Walkability in Campus, Case study of University Technology Malaysia

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Specially dedicated to my beloved father, mother

and my husband
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ABSTRACT

Education is an endeavor that is highly sensitive to location. The physical environment of a campus does much to stimulate and support the mind, body, and spirit of those who study, live, and work there. The concept of ‘Walkability’ provides a primary principle of sustainability in urban design that anchored people’s perception, influence their perspective and behavior. This study focus on the improvement and enhancement of the quality of campus environment in terms of walkways and open spaces. It express the relationship of physical infrastructure with the walkability, the impact of open spaces on walkable area. The objective of this research is to study about the principles of walkability and to identify the problems of walkability in UTM campus. The scope of this dissertation is limited to the surrounding area of library in UTM. University Technology Malaysia has been chosen as a case study for this dissertation. The research methods used consisted of a questionnaire and behavioral observation. A total of 100 respondents were included. The resulting data were statistically analyzed. The results obtained by questionnaire were supported by the findings obtained from other techniques (behavioral observation). The research found that many physical infrastructure problems decrease the student’s willing to walk. The results show that way which has more open space through the walkways, appropriate street furniture for activities such as seating and places for refreshment, gathering with friends or using wireless internet is used more than the other ways. This findings indicated that a campus with more open space tends to create a sustainable pattern of life on campus.
ABSTRAK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER       TITLE                                      PAGE

DECLARATION

SUPERVISOR’S DECLARATION

STATEMENT OF AWARD FOR THESIS   i

DECLARATION                       ii

DEDICATION                                iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT                   iv

ABSTRACT                                 v

ABSTRAK                                 vii

TABLE OF CONTENTS                  ix

LIST OF TABLES                     xii

LIST OF FIGURES                    xiii

LIST OF APPENDIX                  xviii

1    INTRODUCTION                 1

  1.1  Introduction                1
  1.2  Problem Statements         3
  1.3  Objectives                 3
  1.4  Research Question          3
  1.5  Scope of Study            3
              1.5.1  Study Area  4
# Research Framework

1.6 Research Framework

# Research Methodology

1.7 Research Methodology

# LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What is Walkability?

2.2 Characteristics of Walkability

2.2.1 Characteristics of the Physical Environment in Walkable Area

2.2.2 Visual characteristics of the Walkable Street and Walkable Place

2.3 Walking context

2.4 The Ingredients of a Walkable campus

2.4.1 Pedestrian Comfort and Walkability

2.4.1.1 Weather protection

2.4.1.2 Lighting

2.4.2 Proximity

2.4.3 Landscape Elements

2.4.3.1 Planting

2.4.3.2 Public Art

2.4.4 Pedestrian

2.4.5 Open Spaces

2.4.5.1 Courtyards

2.4.6 Street furniture

2.5 Case Study UTP, University of technology Petronas

2.6 Case study UTM, University Technology Malaysia

2.7 Conclusion

# Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Overview of Research Structure

3.2.1 Essential elements of Walkability

3.2.2 Comparison and Interpretation

3.2.3 Survey / Observation / Recording

3.2.4 Pedestrian and Activity

3.2.5 On-street Environment Survey
3.3. Data analysis

3.3.1 Data Analysis Techniques

3.3.2 Pictorial Analysis

3.3.3 Quality Statements and the derivation of parameters of Comparison

3.4. Conclusion

4 Case Study of University Technology Malaysia

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Brief Background of Malaysia

4.2.1 Brief Background of Johor

4.2.2 The study area (UTM Campus, Library and surrounding area)

4.3 Elements of walkability

4.3.1 Visual Appeal and Visual Characteristics of the Street

4.3.2 Open spaces

4.3.3 Building Fronting the Street (Building Facade)

4.3.4 Nodes

4.3.5 Landmarks

4.3.6 Landscapes

4.3.7 Pedestrian comfort and walkability

4.3.8 Pedestrian circulation

4.3.9 Response of Street User

4.4 Conclusion

5 Conclusion and recommendation

5.1 Visual Appeal and Visual Characteristics of the Street

5.2 Pedestrian Comfort and Walkability

5.3 Places on the street

5.4 Improve the liveliness and activities in the Street space

5.4.1 General guidelines

5.4.2 Rational and Concept of proposal
5.4.3 Guideline for open space in front of library 64
5.4.4 Create a better street for walking 64
5.4.5 Street Furniture 64
5.4.6 Lighting 65

