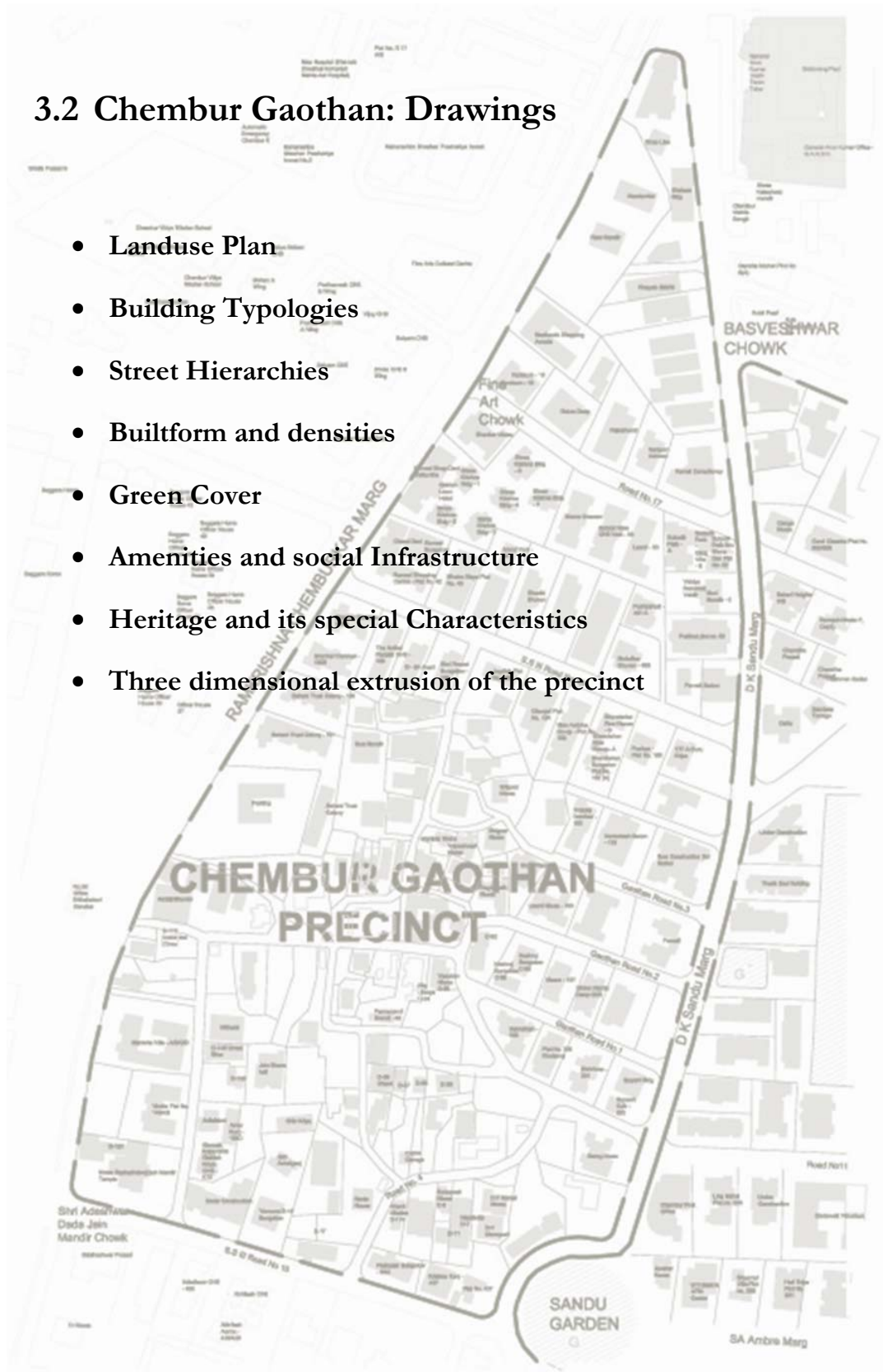
Majority of the structures within the gaathan i.e. 150 nos. (85%) exhibit pre industrial vernacular character of ground and ground and one storied with composite construction of load bearing walls and inbuilt timber frame work with timber sloping tiled roofs. Distinct characteristics of thick masonry white washed walls with timber posts along otlas, external staircases, projecting balconies and roof eaves with major and minor transformation. Distinct characteristics of window openings with timber shutters and ventilators are accentuated with a variety of timber railing usually in a state of disrepair. Further the fabric is accentuated with projecting open otlas along paved winding paths leading to community open

spaces dotted with a well or a temple complex tranquilly set amongst the environs along the core of the settlement such as that of the Bhulingeshwar temple.



