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Defensible space along Main Street in Johannesburg

The area I live in

The area I live in is along a transition zone. The urban fabric changes from stand-alone housing to social housing to semi industrial building then to industrial and then finally changes to commercial buildings into the cbd. This transitional progression happens within 8 city blocks along my journey to the closest taxi rank that is 15 minutes away from where I live.

Safe spaces

I feel the safest when I am close to the taxi rank, this includes both during the day and at night just before most businesses close. The architecture around the taxi rank comprises of dense semi high raised housing and is predominantly commercial and retail street level. The safety factor is contributed by the activity that occur in these spaces when there is foot traffic. The use of the area makes it vibrant as many people would move around the spaces at different times of the day commuting from one place to the other. Formal and informal trading situated around the transport node give the users a sense of ownership and thus promotes the principle of territoriality.

Unsafe Spaces

The area that I feel the least safe along this spine on Main road is in space where on side of the sidewalk there is a building with a high wall and bad paving conditions and opposite it is a large open tract with overgrown grasses and unpruned trees. These area proves to be become access and escape routes for offenders. This open piece of land shares a boundary with a local bar. A lot of times there would be broken glass bottles around the space and traces of blood on the side walk. The perception of being unsafe is given off and this becomes negative for the image and aesthetic of the environment.

Defensible Spaces applied to Housing project in Lorentzville

My design addresses the concept of defensible spaces by implementing firstly urban design principles to engage the public with the building from a greater context. These are to increase visibility at night by introducing good lighting and minimizing obstructions that impair visibility adapted from the principles of surverylance and visibility (7); by designing comfortable walkable sidewalks with no visual obstructions. At the entrance of my building allow for pedestrians and vehicles to pass under through the building, this gives the opportunities for surveillance over the entrance and gives the sense that of 'protective eye or eyes on the street'. I chose to strategically place retail spaces along the edge of the building to allow for a vibrant dynamic foot traffic, this fosters the fact stated by Jacobs that a deserted street is apt to be unsafe. By activating this space with street furniture and landscaping the streets can be comfortable to interact with. The orientation of my building allows for views around the open spaces. My open spaces have seating and recreational facilities that facilitate a social interaction and allows for the people to develop a sense of community identity.

I mix uses of the building to create a diversity of user that populate the site at different zones and are connected by common relief spaces through walk ways .A clear distinction of public and private space is created through thresholds that change from retail to residential. The ground treatment can be distinct in the in the private spaces to those in the public space. Residential is the primary use this would stimulate the development of shopping facilities...(156,1961) and is associated with light industrial facilities that cater to the food processing that is fed by the urban gardens and commercial use these are tied together by a pockets of landscaping and agriculture and are activated by shaded seating facilities.

Refernces

Jacobs, Jane 1961: The Death and Life of Great American Cities, New York. Vintage

CPTED Overview : http://www.cpted.co.za/cpted_summary.pdf

Jacobs, Jane 1961: The Death and Life of Great American Cities, New York. Vintage