5.5 Conclusion 66
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE NO.</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Primary characteristic of walkability</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Overview of research structure</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Component of Land use Zone at UTM Skudai campus</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Rational and concept of proposal guidelines</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>List of street furniture</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE NO.</td>
<td>TITLE</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Liveable Place</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Physical and designable characteristics of the walkable street</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Visual proportions of a street walkable street elements</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Building Street Ratio</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Use of trees in street definition</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Weather protection</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Lighting in entrances</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Landscape element of a walkable street</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Plants highlighted spaces</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Various Sculpture around campus (public art)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Pedestrian</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>Example of walkways in campus</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>Open space in university brings student together</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>Courtyard offers a variety of landscape treatments</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>Street furniture</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>Map of the UTP site</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>Map of UTP</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Map of Malaysia</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Districts of Johor
4.3 The University Campus
4.4 Map of UTM campus
4.5 The walkable distance in UTM
4.6 Location of colleges in UTM
4.7 Jalan Insaf
4.8 Parking lot in front of library
4.9 Monotonous Building
4.10 Level of maintenance of building
4.11 Distance of building to each other
4.12 Condition of Jalan Amal
4.13 Vistas of Jalan Insaf
4.14 Open space in front of library
4.15 Pedestrian pathway under the canopy
4.16 Condition of pedestrian pathway
4.17 Important pathway in study area
4.18 Sidewalks in Jalan Takwa
4.19 Sidewalks in Jalan Takwa
4.20 Sidewalk in Jalan Takwa
4.21 Crossing way in Jalan Takwa
4.22 Improper covered walkways
4.23 Disconnected pedestrian pathway
4.24 Section of Jalan Insaf
4.25 Building street ratio
4.26 Sidewalks in Jalan Amal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>Street furniture</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>Pedestrian’s need</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>Condition of Jalan Amal</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>Inexistence of pedestrian pathway</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>Topography of the pedestrian way</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>Inexistence of direct way</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>Improper covered pedestrian walkways</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>The width of sidewalks</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>Disconnected pedestrian pathway</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>Barriers of pedestrian pathways</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>Pedestrian Circulation</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>Percentage of ways preference</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>Reasons why students choose the special way</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>Opinion of students about the study area</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>Reasons of use or not use the open space in campus</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Proposed schematic plan</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Education is an endeavor that is highly sensitive to location. Students and alumni respond all their lives to memories of the place that nourished their intellectual growth. The physical environment of a campus does much to stimulate and support the mind, body, and spirit of those who study, live, and work there.

Universities today bear the same responsibility to confront environmental challenges as other institutions, municipalities, and countries around the world, but they can make unique contributions through research, teaching, and student initiatives. Universities also have many opportunities to practice sustainability, through such activities as campus operations and the housing, feeding, and transporting of people.

The term university campus refers to an institutional space that is designed for use in the education and residence of college students (Isiaka & Siong 2008) and includes the building and other physical elements found in the associated area (Shuhana et al. 2007b). The establishment of the university campus usually occurs in stages according to its current needs for growth and development (Walker & McGough 1962). Existing university campuses require further development from time to time, based on the objectives that must be achieved. The physical development planning of a campus can be considered to be successful if the project goals are achieved.

Since the Earth Summit sessions in 1992 and 2002, the issue of sustainability has become a critical topic of discussion (Abdul Ghani & Aziah 2007). Because they are a center of knowledge, universities around the world have become increasingly concerned with this issue
Accordingly, many universities have begun to promote strategies for creating sustainable campuses through education and design projects (Davis & Wolski 2009).

The Sustainable Campus Design Guidelines serve as a high quality and trendsetting example for a sustainable development of urban space.

Universities in Malaysia expressed a commitment to implement sustainable practices when only a few universities were moving toward creating a sustainable campus. However, there are several weak aspects in campus physical development planning that has resulted in the failure to create an environment that offers a conducive environment for learning and living (Shuhana et al. 2007a). In addition, campus physical development planning in Malaysia is less sensitive to change and does not satisfy the needs of students on campus, even though they are the primary ‘clients’ in campus (Mohd Tajuddin 2003).

In this research, a sustainable campus is defined as a campus characterized by operations, social and economic, which promote the long term survival of the environment and our own social structures. The purpose of this research was to examine existing campus physical development plans and their impact on campus life, especially for students.

The concept of ‘Walkability’ provides a primary principle of sustainability in urban design that anchored people’s perception, influence their perspective and behavior. People become more engaged with the surrounding environment and the community. The feeling is easily detectable in a residential community. Whilst residents of a city center may have something to say on this matter, the general public use the center regularly for reasons that are as important as to anyone else to the city, the city must permits or provides the necessary environment. Walking is the pre-requisites of that environment.

