One of the most important developmental schemes planned on India’s independence was the building of Chandigarh, a new capital for its truncated Panjab Province. It was meant as a gesture symbolizing the country’s future course in history; a utopia representative of a democratic social order with fresh notions of urban living and an appropriate aesthetic idiom. The extraordinary circumstances of the enterprise triggered a truly outstanding urban landscape, regulated by an extensive range of development laws, which continues to retain its potency to this day.
well-ordered matrix of the generic 800 m x 1,200 m ‘sector’ and the hierarchical circulation resulting from Le Corbusier’s rule of the 7Vs, namely the network of vertical roads, a circulatory system comprising seven different roads (Corbusier, 1961). The extent of the city, distribution of its major functions and the resulting accents in its urban matrix such as the Capitol, the City Centre were determined by the physical attributes of the site. Connecting these accents were the V2s, of which the Jan Marg or the ‘People’s Avenue’ was designed as the ceremonial approach to the Capitol. The second V2, Madhya Marg or the ‘Middle Avenue’, cuts across the city, connecting the railway station and the Industrial Area to the University. The sector itself was a self-sufficient, introverted unit, making contact with the surrounding fast traffic roads (V3s) at four specified points. Meandering bazaar streets (V4s), running northwest-southeast, string them together.

Recognizing the aesthetic role of trees in urban design, a comprehensive plantation scheme was also devised in order to establish appropriate patterns of greenery throughout the city. The V2 and V3 roads were considered in relation to their function as arteries for fast moving traffic, and the foliage pattern was planned in accordance with varying sun conditions. The V4s or shopping streets were intended to convey an individual quality of urban liveliness. To give a separate character to these streets, each V4 would be planted with a different color of flowering trees, as well as with other trees. The Trees Preservation Order, 1952, regulates, restricts or prohibits the cutting down, topping, lopping or wilful destruction of trees, and monitors the planting and replanting of any trees or kinds of trees in any site or location. The object of preventing unsolicited urban sprawl and defining the city limits led to the formulation of the ‘periphery’—a protected green belt of a 16-kilometre radius around the Master Plan Area—and the notification of the Panjab New Capital (Periphery) Control Act, 1952. The
stage was set for the idyllic “...park wherein one does not see the automobile, where one sees the nature... the only city in the world which has at disposition contact between nature and the working inhabitants...” (Corbusier, 1960)

A GOVERNMENT CITY

The next important aspect to set the tone of the city’s visual image was its being built primarily as a government city. In the absence of an existing housing stock on the site, speedy construction of housing for all categories of its employees was given the top priority by the Panjab Government, with over 20,000 people moving into permanent buildings within the

House Type 10 in Sector 22 by Maxwell Fry
first three years. Designed by Pierre Jeanneret, Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, the three Senior Architects of the project, the ‘government housing’ was the largest and the most innovative component of the Chandigarh Capital Project and played a very significant role in defining the constructed volume, architectural expression, the urban grain and texture of the city.

The formal determinants of these structures can well be traced to economic, social and climatic constraints. The most compelling of these was the stringent budget, which dictated choice of locally made bricks as the chief material of construction. Struggle with temperatures and light angles led to devising sun breakers and jaalis. Thus was born the ‘Chandigarh Style’—an all-pervasive vocabulary of exposed brick and lime-washed plastered walls, sunshades to protect