3.2 Chembur Gaothan: Drawings

- Landuse Plan
- Building Typologies
- Street Hierarchies
- Builtform and densities
- Green Cover
- Amenities and social Infrastructure
- Heritage and its special Characteristics
- Three dimensional extrusion of the precinct



4.0 Old Chembur

4.1 Physical and Demographic Documentation:

Settlement and Demographic patterns:

The term old is a misnomer to the Old Chembur Precinct considering that the plotted development is of the 1960s Town Planning Suburban Scheme III planned between the three nodes mainly the sandu garden, Ambedkar c.howk and the renowned Diamond garden. The precinct spread across 21.5 Ha. accommodating a population of 9500 residing within 2350 households, thereby portraying a density of 440 persons per hectare.

The old Chembur precinct consists of few heritage structures, old housing societies built in the 1970s or before and the new towers which have replaced the older buildings in the past 10 years or so. The social fabric of old Chembur consists of cosmopolitan structure and there is a mix of all communities here. All festival including Christmas are celebrated here with great enthusiasm. There are no special customs/rituals or events local to the old Chembur area.



Hierarchy of Streets and Open Spaces

The precinct is surrounded by Dayananda Saraswati marg along the east, V.N. Purav Marg along the south, D. K. Sandu Marg along the west and 18th Road along the North. Further six roads cut across the precinct along the east west direction accentuating the grid iron pattern of development between the three nodes mainly the sandu garden, Ambedkar c.howk and the renowned Diamond garden.

Ownership and land use patterns:

Most of the plots are privately owned and developed under the pretexts of Residential Cooperative Housing societies except for those of the Institutions such as the school which would be under

the auspicious of a private Trust. The majority of the community is of multi ethnic belonging to the largely homogenous middle class. The main north south spine between diamond garden and Ambedkar Chowk has commercial developments on the ground floor specially those such as Banks, restaurants, health clubs, etc. Abundant activity along the roads can be observed considering that they are shaded for most parts of the day thereby making it an inevitable public space.

Existing Builtform Typologies, Growth and Transformation patterns:

The precinct portrays an isolated bungalow type character of settlement of ground and two storied structures. Majority of the earlier developments portrays the 1960s Art Deco Style with appreciable features such as elaborate openings with stain glasses, curvilinear balconies and otlas, accentuated staircase blocks, etc. The precinct enjoys the advantage of an open playground accessed to all associated with the Saraswati Vidyalaya school which is one of the major institutions in the precinct. The north south wide roads are abundantly shaded with ever green trees that create an ambience truly known to Chembur.

Large plots, rising prices of real estate and the pressures of urbanization have led the 188 isolated ground and one storied RCC framed 1960-70s bungalows of which 109 structures i.e. 58% have been pulled down to give way to high rises of seven stories or above considering the wide roads affronting the plots and the scheme of TDR developments resulting into an intermittent development of low and high rises consequently. The recent high rises are concrete edifices with contemporary or post modernist styles with very little response to the earlier fabric as well to the environs of the precinct. Considering the present trend of development and the potential the large plots hold to development, it is very evitable that the Old Chembur precinct is most susceptible to change through redevelopments and that addressing any issues of controlled development in the precinct should be taken up urgently before it is too late. Further the impetus of the alignment of the monorail and other infrastructure projects in the vicinity hold great potential for accelerated development in the area.

Amenities and social infrastructure

Ahobila math, Saraswati Vidyala, Chembur High School, General Education School, Balvikas, Gandhi Maidan, Sandu garden, Ambedekar garden, large no. of banks, multi speciality hospital :Joy hospital, Diamond poly clinic and many small clinics. There is an ayurvedic treatment centre- Kairali health care and many old buildings are getting converted to Spas and health centres, there are number of gymnasiums as well in this area.

