

Abstract:

Urban residential neighborhoods are the primary environment for children during their critical early period when they are most vulnerable and developing rapidly residential areas are supposed to be safe, secure and healthy places, facilitating care giving and supervision, as well as meeting children's basic physical, social, mental, cultural and psychological needs. Children are active learners from the beginning of life and the provision of a safe and stimulating environment where each child is allowed to grow and learn as an individual is essential to support their full development This implies that adequate spaces and places must be available in diverse and stimulating environments that provide access and opportunities to play, social integration, independent mobility and safety, convenience of health, education and shopping facilities and .security and protection from all kinds of harassment This study focused on assessing how urban residential neighborhoods in Nairobi have been planned and designed with regard to children's requirements and how effective the environs have been, in supporting the well being and development of children This was done by answering research questions such as a) what public amenities and spaces have been made in residential areas to cater for the children's requirements? b) Where have the public amenities and spaces been located in relation to dwellings? c) What is the nature of problems experienced by children in existing settlements where facilities have not been provided? d) What options are available for planners, designers, other professionals and stakeholders to integrate children's requirements in the planning and designing of urban residential areas? Answers were captured by conducting a physical audit of amenities in residential neighborhoods- through inventorying and photography Secondly, children were observed and interviewed to find out their use, attitudes and perceptions of urban residential space Similarities and differences between age groups were captured as the children had been divided into three different age groups for purposes of the research. Parents, teachers-in the areas, neighborhoods association leaders and church elders were interviewed to find out their opinion on how responsive/non responsive urban space has been for their children. The study was carried out in. the low income densely populated marginalized urban fringe of the city of Nairobi, Eastland's This is because 'children from economically disadvantaged areas are worst affected by poor planning and designing of urban space A comparison between three , neighborhoods in east lands, planned and developed on different planning approaches in three different generations was done in order to asses which approach and development has been most effective and supportive in meeting children's requirements, and how policy and practice in planning for children has been Over the years.