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Pocket Park as an Intermediate Base in an Urban Area

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**This topical studies is submitted in partial fulfilment of the Bachelor of Landscape
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**DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
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Abstract

In urban planning, a public open space is described as another 'spatial structure' that forms the image of a town. Although the implementation of these 'outdoor rooms' differ; whereas it can be a neighbourhood park, a tot lot or a pocket park, depends to the site physical appearance, these spaces serves similar essential function, to provide public with a place for relaxation.

Current development indicates that demands for such spaces in an urban setting increases whereby children, adults, elderly people, different ethnic groups and culture, men and women; all experience and use these spaces in different and distinct ways, as well as similar ways.

Notable for its' reduced size manner, pocket park; another components of an urban space, is a tiny green space that can be found in an unexpected place. Despite for its location, the park manage to facilitate the public to engaged in conversation, provide an area for people; whom usually fragmented with an hour lunch break, to relax themselves while observing activities happens around them, and also as an unpredicted meeting place between friends. These scenarios portray the effectiveness of a pocket park that influences the improvement of an urban setting together with other social and physical development.

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Chapter 1

Research Background

CHAPTER 1

1.0 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

In urban development, relationship between people and spaces; two different characters in built environment, improved to be another community needs in daily life. Despite of human basic needs for food, clothes, and shelter, those demands essentially extended to assured comfort for any individuals.

In this day and age, urban dweller's demand for public open space is a significant setting that took place on the street and main square of a capital city (Marcus and Francis, 1997). Acknowledged by the community as part of urban built – up constituent or components, public open spaces apparently illustrate the characters and quality of an urban life.

Being describes as another component of urban open spaces, the term 'pocket park' is defined as an isolated group or area of gardens, sitting and play areas and as land that would be owned, used and controlled by the neighborhood (Linn, 1968). Physically appeared as 'size does matter' kind of park, such space is identified to serve purposes as for examples to provide seating plazas for the elderly, a primarily playground, green spaces with its' engineered function is to soften the hard corners of a building and even as an aesthetic green spot in a dense neighborhood.

In an urban context, utilized pocket park is gained through several design application that ensure the public cherishes the proposed area. It's a pity to have an eyesore 'backdrop' in a well-developed neighborhood. Professionals in built environment community such as the landscape architects and park designers are basically involved in organizing these spaces in order to provide different human uses and enjoyment of the landscape.

1.2 Goal

The aim of the chosen subject is primarily to understand the effectiveness of a pocket park on how the area essentially manipulate the public behavior to appreciate its' existence in a dense environment of an urban atmosphere.

1.3 Objectives

To attain the above intention of understanding the existence of a pocket park in an urban area, derived objectives include:

- To perform background studies on the historical aspect on how does the pocket park been implemented in built environment.
- To study the community awareness and understanding on functions of a pocket park as an intermediate base in built up neighborhood.
- To identify the public amenities in terms of street furniture and facility for the needs of urban community in a pocket park.

1.4 Problem Statement

Technically, professionals in environmental design field encounter problems when it comes to develop a certain area. Those problems varies from a to z, with each different situation of difficulty. A landscape architect for example, is responsible to overcome those problems with suitable solutions that offer creativity in design process.

Pocket park can be an interesting area to explore, however at certain stage; it did not went well as it should be. Occurred problems need to be overcome to retain public satisfaction over the facility. Through non – structured observation, indicates that problems pertaining to pocket park involve:

- Site selection

A poor site selection by professionals may result negative effect to the area. Error during site selection is crucial because a park can serve a great variety of uses only if it is located where its potential users are concentrated (Carolyn Francis, 1997).

- Respond to site context

Exceptional outdoor design always relate to the site context whereas it portrays the relation between proposed spaces and the neighborhood framework.

- Safety

Safety aspect covers both the public community and the street furniture that facilitate the park. In detail, design process requires a thorough study on public safety in an open area.

1.5 Methodology

In Oxford, Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1998, the term 'methodology' was described as a set of methods used in a particular area of activity. Particularly defined as a way of doing something, research method involves different stages that influence the relevance of composed data in the study. Such methodical approach eventually helps to elaborate more on those acquired data for better understanding. On behalf of the researcher, research methods assist to define what the researcher want to know, the nature of the object being studied and type of results desired (Asiah, 2001).

According to Ziesel, there are four kinds of research approach, which is diagnostic, descriptive, theoretical and action – based (Asiah, 2001). These approaches help to define raw data materials as related information in the research in order to ensure fruitful results. Discussed by Asiah, a specific research may involve both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to understand the research reliability and validity (2001).