Good walking experience must involve safety, comfort and interest. It is important to have good and clean pedestrian walkways; crossings, elevation and the basic utilities (to cater for the various sections of the community) so that people can walk in that area and do not worry for their safety while they are walking along the road. Cullen (1978) explored the element of serial vision that affects human perception and behavior as well as allowing psychological stimulus while walking. Often, many contemporary towns do lack this aspect.

People walk the city for different reason; leisure, business, passing through, etcetera, nonetheless the key factor remains how ‘walkable’ a place is to encourage people to always use and enjoy the walk. A ‘walkable’ city does not only offer an efficient and cheapest transportation mode, but put the urban environments back on a scale for the sustainability of resources (both natural and economic) and lead to increased social interactions.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENTS
According to previous survey in UTM which is shown in Appendix A, although most of all personal trips are twenty or less minutes – a reasonable distance to walk, but current rates of walking for transportation are low.

1.3. OBJECTIVES

The goal of this dissertation is to make our 'common' dream come true, which is to create a satisfactory planning of the pedestrian environment for future developments for coming students to enjoy.

Key objectives include:

1. To determine the principles of walkability
2. To identify the problems of walkability in UTM
3. To developing a guideline for UTM campus

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are the principles of walkability in campus?
2. What are the physical conditions of the streets that would influence and encourage walkability?

1.5. SCOPE OF STUDY

1.5.1. To appraise the concept of walkability and its usefulness for an urban center.

1.5.2. To understand the relationship of public space and walkability in campus. Thus in the study area (University technology Malaysia) of this dissertation, this relationship will be surveyed and analyzed to establish whether the proposed design in chapter 5 can make
the place walkable. The key elements are the physical amenities, the building form and material, the use of public places, focal points.

1.5.3. Due to time constraints, we have delimited our study population to students living in residence on the campus of UTM. These students are easier to access, and therefore data could be collected in a more time effective manner.

1.5.1. STUDY AREA

University technology Malaysia is located in suburban of Johor Bahru city. The UTM campus is a mountainous area and it height is between 12 meters and 150 meters from sea level. Located in the middle of the area of UTM is a number of small hills, and there is a small river which is the recreational lake and river in the university. Because of the existing hill in the centre of the university campus, the concept of centralization development was applied.(Arash Moradkhani Roshandeh, 2009)

The current UTM master plan is based on radial planning. The main administration and faculty are mostly located in the inner circle of the whole campus. Most of the student’s hostels are located far away (more than twenty minutes walks) from the inner circle.

The study area of this dissertation is the inner circle of the UTM campus. The library and mosque and the faculties are located around it. Actually there are some roles in this area. Student vehicle-free policy is strictly applied within the inner circle (Lingkaran Ilmu) of UTM during office hour. But the condition of this area doesn’t respond to the needs of students.

1.6. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The thesis comprises of 5 chapters. Chapter 1 - will comprise an introduction to the research, problem identification, research objectives and research question and research methodology and the study area.
Chapter 2 - will cover the literature review on the subject matter of ‘walkability’ and related concepts to the subject matter under study. This chapter will provide the theoretical framework that provides the ‘content’ input of the study.

Chapter 3 - will comprise research methodology of this thesis.

Chapter 4 - this chapter deals directly with the study area which include site description and history, several aspects of site investigation and data collection including physical survey of sidewalk conditions, perception survey (face to face interviews) with the students coming to the site (local and foreign), observation survey on public places and pedestrian pathway. The information and data will be tabulated and analyzed.

Chapter 5 - this chapter will highlight the basic findings of chapter 4 and will proceed to propose the relevant improvements and changes as seen appropriate by the author. The basic elements of the proposals are highlighted in the form of schematic and conceptual plans and drawings rather than a detail architecture forms.

1.7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methods for our study included a literature review self-administered survey and an observational analysis of walking infrastructure and habits on the campus of University technology Malaysia to enable the creation of a Campus Walkability Map.

According to scope of study that choose the students who live in campus, these residence students are an appropriate section of the population because most residence students walk on campus every day and are very familiar with their campus. A survey was chosen as the method to collect this information because it is an efficient way to collect information about the prevailing opinions of a rather large population. In addition, the data return period on a self-administered survey is short, which is a necessity due to the limited timeline of our research project.

However, there were some cases where it was difficult to stop students for an interview. In these cases, other students in the area, such as pedestrians waiting for a ride were interviewed.

Both the field walkability survey and the pedestrian interview survey were conducted from 7:30 to 10 am and 3 to 5 pm to capture the morning and afternoon peak-hour pedestrian movement and also the observation was conducted at night time.
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