

Historical Perspective of Urban Development of Gujranwala

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Abstract

Since the dawn of civilization, cities have gone through a process of physical change: they expand, shrink, decay, or regenerate. The transformation has been not only in physical and spatial terms but in political, social, economic and cultural arenas as well. Major cities of the developing world are changing drastically and Pakistan is no exception. Nevertheless, what makes the change of 21st century different from historical precedence is the pace. Gujranwala, the 7th largest city of Pakistan is undergoing through rapid changes in terms of its spatial and traditional social fabric. The city is known for being the birth place of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It is playing a major role in the country's economy as an agricultural marketing center and a commercial and industrial center. Being a stronghold of Sikh rulers (1762- 1849) and British administrative centre, it is embellished with many historical landmarks. Due to its proximity to Lahore, it has been benefiting from the spillovers of the capital of Punjab. However, it has not received its due share in terms of development, infrastructure provision and social uplift as against other large cities of Punjab. Since the last few decades, the city is being seriously threatened by unplanned growth of housing colonies, traffic congestion, land mafia, industrial waste etc. Nothing can be more valuable than the compilation of a sincere historical account for future reference. Hence, major objective of the research paper is twofold. First, to unravel historical layers of different phases that have transformed Gujranwala from a small town to a divisional headquarter city. Secondly, to analyze different facets of the development planning which have changed the traditional pattern of life within the city. Due to dearth of written literature on Gujranwala, existing information available with the development authorities, website of the District Officer, Spatial Planning, informal interviews with prominent personalities, oral history, personal observation, and photography make the major bulk of information.

Keywords: Gujranwala, British rule, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Outline Development Plan, Sikh rule in Punjab.