ITJ | The International Tax Journal

The role of urban design in city development: A sociological approach

Maiza Hadjer [1], and **Yasmina Beghriche** [2]

[1] Laboratoire Société de la ville, Abdelhamid Mehri University – Constantine 2, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Algeria 25000
[2] Laboratoire Société de la ville, Abdelhamid Mehri University – Constantine 2, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Algeria 25000
Correspondence: maizahadjer90@gmail.com

Abstract---This article aims to analyze the role of urban design in the development of cities through a sociological approach that highlights how urban planning can contribute to building balanced urban spaces both physically and socially. The study is based on the premise that urban design is not merely a technical or aesthetic process, but also a powerful social tool that influences living patterns, daily interactions, and urban practices. The focus is placed on integrating the social dimension into contemporary urban planning by exploring how neighborhood layout, service distribution, public space organization, and land use patterns impact social cohesion and community belonging. The article also discusses how urban planning choices can reduce spatial disparities, improve quality of life, and foster environments that encourage civic participation and social stability. A field-based questionnaire was used to collect data from residents regarding their perceptions of spatial organization in their living environment, their satisfaction with the availability of services, road conditions, lighting, and recreational spaces, as well as their sense of belonging and social security. Through a critical and scientific reading of the collected data, the study seeks to explore the link between spatial planning and social behavior in urban settings and to propose integrated urban policies that position urban design as a lever for sustainable development and spatial justice.

Keywords---Urban design, Urban development, City, Social cohesion, Public space.

How to Cite:
Maiza, H., & Beghriche, Y. (2025). The role of urban design in city development: A sociological approach. *The International Tax Journal*, *52*(4), 1345–1366. Retrieved from https://internationaltaxjournal.online/index.php/itj/article/view/151

The International tax journal ISSN: 0097-7314 E-ISSN: 3066-2370
Submitted: 09 May 2025 | Revised: 18 June 2025 | Accepted: 26 July 2025

1 Introduction

In contemporary urban studies, the concept of urban design has evolved from being a purely technical and aesthetic discipline to a multidimensional field that incorporates social, environmental, and economic dimensions. Cities are no longer understood merely as physical structures but as living spaces where design decisions profoundly shape social interactions, mobility patterns, and community belonging (Lynch, 1960; Gehl, 2010). The quality of urban life is strongly influenced by how public spaces, facilities, and services are spatially distributed and whether these elements encourage inclusion or marginalization (Jacobs, 1961; Talen, 2012).

From a sociological perspective, urban design plays a critical role in reinforcing social cohesion and reducing spatial inequalities, particularly in contexts of rapid urbanization where the mismanagement of land use often leads to fragmented and inequitable urban environments (Lefebvre, 1991; Fainstein, 2010). A well-structured urban layout can promote safety, trust, and interaction among residents, while poorly planned spaces may contribute to isolation, insecurity, and social disintegration (Harvey, 2012; Carmona et al., 2010).

In the Arab context, scholars have begun to examine the impact of urban form on sustainable development and social well-being, stressing the need to adopt human-centered planning approaches that account for the lived experiences of citizens (Madani, 2018; Boualem, 2020). This study aims to investigate how urban design contributes to city development by exploring residents' perceptions of spatial organization, access to services, quality of infrastructure, and the sense of safety and community. Through a sociological lens, the article will assess how urban design functions not only as a physical framework but also as a tool for shaping inclusive, equitable, and sustainable cities.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Background

Urban design is increasingly viewed not merely as a physical or aesthetic endeavor but as a tool to enhance public life and social development. Four key concepts emerge in this context: **public space**, **spatial justice**, **social cohesion**, and **urban livability**. Public space refers to accessible areas such as streets, squares, and parks that enable interaction and civic engagement. Spatial justice emphasizes the fair and equitable distribution of urban resources and opportunities across neighborhoods (Fainstein, 2010). Social cohesion reflects the degree of connectedness and trust among residents within a shared space, while urban livability relates to the quality of life that urban environments provide, including comfort, safety, and access to essential services (Gehl, 2010; Carmona et al., 2010).

2.2 Key Authors and Sociological Theories

Henri Lefebvre (1991) introduced the idea of **"the right to the city,"** arguing that urban space should be socially produced and democratically managed. His theory challenged top-down planning and emphasized the everyday experiences of urban dwellers. Jane Jacobs (1961), in her seminal work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, criticized modernist planning for its disregard of street-level dynamics and promoted mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly environments. Kevin Lynch (1960) contributed significantly by analyzing how people mentally perceive and navigate urban space, which led to greater emphasis on legibility and user experience in design. These authors laid the foundations for human-centered urbanism.

2.3 Linking Urban Form to Social Behavior

Empirical research supports the notion that urban form influences how people interact and perceive their environment. Studies have shown that neighborhoods with interconnected street networks, public gathering spaces, and well-maintained infrastructure tend to exhibit stronger social ties and lower crime rates (Bentley et al., 1985; Talen, 2012). In contrast, poorly designed environments with neglected

public areas may foster alienation, insecurity, and social fragmentation (Harvey, 2012). Arab scholars such as Madani (2018) and Boualem (2020) have also explored how urban design can support sustainable development and community resilience in local contexts.

2.4 Identification of Research Gap

While much has been written about the physical and economic dimensions of urban development, fewer studies have examined the **sociological effects** of urban design in Arab cities, particularly from the residents' perspective. The existing literature often overlooks how spatial planning affects social behavior, perceptions of safety, and community participation. This paper seeks to fill that gap by applying a sociological lens to understand how urban design can act as a catalyst for social development and cohesion.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a **quantitative, descriptive-analytical approach**, using a sociological lens to assess how urban design influences social cohesion and perceptions of community development. The research aims to gather empirical data directly from residents in urban neighborhoods, focusing on their lived experiences with spatial organization, access to services, and levels of social interaction.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population consists of adult residents living in urban neighborhoods with diverse spatial characteristics. A **non-probability purposive sampling technique** was used to ensure participants come from areas where urban design features—such as public spaces, lighting, and accessibility—are visibly present or lacking. The final sample included **178 respondents** who completed a structured questionnaire.

3.3 Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using a **standardized questionnaire** designed based on existing literature and adapted to the research context. The questionnaire included **15 closed-ended questions** grouped into three main sections: general demographic information, evaluation of physical infrastructure and services, and perceptions of social cohesion and neighborhood dynamics. The questions used Likert scales and multiple-choice formats to ensure consistency and ease of analysis.

3.4 Variables Studied

The study examines both **independent variables** (urban design elements such as the availability of public spaces, quality of infrastructure, accessibility of services) and **dependent variables** (social cohesion, sense of belonging, perceived safety, and interaction among residents).

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were coded and analyzed using **descriptive statistics** (frequency distributions, percentages) to summarize residents' responses. In addition, **cross-tabulations** were used to explore potential correlations between spatial characteristics and social indicators. Where applicable, **Chi-square tests** were conducted to assess the significance of relationships between variables.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. The data collected were used strictly for academic and scientific purposes.

