



KERALA URBAN POLICY COMMISSION 2025-50 HIGHLIGHTS



**DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT
GOVERNMENT OF KERALA, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
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Kerala Urban Policy Commission

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Preface

Urbanisation is the directed concentration of the population in urban space. The city itself becomes a narrative device for understanding the process of urbanisation. Urbanisation, therefore, helps us to ground globalisation at a local level and thereby allows us to translate the responses of various communities in a city. There is no universally applicable model of urban development; it varies with the requirements of the community, its history, culture, and priorities. Urban is as much a ‘spatial’ as well a ‘political terrain’. Urban India faces both a governance and political deficit, and when combined with chronic infrastructural bottlenecks, the idea of urban sustainability often becomes a misnomer. The stark spatial divide—both between cities and within them—undermines the sector’s competitiveness and overall efficiency. The urban local bodies though numerous have varying capacities to deliver effective programmes.

Political, spatial, and regional complexities—coupled with deep-rooted social and cultural differences—give rise to significant institutional and jurisdictional bottlenecks, hindering efficiency and fostering persistent logjams. Urban spaces often suffer from a marked absence of both cooperation and healthy competition.

The question remains: to what extent are policy solutions for urban areas structurally similar? Perhaps the response to Sivaramakrishnan’s (2015) prognosis lies in recognising that the ‘elegant model’ functions effectively only when people and communities are placed at the heart of the equation.

Successful urban governance cannot rely solely on a top-down approach driven by bureaucracy, the state, and business elites. Rather, it requires a bottom-up strategy that empowers diverse urban stakeholders, enabling a more decisive and participatory form of citizenship. In urban centres, citizenship and governance are not merely about urbanisation or economic growth—they are about urbanism: a dynamic interplay of identity, community practices, social struggles, and collective opportunities that shape the principles of sovereignty. Understanding what frames such an urbanism

is more critical today than ever. The urbanisms of the future will be shaped by the choices we make in the present. As David Harvey (1997:68) aptly notes, “The fundamental difficulty with modernism was its persistent habit of privileging spatial forms over social processes.”

Recognising the complexities and lived realities of urban communities is essential for the successful implementation of urban policies and plans. As Jane Jacobs famously observed, cities can only truly be understood “with eyes on the street, feet on the ground, and ears to the voices of the people.”

In this respect, Kerala Urban Policy Commission Report notes that by 2050, 80.7 per cent of the inhabitants will become urban dwellers. This study provides a clear strategic framework and an effective institutional mechanism for coordination to help articulate policies across its urban-rural continuum across spatial scales. By engaging with the transformative potential of KUPC recommendations, the state can motivate and harness the positive contribution of cities and towns within the devolved framework of Local-Self Government (LSG) to meet global sustainability targets as emphasised in the New Urban Agenda.

Against the backdrop of the erstwhile pandemic impact, emergent global geopolitical challenges, intransigent trade wars, and the AI/robotic revolutions with increased inequalities, high levels of unemployment and stagnant global economic growth, this KUPC Report on how to build trust is essential to urban decision-making and the creation of a transparent, accountable system; where co-design and ownership of urban plans and projects across public, private and people’s partnership (PPPP) are reinforced. Thus deepening Civic Capital is key in Urban Kerala.

Executive Summary

Cities are human creations, places where we aspire to establish communities that can lead peaceful, prosperous and free lives with full respect.

Kerala state presents a unique case of an incredible success story of social and educational development, all juxtaposed across a maximum width of 128 km of land and the narrowest margins of 5-10 km along a north-south axis. This highlights the remarkable tropical biodiversity of coasts, midlands, and highlands. Kerala Urban Policy Commission Report notes that by 2050, 80.7 per cent of the inhabitants will become urban dwellers. The innovative and distinctive Kerala Urban Policy Commission is closely aligned with the **Navakerala Karma Padhathi** (Mission for a New Kerala) and is firmly rooted in the framework of Local Self-Government (LSG). The vision of the Urban Policy is to build fairer and more inclusive cities in alignment with the broader goals of Nava Kerala. In doing so, urban spaces can confront issues of inequality and marginalisation while creating opportunities for all—truly embodying the principle of ‘Leaving No One Behind’.