In particular, for the purpose of this research, the methods used are qualitative in nature, whereby it focuses on description, understanding and interpretation of the attained data. Qualitative methods involve field methods that emphasize on naturalistic, non-laboratory settings and the use of the researcher as the instrument of data collection. It encourages the researcher to view the research situation from the standpoint of the people who are being studied (Asiah, 2001, p. 162; Low, 1987, p. 282).

1.5.1 Literature Review

Categorized as a secondary source, 'literature review' contains evaluation concerning to any relevant aspects that relate to a particular discussed subject. Through literature review or books pertaining to pocket park planning, information regarding to the subject may be obtained in diverse form of input, such as in writings, photos or even graphs.

1.5.2 Case Study

For better understanding, case study is a necessity during performing a research. The approach is another requirement in research where it helps to define the problem statement in physical form.

In a case study, investigators make an intensive study of a limited number of representative cases. A case study is narrower in scope but more exhaustive and more qualitative in nature than a survey (Asiah, 2001, p.152).

Selected samples of case study comprises of two different areas, which is Bintang Square located at pedestrian mall of Bintang Walk, Jalan Bukit Bintang and newly developed Anjung Bagan Park in Seberang Perai, Penang.

1.5.3 Data Collection

Interested data collecting medium involves a multi-method approach. Those implemented methods in the research consist of:

- Observation and site's photograph

According to Van Dallen, observations can be categorized into controlled or uncontrolled, scheduled or unscheduled, visible or concealed, participant or non – participant (Asiah, 2001, p. 167).

Explained by Asiah, who points to Van Dallen research, photography provides an accurate record of the setting that allows the incident to be studied repeatedly by the researcher (2001, p. 170). Taken photos consist of elements that were defined as attributes that influence the site physical appearance.

- Plan analysis

Critical review on design layout of the case study area provides the understanding of the site context, location and human behavioral pattern.

- Interview

Through an unstructured interview, one can gain an insight into the character and intensity of a respondent's attitudes, motives, feelings and beliefs and can detect underlying motivations and acknowledgments attitudes (Asiah, 2001, p. 166; Van Dallen, 1979, pp. 159-160).

1.5.4 Data Analysis

Collection of data; the raw materials of the research, gained from methods advanced earlier, will be analyzed and thoroughly studied. The output of the processed information may results several positive impacts on pocket space objectives for future development.

1.6 Conclusion

In particular; defined earlier by Linn as an isolated group or area of gardens controlled by the neighborhood, pocket park is been acknowledged by the public as another essential needs in built environment. Categorized as part of public open spaces, the 'green' area seeks for people's interest and positive reception in an urban setting.

To figure out its survival in such challenging world, research; supported with relevant issues pertaining to pocket park such as the site selection, its respond to site context and safety, were carried out with the intention of to understand the interpretation of its elementary function as another place where people; especially in an urban neighborhood, intend to stop by.

Analyzed data obtained from each correlated methods, later on offers researcher with comprehensible input on how does these 'pocket-sized' park contributes in urban development.

Chapter 2

Research Topic

CHAPTER 2

2.0 RESEARCH TOPIC

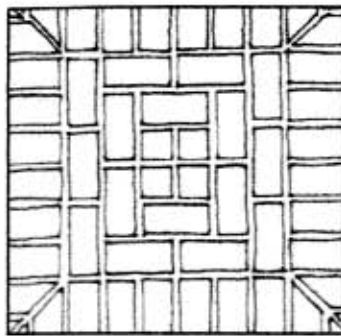
2.1 Introduction

Literature review involves an evaluation concerning to pocket park's planning, its physical appearance based on its location, size, involved facilities and other related information that can be obtained from reliable secondary sources regarding to the park's expansion. Attained data from any possible form of writings such as books, journals, magazines or brochures helps to assist researcher to understand the importance of pocket parks in urban settings.

2.1.1 The 'Green' Spot

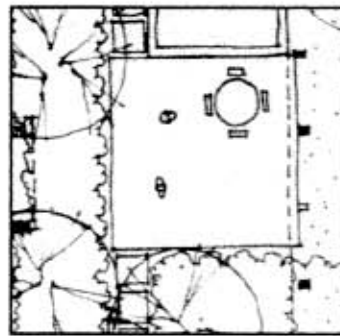
Being acknowledged as promisingly developed nation among members of ASEAN countries, occupied domestic developments in Malaysia need to be equal between the green spaces and built – up vicinity. To be recognized as Garden Nation by the year 2005; as part of government's vision of 2020, landscape improvement needs to be utilized as a whole, which literally concentrate in terms of planning, design process, site implementation and maintenance (Ismail Ngah, 1997). This 'greening' process includes those open spaces and parks that vary from neighbourhood park, urban plazas, roadside and even pocket park.

