

Citizens' Manifesto for a More Livable Chennai

Preamble

Chennai is a historic, resilient, and diverse city. As concerned citizens, we seek development that enhances quality of life, public safety, environmental sustainability, and urban order.

The lack of proper implementation of zoning laws and urban planning regulations has led to the chaotic state of our city, as evident in areas such as T. Nagar, Shanthi Colony, KNK Road, and several other localities. Unchecked commercialisation, unplanned mixed usage, weak enforcement, and ad-hoc permissions have severely strained infrastructure and diminished the quality of life for residents.

Stating a goal of transforming Chennai into a "Singara Chennai" without addressing the systemic failures that brought us here risks reducing the vision to a pipe dream. A truly livable, sustainable, and equitable city will require strong political will, transparent administration, and effective governance that prioritises long-term public interest over short-term gains.

This manifesto sets out essential, actionable reforms to create a city that is planned, walkable, clean, humane, and governed through transparent and accountable systems. The people of this city deserve nothing less.

1. Protection of Zoning Sanctity

1.1 Primary Residential Zones

- Must remain strictly residential.
- No commercial, institutional, or high-footfall activities permitted.
- Uniform enforcement without discretionary exceptions.

1.2 Mixed Residential Zones

- Commercial activities to be clearly defined and restricted to low-impact uses only.
- Prohibition of noisy, polluting, traffic-intensive, or late-night operations.
- Mandatory periodic compliance audits.

1.3 Transparent Zoning Changes

Any zoning change must:

- Be publicly displayed on-site with clear notice boards.
 - Invite written consent or objections from neighbouring residents.
 - Be approved only after public consultation and full disclosure.
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2. Pedestrian-First & Inclusive Urban Design

2.1 Continuous, Well-Lit and Obstruction-Free Footpaths

- Continuous, well-lit, and walkable footpaths across the city.
- Zero tolerance for encroachments by vendors, customers, utilities, transformers, poles, or cables.
- Footpaths are public spaces meant exclusively for pedestrian use and accessibility. They cannot be treated as extensions of private property, commercial spillover zones, parking spaces, or areas for encroachment.
- Encroachments of any kind — permanent or temporary — must be strictly prohibited and removed to ensure safe, continuous, and universally accessible pedestrian pathways.

2.2 Planned Vendor & Market Zones

- Vendors to operate only in designated, well-designed market areas.
- Livelihood protection must not compromise pedestrian safety.

2.3 Universal Accessibility

- Table-top crossings and barrier-free infrastructure for senior citizens and persons with disabilities.
- Tactile paving, ramps, and safe crossing intervals at signals.

2.4 EV Charging Infrastructure with Pedestrian Protection

Electric vehicle (EV) charging stations must be planned and installed without obstructing footpaths, pedestrian movement, carriageways, or emergency access.

Charging infrastructure must:

- Be located in designated parking bays or off-street facilities wherever possible.
- Not encroach upon walkable space or universal accessibility paths.
- Be integrated into city mobility plans with proper safety standards, signage, and traffic considerations.

Promotion of EV infrastructure must not compromise pedestrian-first principles.

3. Traffic, Transport & Parking Management

3.1 Mandatory Parking Provision

- Educational institutions and commercial establishments must provide adequate on-site parking.
- Zero tolerance for spillover parking on public roads.

3.2 School & College Transport

- Mandatory institution-operated buses to reduce congestion, pollution, and road safety risks.

3.3 Context-Sensitive and Code-Compliant Road Design

Roads must be designed based on local usage patterns and long-term mobility planning.

- All roads must strictly conform to Indian Roads Congress (IRC) codes and standards.
- Mandatory provision of safe pedestrian crossings, adequate sight distances, turning radii, and drainage as per IRC norms.
- Speed-calmed zones near hospitals, schools, colleges, and other sensitive institutions.
- Provision for bus lanes, safe U-turns, and turning lanes without disrupting traffic flow.

Road design must prioritise safety over vehicle speed.

3.4 Ward-Level Parking Plans

- Scientific, locality-specific parking plans with strict enforcement and monitoring.

