

Term Project: Making a Livable City



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Urban Studies 12

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Abstract

This research paper delves into the important aspects that make a livable city. This study goes beyond the surface and dives deeper into the significance of safety, walkable environment, greenery, and easy transportation for both drivers and pedestrians. The ultimate goal is to give a detailed grasp of the complicated interconnection between urban features and the effects on citizens. The four features in this study will demonstrate the preference of safe living environment, how urban planners can promote inclusive city development in transportation, the economic impacts of walkable environment, and how urban greenness improves human life. The study aims to uncover the social effects upon these features and to contribute to the potential problems without these qualities. Understanding the four benefits will allow urban planners and policy makers to find potential pathways through which influences the well-being of citizens.

Keywords: Safety, greenery, transportation, walkable environment

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Term Project: Making a Livable City

Introduction

Urban planning is an important aspect in creating a livable city. It includes the idea of designing, and further extends to considering about citizens that will live in the city. A livable city integrates several elements to create an environment where residents can thrive. This work requires ongoing efforts and collaboration between government, urban planners, and community members to enhance favourable livability standards. As a whole, the goal is to create a sustainable and livable environment for people. The research paper will explore and answer the question of the numerous factors that contribute to the livability of a city.

As urban communities grow, the importance of safety features, greenery space, walkable environment, and transportation became a priority in looking at places to live. Efficient transportation will play a crucial role in the busy modern society and the abundant greenery will enhance the quality of life for the residents. Safety ensures that individuals and families live, work and play without fear, fostering a sense of community and well-being. As the concerns rise related to carbon pollution, creating a walkable environment will encourage healthy lifestyles and reduce reliance on vehicles, promoting sustainability. The efficient transportation systems facilitate ease of movement, reducing stress and increasing accessibility to essential services. On top of that, greenery not only beautifies urban spaces but also contributes to environmental health by improving air quality, creating recreational spaces. Together, the four elements will highly stand as a harmonious urban ecosystem where people can thrive as a community.

Methodology

In order to obtain information to create a livable city, information from journal articles were compiled to provide reliable sources for each of the livable features for a city. Journal articles were found through WGSS library and google scholar. In this process of obtaining information, only papers written by professionals were used with the steps of eliminating irrelevant resources, proof reading and edits were done thoroughly, allowing to use only the information approved by the teacher. The physical model demonstrates the remodeling of Willowbrook area in Langley, BC shown in Figure 1.

Materials and Procedures

The materials used in the modeling Figure 1; Styrofoam board was used as a base with painted lines representing traffic lines. To make it realistic, pedestrian sidewalks and cyclist lines were drawn into as details. Buildings and transportation models were created through the mix of Styrofoam board and clay. The representation of the greenery in the city was made by clay and various model figures. In conducting this research, reputable and comprehensive sources such as Google Scholar, the National Library of Medicine (NCBI), and ResearchGate were utilized to gather scholarly articles. Google Scholar, a freely accessible web search engine, indexes the full text or metadata of scholarly literature across various formats and disciplines. It was particularly beneficial due to its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed papers and conference papers from academic publishers, professional societies, online repositories, and universities. This platform's ability to provide citation counts and related articles also helped in tracking the impact and relevance of the research. The National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), part of the U.S. National Library of Medicine, offers access to a wealth of biomedical and genomic information through its specialized databases like PubMed. NCBI is invaluable for accessing the

latest research findings and comprehensive reviews in the medical and life sciences fields, ensuring up-to-date and trusted information. ResearchGate, a professional network for scientists and researchers, was also instrumental. It facilitates the sharing of papers, questions, and collaboration opportunities. Utilizing these platforms ensured that the research was comprehensive, current, and derived from high-quality sources, enriching the overall literature review and supporting a robust analysis.

Figure 1

An aerial photograph of Willowbrook area



Note. Open street map (2024)

Result

As an answer to the inquiry question of how the numerous factors that contribute to the livability of a city, it is finalized that the four features relate heavily in the quality of resident's lives including factors such as mental well-being, physical health, property value, and

comfortable levels of social interactions with other people. The livability of a city is influenced by a multitude of factors, each playing a critical role in shaping urban experiences. Safety and security stand as fundamental pillars, ensuring the physical well-being of residents and visitors alike. Planners must recognize the significance of creating environments that foster feeling of safety, utilizing strategies such as natural surveillance and open design concepts to deter criminal activity. Moreover, the integration of green spaces within urban landscapes not only enhances aesthetics but also promotes physical and mental well-being, mitigates environmental degradation, and provides essential ecosystem services. The importance of walkable environmental cannot be overstated, as they contribute to social cohesion, improve air quality, and stimulate economic activity. By prioritizing pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and expanding green spaces, planners can create cities that prioritize human needs and encourage sustainable modes of transportation. Inclusive transit systems are also essential for fostering equitable urban development, as they provide all residents with access to essential services and opportunities, thereby reducing spatial inequalities and promoting social inclusion. Through careful consideration and strategic planning, cities can enhance their livability and create environments that support the well-being and prosperity of inhabitants.