4 Results and Analysis

This section presents the empirical findings obtained from the questionnaire administered to 179 participants. The survey aimed to capture residents' perceptions of urban design and its role in fostering social development, cohesion, and livability in their neighborhoods. The analysis is structured around the core themes explored in the questionnaire, namely: demographic characteristics of respondents, quality and accessibility of urban infrastructure, availability of public spaces, and the perceived social impact of urban design.

Each question is examined in detail, with results summarized using descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions and percentages. In addition to tabular representations, visual tools like bar charts and pie charts are used to enhance clarity and facilitate interpretation. The objective is not only to identify dominant trends in the data but also to explore correlations between spatial features and social indicators such as sense of safety, community belonging, and resident interaction.

Where relevant, the analysis also integrates theoretical insights from the literature review to contextualize the findings and highlight consistencies or divergences. By doing so, this section forms a bridge between empirical evidence and the broader sociological discourse on urban design, allowing for deeper reflection in the subsequent discussion chapter.

4.1 Research Question

To what extent does urban design influence quality of life and social relationships within residential neighborhoods?

4.2 Main Hypotheses

- Urban design positively impacts **social cohesion and sense of belonging**.
- The availability of public amenities and ease of mobility enhance **residents' satisfaction**.
- Poor urban planning contributes to **feelings of insecurity, isolation, and weak social ties**.
- Well-planned urban environments can serve as **a tool for social development**.

4.3 Correspondence with Field Results

Table 1 : Comparison of Key Urban Planning Hypotheses with Field Survey Results on Belonging, Satisfaction, Safety, and Social Development

Hypothesis	Supporting Results
1: Urban design strengthens social cohesion and belonging	◆ 43.7% feel a **moderate** sense of belonging, 21.9% feel **very strong** belonging. ◆ 38.3% said the design **sometimes** promotes social interaction, and 27.3% said **clearly**.
2: Amenities and mobility improve satisfaction	◆ 43.7% rated mobility as **acceptable**, 19.1% as **excellent**. ◆ 32.8% said public spaces were **few and inadequate**.
3: Poor planning leads to insecurity and isolation	◆ Only 27.3% felt **very safe**, while 21.9% felt **unsafe**. ◆ 24.6% described neighborhood relationships as **weak** or **nearly absent**.
4: Urban planning fosters social development	◆ 43.7% said **yes, absolutely**, and 38.3% said **possibly if well planned**. ◆ Most respondents confirmed the design encourages at least **partial community participation**.

4.4 Analytical Summary:

The findings strongly support the research hypotheses and reveal that urban design significantly influences various aspects of residents' social lives. The survey shows that well-structured neighborhoods with accessible amenities and functional infrastructure foster stronger social bonds, a sense of safety, and belonging. Conversely, spatial imbalance, inadequate public spaces, and poor infrastructure correlate with feelings of insecurity and social fragmentation. These results confirm that urban design, when strategically planned, can serve as a powerful lever for social cohesion and sustainable urban development.

4.5 Analytical Mapping Between Survey Questions, Research Objectives, and Hypotheses

In order to ensure methodological coherence and validate the relevance of the fieldwork, each survey question has been carefully examined in relation to the research objectives, the main research question, and the proposed hypotheses. The following table presents a systematic analysis of how each question contributes to assessing the sociological impact of urban design on residents' quality of life, social cohesion, and sense of belonging. This mapping strengthens the internal consistency of the research and confirms the alignment between data collection tools and theoretical foundations.

4.5.1 Question 1: Gender and Its Role in Perceived Safety and Belonging in Urban Neighborhoods

Table 2: Analysis of Question 1 (Gender)

Item	Content
Question	Q1: Gender
Purpose of the Question	Analyze demographic structure by gender
Relation to Research Question	Helps understand gender-based differences in safety and belonging
Relation to Hypotheses	Supports the hypothesis that urban design does not affect everyone equally

Table 3: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Number of Responses	Percentage
Male	98	53.6%
Female	85	46.4%

This table N°3 presents the gender distribution of the study participants, showing that males represent 53.6% (98 respondents) and females 46.4% (85 respondents). This near-balanced ratio adds credibility to the sample by incorporating diverse social perspectives. The main purpose of this question is to analyze the demographic structure based on gender, helping determine whether feelings of safety and belonging vary between males and females. This directly relates to the study's core question concerning the impact of urban design on quality of life and social relationships, as gender may influence individuals' perceptions and experiences in urban environments. In relation to the hypotheses, this table supports the assumption that urban design does not affect all groups uniformly, and its social impacts may vary based on demographic factors like gender. Therefore, achieving gender balance in the responses strengthens the ability to examine these potential differences objectively and meaningfully. This foundational insight ensures that the interpretation of results accounts for how urban design might promote or hinder community cohesion differently across gender lines.

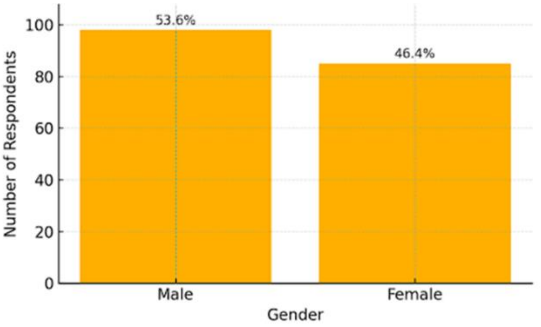

Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

4.5.2 Question 2: Age and Its Influence on Urban Experience and Social Engagement

Table 4: Analysis of Question 2 (Age Group)

Item	Content
Question	Q2: Age Group
Purpose of the Question	Classify participants by age to understand differences in urban interaction
Relation to Research Question	Shows how different age groups respond to urban environment
Relation to Hypotheses	Tests whether age impacts quality of life and inclusion

Table 5: Age Group Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Number of Responses	Percentage
< 20 years	25	13.7%
20–35 years	78	42.6%
36–50 years	55	30.1%
> 50 years	25	13.7%

Table N°5 displays the age distribution of respondents: the 20–35 age group comprises the largest portion at 42.6% (78 participants), followed by the 36–50 group at 30.1% (55 participants). The youngest (<20 years) and oldest (>50 years) groups each represent 13.7% (25 participants). This question aims to categorize participants by age to explore how life stage affects individuals' interaction with and perception of urban design. Its relevance to the main research question lies in examining whether quality of life and social engagement vary across age groups. Different age cohorts may have diverse needs, expectations, and levels of participation in community life. Regarding the hypotheses, the data helps assess the assumption that urban design does not affect all residents equally. The table supports the idea that the perception of urban space and social cohesion can be influenced by age. Notably, strong representation from younger adults typically more active in community life provides a valuable basis to analyze how urban planning contributes to social engagement and overall urban satisfaction across generations.