3.5 Strengthening Public Transport & Electric Bus Fleet

A significant expansion of the electric bus fleet is essential to reduce air pollution, fossil fuel dependency, and traffic congestion.

The Government must:

- Accelerate procurement of electric buses.
- Ensure adequate charging depots and operational support infrastructure.

- Improve route rationalisation to reduce private vehicle dependency.
- Enhance frequency, reliability, and last-mile connectivity to make public transport the preferred mobility option.

Sustainable mobility must be prioritised over private vehicle growth.

4. Infrastructure-Based Building Permissions & Change of Usage

4.1 Infrastructure Capacity as a Precondition for Approval

Permissions for all new developments — residential, commercial, institutional, or rental conversions — must be granted strictly based on the carrying capacity of existing infrastructure. Approvals must consider:

- Road width and traffic-handling capacity
- Adequate ingress and egress
- Drainage and sewage systems
- Water supply
- Power infrastructure
- Parking provisions
- Emergency vehicle access

4.2 Usage-Based Impact Assessment

Land use approvals must reflect actual intended use — office, restaurant, retail outlet, clinic, co-working space, educational centre, or residential rental — and incorporate traffic and environmental impact assessments accordingly.

A building's approval cannot be treated as generic; its functional use determines its real impact.

4.3 Change of Usage Controls

- Any change of usage must require fresh approval.
 - Fresh approvals must be based on updated infrastructure, traffic, and environmental impact evaluation.
 - Unauthorized conversion of residential premises into high-footfall rental or commercial activity must attract strict penalties and sealing action.
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5. Visual Order, Aesthetics & Green Cover

5.1 Reduction of Visual Clutter

- Uniform standards for signage size, design, and placement.
- Removal of oversized, distracting, and unauthorised boards.

5.2 Public Infrastructure Discipline

- Bus stops, police booths, and traffic signage to serve public information only — not advertising.

5.3 Urban Greening

- Expansion of tree cover, neighbourhood parks, green buffers, and well-maintained public walls.
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6. Waste Management, Construction Regulation & Urban Cleanliness

6.1 Door-to-Door Segregated Waste Collection

- Mandatory segregation at source.
- Elimination of large roadside dumpster bins.

6.2 Ward-Level Waste Processing

- Biogas plants and composting centres in every ward.
- Local reuse of compost and biogas.

6.3 Recycling & Material Recovery

- Recycling and material recovery facilities in every ward.
- Formal integration of waste pickers with dignity, safety, and social security.

6.4 Construction Debris & Material Management

- Prompt removal of all construction debris by the responsible agency.
- Absolute prohibition on storing construction materials or debris on footpaths, roads, or public land.
- Mandatory storage in approved, covered skips or containers.
- Designated ward-level debris collection, processing, and recycling facilities.
- Strict penalties, stop-work notices, and blacklisting for non-compliance.

6.5 Noise Regulation at Construction Sites

- Strict enforcement of prescribed noise limits and construction timings.
 - Zero tolerance for early morning, late night, holiday, or residential-area violations.
 - Mandatory public display of approved timings and responsible authorities.
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7. Cable Management, Utility Planning & Public Safety

7.1 Elimination of Hanging & Abandoned Cables

- No cables on trees, lamp posts, traffic poles, or public structures.
- Immediate removal of loose, dangling, and obsolete cables.

7.2 Dedicated Cable Infrastructure

- Mandatory use of T-poles with loop systems.
- Progressive underground cabling wherever feasible.

7.3 Accountability of Operators

- Colour-coding, route documentation, and periodic removal of unused cables.
 - Heavy penalties and licence suspension for repeat violations.
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8. Utility Ducts in New Building Permissions

- All new building approvals must mandate accessible utility ducts along property frontages.
 - Ducts to accommodate electrical, water, sewer, and telecom services.
 - Standardised Government-prescribed designs to eliminate repeated road digging and infrastructure damage.
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9. Humane Management of Stray Animals & Public Health

9.1 Decentralised Veterinary Infrastructure

- Ward-level or zone-level veterinary centres.
- Timely access to treatment, sterilisation, vaccination, and emergency care.