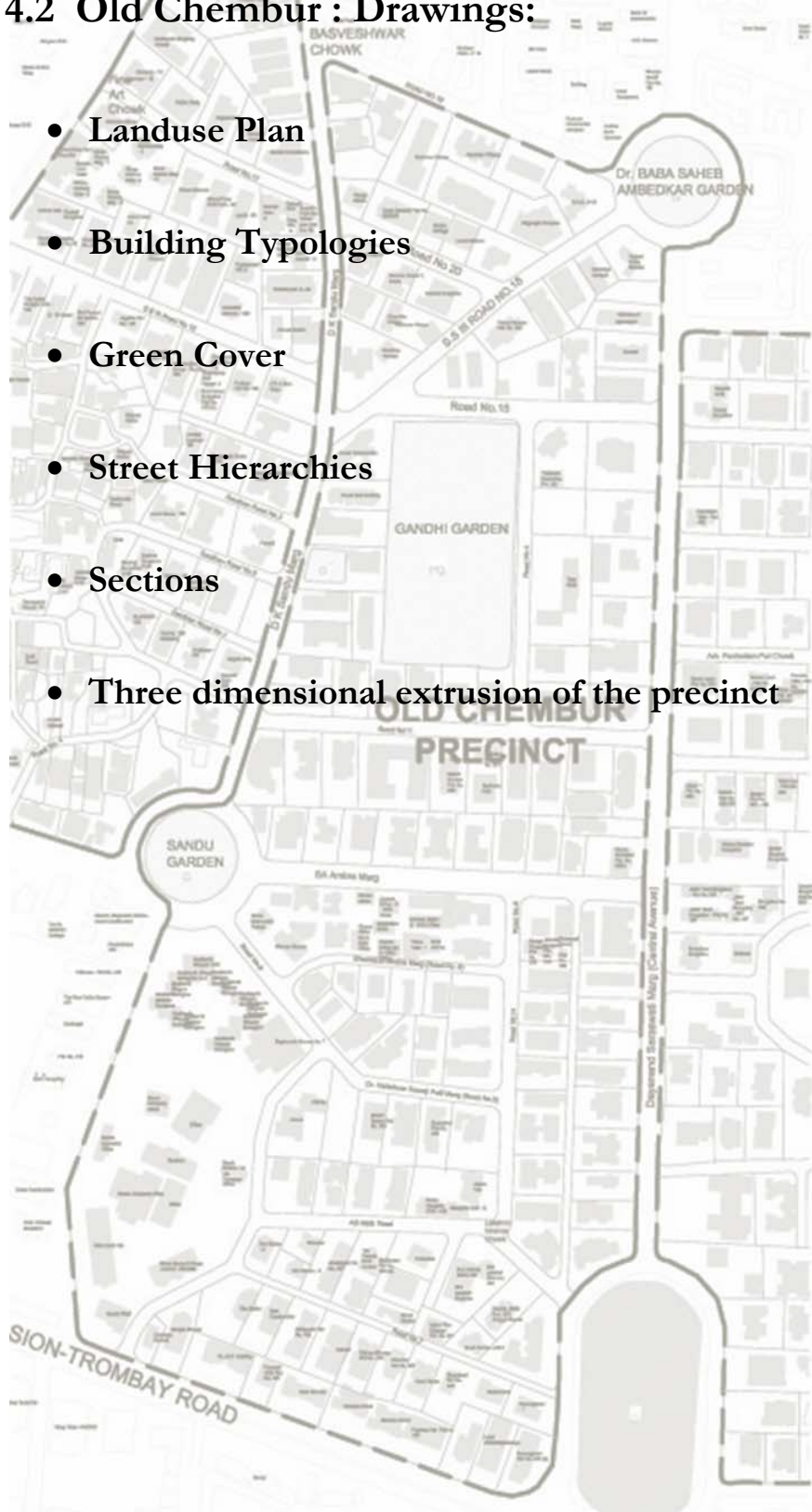
Heritage and its special characteristics

A limited 17 structures of the 188 built forms within the precinct have heritage characteristics portraying the vernacular and a few Art Deco Style Bungalows.with appreciable features such as elaborate openings with stain glasses, curvilinear balconies and otlas, accentuated staircase blocks, etc. However There is a very rapid irreversible transformation in the Builtforms.



4.2 Old Chembur : Drawings:

- Landuse Plan
- Building Typologies
- Green Cover
- Street Hierarchies
- Sections
- Three dimensional extrusion of the precinct



5.0 St. Anthony's Precinct

5.1 Physical and Demographic Documentation:

Settlement and Demographic patterns:

The plotted development is of the 1960s Town Planning Suburban Scheme III planned to the west of the Gaothan as well as the old Chembur precincts under the Christian covenant of community development has led to the identity of this precinct for long . The precinct spread across 20. 5 Ha. accomodates a population of 8000 residing in 1200 houtholds , thereby a density of 390 persons per hectare.