Managing the vulnerability of the urban-rural continuum in the wake of progressive climate change remains a key challenge as we move towards an increasing urban identity. Reducing the ecological footprint of cities and urban centres in Kerala is essential for a sustainable future. Natural hazards affect the daily lives of all individuals and are exacerbated by both unplanned and planned human activities. The absence of a robust and integrated institutional framework hinders the translation of scientific data and knowledge into action. Furthermore, a lack of trust in democratic decision-making processes, intractable delays in project ideation and implementation, and duplicated administrative bottlenecks inevitably lead to stasis and policy paralysis. Likewise, investing in tertiary educational institutions will help foster the knowledge economy of the state and thereby improve economic opportunities. Creating space for urban governance based on evidence-based policies is one of the key recommendations from this Commission. Secondly, urban decision-making needs to be brought closer to the citizens

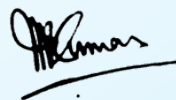
and technical expertise to ensure transparency, accountability and success, rather than being a purely routinised administrative-driven exercise.

Kerala, with its unique decentralised model of local governance with varying capacities, holds the key policy and investment responsibilities to engage with urban challenges. This Kerala Urban Policy Commission (KUPC), as the first in India, has provided a comprehensive, evidence-based framework to align spatial planning with climate-resilient policies, investments in local economic development by acknowledging the key growth drivers, and innovative interventions in collective local governance, sustainable urban finance, thereby addressing challenges and opportunities in health and wellbeing, habitat and built environment, ultimately promoting culture and heritage of the people of Kerala. The professionalisation of urban local bodies is possible by reducing duplication of efforts and resources. Effective coordination of elected representatives, civil servants, and citizens across all levels of the local self-government framework will initiate innovation, entrepreneurship and productive outcomes. Amidst all this, the roles of urban sovereignty, governance, and citizenship have become deeply influential in shaping the trajectories of change—whether leading to success or failure. Addressing the interconnected challenges faced by cities and towns along the urban-rural continuum remains central to the KUPC. This aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 11, which aims to make ‘cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable’.

Drawing on evidence-based reports from **10 Policy Pillars and 33 Commissioned Short Studies, 53 Stakeholder Meetings** covered all **14 Districts**, including the Mayor’s Council, Chamber of Municipal Chairman, all Urban Local Government Standing Committees, Chairpersons, all Higher Order Municipal Officials, various NGOs, Resident’s Welfare Associations, Advocacy Groups, Unions, Student Groups, Women’s Groups, Guest Workers, Unorganised Workers, Youth Groups, and Vendors and Gig Workers. In total, this effort engages over 2,500 individuals, highlighting the broad scope of participation and collaboration. These discussions produced 2359 pages of outputs, which were refined to create the final results in less than a year of engagement. The ten Policy Pillars are critical instruments to manage urban challenges in Kerala and to advance an Urban Policy,

prioritising People, enhancing Resilience and Strengthening Collective Local Governance.

It is hoped that the Kerala Urban Policy Commission (KUPC) will provide a framework and a prototype for other States in India and at the same time, also a model for countries in the global South. The commonalities and lessons learnt will help to reflect on the diversity of experience in designing, formulating, implementing and finally monitoring effective Kerala Urban Policies. The report takes a realist view of policymaking and its mobility or governance across the urban-rural continuum.



Dr. M. Satish Kumar

Key Findings

PILLAR 1- SPATIAL PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

1. Slow master plan progress and limited coverage are evident. Only 60 per cent of urban areas have approved master plans, while 37 statutory towns remain in the planning phase. The creation of master plans, district development plans, and metropolitan plans is progressing slowly.
2. The planning system is highly centralised, requiring state approval for all plans, which limits local governance involvement and slows the planning process.
3. The existing DTP scheme does not align with higher-order plans, and LAP areas are not delineated, resulting in master plans that do not address LAP and DTP requirements.
4. Many smaller municipalities and panchayats lack the technical expertise and resources to prepare plans, so they rely on the Department of Town and Country Planning, which causes delays.
5. Spatial plans fail to address region-specific environmental vulnerabilities like flooding, landslides, sea-level rise, etc, as guidelines are not context-specific and lack detailed town planning and urban design proposals.
6. A comparative analysis of master plans shows little variation in Development Control Regulations (DCR), applying the same rules to coastal and highland settlements. The plans lack micro-zonation and fail to incorporate large-scale projects that affect land use.
7. Need for compact growth, integrating blue-green infrastructure, and enhancing water transport.
8. Metropolitan areas face issues like urban sprawl, densification in peripheral regions, and rural-urban continuums. There's a lack of integrated spatial planning, with master plans covering only urban areas and neglecting peri-urban panchayats. Neighbouring panchayats grow faster than municipalities, and no integrated development or statutory plans exist at the metropolitan level. Contiguous growth is seen in urban and peripheral areas, such as the Thanoor-Tirur-Kottakkal and Kottayam-Ettumanoor-Changanacherry belts.
9. The Kerala Town and Country Planning Department (TCPD) faces a significant staffing shortage. The state requires 3,300 planners by

2051, but the current supply is insufficient. Additionally, the existing recruitment syllabus needs revision.

