

Using Public Space to Fill the Recreational Gap in City of Lucknow

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Abstract: *In today's world quality of life is the most crucial priority of people, but with the growing population and lack of recreational infrastructure has led to residents, home-centric during their free time, resulting in very less amount of recreational activities in their life. In today's world, there is a lack of interactive public spaces which can lead to a healthy environment. Recreational places generate economic development and drive environmental sustainability. This research is to investigate what are the problems in Lucknow public spaces to identify the deficiency and sufficiency and to identify significant issues which discouraged people from using it. The study comprises of types of recreation, place making guidelines, mapping of infrastructure facilities of Lucknow at ward level is done and identification of area with a suitable recreational space proposal on it.*

Keywords: Recreational infrastructure, recreation, public space, recreational activities

1. Introduction

Recreation represents any rational human activity enriching physical, intellectual and human benefits. Recreation activity is done for fun, pleasure being discretionary time often done for enjoyment and amusement. It is also important to provide recreation spaces with appropriate elements of infrastructure. Recreation facilities are incredibly important for a healthy, lively community. Recreational activities provide opportunities for residents to be active and to interact with other residents. A recreation facility's main purpose should be to provide opportunities for dynamic living and recreation in a safe, complete environment. Physical activity decreases the risk of disease, improve physical and mental wellbeing, lower risk of injuries and premature death. In today's world quality of life is the most crucial priority of people, but with the growing population and lack of recreational infrastructure has led to residents, home-centric during their free time, resulting in very less amount of recreational activities in their life. In urban lifestyles, it is not a matter of choice; it is a part of healthy leaving. In today's world, there is a lack of interactive public spaces which can lead to a healthy environment. Recreational places generate economic development and drive environmental sustainability.

A. Types of Recreation

1) *Active recreation:* Recreational activities that require the use of special facilities, courses, fields, or equipment that can provide communities with opportunities to participate in individual sports like golf and skiing and team sports like soccer and baseball. Active recreational opportunities have great benefits that include local economic development and improved physical, mental, and social health.

B. Passive Recreation

Recreational activities that do not require prepared facilities like sports fields or pavilions – can provide communities with opportunities like camping, trail running, and cross-

country skiing. Sites restored passive recreation provide ecosystem services, since ecosystem functioning is not impaired by passive recreational activities. Advantages of passive recreation are natural resource protection, restored ecosystem services, restored animal and plant habitat local economic development.

2. Recreation through public space

The moment one steps out of his or her private space such as their home, workspace etc. they are automatically in the public realm. Everyone in the world irrespective of age, background or status invariably use public spaces. It is, then, astounding that for many years these spaces have been taken for granted and very little attention has been directed towards their quality. However, some conscious effort had been made towards creating public spaces like gardens and squares in some cities.

It is almost impossible to write down the exact meaning of public space through one single definition. It is a social space that is generally accessible and open to people. In a broader sense, it is a space in which people can choose to be at, regardless of their ethnicity, age, ideologies and gender. It is a space that allows and facilitates the coexistence of different categories of people. Generally, when one thinks of public space, it is automatically assumed to be a city square, a park, a boulevard etc. This is where the question of what precisely a public space arises. Public space doesn't necessarily only mean a typical square or garden but can also be spaces of everyday use such as streets, sidewalks and subway platforms to areas such as a public library. It is a place that provides a platform to experience something new and introduces a feeling of discovery, adventure and reflection in people. It gives opportunities for the unfamiliar to mingle freely but at the same time have control over their privacy.

Public spaces provide a platform or area in which people can come in contact with the social world outside and experience the opportunity of being with, seeing and hearing others

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which instils stimulation. It is a space that gives people a chance to see something new, to feel differently, to learn and to be inspired. The public realm can be perceived as not only a place but also an experience. Public spaces play a vital role in the social development of people on various levels, from small neighborhood parks to large city-center squares.