In particular, landscape improvement covers a wide range of contexts and scales. Illustrated by Dines and Brown, the work may include greenway or landscape planning over vast landscapes, institutional master planning, arboretum planning, urban design, housing, recreation or public garden design (2001).



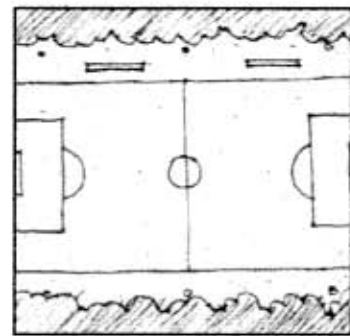
Detail scale (1m x 1m)

- Resident garden, pocket park



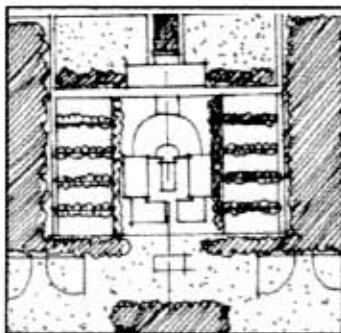
Spatial scale (10m x 10m)

- Pocket park, subdivision



Place scale (100m x 100m)

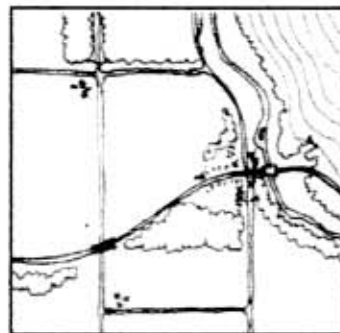
- Community park, campus



Neighbourhood scale

(1km x 1km)

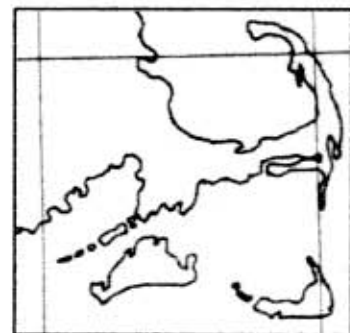
- Campus, business park



Community scale

(10km x 10km)

- District planning



Regional scale

(100km x 100km)

- Community planning

Figure 2.1 Typical primary scales for specific projects depend on design objectives and project size (Dines and Brown, 2001).

2.1.2 Definition of Pocket Park

Earlier in chapter one, the term 'pocket park' was briefly described as an isolated group or area of gardens that manage to serve several purposes, which influences the community growth that may results positive impacts to public individuals. According to Til, pocket parks help to inspire the community and the existence of green spaces assist the public to breath better (1994). The interrelated appearance of these limited sizes of parks within urban neighbourhood benefits participant of all level in stretch of recreation and leisure purposes.

To fulfil those needs, proficient design hierarchy of pocket park with the intention of to certify public amusement help to provide outdoors experiences in today's urban communities. These 'compartment' spaces functionally facilitate to soften those 'concrete' environments, create an environmental friendly atmosphere and constantly balancing the urban social and physical appearance.

Professionals need to be aware of the overwhelming desire for an area of green space by the local residents. Physical surrounding of these green spot in an urban area commonly enhanced by the broad categories of function and aesthetic values. However, those design implementation need to be understand thoroughly so that the design suits the people's desire. Albert J. Rutledge suggested that consideration of human habits as they might be accommodated in design is not presently common practice as that the human habits are still too frequently ignored in park planning (1981, p. 1).

‘Surely we cannot make good use of the earth unless we have some notion as to what is good and what is useful, what is aimless change and what is goal directed transformation.’

- Lewis Mumford, 1981 -

In detail, with the aim of to ensure the success of a pocket park, the ability to understand human behaviour is the main support in built environment. Failure to do so may results distortion to existing urban fabric. Quoted by Clare Cooper Marcus and Carolyn Francis that whatever their size or design, the difficulty of getting funds for programmes or maintenance after they are built has resulted many pocket park or minipark falling into decay or disuse (1997, p. 150).