PILLAR 2- CLIMATE RESILIENT URBANISATION

1. Urban sprawl is extending from lowlands to highlands, altering landscapes, overburdening land resources, and degrading critical blue-green infrastructure.
2. Kerala faces escalating climate risks, including rising temperatures, intensified cyclones, sea-level rise, and erratic rainfall, leading to floods, landslides, and coastal erosion.
3. Unregulated urbanisation exacerbates climate vulnerabilities, demanding urgent and strategic land-use planning interventions.
4. While spatial data is available at the state level, its inaccessibility to the researchers, administrators, and public hampers informed decision-making.
5. Kerala must embrace a holistic approach to sustainable development by integrating energy efficient, carbon neutral, and nature-based solutions, spatial planning while prioritising climate-smart infrastructure and sustainable land use. Strong institutional frameworks, state of art technology infusion and normative values are essential for long-term resilience and ecological balance.

PILLAR 3- HABITAT & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

1. Environmental Consequences of Urbanisation: Kerala's unique settlement patterns are threatened by rapid urbanisation, leading to environmental degradation, flooding, and resource depletion due to inadequate planning.
2. Scenario-Based Planning for Uncertainty: Traditional planning methods are insufficient due to rapid climate, technological, and socio-economic changes. Scenario-based planning can address these uncertainties by integrating climate science, technology, and participatory governance.
3. Leveraging Technology for Climate Adaptation: Emerging technologies like AI, remote sensing, and predictive analytics can enhance disaster preparedness, optimise water management, and promote sustainable urban development.
4. Integration and Rehabilitation of Guest Worker Settlements: The

scattered enclaves of guest workers across the state must be better integrated into the broader community to prevent isolation and social fragmentation. Addressing the social and psychological challenges faced by these workers is crucial, especially as many seek permanent settlement. The Perspective Plan should incorporate a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy that ensures their inclusion, promotes social equity, and recognises their vital contribution to Kerala's economy.

5. **Infrastructure's Impact on Ecological Balance:** Kerala's infrastructure development has compromised environmental sustainability, disrupting natural water flows and exacerbating flooding. Future projects must prioritise ecological resilience to mitigate these challenges.
6. **Transition from Growth-Centric to Human-Centred Cities:** Kerala's urbanisation must shift from a purely growth-driven model to a more humanised and caring city framework. The digital revolution enables cities to be seen as inclusive habitats rather than mere economic engines, emphasising quality of life, sustainability, and well-being. Future urban development should prioritise creative, slow-paced cities with excellent public spaces, shorter commutes, and reduced carbon footprints. Addressing climate challenges and excessive consumption, Kerala's urban future should focus on a caring built environment supported by a strong welfare state.

PILLAR 4- SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND BASIC SERVICES

1. As of FY 2023, KWA supplies water to 2.47 crore people in Kerala through 914 schemes, 41.9 lakh connections, and 1.53 lakh public taps. The state's average urban water supply is 105 LPCD, which is 25 per cent below the national benchmark of 135-150 LPCD, depending on the city's size. Larger cities, such as Trivandrum and Kochi, receive 140-150 LPCD in most areas, although some areas rely on groundwater with less than 100 LPCD.
2. Kerala is one of the first states to provide households with a 100 per cent metered water supply. Despite a long-standing national benchmark of 20 per cent, Kerala's cities face high non-revenue water (NRW) levels, averaging 45 per cent, due to ageing infrastructure and inadequate monitoring and maintenance.
3. The state still has significant progress in establishing a comprehensive

piped sewerage network within its cities. Only 4-5 per cent of urban households in Kerala are connected to the city sewerage network. Thiruvananthapuram's sewerage coverage is about 40 per cent, while Kochi's is just 5 per cent.