3. Lucknow City

Lucknow is the capital city of Uttar Pradesh, and it has always been a multicultural city. Courtly manners, beautiful gardens, poetry, music, and fine cuisine patronized by the Persian-loving Shia Nawabs of the city are well known amongst Indians and students of South Asian culture and history. Lucknow is popularly known as the *City of Nawabs*. It is also known as the *Golden City of the East*, *Shiraz-i-Hind* and the *Constantinople of India*.

Source:(Abo)



Figure 1: Lucknow District map

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6b/Lucknow_District_map.PNG

Lucknow Metropolis lies between the coordinates of 26o 30' N to 27o 10' N latitudes and 80o30' E to 81o13' E longitudes. Lucknow is situated in Gangetic Plain and spreads on the banks of the river Gomati, a left-bank tributary of river Ganga. It enjoys a central position in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It is bounded on the north by Sitapur, on the southeast by the Rae Bareilly, on the northeast by Barabanki, on the northwest by Hardoi and the southwest by Unnao. The height of Lucknow city above mean sea level is 123 meters. The total land area of Lucknow city is 310 Sq. Km. Lucknow has got an extensive network of roads and railways, and it has grown all around in a radius of 25 Km.

According to the 2011 census Lucknow district has a population of 4,588,455. It has a population density of 1,815 inhabitants per square kilometer (4,700/sq. mi). The growth rate over the decade 2001-2011 was 25.79%. It has a sex ratio of 906 females for every 1000 males and a literacy rate of 79.33%.

a) Mapping of recreational infrastructure of Lucknow

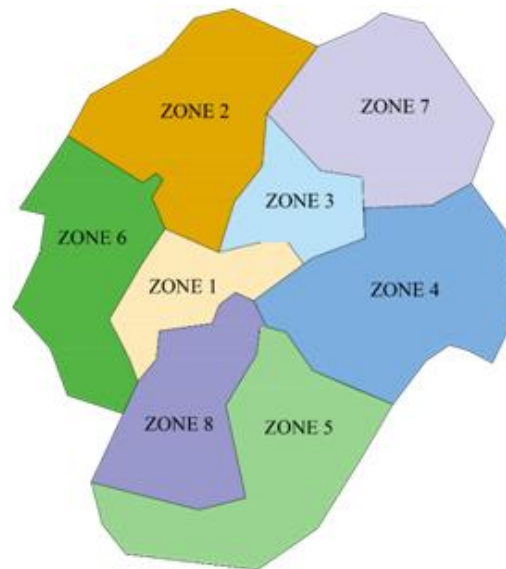


Figure 2: Lucknow Zone map

Source: Author

Lucknow city is divided into *eight zones* and zones consist of several wards in which recreational infrastructure facilities are present. After mapping, it will come out which zone needs a facility first. The analysis has been done on comparison with URDPFI guidelines based on population and according to that in which areas facilities are lacking and need to be taken care of.

1) ZONE 1

This zone consists of 14 wards with a total population of 390306

AMBITES												
ZONE	WARD	STADIUM	SPORT COMPLEX	MALL	PARK	PLAYGROUND	MONUMENT	WATER PARKS	MARKET PLACE	CONVENTION CENTRE	MUSEUM	TOTAL
ZONE 1	W-21	-	-	1	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	8
	W-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	0
	W-27	-	1	-	2	3	1	-	-	-	-	6
	W-33	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	4
	W-42	-	-	3	-	-	3	-	2	-	-	8
	W-44	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	3
	W-55	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
	W-56	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	3
	W-59	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	W-64	1	-	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	5
	W-84	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
	W-88	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	W-92	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	W-99	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
W-102	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	
W-102	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	
TOTAL	1	1	5	5	13	13	7	0	3	0	0	43

Figure 3: Number of wards in Zone 1 with recreational facilities

Source: Author

- W-24,88 does not have a single recreational facility
- W-84,92,99,102 have very less facilities.