Other than the Christian community the residents of the settlement have a multi ethnic group with a predominant middle class background and the landuse predominantly in the precinct is Residential other than the Institution of St. Anthony's Church and school itself.

Hierarchy of Streets and Open Spaces

Other than the church and the playground complex the settlement is planned along a grid iron with roads such as the 11th,12th,13th,14th and 16th as internal roads running along the east west direction. The covenant development led to isolated two storied bungalows along large plots. Lush green trees line either side of the roads giving a distinct identity to the precinct of serenity.

Ownership and land use patterns:

The plots of land owned by St. Anthony's Co-op housing Society were reserved for Christian community. They were allotted to the members of the St. Anthony's Church Parish. Later as the real estate prices soared the community has found legal loopholes to forgo the law and they have found ways to sell the apartments built on individual plots to even non-Christians.

More insights are required to understand how these deals happen and we will collect the information in the subsequent stage and analyse it. Some of the most beautiful and heritage value structures are found in this area.

Other than the Christian community the residents of the settlement have a multi ethnic group with a predominant middle class background and the landuse predominantly in the precinct is



Residential other than the Institution of St. Anthony's Church and school itself.

Existing Builtform Typologies, Growth and Transformation patterns:

There are mainly four typologies in this precinct,

1. Old Christian Bungalows under the St. Anthony's Co-op Housing Society, some of which have are declared as heritage properties.
2. Co-operative housing societies which are nearly 40-50 years old G+2/3 structures with 4 flats per floor.
3. Newly built towers G+7 and above with 2 or 3 flats per floor
4. Condominiums where the ownership is as per the unit and floor and ownership of the land is with the ground floor owner.

Hence, out of the 200 isolated plotted development, 48 odd structures have been pulled down and given way to high rises considering the great potential of large plots and wide internal roads.

The most vulnerable for redevelopment are the old co-operative housing societies as these older building in need of repairs and the residents require more space so they are falling prey to the builder lobby. In the last five years 16 new towers have replaced the old houses and low rise co-op societies. If the trend continues the area will lose its charm and openness as the new construction will pressurize the existing infrastructure and roads. The newer buildings which are coming up have a setback of only 1.5 mtrs. from the plot line, while the older buildings had a 4.5-6 mt. setback which helped creating a sense of openness and wider avenues. Main reasons for redevelopment:

Maintenance of the old structures is very difficult and cumbersome and at times the residents cannot find the right materials/skilled craftsmen to carry out the repairs.

Most of the original owners / first generation owners are very old or widowed and hence feel the need for a more secure accommodation as the flats offer a single door access.

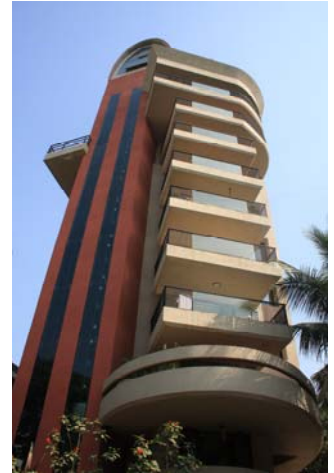
The properties are jointly inherited or owned and hence the family members who are away from Mumbai demand their share and that is only possible to give after liquidating the property. Most residents find it convenient to sell it to a builder who also gives them a flat

along with the money component, hence this way they can avoid relocation.

Considering only 25% of the development influenced by the ongoing trends, the precinct still holds great potential for development guidelines to be framed for a more sensitive development.

Amenities and social infrastructure

St. Anthony's Church, Sevedan centre for disabled, Cemetery, Hanuman temple, Sai Baba temple and Sharda math, schools namely OLPS, St. Anthony, AFAC, Subhash Nagar Municipal School, many poly clinics, banks, healthy centre and spas.



Heritage and its special characteristics

The precinct enjoys a good 81 built forms as heritage structures with distinct characteristics that can help classifying these isolated bungalows into three categories:

The Vernacular style: This typology of bungalows portray ground storied structures with semi covered verandahs, load bearing walls with inbuilt timber posts as frames, timber roofs with large overhangs, distinct timber paneled windows with ventilators and local influences displayed as visual character.



The Art Deco style: This typology of bungalows portray the 1960s Art Deco Style with appreciable features such as elaborate openings with stain glasses, curvilinear balconies and otlas, accentuated staircase blocks, etc.