4. Regarding the adoption of treated wastewater reuse, the average extent of reuse is only about 5-7 per cent.
5. As of 2022, only about half of households and establishments segregate solid waste at its source, a figure that varies significantly across urban ULGs. Some ULGs with strong community participation at the ward level exhibit a very high segregation rate, even up to 90 per cent.
6. On average, 30-40 per cent of biodegradable waste generated is collected by ULGs. This accounts for about 45 per cent of the households from which non-biodegradable waste is collected.
7. Bus-based public transportation accessibility in Kerala is relatively low, with an inadequate supply of buses to meet demand and ensure quality service. The MoHUA benchmark recommends 60 buses per lakh population, but Kerala falls short, with less than 45 buses, particularly in smaller towns, requiring an additional 8,540 buses to meet demand.
8. Kerala leads India in EV adoption with a 10.8 per cent penetration rate, surpassing the national average. However, EV registrations in major cities fall below this rate, with most EVs concentrated in peri-urban areas and satellite towns.

PILLAR 5- HEALTH & WELLBEING

1. Neighbourhood-Based Healthcare Approach: The report highlights the need to redefine 'neighbourhood' in urban settings as a key unit for healthcare delivery. Unlike rural areas, urban neighbourhoods are more fluid and dynamic, requiring a framework that fosters social interactions, accessibility to essential services, and community participation for improved health outcomes.
2. Population Ageing and Its Challenges: Kerala is rapidly ageing population, projected to exceed 31 per cent by 2051, demands urgent attention. This demographic shift brings challenges such as increased chronic diseases, limited accessibility in urban infrastructure, and the necessity for age-friendly policies, integrated healthcare systems, and community-based

support mechanisms.

3. **Data-Driven Health Systems and Financial Burden:** The report identifies gaps in health data collection and the urgent need for a unified digital Health Card system linked to electronic health records (EHRs). This would enhance healthcare accessibility, track individual health histories, and integrate public-private healthcare data. Additionally, Kerala has one of the highest out-of-pocket expenditures (OOPE) in India, underscoring the need for financial protection mechanisms and affordable healthcare services.
4. **Mental Health in Urban Settings:** Urbanisation has led to rising mental health issues such as depression, neurotic disorders, and substance abuse, driven by overcrowding, pollution, economic stress, and weakening social structures. The report highlights the importance of community-based mental health interventions, de-addiction centres, and integrating mental well-being into urban planning.
5. **Environmental and Climate Change Impact on Health:** Rapid urbanisation has worsened environmental health concerns, including water contamination, poor waste management, air pollution, and climate-related risks such as heat stress and vector-borne diseases. Sustainable urban planning, improved sanitation, and disaster resilience are crucial to mitigating these health threats.

PILLAR 6- PEOPLE, CULTURE, & HERITAGE

1. Kerala's heritage includes diverse historical, architectural, ecological, and cultural assets such as rock art sites, ancient trade ports, religious traditions, performing arts, backwaters, biodiversity, and Ayurveda, but its geographical vulnerability to extreme weather events necessitates climate-resilient conservation strategies.
2. While Kerala has successfully repurposed heritage spaces for contemporary cultural uses, such as the Kochi Biennale boosting local economies and artistic engagement, challenges persist, including the inability to secure key heritage sites like the Aspinwall warehouse and conflicts between development projects and conservation laws. A growing trend of modernisation disregards heritage conservation principles, with community-driven renovations, such as those at St. George Chapel in Edapally, erasing historical value due to preferences

for modern aesthetics over preservation.

3. Tourism, contributing 13 per cent of Kerala's GDP and employing 1.5 million people, is a key economic driver, but unregulated growth threatens natural and cultural heritage, particularly in ecologically fragile areas like Idukki and Wayanad, leading to environmental concerns and conflicts between conservation and modern development initiatives.
4. The commercialisation of traditional shared spaces such as libraries and playgrounds is increasingly limiting free access for marginalised groups, as a shift toward privatised sports infrastructure and paid coaching centers reduces inclusivity.
5. Kerala's rich heritage assets, including traditional crafts like goldsmithing, palm leaf manuscripts, and martial arts, remain underutilised due to the lack of structured heritage tourism, digital integration, and coordinated planning. The absence of dedicated cultural spaces, such as a central cartoon gallery, fragmented pilgrim circuits, and limited use of smart tourism technologies (VR, AR), further restricts engagement, economic potential, and sustainable conservation efforts.

