Our cities without green space

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Introduction

Urbanization involves change and good change generates sustainable development. Changes in terms of population increase, industrialization and increased settlement are inevitable. They use up a lot of space and consequently exert significant pressure on the limited available urban space, most especially the green space.

Aware of the fact that all components of nature are interrelated, there's a need to closely establish the relationship between the urban man and nature. This interdependence of all living things and their complex relation with the physical environment constitutes the scientific basis for conservation. The ultimate goal for conservation is to help man retain meaningful contact with the natural set-up from which he evolved and to which he remains linked.

Green space represents an area within the urban zone that is predominantly covered by vegetation. For purposes of distinction, all green space in urban areas is categorized into two; protected or unprotected green space.

Protected green space includes that vegetation that is formally gazzetted by government law as an environment protection zone. The sustainability of such a space is supported by a buffer policy that is aimed at eliminating resource encroachments. By implication, the conversion of such land into other forms of land use is highly restricted. Such green space appears as a forest reserve, golf courses, park or wetland.

Unprotected green space is composed of un-gazzetted vegetation within the urban area. It is represented by sports grounds, children's parks, flowerbeds, lawns, home gardens, private woodlots and herbal gardens. By implication therefore, unprotected green space is prone to a lot of human alteration and disturbance even with the simplest decision.

Values of green space

Wherever it exists, green space plays significant roles. These roles may be direct or indirect and they include;

-Temperature regulation
-Air quality maintenance
-Sustenance of ecological values
-Storm water retention and infiltration

-Social impacts
-Offers recreational opportunities
-Symbol of human/nature interaction
-Psychological satisfaction
-Etc

B_James confirms the green space social advantage that, " For families living in poverty, having a simple lawn with a few trees can play a major role in developing social ties and a sense of community, according to a study released recently by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The study shows that green space draws people outside and fosters important social contact that can lead to a more friendly, supportive environment. Because families living at the poverty level often rely on sharing resources in larger social networks, common space with trees and grass promote an informal form of social security and reduces the reliance on costly social services"

Despite all the above values, green spaces have continuously been threatened with land use conversion. It is not surprising to mention that some individuals still refer to such spaces, existing in our urban areas, as vacant land that must be put to meaningful use. This explains why in many cities of developing countries, green spaces are becoming increasingly scarce.

It is worth noting that the pressure exerted on these green spaces is a function of several demands. These include;

-Shortage of land for the growing industrial sector
-Search for better and bigger residential plots.
-Shortage of dumping sites for urban waste
-New projects, etc

Many urban communities have expressed the ultimate need to have ample space allocated to green space management. For instance, "Echoing the sentiments of many other respondents, one resident succinctly wrote, "Cities with more concrete than chlorophyll bother me." ***Marie Zhuikov.***

Planning and management of green spaces is deemed to be of paramount importance for all urban authorities. Of interest to the planning arena however is the extent to which the green spacing concept is gaining recognition. This in itself provides a basis for the way forward.

For purpose of promoting ecological green space identity and ensuing sustainable use of land, planners must consider the natural and human processes as being interdependent.

Management tools

Effective management of green space, wherever it is located, is still a puzzle. Some people think that management of such areas is the work of the local community while others believe this is work for the local authorities. To others this is viewed as a co-patternship venture.

Community stewardship

By popular assumption, communities are potential stakeholders in green space management. The spatial dispersion and interaction of these communities with the green space cultivates a sense of belonging and stewardship.

Working with the different communities provides a basis for analyzing what and how much each community can do in green spacing. Voluntarily, individuals participate in roles that match their abilities and competences, with the goal of fronting cultural/social obligations and interests.

Local authority

In the majority of cities, green space management especially for the protected type, is the responsibility of the urban councils. This is in response to central government policy regarding environment and planning. Urban councils have the powers to undertake large scale greening if they so wish but not to do otherwise.

Co-partnership

The principle of co-partnership in green space management is considered of great relevancy to the purpose. Joint co-operation between the local authority and the community can generate sustainable linkages.

Conclusion

Plenty of values are attached to green space. And this appears to be the cause for community's interest in green space establishment. The need to have adequate green space within walkable distance from residential points, together with many other community interests constitutes the basis for undertaking both qualitative and quantitative planning. It is true that the

modern geographical information systems can support the management process through the capture, manipulation, analysis, modeling and display of green space data.

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