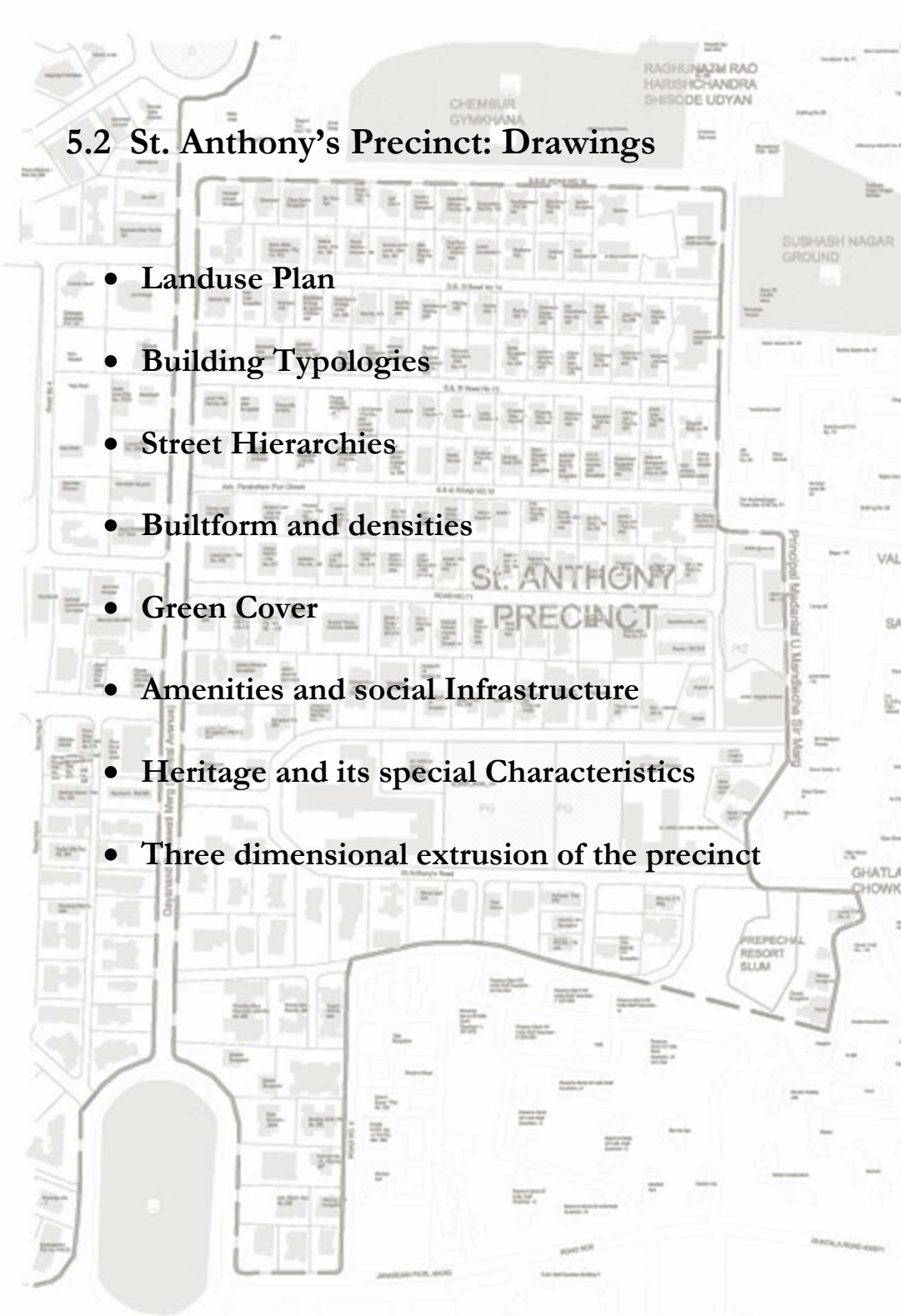


The Modernist Style: This typology of Bungalows portrays the 1960s influence of the Modernist style comprising of a ground and one storied RCC framed structure with stone clad vertical walls as distinct characteristic features and supporting horizontal RCC running chajjas as bands highlighted using colours in contrast to the entire body of the structure which is distinctively white. Flat roofed terrace, semi covered otlas, partial stone masonry in contrast to the white body of the entire structure and external staircases with prominent handrails is distinctive of its style.