PILLAR 7- GROWTH DRIVERS

1. Land scarcity in Kerala warrants that the state specialises in high-technology, high-value-adding, and least-polluting modern industries with a minimum requirement of land to drive its sustainable growth.
2. Kerala is experiencing a structural transformation in the form of declining primary sector, stagnated secondary sector, and the disproportionate growth of the service sector. Secondary and tertiary sectors together contribute to over 91 per cent in the GSVA, and 72.7 per cent in employment. Based on a trend assessment, Kerala's GDSP is expected to reach Rs. 45.62 lakh crore by 2035-36.
3. A high concentration of service sector segments such as ITES, tourism, financial services, real estate and start-ups can be observed in the central and southern districts. This highlights the need to distribute these opportunities more widely, especially towards the northern districts.
4. The economic growth of Kerala directly relates to the development of MSMEs, which have seen a significant growth post-COVID. However, traditional sectors such as cashew processing, coir processing, garments,

handlooms, and textile mills are low value addition sectors and face the challenge of high labour costs, as Kerala's high wage rates are not competitive for these industries.

5. Over 90 per cent of funded startups are from Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram—implying that the ecosystem beyond these two cities needs to be strengthened. Most startups struggle with seed-stage funding, lacking late-stage investments in the last 5 years.
6. Kerala has long excelled in human development, but the challenge remains in transforming this capability into productive human capital. The mismatch between the labour supply and demand in the state is resulting into educated youth unemployment. Future growth in Kerala needs to rely on approaches to strengthen knowledge-based economy.

PILLAR 8- LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

1. The Kudumbashree and cooperative models have provided a strong foundation for community-based microenterprise, but limited market access, weak financial support, and technological constraints hinder scalability. It is critical that the state transit from the state-driven grant funding approach to the financing approach.
2. While Kerala's startup sector is expanding, it faces significant challenges due to limited late-stage funding, insufficient industry collaborations, and weak innovation networks, which are identified as major gaps hindering its growth.
3. LED approaches should shift from a city-centric focus to a regional perspective, prioritising city regions, economic clusters, and enterprise hubs as key frameworks for smart city development in Kerala's distinct settlement pattern.
4. While ULGIs have limited opportunities to attract private investment beyond select PPP projects, they lack the capacity to establish and sustain industry interfaces. Strengthening institutions is crucial for fostering business partnerships, enterprise networks, intercity linkages, and collaborations with academia, startups, and Kerala's vast diaspora.
5. Key LED drivers for urban local economies include fostering scalable and value-added startups, efficiently utilising urban land, particularly municipal land, promoting demand-driven skill development, supporting

sustainable and responsible tourism enterprises, ensuring affordable housing, encouraging community and market-based microenterprises and small businesses, and integrating urban street vending into the formal economy to enhance economic resilience and inclusivity.

PILLAR 9- INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN FINANCING

1. When compared as a share of own source revenue of Urban Local Governments to their revenue receipts, the ratio is seen to have declined from 44 per cent in 2019-20 to 34 percent in 2023-24. In Gujarat, own revenue contributes to 73 per cent of municipal revenue, while in Andhra Pradesh, the contribution is higher at 79 per cent.
2. Property tax is a major source of revenue for all ULGs, accounting for 48.28 per cent of their own source revenue and 66.4 per cent of tax revenue. (CAG 2024)
3. Profession tax contributes to approximately 20 per cent of own source revenue of ULGs and 32 per cent of tax revenue. (CAG 2024)
4. Fees and fines account for 57.8 per cent of non-tax revenue; while user charges constitute only 6.9 per cent.
5. There is an over-reliance on grants in Kerala from central and state government resources. Grants constitute 66 per cent of total receipts of ULGs. (CAG 2024)
6. CAG reported that pace of utilisation of funds by ULGs is slow. 41.37 percent of funds allotted under centrally sponsored schemes and 55.51 percent of Central Finance Commission grants remained unutilized at the end of 2021-22 financial year; which was utilized in the subsequent year.

PILLAR 10- COLLECTIVE LOCAL SELF GOVERNANCE

1. Centralised control and partial devolution of powers significantly restrict municipal autonomy, leading to inefficiencies in resource management. Additionally, the dual accountability stemming from state-controlled recruitment and outdated staff structures hinders effective governance. The lack of professionalisation, poor remuneration for elected representatives, and coordination issues within Urban Local Governments (ULGs) further exacerbate these challenges.