9.2 Humane & Scientific Animal Management

- Humane, evidence-based, and legally compliant measures.
- Balance animal welfare with public health and safety.

9.3 Trained Personnel & Public Awareness

- Deployment of trained veterinary and animal welfare staff.
 - Public education on responsible coexistence with community animals.
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10. Unified City Planning, Enforcement & Governance

10.1 Integrated City Planning

- Area-wise, publicly accessible, regularly updated city development plans.

10.2 Single Empowered Coordinating Authority

- Unified oversight of zoning, roads, utilities, traffic, and enforcement.
- Elimination of inter-agency fragmentation and blame-shifting.

10.3 Formal Role for Traffic Police

- Statutory involvement in road design, zoning approvals, and commercial permissions.

10.4 Responsible & Accountable Enforcement

- Clearly defined enforcement responsibility for construction, noise, encroachments, utilities, and zoning violations.
- Time-bound, trackable grievance redressal systems.
- Enforcement must be transparent, rule-based, and free from discretion.

10.5 Institutionalised Public Participation

Structured ward-level and city-level public participatory forums must be established to discuss:

- Annual development vision and priorities.
- Major infrastructure projects.
- Zoning changes and policy shifts.
- Budget allocations and performance reports.

These forums must:

- Be conducted at least once annually.
- Publish minutes and action-taken reports.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for citizen input before major decisions are finalised.

Transparent governance requires institutionalised citizen engagement — not ad-hoc consultation.

Conclusion

A livable Chennai requires planning discipline, humane governance, and accountable enforcement. Development must serve citizens, not inconvenience them.

A “Singara Chennai” cannot be achieved through slogans alone. It will be realised only through systemic reform, political will, institutional accountability, and consistent enforcement of the rule of law.

We urge the Government to partner with residents to build a city that is orderly, inclusive, safe, sustainable, and future-ready — one that respects people, planning, and the public realm.

Citizens from:

I Harrington Road – Chetpet I Subba Rao Avenue – Nungambakkam I Lake Area – Nungambakkam I
 I RK Nagara - Ramakrishna Nagar, Mandaveli I Voices of Mandavelipakkam I
 I Raja Street – Mandaveli I Sivaraman Street – Mandaveli I
 I CIT Colony – Mylapore I RAPRA – RA Puram I AbhiNeRA – Abhiramapuram
 I Poonga View Residents Association – Adyar I Kasturba Nagar – Adyar I
 I Venkatrinam Nagar – Adyar I KCWA – Kalakshetra I
 I Nawab Gardens – Kotturpuram I Kottur gardens - Kotturpuram I
 I MIG Owners – Kotturpuram I

Annexure: Indian Best Practices Supporting the Citizens' Manifesto

Purpose of this Annexure

This annexure presents documented examples from Indian cities that have successfully implemented reforms aligned with the proposals contained in the Citizens' Manifesto for a More Livable Chennai.

The purpose is to demonstrate that the recommendations are:

- Administratively feasible
- Legally grounded
- Financially viable
- Already implemented within Indian governance frameworks

These precedents establish that systemic urban reform is achievable with political will, institutional coordination, and consistent enforcement.

A. Zoning Discipline & Infrastructure-First Planning

A.1 Ahmedabad – Town Planning Scheme (TPS) Model

Key Features:

- Land pooling and reconstitution before development.
- Infrastructure (roads, drainage, utilities) laid out prior to construction.
- Defined land-use allocations within planned layouts.

Outcomes:

- Reduced litigation compared to traditional land acquisition.
- Orderly urban expansion.
- Integrated infrastructure provision.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Protection of Zoning Sanctity
- Infrastructure-Based Building Permissions
- Usage-Based Impact Assessment

Key Lesson: Development must follow infrastructure planning — not precede it.

A.2 Bengaluru – Public Objection Process in Master Plans

Key Features:

- Draft Master Plans published publicly.
- Formal objection and suggestion process.
- Documented review of zoning change requests.

