



Prof. D.N.L. Alwis lighting the traditional oil lamp at Niwanthipura opening ceremony. Looking on are Minister Indika Gunawardana, M.P. Amal Senadhilankara, Archt. Vidura Sri Nammuni -President-SLIA

SLIA-Rotary collaboration in building a neighbourhood at Niwanthipura, Mirihana

by: Archt. Vidura Sri Nammuni, President SLIA

The long term plan of CHELTA (SLIA centre for Housing and Environment Link to Action) was to commence this pilot project with the patronage of the Government and the Minister of Housing, Construction and Public Utilities, and to subsequently seek international validation for this approach corresponding international funding for other such pilot projects.

Three Important Stipulations

One important aspect of the proposal was the stipulation by the Rotary Club that the Houses be given to the poorest of the poor. The SLIA undertook to ensure this and was entrusted with the task of selecting the eventual occupants, assisted by the NHDA.

The second stipulation was SLIA'S insistence that occupants be selected on a sound socioeconomic basis with the goal of putting together an interdependent group of people who could thus have a greater chance of welding into a community. The community thus had to be not too small and not too large, and placed in a designed setting designed to foster and sustain a sense of community and good neighbourliness. An open

An aspect of housing that has been long neglected is the creation of neighbourhoods. Good neighbourhoods are vital in fostering and sustaining good communities and should be the urgent concern of both designers and social workers. This also becomes an urgent concern of the government in consideration of the stake it has in developing a sense of community in Sri Lanka, while the absence of this has been talked of often, and has been identified as being at the root of most of our ills, concrete proposals have not emerged which address this issue comprehensively.

An essential problem accomplishing this is the paucity of reliable information on what constitutes a Good Neighbourhood and perhaps more importantly, what physical attributes will provide the appropriate framework, for the creation of one.

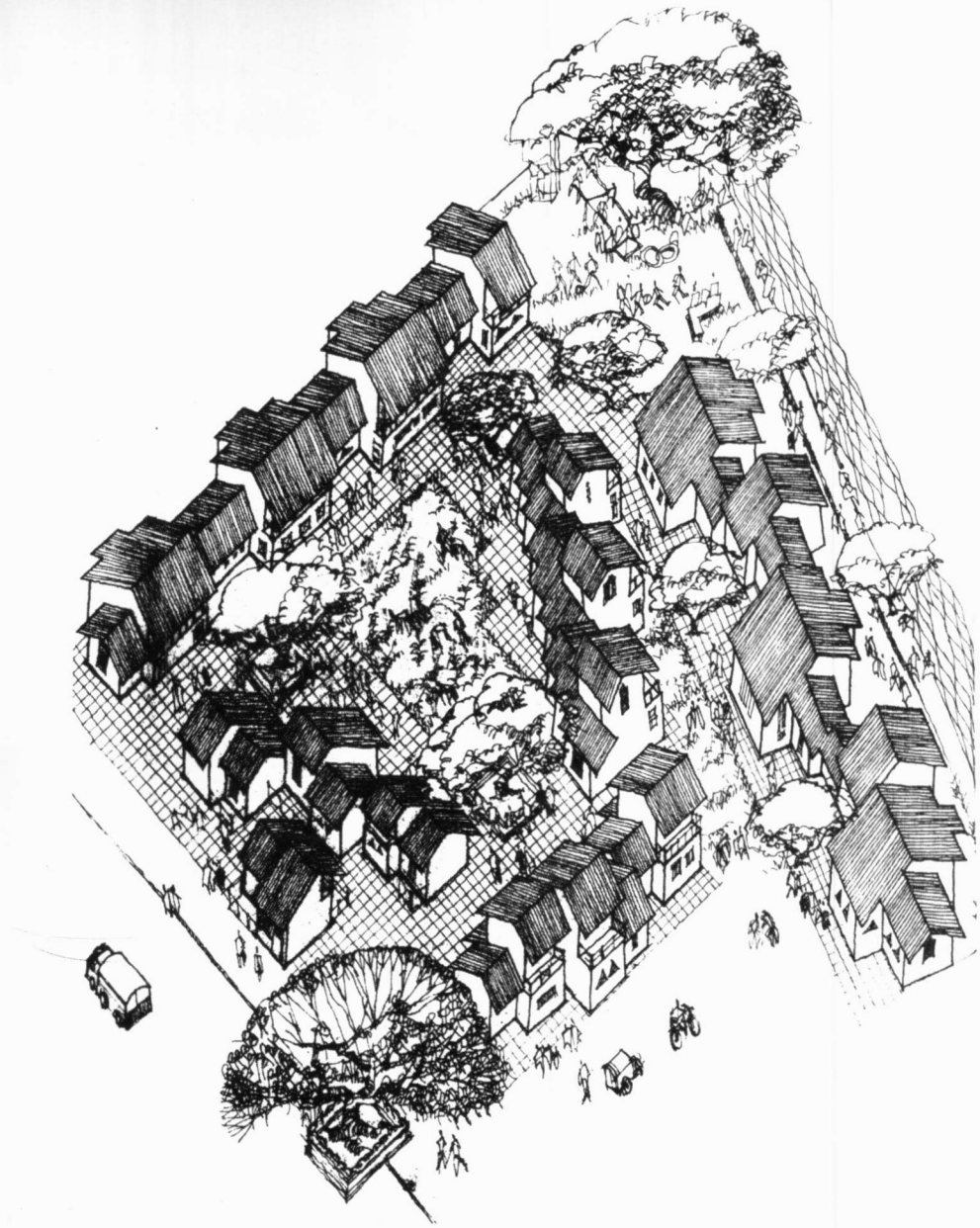
A Pilot Project

The Niwanthipura Project will seek to assist the Government of Sri Lanka to find an answer by including a research component so that not only will a neighbourhood be designed and constructed but the design assumptions and their implications will be decided over a number of years and the results made available.



Niwanthipura Opening Ceremony

Photo Credit : DSL



Niwanthipura Perspective

Designed by : Archt. Primali Paranagamage

Design Competition was held among architects to find the best appropriate design.

The Competition was won by Archt. Primali Paranagamage. The moneys for the prizes for the first 3 winners were supplied by the UDA. The construction, initially supervised by the winner eventually fell on the shoulders of professor Lakshman Alwis, who, in addition, was responsible for keeping the funds flowing in.

Handing Over

The construction of the 250 Houses has now been completed, and what left is the landscaping and the provision of common facilities which should complete the process of

Neighbourhood Building. But the process is not over, if we are to succeed in finding the correct "formula" for sociological mixing, feedback information is necessary, and the need to look at Niwanthipura as a pilot project, critical.

As far as the SLIA is concerned, Niwanthipura Project exemplifies hoe the DESIGN AID SCHEME may operate beyond giving Advisory Services. Given adequate and organized media assistance, the SLIA intends to offer this aspect of their services – the offer to conduct a series of competitions to obtain a GENERIC DESIGN for different user categories – to demonstrate how an Architecturally Designed Home (and neighbourhood) may help man retain his human sprit, and how he may be emotionally strengthened to withstand the travails of life.