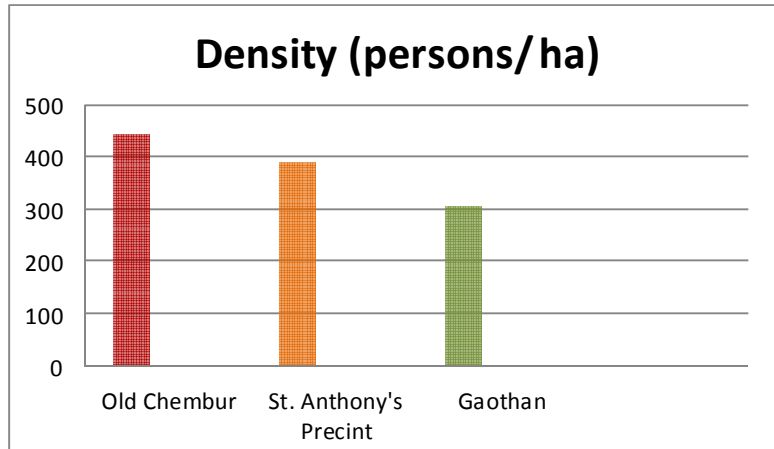
5.2 St. Anthony's Precinct: Drawings

- Landuse Plan
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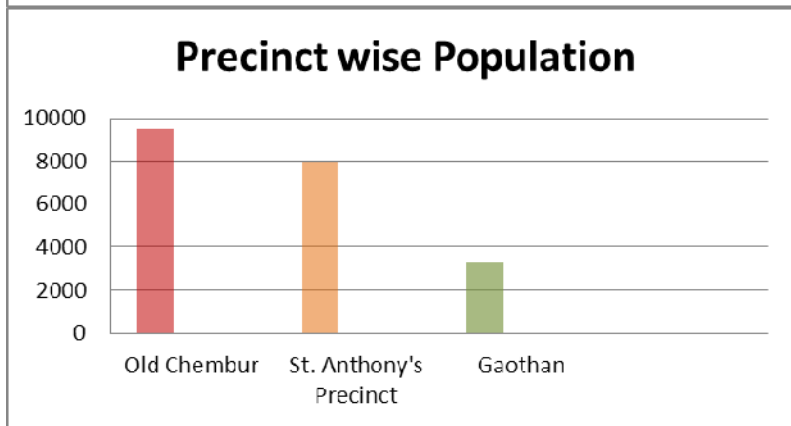
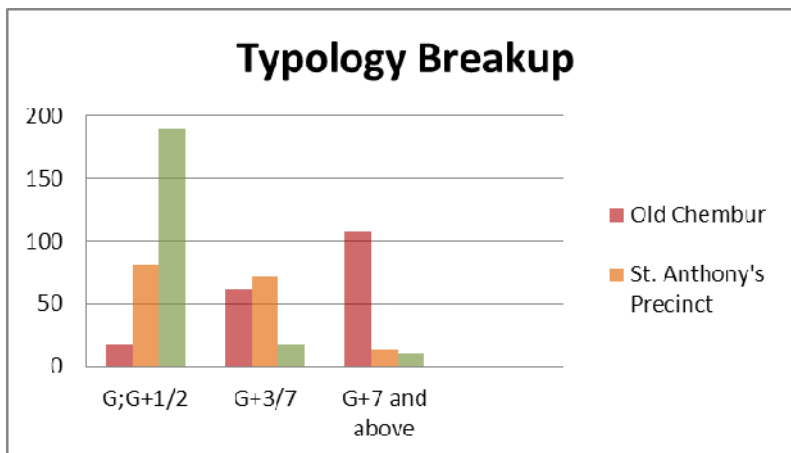


6.0 Bar Charts:

Comparative understanding of Population, Densities and Typologies of Built forms for all the three precincts.in



Chembur



6.1 Transformations in the three precincts

Old Chembur as defined is the western part of the SS III (which was laid out in the 1920s) with perpendicular East west roads abutting Chembur Gaothan. It was commonly called Hindu Colony, the eastern part of SS III, (St. Anthony Homes C.H.S) being called the Christian colony. This precinct has seen much transformation and continues to modify and change its character. The buildings reflect the period they were built in, the social and economic scenario and the prevailing development control rules.