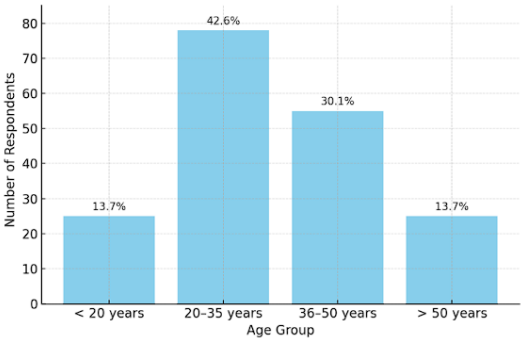

Figure 2: Age Group Distribution of Respondents

4.5.3 Question 3: Educational Level as a Factor in Urban Awareness and Expectations

Table 6: Analysis of Question 3 (Educational Level)

Item	Content
Question	Q3: Educational Level
Purpose of the Question	Assess the influence of education on awareness of urban design
Relation to Research Question	Links awareness of urban space to educational background
Relation to Hypotheses	Checks if educated residents demand more equitable planning

Table 7: Educational Level of Respondents

Educational Level	Number of Responses	Percentage
No Education	10	5.5%
Primary	30	16.4%
Secondary	75	41.0%
University or Higher	68	37.2%

This table N°7 outlines the educational levels of respondents, showing that the majority hold secondary education at 41.0% (75 participants), followed closely by those with university-level education or higher at 37.2% (68 participants). Meanwhile, 16.4% have only primary education, and 5.5% (10 participants) report no formal education. The purpose of this question is to assess how educational background influences awareness of and attitudes toward urban design. In relation to the main research question, it helps determine whether more educated individuals are more critical of urban planning and more engaged in their community's development. Regarding the hypotheses, the table supports the idea that education level may shape perceptions of justice, access to services, and participation in urban life. The predominance of respondents with moderate to high educational attainment enriches the analytical depth of the study, allowing for a more nuanced examination of how urban design is understood and evaluated through a socio-cognitive lens. It highlights that educational awareness potentially enhances expectations for well-planned, equitable, and socially inclusive neighborhoods.

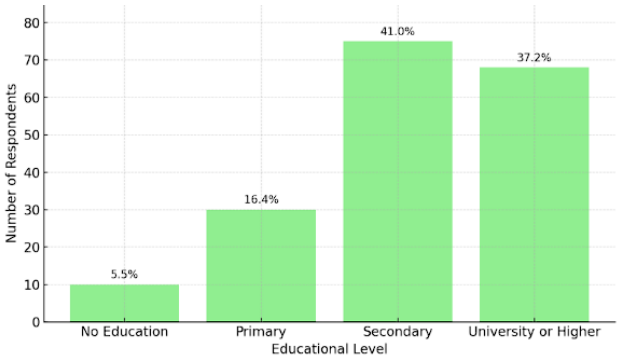

Figure 3: Educational Level of Respondents

4.5.4 Question 4: Duration of Residence and Its Impact on Sense of Belonging

Table 8: Analysis of Question 4 (Length of Residence)

Item	Content
Question	Q4: Length of Residence
Purpose of the Question	Understand how long-term residence affects attachment to place
Relation to Research Question	Explores the effect of spatial stability on social connection
Relation to Hypotheses	Supports the idea that stability increases belonging

Table 9: Length of Residence in the Neighborhood

Length of Residence	Number of Responses	Percentage
< 1 year	20	10.9%
1–5 years	70	38.3%
> 5 years	93	50.8%

This table N°9 shows respondents' length of residence in the neighborhood. A majority, 50.8% (93 participants), have lived there for over five years, followed by 38.3% (70 participants) who have stayed between one and five years, and only 10.9% (20 participants) residing for less than a year. The aim of this question is to explore how spatial stability influences feelings of belonging and community engagement. It is directly tied to the central research question by assessing how urban design supports long-term social cohesion. Regarding the hypotheses, the data supports the assumption that a longer residence enhances the sense of place and belonging, allowing residents to better assess the impact of urban planning on their daily lives. The high percentage of long-term residents enriches the study's findings by offering insights based on extended experience with the neighborhood's physical and social environment. These results are valuable for understanding how continued exposure to the same urban setting may foster stronger social ties, deeper engagement, and greater sensitivity to the advantages or shortcomings of urban design.

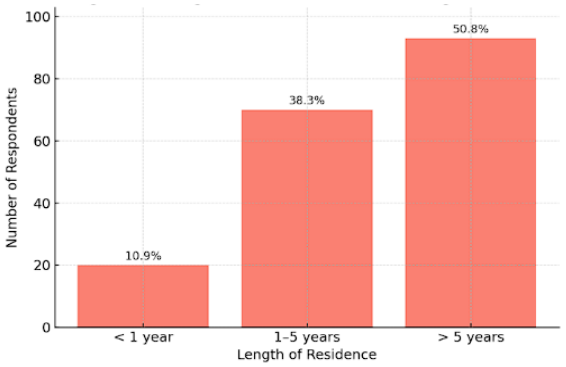

Figure 4: Length of Residence in the Neighborhood

4.5.5 Question 5: Perceived Fairness in the Distribution of Urban Services and Amenities

Table 10: Analysis of Question 5 (Service Distribution)

Item	Content
Question	Q5: Service Distribution in the Neighborhood
Purpose of the Question	Evaluate the fairness of service and facility distribution
Relation to Research Question	Connects urban equity to residents' perception of life quality
Relation to Hypotheses	Confirms that fair distribution improves satisfaction and engagement

Table 11: Perception of Fairness in Service Distribution in the Neighborhood

Response Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes, sufficiently	40	21.9%
To some extent	70	38.3%
Weak and unbalanced	50	27.3%
No sufficient services	23	12.6%

This table N°11 presents residents' perceptions of fairness in the distribution of facilities and services in their neighborhoods. The majority, 38.3% (70 respondents), answered "to some extent," followed by 27.3% (50 respondents) who found the distribution "weak and unbalanced." Meanwhile, 21.9% (40 respondents) believed services were sufficiently distributed, and 12.6% (23 respondents) stated that facilities were completely lacking. The purpose of this question is to assess how residents perceive spatial equity and resource accessibility, which are vital indicators of urban quality of life. Its relevance to the main research question lies in understanding how the spatial organization of services influences social cohesion and satisfaction. In terms of the study's hypotheses, the data supports the idea that well-distributed public facilities contribute to stronger community integration and resident contentment. The notable portion of respondents indicating insufficient or unbalanced services suggests deficiencies in urban planning that may lead to feelings of inequality and detachment. These insights underscore the necessity of urban design that emphasizes equitable service provision to prevent marginalization and promote social sustainability across neighborhoods.