Outcomes:

- Increased transparency in land-use decisions.
- Public awareness of planning processes.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Transparent Zoning Changes
- Public Consultation Before Land-Use Modifications

Key Lesson: Public display and objection mechanisms strengthen planning legitimacy.

B. Pedestrian-First Urban Design

B.1 Pune – Complete Streets Programme

Key Features:

- Over 100 km of roads redesigned.
- Continuous, obstruction-free footpaths.
- Standardised urban street design guidelines.
- Removal of encroachments.

Outcomes:

- Improved pedestrian safety.
- Enhanced commercial vibrancy.
- National recognition under Smart Cities Mission.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Continuous, Well-Lit & Obstruction-Free Footpaths
- Context-Sensitive Road Design

Key Lesson: Pedestrian-first design improves both safety and economic activity.

B.2 Chandigarh – Urban Design Code Enforcement

Key Features:

- Defined sector-based zoning.
- Uniform signage standards.
- Planned pedestrian corridors.

Outcomes:

- Lower visual clutter.
- Higher compliance with land-use norms (in original sectors).

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Visual Order & Aesthetic Regulation
- Zoning Sanctity

Key Lesson: Consistent design codes preserve long-term urban character.

C. Public Transport & Electric Bus Transition

C.1 Delhi – Large-Scale Electric Bus Induction

Key Features:

- Major procurement of electric buses under FAME scheme.
- Dedicated charging depots.
- Integration into existing public transport network.

Outcomes:

- Reduced particulate emissions.
- Improved commuter comfort.
- Growing share of zero-emission buses.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Strengthening Public Transport & Electric Bus Fleet
- Sustainable Mobility Prioritisation

Key Lesson: Electric fleet transition is feasible in large Indian metros.

C.2 Mumbai (BEST) – Gradual EV Adoption**Key Features:**

- Phased induction of electric buses.
- Route rationalisation.
- Improved reliability on key corridors.

Outcomes:

- Reduced emissions and noise.
- Improved public perception of bus services.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Public Transport Modernisation
 - Reduced Private Vehicle Dependency
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D. Road Safety & Traffic Calming**D.1 Mumbai – School Zone Traffic Calming****Key Features:**

- Raised pedestrian crossings.
- Lane narrowing.
- Reduced speed limits near schools.

Outcomes:

- Improved safety in pilot areas.
- Better pedestrian compliance.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Speed-Calmed Zones Near Hospitals & Educational Institutions
 - Safety-Oriented Road Design
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D.2 Delhi – Road Safety Interventions under Vision Zero (Pilot Corridors)**Key Features:**

- Junction redesign.
- Median protection.
- Improved pedestrian crossings.

Outcomes:

- Reduction in fatal accidents on redesigned corridors.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Road Design Prioritising Safety Over Speed
 - Code-Compliant Infrastructure
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E. Waste Management & Decentralised Processing**E.1 Indore – Segregated Waste & Decentralised Processing****Key Features:**

- 100% door-to-door segregated collection.
- Strict penalties for non-segregation.
- Composting and processing infrastructure.

Outcomes:

- Consistently ranked India's cleanest city.
- Minimal visible garbage dumping.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Mandatory Segregation at Source
 - Ward-Level Waste Processing
 - Elimination of Roadside Dumpsters
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E.2 Ambikapur (Chhattisgarh) – Zero Landfill Model

Key Features:

- Women-led self-help group management.
- Ward-level material recovery centres.
- Waste monetisation model.

Outcomes:

- Financially sustainable system.
- No landfill dependency.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Recycling & Material Recovery Facilities
 - Integration of Waste Pickers
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F. Cable & Utility Infrastructure

F.1 GIFT City, Gujarat – Common Utility Tunnel (CUT)

Key Features:

- Dedicated underground utility corridors.
- Shared service infrastructure.
- No repeated road cutting.