Before independence there were bungalows and rental flat buildings, often with a chawl type plan. There were balconies and verandahs. In the fifties and sixties, the flats were largely no-bedroom and one bedroom, and only few 2 bed room units. Before the Development plan of 1964 came into force, the floor space index consumed was 1, though there was no usage of the word FSI. The Development plan saw the FSI restricted to .5. The Co-op housing society became popular as a form of people housing themselves in the 1970s. In the 90s the developers got into the housing process and introduced three bedroom units, attached toilets, an element of luxury and aesthetics and rising prices. With F.S.I raised to .75 and later to 1. Permission for use of TDR totally changed the development scenario. In effect the FSI becomes 2. Developers have taken over the housing process, and on one hand offering free houses to present occupants as well as alternate accommodation during construction and a corpus, on the other hand selling the balance flats at high prices, thus changing the social and economic profile of the population. Single family houses often with no car ownership are being replaced typically with 14 or more apartments with car ownership of around 20. This is transforming the social economic and physical fabric of the settlement. So also the C.H.S.s of the 70s generally 3 storeyed are being replaced by 7 or more storeyed buildings.

Prior to Independence, the buildings had a smaller scale, a charming roof line and some interesting details like columns, pilasters, brackets, balconies, exposed staircases, aesthetic grills and carved / panelled timber elements. After the fifties, the facades became characterless and bland. Climate consideration took a back seat. Balconies, gradually became smaller, and notional and started getting included in the room area, as the byelaws permitted that. However from the eighties, there came a greater concern for aesthetics, though

often superficial. In recent years as ducts, elaborate architectural features and flower beds started getting allowed, we see a new interpretation of balconies, as the flower beds get converted into narrow balconies. With the DCR allowing Rewas projections, balconies, flower beds and architectural features in the front open space, the new buildings are barely 1 or 1.5 M away from the front boundary. Thus the scale of the road space is changing, making it a tall narrow corridor. With the DCR allowing Rewas projections, balconies, flower beds and architectural features in the front open space, the new buildings are barely 1 or 1.5 M away from the front boundary. Thus the scale of the road space is changing, making it a tall narrow corridor. The green avenues are seeing a reduction in the green cover.

St. Anthony's homes Society has distinct character. In the St Anthony's Society, there are special rules and regulations for development. Plots can be leased out only to Christians. This places some restrictions and thus fewer Christian properties have been redeveloped. However in the St Anthony's Part, there are several plots not under the society, many of which have been and are being redeveloped like those in old Chembur. The social fabric is more cohesive in this part, with the Church playing an important role.

Gaothan is still a village with some charming old houses, narrow winding lanes. A large no of houses are in poor physical condition. There are six wells, temples, Vyayam mandirs etc. The redevelopment is on a lower scale, as the properties are small in area, with many claimants / resident families. In spite of relaxed rules for accesses, open spaces, etc, it is not easy for the residents to redevelop their properties. Resources for redevelopment are low. The redevelopment is not attractive for builders, hence external finance is difficult. The residents are largely close knit with strong social institutions. They celebrate sarvajanic Ganesh Utsavs, and Durga pujas and many events related with the Temples.

7.0 Community Meeting with representatives of the of Precincts

BRIEF REPORT

Venue of the meeting: Balvikas Sangh, Gandhi Maidan Old Chembur

June 10, 2010; 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Since it was the very first meeting with the community, the invitees were restricted to prominent residents from each precinct. The selection of the invitees was based on the survey of the Social Capital conducted by us in the three precincts.

The meeting was attended by :

1. Ms.Valerie De Souza – Old resident of Chembur
2. Ms. Celia Nazareth – Principal, Sevadaan Special School, Chembur
3. Mr.Homi K. Clubwala – Chairman, 11 th Road (E) Residents' Forum
4. Dr. A. Soares – President, SAHC Society, Chembur
5. Mr. V. Srinivasan Ayenkar – Ahobilla Mutt, Chembur
6. Mr. Ajay Raote – Resident of Chembur Gaothan
7. Mr. K. Nunes – Resident of Old Chembur
8. Mr. P.S. Ranade – Bal Vikas Sangh
9. Mr. Ramakant G. Patil – Architect & Townplanner and Gaothan an old resident of
10. Mr. Ashok Chalke – Member, Kunbi Seva Sangh
11. Mr. Rajkumar Sharma - AGNI, ALMANAC
12. Mr. A.G. Mandavkar - Member, Kunbi Seva Samaj
13. Mr. Avinash R. Tambe - Member, Chembur Education Society
14. Mr. Virouhan Raote - Resident of Chembur Gaothan
15. Ms. Gangi Raote Resident of Chembur Gaothan

I. BROAD AIM

To facilitate a process by which the residents, owners, users and others of the neighborhood will work together to identify physical, social, cultural, economic features of the neighborhoods which need to be retained and still others which may be needed to be curtailed and in this process suggest develop regulations for the neighborhood.