2) ZONE 2

This zone consists of 12 wards with a total population of 315000

AMBITES												
ZONE	WARD	STADIUM	SPORT COMPLEX	MALL	PARK	PLAYGROUND	MONUMENT	WATER PARKS	MARKET PLACE	CONVENTION CENTRE	MUSEUM	TOTAL
ZONE 2	W-01	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
	W-10	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
	W-18	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	5
	W-34	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
	W-46	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
	W-70	-	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	-	-	25
	W-71	-	-	-	-	21	-	-	-	-	-	21
	W-74	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	W-81	1	-	-	-	21	-	-	-	-	-	22
	W-83	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
	W-104	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	W-105	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	-	-	-	5
TOTAL	3	0	0	2	79	0	0	0	0	0	0	80

Figure 4: Number of wards in Zone 2 with recreational facilities

Source: Author

- W-74,104 does not have a single recreational facility.
- W-10,18,34 have very less facilities.

- 1 Museum
- 14 Shopping centres
- 3 Water parks
- 4 Market places

Zone 6

Total population of zone – 486882

Facilities at district level (Population between 100000-500000) which are lacking:

- District centre
- District Park
- Recreational club

Facilities at community level (Population between 10000-100000) which are lacking:

- Community recreation club
- Socio cultural activities centre

Facilities at neighbourhood level (Population of 10000) which are lacking:

- Service market
- Neighbourhood park

Facilities at housing level (Population of 5000) which are lacking:

- Housing area park and playground

C. Recommendations

- Zone 7 has at par number of facilities followed by zone 4 and 8.
- Zone 2 and 3 have adequate number of facilities.
- Zone 1,5 and 6 have very less recreational facilities as compared to its population and number of wards.
- Zone 6 should be taken care of and requires most attention.
- In zone 6, 8 wards have no recreational facilities and 6 wards have very a smaller number of recreational facilities.
- Being the biggest in number of wards, area and population it is severely lacking recreational facilities at housing, neighborhood, community and at district level.
- As seen the by the chart most of the ward at community level are lacking with single facility and care has to be taken of that particular ward and of that particular zone.

D. Identification of area and site:

Since in identification in area where recreational facility is to be provided is not present in zone 6, we have to look at its nearby location where there is a proposal or if there is a structure that can be reused.

Rifa-E-Aam located in zone 1, at Qaiserbagh in Lucknow, is a historical monument of immense value. This beautifully designed building was got constructed in 1883, by the elites of colonial Lucknow for housing the Rifa e Aam Club. The club itself was established much earlier in 1860, and served as a platform for the thinkers and intellectuals of Lucknow.

It has city station near it with good connectivity of roads around the site.

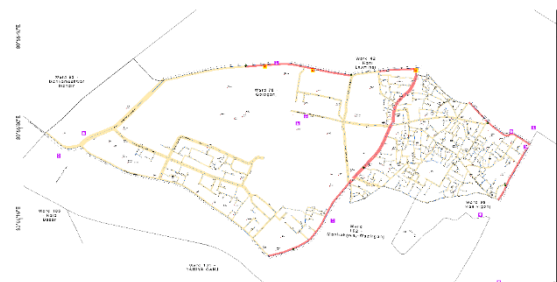


Figure 10: Ward 78 location of Rifa-e-Aam club
Source: author

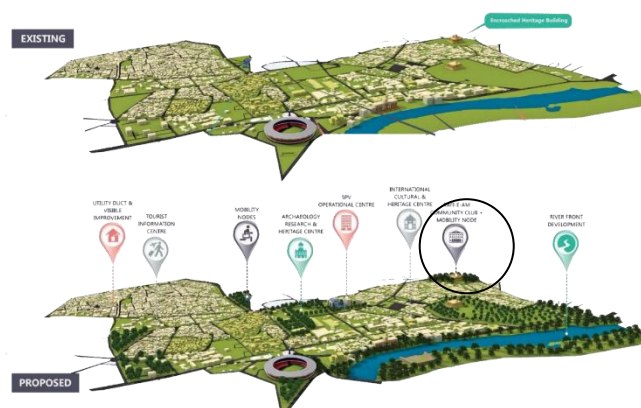


Figure 11: Map showing Rifa-E-Aam club
Source: http://smartcities.gov.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/SCP_Lucknow.pdf