Outcomes:

- Improved urban aesthetics.
- Reduced maintenance disruption.
- Higher infrastructure reliability.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Mandatory Utility Ducts in New Building Approvals
 - Elimination of Repeated Road Digging
-

F.2 New Delhi – Underground Cabling (Lutyens’ Zone & NDMC Areas)

Key Features:

- Progressive undergrounding of overhead wires.
- Coordinated agency implementation.

Outcomes:

- Improved safety and visual order.
- Reduced fire hazards.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Elimination of Hanging & Abandoned Cables
 - Dedicated Cable Infrastructure
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G. Participatory Governance

G.1 Kerala – People’s Planning Campaign

Key Features:

- Decentralised planning authority.
- Ward-level consultations.
- Public participation in budget allocation.

Outcomes:

- Increased civic engagement.
- Greater transparency in local spending.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Institutionalised Public Participation
- Annual Vision & Development Forums

G.2 Pune – Participatory Budgeting

Key Features:

- Citizens propose local works.
- Transparent review and prioritisation.

Outcomes:

- Increased trust in municipal governance.
- Implementation of community-prioritised works.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Structured Citizen Engagement in Development Planning
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H. Humane Stray Animal Management

H.1 Jaipur – Humane Sterilisation Model

Key Features:

- NGO–municipality partnership.
- Systematic sterilisation and vaccination.
- Monitoring and data tracking.

Outcomes:

- Stabilised stray population growth.
- International recognition.

Relevance to Manifesto:

Supports:

- Humane & Scientific Animal Management
 - Ward-Level Veterinary Infrastructure
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Conclusion

The reforms proposed in the Citizens' Manifesto are not theoretical or experimental. They are:

- Rooted in existing Indian legal frameworks
- Demonstrated in multiple Indian cities
- Administratively viable
- Scalable with institutional coordination

The evidence from across India confirms that:

1. Urban discipline is achievable.
2. Pedestrian-first design improves safety and commerce.
3. Electric public transport transition is feasible.
4. Waste segregation and decentralised processing work.
5. Participatory governance strengthens public trust.

Chennai can adopt and adapt these proven models to build a city that is orderly, sustainable, safe, and citizen-centric.

International Case Studies

Many of the reforms proposed in our Citizens' Manifesto have strong international precedents. Below are carefully selected case studies mapped directly to the key themes in the document, along with what Chennai could learn from each.

1. Protection of Zoning & Land Use Discipline

Tokyo, Japan – Strict but Flexible Zoning Framework

What they did:

- Clear national zoning categories with strict enforcement.
- Mixed-use allowed, but intensity tightly controlled.
- Infrastructure capacity considered before permitting high-density development.

Impact:

- Orderly urban growth despite extreme density.
- Minimal land-use conflict between residential and commercial areas.

Relevance for Chennai:

Demonstrates how predictable, rule-based zoning — with minimal discretionary exceptions — prevents chaotic commercialization.

 Munich, Germany – Transparent Public Consultation for Zoning Changes**What they did:**


- Mandatory public display of zoning changes.
- Formal objection windows.
- Citizens can legally challenge improper approvals.

Impact:

- High trust in planning institutions.
- Lower incidence of arbitrary land-use changes.

Relevance:

Supports your proposal for publicly displayed zoning changes and written objections before approval.

2. Pedestrian-First Urban Design** Copenhagen, Denmark – Pedestrian Priority Streets****What they did:**

- Converted central roads into pedestrian zones (Strøget).
- Strict removal of encroachments.
- Continuous, obstruction-free walkways.

Impact:

- 80%+ residents walk or cycle daily.
- Increased retail revenue despite reduced vehicle access.

Relevance:

Validates strict footpath protection and pedestrian-first principles.

Singapore – Zero Encroachment Enforcement

What they did:

- Strict prohibition of private encroachment on public walkways.
- Heavy penalties for obstruction.
- Designated hawker centres instead of street encroachment.

Impact:

- Clean, obstruction-free sidewalks.
- Protected vendor livelihoods in structured environments.

Relevance:

Direct model for your “Planned Vendor & Market Zones” section.