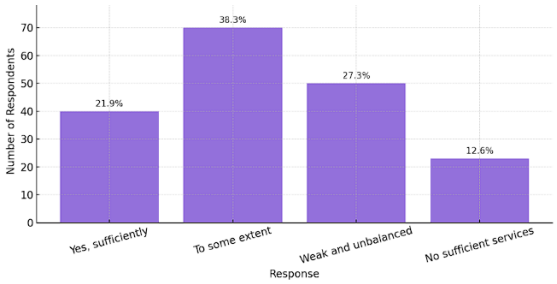

Figure 12: Perception of Fairness in Service Distribution in the Neighborhood

4.5.6 Question 6: Residents' Evaluation of Mobility and Accessibility Within the Neighborhood

Table 12: Analysis of Question 6 (Ease of Mobility)

Item	Content
Question	Q6: Ease of Mobility within the Neighborhood
Purpose of the Question	Assess how easily residents can move within their local environment
Relation to Research Question	Relates to physical comfort, spatial integration, and access to services
Relation to Hypotheses	Confirms that accessible design facilitates quality of life and interaction

Table 13: Evaluation of Mobility Ease within the Neighborhood

Mobility Evaluation	Number of Responses	Percentage
Excellent	35	19.1%
Acceptable	80	43.7%
Difficult	50	27.3%
Very Difficult	18	9.8%

This table N°13 illustrates how residents evaluate the ease of mobility within their neighborhood. A plurality, 43.7% (80 respondents), rated it as "acceptable," while 19.1% (35 respondents) found it "excellent." On the other hand, 27.3% (50 respondents) considered it "difficult," and 9.8% (18 respondents) described it as "very difficult." The aim of this question is to assess how easily residents can move within their neighborhood a key factor in daily comfort and access to services and public spaces. In relation to the main research question, ease of mobility reflects how well urban design facilitates integration and accessibility. Regarding the hypotheses, the table supports the assumption that improved urban mobility contributes to better quality of life and social interaction. The results show that a significant portion of residents experiences some level of difficulty navigating their area, which underscores the importance of well-planned streets, sidewalks, and infrastructure. These findings highlight the functional aspect of urban design and its direct impact on residents' daily routines and their ability to connect with others in the community, reinforcing the link between design efficiency and social cohesion.

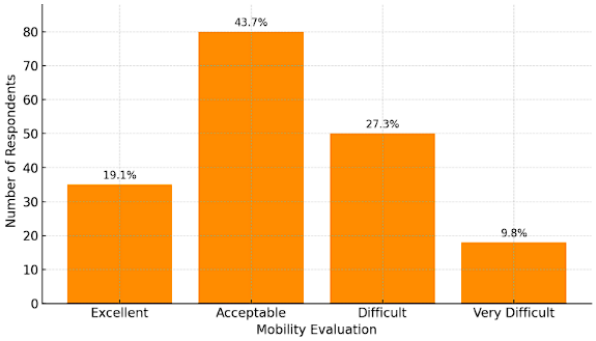

Figure 6: Evaluation of Mobility Ease within the Neighborhood

4.5.7 Question 7: Availability of Public Spaces and Their Role in Social Interaction

Table 14: Analysis of Question 7 (Public Spaces Availability)

Item	Content
Question	Q7: Availability of Public Spaces (Parks, Squares, Playgrounds)
Purpose of the Question	Measure the presence and condition of public spaces enabling interaction
Relation to Research Question	Connects to urban livability, social inclusion, and community well-being
Relation to Hypotheses	Supports the hypothesis that well-designed public spaces strengthen social life

Table 15: Availability of Public Spaces (Parks, Squares, Playgrounds)

Perception of Availability	Number of Responses	Percentage
Available & Well-Equipped	45	24.6%
Available but Neglected	50	27.3%
Few & Inadequate	60	32.8%
Not Available	28	15.3%

This table N°15 reflects residents' perceptions of the availability and usability of public spaces such as parks, squares, and playgrounds. A notable 32.8% (60 respondents) stated that public spaces are "few and inadequate," while 27.3% (50 respondents) said they are "available but not well-utilized." Meanwhile, 24.6% (45 respondents) found them "available and well-equipped," and 15.3% (28 respondents) noted they were "not available." The goal of this question is to assess access to communal spaces that promote social interaction, recreation, and engagement key indicators of urban quality of life. This ties directly into the study's central question, as the presence and quality of such spaces significantly influence social relationships and the sense of community. From the standpoint of the hypotheses, the table supports the assumption that accessible and well-designed public spaces foster stronger social bonds and communal participation. The data reveal that a majority of residents perceive public spaces as lacking or underutilized, suggesting shortcomings in urban planning. These results underscore the importance of investing in vibrant and inclusive public areas to enhance community life and support the social function of urban environments.

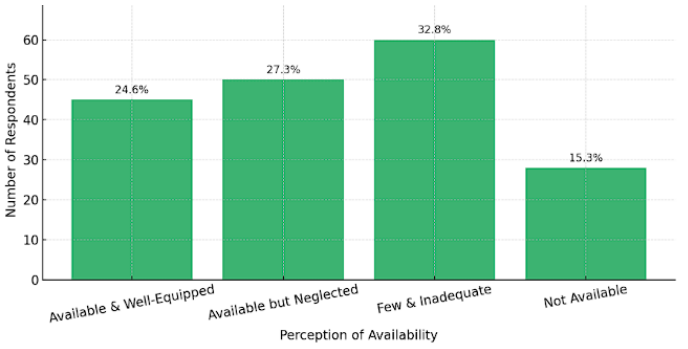

Figure 7: Availability of Public Spaces (Parks, Squares, Playgrounds)

4.5.8 Question 8: Infrastructure Quality and Its Influence on Urban Comfort and Safety

Table 16: Analysis of Question 8 (Infrastructure Condition)

Item	Content
Question	Q8: Evaluation of Infrastructure Condition (Roads, Sidewalks, Lighting)
Purpose of the Question	Assess the physical state of the neighborhood's infrastructure
Relation to Research Question	Relates to perceived safety, comfort, and the overall urban experience
Relation to Hypotheses	Validates that poor infrastructure reduces safety and weakens social cohesion

Table 17: Evaluation of Infrastructure Condition (Roads, Sidewalks, Lighting)

Condition Rating	Number of Responses	Percentage
Very Good	30	16.4%
Acceptable	70	38.3%
Weak	60	32.8%
Worn out or Absent	23	12.6%

This table N°17 presents residents' evaluations of neighborhood infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, and lighting. A plurality of 38.3% (70 respondents) rated the condition as "acceptable," while 32.8% (60 respondents) described it as "weak." Only 16.4% (30 respondents) considered it "very good," and 12.6% (23 respondents) rated it as "worn out or absent." The purpose of this question is to assess the physical quality of the urban environment and how it affects residents' comfort and sense of safety. It directly relates to the study's main question by examining how infrastructure conditions impact daily life and social interaction. From the perspective of the hypotheses, this table supports the assumption that poor urban organization and inadequate infrastructure lead to reduced safety and social cohesion. The results highlight a significant level of dissatisfaction with the infrastructure, suggesting a clear gap in urban planning effectiveness. These findings call for targeted interventions to improve infrastructure, ensuring a safer, more accessible, and socially engaging urban setting that fosters trust and a stronger sense of community.