Lucknow city is known as the city of Nawabs and it has various numbers of ancient monuments and places that are lying in a very bad condition, one of them is Rifa-E-Aam club that has to be rejuvenated under Smruddh yojna of smart cities mission proposal. *It will be developed as recreational hub that can fulfill all requirements and also helps in improvement of health and for healthy living.*

E. About site:



Figure 11: Rifa-E-Aam club
Source - Author

1) Historical association:

Rifa-e-Aam in Persian literally stands for *Welfare* (Rifa) of the *Public* (Aam). One of the earliest public buildings in Lucknow, the structure is most significant for being the cultural and political hub for Indians in Colonial Lucknow. The magnificent, Rifa-e-Aam club was constructed by *royal Kings and Nawabs of Awadh in 1860*, who intended it to be a center of royalty's literary life in the region. At that time, under British rule, Indians were not allowed to take membership in the *United services club, Chattar Manzil*. So royal families conceived the idea of setting up their own club, and this is how Rifa-e-Aam was born.

This club has proudly witnesses the famous session of the Progressive Writers Association organised by the writers in 1936 and the session was presided by the great writers like Saadat Hasan Manto, Munshi Premchand and many more. In 1940s-1960s, post the independence of India, the Club remained to be the hub for artists, writers, poets and performers who collected here and rehearsed and performed. The Club continued its legacy of being the cultural centre for a long time, hosting plays, mushairas and kavi sammelans well into the 60s. Slowly the members of the Club started to disperse and the Club disintegrated. By the 1970s, Club had dissolved and the structure was left abandoned, falling prey to anti-social elements and activities.

In 1970s-1980s, Rifa-e-Aam captured the fancy of a few politicians from time to time, when once an MLA had proposed a *Nari Samiti*, under which a *Natya Kala Kendra* was also proposed. In 1990s *Lucknow Development Authority* intervened on the site to distribute plots which was opposed by the members of the Royal family and stay order was imposed on the site. In 2000s, eventually the stay order was lifted by the court, but since then the structure has been standing *neglected and unprotected* by the Government and all other concerned authorities.

2) Why Rifa-E-Aam club:

The club begin the emblem of defiance as it was established for the use of common Indians during British time. Integrating the spirit of the building existence with literary activities would put the building to its best use. Today it is hard to walk past the premises, which is the birth place of Progressive Writers Association. It is located in the Qaiserbagh area which lacks in any recreational spaces or gathering space of any sort for the major residential area surrounding it. It gives scope for different cultures and communities to come together and celebrate. Like culture and art, recreation, leisure and sports activities play an important role in communities. Their many benefits include improving the health and well-being of individuals, contributing to the empowerment of individuals, and promoting the development of inclusive communities.

4. Conclusion

The Rifa-e-aam club was once stately building a buzz with political and cultural activity. It hosted eminent leaders and writers from undivided India and became a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity in the political sphere. Today the Rifa-e-Aam club is on the verge of collapse. It is now a garbage dump and rag pickers delight. The building is deteriorating,

and the structure has developed ever-widening cracks. Its poor condition has even led some homeless people to occupy the interiors. The area surrounding the club is used as parking for buses. The building has not been well maintained in the decades. The historic site does not appear on the radar of municipal corporation .and other government agency. *The program intends to rejuvenate the club as the 'recreational hub' holding cultural, literacy events and to entertain all kinds of age group through its design interventions and also it will help's in generating local employment and revenue that eventually boosts-up our economy.*

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Author Profile



Syed Ejaz Ahmad has done his B.Arch. degree from 'Integral university', Lucknow in 2018 and currently pursuing M. Arch degree from Faculty of Architecture & Planning, Lucknow Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University Lucknow, India. From last one-year author is busy in completing his research project on the topic 'Using Public space to fill the recreational gap in city of Lucknow'. The main aim of his thesis is 'Rejuvenation of 'Rifa-E-Aam club at Lucknow.