Discussion

Enhancing Safety and Security in Urban Areas

In urban areas, safety and security are crucial for both residents and visitors. Safety pertains to the physical well-being of individuals, while security focuses on the protection of property and possessions. The "urban public space can be a place of excellent security or an area of crime and fear" (Kochanowski, 2022) depending on how planners create the surrounding environment. The cohabit of residence and urban spaces are an essential part of life and cannot

be avoided in a modern society. "When people feel safe in public spaces, they are more likely to use them" (Kochanowski, 2022). Commonly, people misconceive the idea of feeling safe in public areas. To enhance the feeling of safety, urban planners can interact safety with urban design. Securing property by installing security cameras or locks are one of the options but also, "designing public spaces in a way that promotes natural surveillance" (Kochanowski, 2022) can be a way urban planners can creatively interact with designs and safety. Not only brightly lit streets but creating an open space for pedestrians and even for drivers to see obstacles while being outside. Due to the "cities becoming more crowded and denser, it makes it easier for criminals to hide and commit crimes" (Minton, 2018). Creating an open area will allow less opportunities for crimes to occur. It is important that urban planners come up with new designs and installations on safety and security in these spaces. Most importantly, planners should not only focus on aesthetically pleasing residents but also creating designs practical for users.

Benefits and Quality Enhancement in Greeneries in Cities

Humans have evolved around natural environments over a long period of time. Green spaces in urban settings provide natural landscapes and "accelerate a sense of individuality and belonging" (Konijnendijk et al., 2013). To highlight, the fastened urbanization, and the ongoing conversion from green to grey structures have been damaging the natural environmental resources. It is well known that green spaces are known to be documented for socioeconomic and environmental benefits in urban areas. Green urban structures are "one of the significant pillars of urban structures that accelerates human life events by promoting physical activities, mental and psychological relaxation, oxygen for breathing, and purifying air pollutants" (Jabber et al., 2021). The importance of green space has been "analyzed for better human life through leisure activities, social interaction, noise reduction, and removal of air pollution" (Wolch et al., 2014).

Operationally, urban greenery absorbs CO₂ and releases O₂, decreasing the temperature resulting in the reduction of urban heat island effect. It enhances the "air quality and humidity, conserve soil and water, minimize noise pollution, cut down wind speeds, and save soil from contamination and erosion" (Lou et al., 2017). Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, urban green spaces were a significant source of leisure activities, reporting "291% higher during lockdown than the three previous years in Oslo, Norway" (Jabber et al., 2021).

Effects on Walkable Environment

Walkable environments have an enormous impact on the quality of life of urban residents. Many planners have been "working towards walkability in cities involves the provision of mobility infrastructure and social infrastructure in a manner that encourages walking as a viable transportation option" (Carr et al., 2010; Huang and Khalil, 2022). The underlying benefit commonly associated with walkable cities is social cohesion. It allows individuals to grow the strength of connection among people. Previously, "it has been shown to improve the ability of communities to respond and adapt to external shocks such as natural disasters" (Shin and Woo, 2024), and is often considered as an important attribute of overall well-being. The activity of walking owes pedestrian-friendly environments has positively impacted on city's air quality as it reduces vehicle traffic. Urban planner should be encouraged to "look beyond and vitalize commercial districts and generate economic benefits of commercial properties as a simple expansion of commercial units and parking lots" (Shin and Woo, 2024). Planners should work closely together to provide residents with comfort and pleasure by expanding walkable greenery and demanding safety by paving sidewalks. This will not only boost commercial property values but also maximize the economic benefits of walkability for real estate.

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The Effects on Inclusive Transit Environment

Inclusivity in transportation is crucial for creating a livable city, yet it faces several challenges. One major issue is the spatial polarization of income, where economically disadvantaged neighborhoods are often underserved by public transit. This lack of access "exacerbates inequality, limiting residents' ability to reach employment, education, and health services, which are essential for improving their quality of life" (Breau et al., 2023). In Montreal, for example, many low-income areas in the Northeast and East boroughs remain disconnected from the central business district due to insufficient transit options. This disconnection not only "hampers economic opportunities for residents but also perpetuates social exclusion" (Breau et al., 2023). Addressing these problems requires significant investments in public transit infrastructure that prioritize inclusivity. By improving transit accessibility, "it will provide residents with better access to job and services" (Breau et al., 2023). Additionally, inclusive transportation policies can "boost commercial property values and drive economic growth by making cities more attractive to residents and businesses alike" (Breau et al., 2023). Therefore, ensuring that transportation infrastructure projects are designed with inclusivity in mind is vital for achieving equitable and sustainable urban development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has provided a comprehensive exploration of the myriad factors essential to creating a livable city. By analyzing the critical elements of safety, green spaces, walkable environments, and inclusive transportation systems, it is highlighted the profound impacts on residents' well-being and urban development. These components not only enhance physical health but also contribute to mental well-being, social cohesion, and economic prosperity. Through strategic urban planning and ongoing collaboration among stakeholders,

cities can prioritize human-centric design, promote sustainable practices, and create environments where all residents can thrive. This study underscores the importance of holistic approaches to urban development and emphasizes the need for continued research and action to build cities that are equitable, resilient, and livable for all.

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