3. EV Infrastructure Without Pedestrian Obstruction

Amsterdam, Netherlands – Integrated EV Charging

What they did:

- EV chargers placed in designated parking bays only.
- Not installed on footpaths.
- Data-driven placement to avoid pedestrian conflict.

Impact:

- One of Europe’s highest EV adoption rates.
- No compromise to pedestrian space.

Relevance:

Aligns exactly with your clause on EV charging without pedestrian obstruction.

4. Electric Bus Fleet Expansion

Shenzhen, China – 100% Electric Bus Fleet

What they did:

- Converted entire fleet (~16,000 buses) to electric.

- Built dedicated charging depots.
- Strong government investment.

Impact:

- Significant reduction in air pollution.
- Lower operating costs over time.

Relevance:

Demonstrates feasibility of scaling electric buses in a large urban environment.

 **Santiago, Chile – Electric Buses in Emerging Economy**

What they did:

- Gradual fleet transition.
- Public-private partnerships.
- Improved reliability and rider experience.

Impact:

- Reduced emissions and noise.
- Increased public transport usage.

Relevance:

Shows that even non-high-income cities can transition successfully.

5. IRC-Compliant & Safety-Oriented Road Design

 **Netherlands – “Sustainable Safety” Road Design**

What they did:

- Roads classified by function.
- Strict design standards.
- Traffic calming near schools and hospitals.
- Narrowed lanes in sensitive areas.

Impact:

- Among the lowest road fatality rates globally.

Relevance:

Strong evidence for your speed-calmed zones and code-compliant design.

 Sweden – Vision Zero Policy**What they did:**


- Designed roads assuming human error.
- Speed limits aligned with injury tolerance.
- Traffic calming near vulnerable zones.

Impact:

- Drastic reduction in traffic fatalities.

Relevance:

Supports prioritising safety over vehicle speed.

6. Ward-Level Waste Processing** Stockholm, Sweden – Local Waste-to-Energy****What they did:**


- Segregation at source.
- Decentralised waste processing.
- Biogas used for public buses.

Impact:

- Less than 1% landfill waste.
- Circular economy benefits.

Relevance:

Supports ward-level composting and biogas proposals.

7. Cable & Utility Management** Seoul, South Korea – Underground Cabling**

What they did:


- Phased elimination of overhead cables.
- Shared utility ducts.
- Coordinated inter-agency planning.

Impact:

- Improved aesthetics and safety.
- Reduced infrastructure damage.

Relevance:

Direct precedent for your dedicated cable infrastructure and utility ducts mandate.

8. Public Participatory Governance** Porto Alegre, Brazil – Participatory Budgeting****What they did:**

- Annual public forums.
- Citizens vote on budget allocations.
- Transparent publication of decisions.

Impact:

- Increased civic trust.
- More equitable infrastructure spending.

Relevance:

Strong model for your “Institutionalised Public Participation” clause.

 Vancouver, Canada – Structured Public Consultations**What they did:**

- Mandatory consultation before major projects.
- Published reports on citizen feedback.
- Transparent zoning deliberations.

Impact:

- Reduced litigation.
 - Increased public buy-in.
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9. Stray Animal Management

Netherlands – Humane Stray Dog Elimination

What they did:

- Nationwide sterilisation.
- Strong registration system.
- Strict anti-abandonment laws.

Impact:

- Near-zero stray dog population without mass euthanasia.

Relevance:

Supports humane, scientific animal management.

10. Integrated Urban Governance

Singapore – Unified Urban Planning Authority (URA)

What they did:

- Centralised planning oversight.
- Integrated land use, transport, and infrastructure planning.
- Minimal inter-agency conflict.

Impact:

- High implementation efficiency.
- Long-term consistency in urban design.

Relevance:

Validates your proposal for a single empowered coordinating authority.

Key Takeaway for Chennai

Globally successful cities share five characteristics:

1. Clear rules with minimal discretion
2. Strong enforcement
3. Infrastructure-first planning
4. Citizen participation
5. Safety over speed

Your manifesto is strongly aligned with international best practices — it is not radical, but evidence-based.