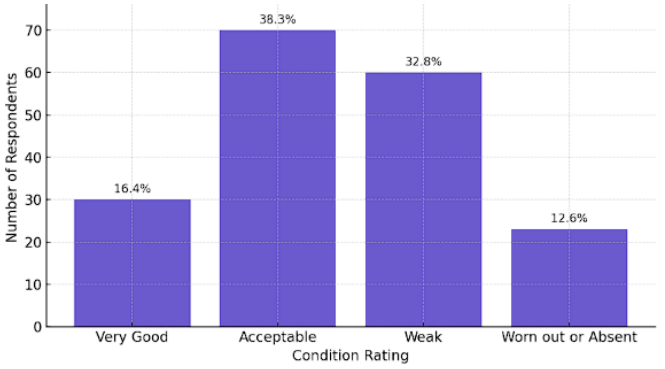

Figure 8: Evaluation of Infrastructure Condition (Roads, Sidewalks, Lighting)

4.5.9 Question 9: The Role of Urban Design in Facilitating Neighborly Interaction

Table 18: Analysis of Question 9 (Neighborhood Design & Interaction)

Item	Content
Question	Q9: Does neighborhood design enhance interaction among neighbors?
Purpose of the Question	Assess how urban design influences daily social relationships
Relation to Research Question	Directly linked to the role of design in promoting community interaction
Relation to Hypotheses	Supports the hypothesis that good urban layout strengthens social cohesion

Table 19: Impact of Neighborhood Design on Social Interaction

Perception	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes, clearly	50	27.3%
Sometimes only	70	38.3%
Not much effect	45	24.6%
Hinders interaction	18	9.8%

This table N°19 captures residents' perceptions of how neighborhood design influences social interaction among neighbors. A significant portion, 38.3% (70 respondents), indicated that the design "sometimes" facilitates interaction. Meanwhile, 27.3% (50 respondents) believe it "clearly" enhances social engagement, while 24.6% (45 respondents) feel it has "little effect," and 9.8% (18 respondents) think it "hinders interaction." The question's objective is to assess the social dimension of urban design and its role in fostering daily communication and relationships among residents. Its connection to the main research question lies in determining whether the physical layout of a neighborhood affects social cohesion and interpersonal connection. Regarding the hypotheses, this table supports the notion that well-planned urban design encourages community interaction and bonding. The mixed responses suggest varying levels of effectiveness depending on neighborhood-specific factors. Although the group recognizing a clear positive impact is not the majority, the results collectively reveal an awareness that urban design plays a role in either facilitating or obstructing social relationships within residential areas. This underscores the need for intentional spatial planning that promotes inclusive, interaction-friendly environments.

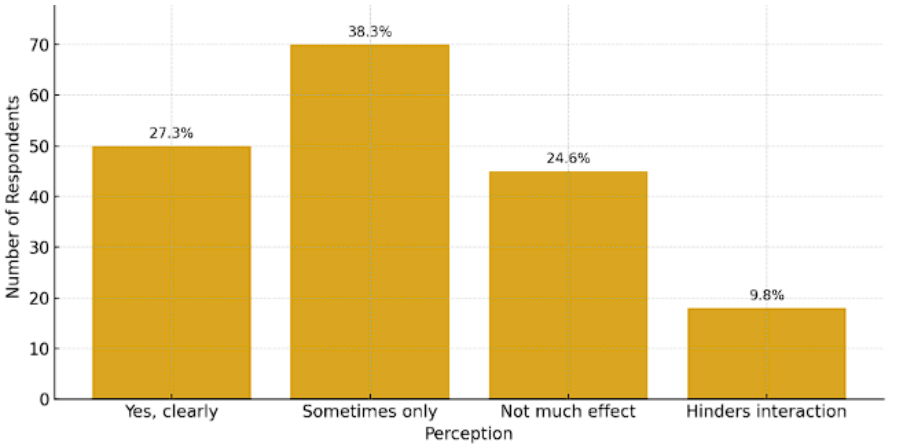

Figure 9: Impact of Neighborhood Design on Social Interaction

4.5.10 Question 10: Measuring the Sense of Belonging Among Neighborhood Residents

Table 20: Analysis of Question 10 (Sense of Belonging to the Neighborhood)

Item	Content
Question	Q10: To what extent do you feel a sense of belonging to your neighborhood?
Purpose of the Question	Measure residents' emotional attachment and sense of place
Relation to Research Question	Reflects a key indicator of quality of life and social connection
Relation to Hypotheses	Supports the hypothesis that good urban design fosters place attachment

Table 21: Sense of Belonging to the Neighborhood

Level of Belonging	Number of Responses	Percentage
Very Strong	40	21.9%
Moderate	80	43.7%
Weak	45	24.6%
No Sense of Belonging	18	9.8%

This table N°21 illustrates residents' sense of belonging to their neighborhood. The largest portion, 43.7% (80 respondents), described their sense as "moderate," followed by 21.9% (40 respondents) reporting it as "very strong." Meanwhile, 24.6% (45 respondents) indicated a "weak" sense of belonging, and 9.8% (18 respondents) expressed no sense of belonging at all. The question aims to evaluate residents' emotional and psychological connection to their living environment an essential component of community well-being. Its relevance to the main research question lies in the belief that a strong sense of belonging reflects effective urban design. Regarding the hypotheses, the results support the assumption that well-planned urban spaces strengthen attachment and identification with the neighborhood. The data suggest that while many residents feel connected to their surroundings, a notable percentage do not, highlighting the need to enhance urban environments that foster a sense of identity and inclusion. These results emphasize the psychological and symbolic dimension of urban design and its power to cultivate or erode social bonds and neighborhood identity over time.

