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Re-development of Urban Park, Bagh-E-Bahu, Jammu (J&K) By Using Energy Efficient Landscape Techniques

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Abstract

Globally efforts are being made to preserve the innate environment mainly concerned with large biomes and relatively unscathed ecosystems or with individual fauna or floral species which are either rare or threatened with extermination. It is imperative to mention here that, much less interest is being shown to that type of environment or nature which is close to where people reside and work, to micro level green areas in cities that are benefitting the people. The main concern of this research paper is to address the significance of urban nature for denizens' well being and for the sustainability of the town or city they inhabit. The concept of energy efficient landscapes is still in early stages in India. This research involves use of energy efficient techniques in landscapes so that the community itself can take care of the green without putting pressure on the Government for its maintenance. Jammu is the largest city in the Jammu Division and the winter capital of Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir. It is situated on the banks of Tawi river. The city spreads around the Tawi river with the old city overlooking it from the north (right bank) while the new neighborhoods spread around the southern side (left bank) of river. As of 2011 India census, the population of Jammu city within jurisdiction of Jammu Municipal Corporation was 503,690 and the population of Jammu urban agglomeration (including adjacent urban areas) was 951,373. **Bagh-E-Bahu** “Urban park” is located on the banks of Tawi river, is a Mughal-age garden situated right in the heart of the city and also helps in changing the microclimate of the adjoining areas. It is also next to historical complex Bahu Fort and principally becomes a part of it as a whole. This research deals with the redevelopment of the existing bagh which lacks many fundamentals either in the form of planning or poorly maintained infrastructure. Results confirm that the experience of nature in urban surroundings is source of optimistic feelings and valuable services, which fulfill important irrelevant and non-consumptive human needs.

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1. Introduction

To understand the value of public city parks it is necessary to have a clear understanding of what constitutes an urban park. While to define a park is a misleadingly complex endeavor, it is paramount for the park users, the planners, and the managers of these spaces. Spring gate (2008) explained, “as a practical matter, there is no standard, widely accepted definition of a park.” Instead of a uniform system of rules, what constitutes a park has evolved over time as a reflection of societal and cultural changes. The Council of Europe describes parks and open spaces as a public living room for the locality (European Urban Charter, art. 4 sec. 3). This definition illustrates the objectives of an urban park: to be the central meeting place for activities outside of work and home. The purpose of the park is to be a space that encourages interaction, discussion, relaxation and enjoyment of the surroundings. Park spaces that are public, are areas where any person may socialize with, converse with, or simply be near another individual whether a friend or stranger.

1.1 Working Definition

Urban, by definition, is pertaining to a city, and a park is land set aside for recreation. The public aspect is most clearly described as an area that is open and accessible to all members of the public in a society, in principle though not necessarily in practice. Parks are a public good that provide access and benefits to all users. Narrowing a park’s definition to four specific criteria helps one to understand the space. A park is publicly open and accessible, has identifiable boundaries, contributes to the aesthetic and natural elements of the community, and provides a space for community gathering and interaction.

“Open and accessible” means that people are free to come and go and to use that space however they see fit: passive or active recreation, meeting friends, sleeping, eating, rallying, dancing, etc. The use of a public space is not conditioned upon membership in a particular group like a political party or religious community. Public parks, in theory, do not discriminate based on economic status, race, income, education, sex or age. The accessibility includes both physical access limitations as well as mental: all of which do not exist in a truly public *public* space. The openness and accessibility is a theory of best practice, since a park without benches or without safe playground equipment does not provide full accessibility or openness. A park has identifiable boundaries. Whether the park stands alone or in connection with a greenway or environmental system, the park is a distinguishable space that accommodates a variety of public uses. The parks boundaries indicate where the public and private spaces meet and in what space the park’s activities take place. Parks with trees, lawns, bushes, flowers, and natural elements contribute to the aesthetics of a community. They allow users an opportunity to connect with nature and be among green elements. As Spring gate (2008) states “parks develop or preserve natural beauty” (p. 5). The outdoor park venue provides an opportunity to share ideas, and the space facilitates a greater sense of community. Where intimacies occur such as a wave or smile, or even conversation; the social life of the city is strong. When residents feel a part of their community; there is a natural sense of ownership and investment in its wellbeing. Places to sit and relax such as walls, benches, or landscaping encourage these important relationships.

1.2 A Park’s Purpose

When identifying the fundamentals of a city, key features come to mind: businesses, shopping and dining spots, infrastructure, public services and parks. But why use inexpensively valuable urban land as a park? What is the purpose of having an urban park when the land could instead be a more lucrative development, and allow residents to retreat to the outer edges of the urban core to enjoy the natural environment? While preserving the natural state of the environment with reduced sprawl should be a priority; there is considerable value in utilizing central urban space as a park.

Apparent benefits of the urban park are as an escape or retreat from the congestion and noise of the city as well as a place to touch the natural environment amidst a tangle of concrete and brick. Yet the question remains as to why provide public park areas that are vulnerable to vandalism, abuse or neglect in lieu of private green areas. The answer is in the benefits derived from the shared communal space of public parks. Thompson and Travlou (2007) advise that “public spaces provide sites for the many types of person-to person interaction that constitutes public life. But, as such spaces disappear or become less open, so too do the opportunities to engage in these activities”. Urban parks connect people. And these interactions and shared spaces are important for strong community

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