2. The heavy reliance on state and central grants restricts fiscal autonomy for municipalities. This is compounded by inefficiencies in property tax collection, a shortage of trained finance officers, and outdated financial practices that impede effective revenue generation.
3. The Kerala Municipality Act, which was last comprehensively amended in 1999, requires revision to address contemporary urban governance challenges. Additionally, overlapping laws create ambiguities in roles and responsibilities, highlighting the need for a thorough mapping of all relevant laws to streamline accountability.
4. Marginalised communities experience tokenistic participation in governance with minimal decision-making influence. There is a pressing need to strengthen the inclusion of youth, the elderly, and migrant workers. Furthermore, a lack of awareness, incentives, and dedicated spaces for civic engagement diminishes effective participation in governance processes.
5. There is a need to shift from a reactionary governance approach to an anticipatory approach where the local governments can be positioned to adapt to the dynamic risks of urban transition.

Key Recommendations

PILLAR 1- SPATIAL PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

1. Six directly elected Metropolitan Planning Committees (MPCs) around the municipal corporations of Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode, Kollam, Thrissur, and Kannur should be set up to steer the process of urban development in and around these areas. Planning areas of the MRPCs should be delineated on the basis of population size and density, connectivity, ubiquity, land use, and other relevant criteria.
2. All MPCs and DPCs should be supported by planning departments established at each metropolitan and district level. Both Metropolitan Development Plans and District Development Plans should be mandatorily prepared as spatial development plans. Director (City Planning) will be appointed along with qualified professional planning staff for each urban local body.
3. For the first five years, funding for setting up and making operational six Metropolitan Planning Committees and Metropolitan Planning Departments should be provided by the state government.
4. An independent Town and Country Planning Department with the Chief Town and Country Planner directly reporting to the cabinet rank minister should be created with powers and responsibilities to provide overall policy direction to town and country planning offices established at metropolitan, district, block, municipal and town panchayat level. All planning positions must be filled with qualified town and country planners appointed by the Kerala Public Service Commission through a written test based on the planning syllabus.
5. A hierarchy of development plans should be maintained starting from a Metropolitan Development Plan, District Development Plan, Master Plan or Joint Master Plan, Detailed Town Planning Scheme and Local Area Plan.
6. Provisions to form Joint Planning Areas and constitute Joint Planning Committees are already in place. Such spatial development plans should be prepared for Kochi consisting of Kochi plus 5 municipalities and 5 panchayats; Kozhikode involving Kozhikode plus 2 municipalities and 2 panchayats; and Kottayam involving Kottayam plus 2 panchayats. This should be done by forming unified planning departments not just for

corporation areas but also for municipalities adjacent to each other.

7. Kerala would require nearly 300 planners by the year 2051. To meet this demand, 50 town and country planners are required to be appointed each year. The current supply of planners at the national level is limited. Therefore, it is proposed that the School of Planning and Architecture should be set up in Kerala. The special police force in each planning area with the basic knowledge of spatial planning, in particular negotiations and conflict resolution should be raised. The primary task of this police force should be to encourage people to follow planning laws and bylaws. Therefore, empathy and kindness would be the basic features of training of this police force.
8. The KILA School of Urban Planning, Policy and Governance should be set up to forge partnerships with relevant national and international organizations for training and retraining existing planning professionals. To begin with, the 'Kerala Urban Knowledge Partnership' with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs' Centre of Excellence (CoE) at NIT Calicut should be forged.

PILLAR 2- CLIMATE RESILIENT URBANISATION

1. Kerala should develop a risk-informed master plan at the local level to integrate climate resilience into urban planning. All spatial plans, including Disaster Management Plans, Master Plans, Development Plans, and Local Area Plans, should be aligned with this framework to ensure cohesive and risk-sensitive development, particularly in ecologically fragile and hazard-prone areas, enhancing the state's long-term resilience.
2. Strengthen KILA with advanced geospatial technologies, data analytics tools, funding for research to enhance training for LSG with the support of concerned state and national institutions to incorporate climate resilience in decision making.
3. Launch the Jnanashree Programme to provide sustained technical support to institutions, covering technology, planning, management, finance, legal and other aspects at all levels of administration, in Similar lines to Kudumbashree, a successful enterprise. This will provide professionally trained human resources to the Government and an opportunity of employment to the urban youth of Kerala. This will provide a platform

for the professionals of Jnanashree to compete globally and start their own business enterprises.