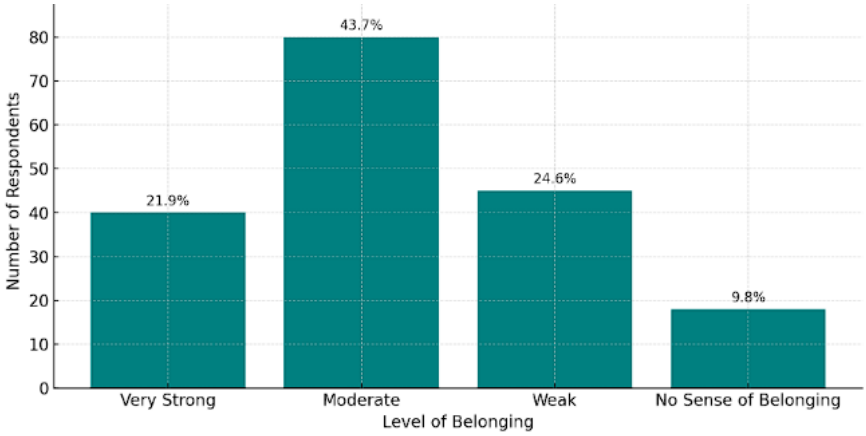

Figure 10: Sense of Belonging to the Neighborhood

4.5.11 Question 11: Nature of Social Relationships and Community Bonding

Table 22: Analysis of Question 11 (Social Relationships Among Residents)

Item	Content
Question	Q11: How would you describe the social relationships among residents?
Purpose of the Question	Analyze the nature and quality of social ties within the neighborhood
Relation to Research Question	Reflects how urban design influences social dynamics and cohesion
Relation to Hypotheses	Supports the hypothesis that proper planning fosters solidarity and reduces isolation

Table 23: Nature of Social Relationships Among Residents

Type of Relationship	Number of Responses	Percentage
Cooperation & Solidarity	60	32.8%
Superficial Relations	80	43.7%
Little to No Contact	30	16.4%
Conflicts or Tension	13	7.1%

This table N°23 outlines the nature of social relationships among neighborhood residents. The majority, 43.7% (80 respondents), described their relationships as "superficial only," while 32.8% (60 respondents) reported "cooperation and solidarity." Additionally, 16.4% (30 respondents) said there is "little to no contact," and 7.1% (13 respondents) described the relationships as marked by "conflict or constant tension." The purpose of this question is to assess the strength and depth of social connections within the neighborhood—a key indicator of social cohesion. This ties directly to the main research question, which seeks to understand how urban design influences social relationships. In terms of hypotheses, the data supports the assumption that thoughtful urban planning fosters stronger community ties, while poor design may lead to social fragmentation or tension. The high percentage of respondents reporting superficial or weak interactions suggests a lack of socially supportive urban environments. This calls for urban interventions that promote daily encounters, shared spaces, and social infrastructure to help build meaningful and resilient community relationships.

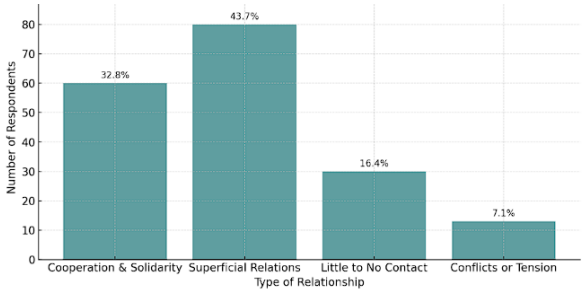

Figure 11: Nature of Social Relationships Among Residents

4.5.12 Question 12: The Impact of Urban Planning on Resident Behavior and Lifestyle

Table 24: Analysis of Question 12 (Impact of Urban Design on Behavior and Lifestyle)

Item	Content
Question	Q12: Do you think urban planning affects residents' behavior and lifestyle?
Purpose of the Question	Measure residents' awareness of how spatial organization shapes daily habits
Relation to Research Question	Directly related to the core question about the sociological impact of urban design
Relation to Hypotheses	Confirms the hypothesis that urban layout influences behavior and social practices

Table 25: Perceived Impact of Urban Planning on Residents' Behavior and Lifestyle

Perception	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes, significantly	70	38.3%
To some extent	80	43.7%
Limited effect	25	13.7%
No effect	8	4.4%

This table N°25 examines residents' perceptions of how urban planning influences their behavior and lifestyle. A plurality, 43.7% (80 respondents), believe it affects them "to some extent," while 38.3% (70 respondents) feel the impact is "significant." Meanwhile, 13.7% (25 respondents) consider the effect "limited," and only 4.4% (8 respondents) see "no connection" at all. The aim of this question is to assess the non-material influence of urban planning how it shapes daily routines, social interactions, and the use of space. This is closely tied to the study's core question, which investigates the role of urban design in shaping social life. From a hypothesis perspective, the data strongly supports the notion that urban organization significantly affects how residents behave and live. The results suggest a collective awareness that the built environment not only defines physical surroundings but also molds social dynamics and personal habits. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating psychological and behavioral dimensions into urban design to create neighborhoods that are not only functional but also socially and emotionally responsive to their inhabitants' needs.

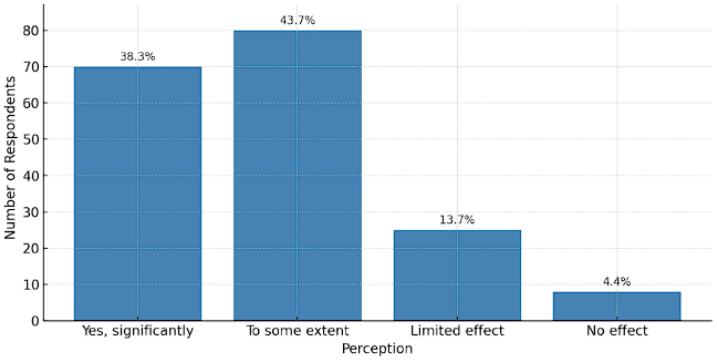

Figure 16: Perceived Impact of Urban Planning on Residents' Behavior and Lifestyle

4.5.13 Question 13: Perceptions of Safety as a Reflection of Urban Environmental Design

Table 26: Analysis of Question 13 (Perception of Safety within the Neighborhood)

Item	Content
Question	Q13: How do you evaluate your sense of safety within the neighborhood?
Purpose of the Question	Assess perceived safety as a core component of urban quality of life
Relation to Research Question	Reflects how urban design influences feelings of safety and psychological comfort
Relation to Hypotheses	Supports the hypothesis that proper planning enhances social security and reduces crime

Table 27: Perception of Safety within the Neighborhood

Safety Level	Number of Responses	Percentage
Very Safe	50	27.3%
Somewhat Safe	80	43.7%
Unsafe	40	21.9%
Completely Unsafe	13	7.1%

This table N°27 evaluates residents' sense of safety within their neighborhood. A significant portion, 43.7% (80 respondents), reported feeling "somewhat safe," while 27.3% (50 respondents) said they feel "very safe." Meanwhile, 21.9% (40 respondents) described the area as "unsafe," and 7.1% (13 respondents) said it is "completely unsafe." The goal of this question is to measure the psychological and social security residents experience—an essential component of urban quality of life. Its connection to the main research question lies in the understanding that perceived safety is a key outcome of successful urban design. In terms of the study's hypotheses, this table supports the assumption that well-organized urban environments enhance safety and reduce fear. The data reveals that a majority of residents do not feel entirely safe, potentially due to issues like inadequate infrastructure, poor lighting, or lack of secure public spaces. These findings highlight the need for urban planning strategies that incorporate safety-enhancing elements such as proper lighting, open visibility, and monitored public areas to create environments where residents feel protected and connected to their surroundings.

