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Green Infrastructure and its Roles in Enhancing Quality of Life

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Abstract

This study undertaken to evaluate the respondents' level of awareness towards green infrastructure (GI) component in Labuan housing area with objectives; (i) to analyze the existence of GI attributes in the study area and (ii) to examine the public perspectives on these attributes. The questionnaire was distributed to the 386 respondents in housing area (1800 meter radius from the Botanical Garden). The findings implicate that Labuan Botanical Garden which the most prominent GI in the vicinity, not only contributes to the enhancement of visual quality to the housing area but also provides recreational and social interaction to the house residents.

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Keywords : Green Infrastructure; environmental attributes; visual quality attributes; Botanical Garden

1. Introduction

According to Mell (2008), GI is a vital indicator for environmental consideration that existed since 19th Century in United States. GI serves 4 major benefits to the community in term of social, health, environment and economic (Benedict and McMahon 2002; Mansor et al., 2010). All the benefits are mitigating the potential impacts of existing and future development and growth as well as to offer valuables services to the surrounding community. Recently, most of the developments projects have

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promote the trend of eco-friendly lifestyle to preserve their environment. It comprises varieties of goods and services, which engaged the surrounding area with minimum or no harm to the environment (Morgan, 2009). In the other words, eco-friendly are activities that provide a positive impact to our environment and future generation. Nowadays, people are engaged with this eco-friendly term because they are very concerned about their health from time to time (Defra, 2011). This has been proven by Islam (2008), where public are more aware about their environment as they always find out the best way to improve the condition of their environment. In relation to that concept, GI acts as one of the eco-friendly function towards sustainable development. Identically, Benedict and McMahon (2002) stressed that GI networks consist of hubs and links. Hubs in this study refer to the main place for the human and ecosystem. While, link refers to the connection from one hub to another. The hub and the link have their own functions based on the needs, place and situation. The hubs in this study will be the housing area and Botanical Garden. All GI elements are the link to the hubs.

In the housing sector, GI becomes an attraction for the house buyers to buy or invest in the housing property because nowadays public are aware of their environment on deciding to buy a new house. As a proof, Jim (2004) explained that GI or green spaces contributes to the sustainability of the cities that preferred by the community. At the same time, green space has presented the characteristics of public local goods and also generates externalities on economic analysis point of view (Chourmet et al., 2008). The aim of this paper is to find out the awareness of public towards their GI elements in their surrounding environment. Based on the aim, two main objectives have been determined for this study; to analyze the existence of GI in the study area and to examine the public perspectives on GI attributes.

2. Green infrastructure in Malaysia

Kuala Lumpur has enhances the GI components in its planning and enforcement to maintain the environment, as well as visual quality of the city. In order to possess the world-class living environment, the metropolitan city of Kuala Lumpur offers an adequate quality of housing with first class accessibility and facilities surrounded by healthy and safe environment (CHKL, 2003; Ghani and Izwar, 2009). Since 1984, The Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan formulated general policies related to landscape, townscape and conservation, which were generally appropriate (CHKL, 2003) for future development. Kuala Lumpur is aiming towards being a sustainable city, which creates a balance between physical, economic, social and environmental development. On top of that, Putrajaya, which is another new city in Malaysia that is also known as a new township in Malaysia, has emphasized on the green city concept in their previous, current and future legislation and policies. Generally, the housing area in Putrajaya provides pocket parks for visual and environmental purposes. Besides, buffer zone like shrubs can be found in most of the housing area in Putrajaya to enhance neighborhood concept. To make it livable, the housing area offers an adequate open space, well-planned, well-maintained, well-serviced and well-connected facilities (Qureshi and Ho, 2011). It creates nice view and at the same time preserving the environment. Indirectly, it might seek to strike a balance between the well-planned city and community lifestyle.

3. The main green infrastructure element in this study (Botanical Garden)

A Botanical Garden serves general functions such as a recreational area for the community, research center and plant arboretums for the researchers. The main function is providing a variety of information, which concern on the form, habitat, quality of life and general biological as well as, ecological relationship of the vegetation in the area. Plants and man has a special relation and prominent by concentration to the horticultural and economic growth of the subject (Macdougall, 1990). A Botanical Garden should be located within the reasonable walking distance, easy and safe accessible. It might be a

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