Thus, it is advisable for designers to review the fate of such area in the city in order to learn from the experiences so that the same mistakes is not been repeated in future time.

2.1.3 Pocket Park in the Western Countries

Pocket park is relatively differing in terms of the urban context. Quoted by Clare Cooper Marcus and Nanine Hilliard Greene, in big cities of New York and Philadelphia, a pocket park may be only twenty feet wide. In Texas, one pocket park turned out to be three acres. But usually they are one to three lots in size (1997, p. 150). Valued as another ‘pillar’ that supports urban development, these tiny, small ‘green dot’ is frequently featured in various design form and function that relates to the site context. Essentially described as a scaled down version of neighbourhood

park, in particular, this mini park act as an intermediate base in a hectic surrounding of an urban area.

In general, pocket park in mid-western and western U.S. cities are larger than those on the East Coast simply because the lots are larger in less dense cities (Marcus and Greene, 1997).

Usual design implementation that influences those physical characters to be differ from each other includes (a) planting or trees; (b) a place for adults to sit; (c) a place for children to play; (d) identifying logos; a mural, a colour scheme; (e) a basketball net; and (f) areas that is large enough to play group games. These facilities are designated as a public easement for diverse community individuals to appreciate its existence in a concentrated built-up neighbourhood.

Intense growth of an urban settlement, directs the community pocket park to be sited within a four – block radius that allow users to walk to it without crossing a major street (Marcus and Greene, 1997). Primary studies performed concerning to human circulation pattern, intend to understand and identify sufficient areas where potential users are concentrated. Apparently, implemented park that serve a specific user group; for example, the preschoolers, should be located only where there is a demonstrated need for it (Carolyn Francis, 1997). Those implicated setting needs to be considered at some stage in design process with the aim of to facilitate the community demands for an attractive and functional pocket park. A park built just to fill a vacant lot is a waste of public and private fund (Carolyn Francis, 1997, p. 151). Whilst maintaining the existing characters of the area as part of urban enhancement, the park do needs an active involvement of the public to keep it obtainable as a transitional gap in a town development.

2.1.4 Pocket Park's Setting

Positioned directly on the street so that people are attracted to look in and enter, urban pocket park are essentially divided into three basic locations concerning of corner lots, mid – block lots, and through – the – block lots (Marcus and Greene, 1997).

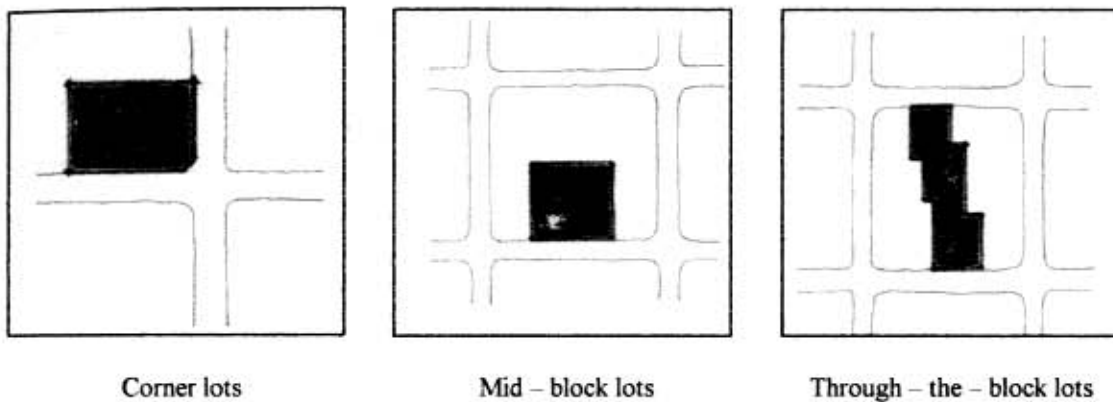


Figure 2.2 Three typical locations of pocket park (Marcus and Greene, 1997).

To enable efficient use of its location, corner lots should capitalize on its exposure to passer-by on two of its four sides by providing (a) a number of access points, describes as pathway allowing the park to be used as a shortcut across the corner; (b) a fence or boundary design that allows controlled access and doubles as a bench; facilities for passer-by to sit and rest facing the street; and (c) planting that provides green experience for the public. These characters help to improve the site physical form and encourage the public community to utilize the corner.

A mid – block lots particularly designed to provide secure environment to the users whereas the space may be quieter if it is intended for older people, more protected from the wind, and for small children, the area is protected from the traffic.