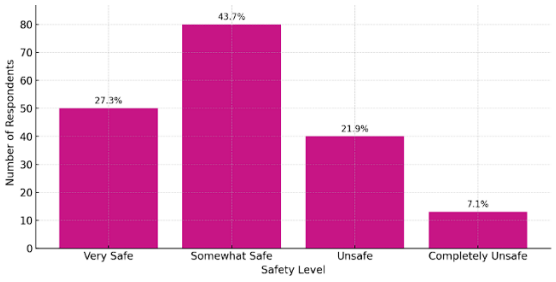

Figure 13: Perception of Safety within the Neighborhood

4.5.14 Question 14: Does Neighborhood Design Encourage Community Participation?

Table 28: Analysis of Question 14 (Neighborhood Design and Community Participation)

Item	Content
Question	Q14: Does the current neighborhood design encourage community participation?
Purpose of the Question	Assess the extent to which urban design stimulates civic involvement
Relation to Research Question	Addresses the link between spatial design and public engagement
Relation to Hypotheses	Supports the hypothesis that thoughtful urban design promotes social inclusion and participation

Table 29: Neighborhood Design and Encouragement of Community Participation

Resident Perception	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes, clearly encourages	40	21.9%
Partially encourages	80	43.7%
Does not encourage	50	27.3%
Discourages/isolates residents	13	7.1%

This table N°29 reflects residents' opinions on whether the current neighborhood design encourages community participation. A plurality, 43.7% (80 respondents), indicated that it "partially encourages" participation, while 21.9% (40 respondents) felt it "clearly encourages" it. On the other hand, 27.3% (50 respondents) said it "does not encourage" participation, and 7.1% (13 respondents) believed it "isolates residents." The purpose of this question is to analyze the participatory role of urban design and its capacity to stimulate resident involvement in community life. This directly relates to the main research question by exploring how well-designed environments can foster social engagement and active citizenship. Regarding the hypotheses, the results support the idea that intentional urban design enhances collective participation and community initiative. The findings suggest that while some residents acknowledge participatory elements in their environment, many perceive the design as lacking full support for engagement. This underscores a need for more inclusive planning—such as shared spaces, accessible public areas, and interactive zones—that not only facilitate interaction but also empower residents to contribute to their community's well-being and cohesion.

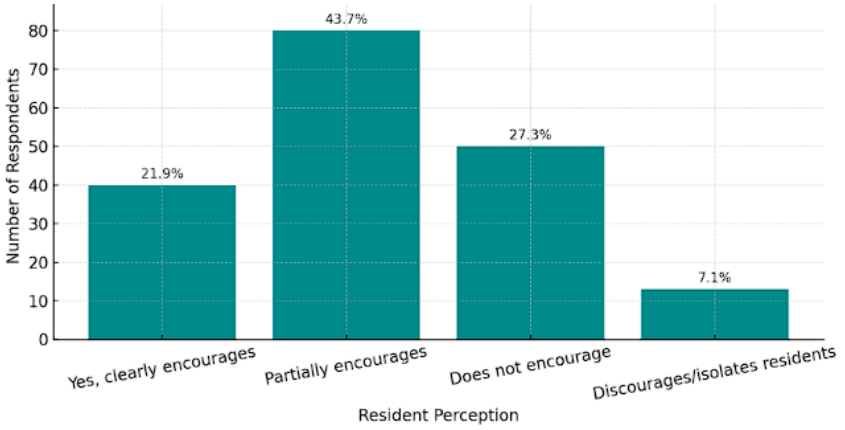

Figure 14: Neighborhood Design and Encouragement of Community Participation

4.5.15 Question 15: Urban Design as a Tool for Enhancing Social Life

Table 30: Analysis of Question 15 (Urban Design as a Tool for Enhancing Social Life)

Item	Content
Question	Q15: In your opinion, can urban design be a tool for enhancing social life?
Purpose of the Question	Explore whether residents believe spatial planning can drive social development
Relation to Research Question	Directly linked to the central question on the sociological function of design
Relation to Hypotheses	Affirms the core hypothesis that urban design is a lever for inclusion and development

Table 31: Urban Design as a Tool for Enhancing Social Life

Respondent Opinion	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes, absolutely	80	43.7%
Possibly if well planned	70	38.3%
Not always	25	13.7%
I don't think so	8	4.4%

This table N°31 presents residents' opinions on whether urban design can serve as a tool for enhancing social life. A significant portion, 43.7% (80 respondents), answered "yes, absolutely," while 38.3% (70 respondents) said "possibly, if well planned." Meanwhile, 13.7% (25 respondents) believed it's "not always" effective, and only 4.4% (8 respondents) said "I don't think so." The purpose of this question is to explore residents' awareness of urban design as a comprehensive mechanism—not just for physical development but also for fostering social cohesion. Its relevance to the central research question is direct, as it asks whether urban design affects social relationships and quality of life. Regarding the study's hypotheses, this table supports the core assumption that urban design is a powerful driver of social development and community integration. The results show a strong consensus among participants recognizing the potential of well-thought-out urban planning, reflecting a growing public understanding that spatial design has far-reaching implications for behavioral patterns and community well-being. This insight highlights the importance of prioritizing inclusive, socially responsive planning strategies in future urban development efforts.