4. Introduce a targeted green fee on urban development projects to fund disaster risk reduction initiatives, including resilient infrastructure and emergency response systems. Expand disaster-specific insurance schemes to protect vulnerable communities and critical assets. Establish a Climate Finance Advisory cell at State level to assist local governments in accessing green funds, carbon financing, and international climate adaptation resources, ensuring efficient allocation for mitigation and resilience-building efforts.
5. Kerala should establish a comprehensive climate risk insurance framework that integrates parametric insurance models and align with the State Action Plan on Climate Change to enhance resilience against climate-related disasters.
6. Establish a functional state level Digital Data Observatory with existing spatial datasets from National and State Institutions. Further enriching the data sets with appropriate IOTs, undertaking LIDAR surveys in core urban areas to obtain DEM (better than 50cm) integrated with the existing space-based DEMs available for the entire state. Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) mapping in cities to obtain the sub-surface infrastructure of utilities, systematic geo-physical survey for capturing subsurface strata in the midlands and plains, for effective planning and execution of infrastructure projects.
7. Strengthen the state's weather monitoring network by installing sufficient automated weather stations (AWS) and tide gauges at strategic locations. This will ensure continuous real-time data collection, improving the accuracy of weather forecasts and early warnings for extreme climatic events.
8. Establish a robust techno-legal and techno-financing regime by updating KMBR and KPBR to integrate climate risk and disaster resilience provisions, this approach will reduce long-term disaster recovery costs and attract climate-resilient investments.

PILLAR 3- HABITAT & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

1. Accepting land / water as prime parameters to generate Urban Design principles by collating geo-morphological information to establish a

sound State-wide developmental strategy.

2. Revise the building rules to address the issues of carbon reduction and environmental safety for immediate enforcement. Universal Accessibility should be extended to include the entire City, Public Amenities, Parks, Open Spaces, and Public Transport all the way to the building unit level.
3. From a unified FAR, planning regulations must shift to a set of differentiated Bye Laws, specified and enforced at District levels including differentiated parameters of Energy Efficiency in all constructions.
4. From big ticket digital future to small grained, people centric application of future technologies.
5. Financially functional cities to a Humanised City concept in keeping with geo-morphology and climate-induced threats. Bio-remedial measures, appropriate building typologies must be devised to restore the health of land.

PILLAR 4- SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND BASIC SERVICES

1. Infrastructure Modernisation - Embrace the opportunity to enhance water efficiency and minimise waste by replacing outdated and corroded pipelines with modern, leak-proof systems. This Modernisation will not only meet the growing demand but also pave the way for a more sustainable and efficient water management system.
2. Deploy Decentralized Treatment and Regulate Septic Systems: Establish decentralised STPs, FSTPs, and co-treatment facilities for localised wastewater management, including safe handling of sludge. Implement rigorous regulations for septic tank construction, maintenance, and sludge disposal.
3. Drainage and Stormwater Master Plans - Conduct an audit of drainage and stormwater networks and prepare a comprehensive plan for efficient drainage and stormwater management.
4. Traffic and Transport Survey and Mobility Plan - Conduct a comprehensive traffic and transport survey in all Urban Local Bodies to assess transportation patterns and infrastructure needs.
5. Establish Project Development Support Centers: Provide technical assistance for green and climate-resilient infrastructure projects.

PILLAR 5- HEALTH & WELLBEING

1. Integrate urban health and nutritional institutions to ensure preventive, promotive, and curative care including chronic disease screening from a wellbeing perspective.
2. ULGs should use GIS mapping to identify unserved and under-resourced areas.
3. Form city, town, and ward-level health committees to develop age-friendly neighbourhood plans and assess elderly needs.
4. Improve healthcare access for migrants by offering language support and extended public health facility hours.
5. Implement structured parenting, school well-being programs, and skill-based education to reduce student stress.

PILLAR 6- PEOPLE, CULTURE, & HERITAGE

1. Heritage & Eco-Resource Listing – Conduct a state-wide and district-wise survey of heritage sites, waterways, canals, and abandoned industrial sites for rewilding. Rank sites based on significance through expert and community collaboration.
2. Preservation of Open Spaces – Designate open spaces, waste grounds, and fields as carbon sinks to enhance urban resilience, biodiversity, and public health.
3. Smart & Sustainable Tourism Infrastructure – Invest in advanced tourism infrastructure, including AR/VR experiences, sustainable transport in heritage zones, and improved waste and water management in cultural sites.
4. Revive & Integrate Waterways as Eco-Heritage & Transport Corridors – Rejuvenate Kerala’s waterscapes for sustainable transport, biodiversity conservation, and community livelihoods, easing road congestion and enhancing tourism.
5. Preserve & Promote Kerala’s Handicrafts & Creative Economy – Set up craft emporiums in major hubs, introduce training programs, and leverage digital platforms to connect artisans with global markets

PILLAR 7- GROWTH DRIVERS

1. Integration of tourism sector with other allied sectors through strategic

initiatives such as health and wellness tourism, educational tourism, agricultural tourism, experiential tourism and religious tourism in different circuits and clusters.