II. AIM OF THE FIRST MEETING:

The aim of the meeting was to explore what the residents think about Chembur in general and what they particularly cherish about their respective precincts. It was part of the 'Discovery' stage of our programme, which would then lead us to the 'Dream' stage.

III. REPRESENTATION :

Although their numbers were restricted, they represented all classes, castes, religions, age groups as well as various socio – cultural organisations within the precincts.

In all there were 15 members of the community, representing Chembur Gaathan, Old Chembur & St. Anthony's Society.

IV. DISCUSSION :

A. Introduction :

Initially there appeared to be a lot of skepticism amongst the participants about the usefulness of such a meeting. Several residents commented on the apathy of the authorities such as the State Govt., the BMC, MMRDA etc.

A brief introduction of the project accompanied by a slide show was given by us. This helped the community members realise that their participation in the process of identifying the various

aspects like environmental, built forms, socio-cultural practices, would play a significant role in the future development of their precincts.

B. Interactions

An informal discussion showed what the residents think about the various features of their respective precincts:

1. Environmental features and serious threats:

Members from all 3 precincts agreed that the extensive Green cover is a very important asset in their specific precincts and in the whole of Chembur in general. In the 1960s it was called the Queen of Eastern Suburbs.

But it was commonly felt that there is serious environmental threat to the entire M(E) & M(W) wards. It was pointed out by a senior professional and activist Mr Clubwala that within 5km radius of this area, there are potentially hazardous industries and infrastructural projects viz :

- a) BARC with potential radiation hazard.
- b) Mahul-Trombay Industrial Belt comprising
 - Refineries – HPCL & BPCL
 - Fertiliser / Chemical Plant – RCF
 - Tata Power Plant

All these have extensive storage of hazardous materials and are therefore a potential pollution and explosion / fire hazard.

- c) Naval Armament Depot, Mankhurd is a potential fire explosion hazard.
- d) Dumping Ground at Deonar, with a bio – medical waste disposal unit within it, is a potential health hazard.

2 Built form :

a) The residents appreciate the low rise developments and the bungalows especially in St. Anthony's Society. It was unanimously felt that the current development is however, unregulated leading to monstrosities. The high rises mushrooming in Old Chembur and St. Anthony's Society are destroying the 'openness' and threatening the safety and security. Many examples were given to convey that the 'homely' feel of the Central Avenue has vanished.

The ratio of street widths to building heights is skewed due to the towers built with the TDR

3. Socio – cultural features :

- a) The boom in construction activity has led to a change in the existing social strata. There is also an increase in the migrant population.
- b) There is a feeling of 'harmony, peace and security' in Gaothan. Even today, the people leave their main doors open during day time.
- c) Gaothan has a lot of temples. It has a village like atmosphere where most of the residents are closely known to each other.
- d) The three precincts put together have many educational institutions.

Community Meeting



8.0 Concluding Observations of Stage II

After gathering information, having active interactions with the community jointly during the workshop, individual discussions and conducting physical surveys in the three precincts of Chembur, it can be inferred that the built form is changing at a very fast pace. If timely interventions are not made in the form of Development Guidelines then Chembur will lose the aspects which are cherished by the residents such as: low rise development, open avenues, green cover, heritage structures and the socio- cultural identity.

The major sentiments which came out during our discussions with the community were as follows:

- Feelings of nostalgia: memory of Chembur as a sleepy, green suburb, with vast tracts of open land and close community bonding.
- While the community is aware that real estate development is inevitable due to market forces, they expect the transformations to be more in tune with the existing character and identity.
- On one hand they appreciate the fact that this is an opportunity for them to participate in the process of transformation of their neighbourhood but on the other hand given the history there is an understandable/ justifiable apprehension about role of the Government authorities at large and the role of the consultant.

During the workshop it was possible to diffuse the skepticism to a large extent and we could convey to them that the onus lies with them to shape the destiny of their own neighbourhood.

In our next workshop with the larger community we will be sharing the essence of the physical documentation of the present state and various visual scenarios indicative of what are the possibilities of future transformations. This will help the community to realize that if correct and timely interventions are made, only then, they will be able to conserve the most cherished aspects of their neighbourhood. These interventions will be in the form of Design and Development Guidelines (for conservation, transformation and redevelopment) which will be arrived at jointly by us and the community's representatives.