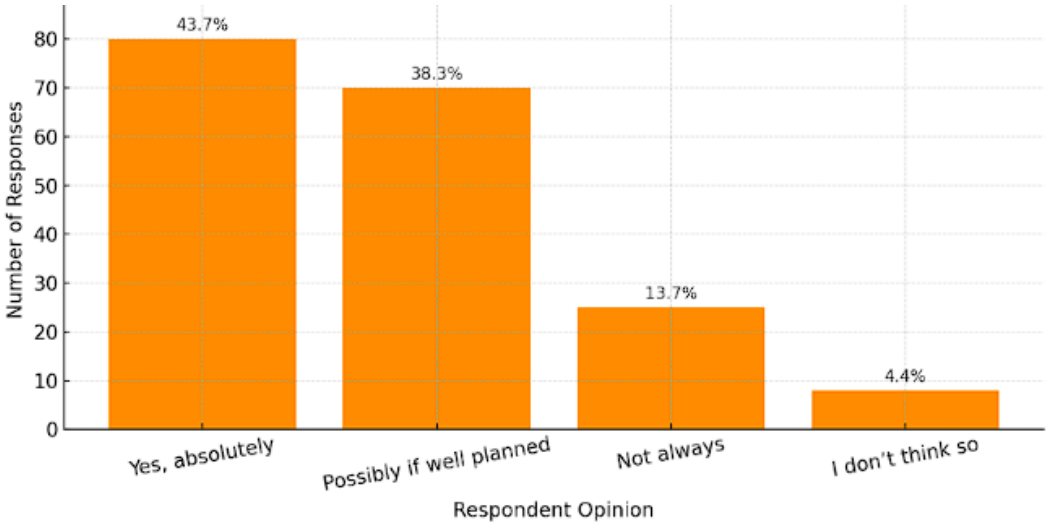

Figure 15: Urban Design as a Tool for Enhancing Social Life

Conclusion

The findings from this study reaffirm that urban design is far more than an aesthetic or technical concern; it is a sociological instrument that shapes the behaviors, relationships, and identities of residents. Through the lens of urban sociology, the survey data revealed that aspects such as the availability of public spaces, ease of mobility, infrastructure quality, and spatial layout collectively define how communities function and thrive. Residents did not merely evaluate the physical attributes of their neighborhoods they responded to the emotional and social experiences these environments produced. More than 80% of participants recognized, to varying degrees, that urban design affects their behavior and sense of belonging. This insight aligns with the hypothesis that spatial planning can be a tool for social development, capable of either cultivating or obstructing cohesion, safety, and civic participation. The study confirms that urban design must be intentional and human-centered. When neighborhoods are created with social dynamics in mind, they become fertile grounds for trust, collaboration, and long-term settlement. Conversely, when urban environments are fragmented, inaccessible, or poorly maintained, they contribute to isolation, insecurity, and urban disengagement. The evidence shows that built environments are deeply intertwined with lived experiences. As such, the scope of urban design must be expanded to include psychological, behavioral, and social dimensions. The power of physical space to influence society should not be underestimated it must be strategically leveraged to build inclusive, cohesive, and sustainable urban communities.

A core takeaway from the survey results is the significance of **equity in urban service distribution** and its direct correlation with social well-being. The perception of fairness in the availability of services such as parks, lighting, walkways, and communal areas emerged as a recurring concern among respondents. A significant portion of participants rated service distribution as either "weak and unbalanced" or "insufficient," emphasizing that spatial justice remains a pressing urban challenge. Such disparities breed feelings of exclusion and neglect, which eventually erode trust in public institutions and weaken the sense of citizenship. The data also revealed that those who felt their neighborhoods lacked fair access to amenities were more likely to report weaker social ties and lower levels of safety. This supports the hypothesis that urban planning is not just a technical function, but an ethical and civic duty to ensure inclusivity and justice in the spatial organization of cities. When neighborhoods are equitably planned, they foster shared ownership, pride, and participation in local affairs. The concept of "right to the city" where every resident, regardless of socioeconomic background, enjoys equal access to services and opportunities was implicitly reflected in many responses. Residents do not perceive urban

design in isolation; they evaluate it in relation to how it serves them socially and functionally. These findings call for participatory planning approaches that engage local communities in shaping their environments. Ensuring spatial equity is not only a matter of infrastructure; it is foundational to building trust, nurturing identity, and strengthening democracy in urban life.

This study has shown that emotional factors like **belonging and identity** are deeply influenced by urban form and design. The degree to which respondents reported feeling "connected" to their neighborhoods was closely linked to the presence of public spaces, social interaction opportunities, and well-maintained infrastructure. Nearly half of the participants expressed only moderate or weak levels of belonging, with a notable minority stating they felt no attachment at all. These findings validate the hypothesis that spatial design has a profound psychological dimension. When urban environments are cold, isolating, or chaotic, they fail to anchor people emotionally. In contrast, when neighborhoods offer shared spaces, inviting aesthetics, and opportunities for interaction, they become places of emotional resonance. This emotional geography plays a critical role in shaping community dynamics, influencing not just whether people stay, but how they relate to each other and to their surroundings. The sense of "home" in urban contexts is not merely defined by physical shelter, but by the perceived social and symbolic meanings of the neighborhood. If people feel seen, safe, and included in the fabric of their community, they are more likely to invest socially, economically, and emotionally. Thus, urban planners must treat belonging as a core design principle not an afterthought. By embedding identity, cultural relevance, and shared history into spatial development, cities can evolve into environments that foster both personal fulfillment and collective cohesion. This study calls attention to the urgent need for planning that heals, connects, and dignifies urban life.

Based on the outcomes of this research, several strategic **recommendations** emerge. First, urban planning policies should adopt an integrated framework that blends social research with spatial design. Planners must collaborate closely with sociologists, community leaders, and residents to ensure that development projects are rooted in lived experiences and local realities. Second, investment in public spaces particularly parks, plazas, and pedestrian areas should be prioritized, as these are the heartbeats of community life. Their design must emphasize accessibility, safety, and aesthetic harmony to encourage active and inclusive use. Third, infrastructure quality especially in lighting, sidewalks, and road conditions must be upgraded in underserved areas to promote safety and ease of movement, which are essential for daily well-being and civic trust. Fourth, planners should institutionalize mechanisms for regular community feedback, ensuring adaptive and participatory decision-making. From a policy perspective, cities must embed equity indicators into planning metrics, holding agencies accountable for inclusivity and justice. Finally, future research should delve deeper into longitudinal impacts tracking how changes in urban form influence behavior, relationships, and perceptions over time. This will require interdisciplinary efforts that combine urban planning, sociology, psychology, and data science. Ultimately, the future of urban life depends not on how many buildings we construct, but on how thoughtfully we design the spaces between them. If embraced with intention, urban design can become a transformative force redefining cities as ecosystems of connection, empathy, and shared opportunity. This study contributes to that vision by highlighting the lived human stakes of the built environment and offering a roadmap for more just and humane urban futures.

References

1. Abu-Lughod, J. (1991). *Changing cities: Urban sociology*. HarperCollins.
2. Al-Khatib, M. (2017). *Urban design: Concept and practice* [in Arabic]. Al-Dar Al-Arabia for Science.
3. Bentley, I., Alcock, A., Murrain, P., McGlynn, S., & Smith, G. (1985). *Responsive environments: A manual for designers*. Architectural Press.
4. Boualem, A. (2020). The impact of urban planning on improving urban quality of life. *Journal of Economy and Society*, 12(2), 45–60. [In Arabic]

5. Carmona, M., Heath, T., Oc, T., & Tiesdell, S. (2010). *Public places, urban spaces: The dimensions of urban design* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
6. Cherifi, S. (2019). Urban development and spatial justice in Algerian cities. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 33(1), 77–93. [In Arabic]
7. Fainstein, S. S. (2010). *The just city*. Cornell University Press.
8. Gehl, J. (2010). *Cities for people*. Island Press.
9. Harvey, D. (2012). *Rebel cities: From the right to the city to the urban revolution*. Verso.
10. Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of great American cities*. Random House.
11. Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Blackwell.
12. Lynch, K. (1960). *The image of the city*. MIT Press.
13. Madani, L. (2018). Urban design and its impact on sustainable development. *Journal of Urban Studies*, 5(1), 20–38. [In Arabic]
14. Talen, E. (2012). *City rules: How regulations affect urban form*. Island Press.
15. UN-Habitat. (2020). *World cities report 2020: The value of sustainable urbanization*. United Nations Human Settlements Programme.