2. State should move towards Industrial Revolution 4.0 by strengthening MSMEs, leveraging high Technology, collaborating between educational institutions, and private investors; reducing licensing approval window to 7-15 days (fast-track single window mechanism)
3. Developing Eco-industrial parks run by renewable energy for non-red industries such as electronic goods, gems and jewellery, agro-based food processing, spices, cashews etc. Developing clusters - Trivandrum-Kollam Cluster; Kochi-Thrissur Cluster and Calicut-Kannur Cluster for MSMEs
4. Transform state universities into globally competitive research and innovation centres; strengthen the university-industry-government triple helix model; establish Kerala as a national leader in knowledge-based industries
5. City-specific recommendations based on regional strengths: Thrissur-Cochin should be developed as FinTech Hub of Kerala; Palakkad and Kasaragod should be developed as Industrial Smart Cities; Thiruvananthapuram-Kollam Knowledge Corridor to be developed to foster research and innovation; Kannur to be also promoted as a Fashion City; Kannur-Kasaragod and Thrissur-Ernakulam should be leveraged as Edu Health Hubs; and Kozhikode to be branded as the “City of Literature,” drawing on its rich literary heritage.

PILLAR 8- LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

1. Establish City Business Development Councils in all municipal corporations and municipalities, ensuring membership includes local businesses, industry associations, and community groups.
2. Establish LED Departments in all urban local governments for supporting urban local governments to reduce dependency on state grants and enhance their own revenue aimed to strengthen their financial independence.
3. Prioritize businesses under the ‘One District One Product’ scheme and integrate it with the ‘One LSG One Product Scheme’ for program

integration and implementation.

4. Implement the Navakeralam Spatial Planning for promoting integrated district development plans and joint area development plans based on participatory governance and resilience principles.
5. Formulate an institutional mechanism to coordinate District Development Plans and City Local Economic Development Plans for ensuring that the economic growth potentials of city regions are adequately addressed.

PILLAR 9- INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN FINANCING

1. Enhance own source revenue resources through various taxation and other revenue options/CESS routes.
2. Draw up sources of fund-raising options from Own sources, Central and state devolution, Central and state Project implementation grants such as Central Agencies, Domestic Fund-raising mechanisms, International Funding Options and from the Contribution of community, Citizens and Private sectors can be explored.
3. Assess Financial Health of ULGs for credit rating and launch Kerala Municipal Bonds for lead municipal corporations like Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode directly. Pooled Municipal Bonds for other municipal corporations and led municipalities through KIIIFB/KURDFC/new SPV.
4. Revision of Kerala Municipality Accounts Manual (KMAM), 2007
5. Create Project Initialisation Fund /Project Initiative Fund /Project Development Fund for preparation of viable, implementable techno finance supported detailed project reports.

PILLAR 10- COLLECTIVE LOCAL SELF GOVERNANCE

1. The Steering Committee may be elevated to the position of City Cabinet, headed by the Mayor. Initially, this will be implemented in the municipal corporations and a Chief Executive, jointly selected by the State Government and the ULG, shall be appointed in the Municipal Corporations, replacing the current role of the Secretary. It is also proposed that the city police chief be part of the city cabinet as an ex-officio member.
2. KILA's School of Urban Governance to be recognised as a Centre of

Excellence in urban policy and planning and be entrusted with the work for urban transition in the capacity development of officials and elected urban representatives.

3. Professionalisation should be carried out in the ULGs. This should include restructuring of the staff understanding requirements at different levels. Specialised Cells shall be established for Solid Waste Management, Climate and Disaster Management apart from setting up City level Urban Observatories. The positions of Finance Officer, Health Officer, Electrical Engineer, Mechanical Engineer, Legal Officer, Digital Officer and a Public Relations Officer may be established. Specialised departments need to be established in the municipalities which can be headed by Experts (Director-Planning, Director-Finance, etc.) It is proposed that a Municipal Staff recruitment system be established to form an LSG cadre. Establish SPVs under the control of autonomous local governments, ensuring professionalism in project planning and implementation.
4. An Inter departmental/agency coordination committee shall be established and statutory power is to be provided to the ULG heads to convene the meetings of all departments and agencies working within the domain of ULGs.
5. Worker's Council and Citizen's Council shall be established at ULG level. 25 percent of the total seats in the council at all ULGs shall be reserved for youth through proportional representation.

