

User Perception of Land Use Activities and Forms Along River Corridors

A Case of the Nairobi River Urban Waterfront

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ABSTRACT

The Nairobi River corridor is neither pleasant nor enjoyable. Accessibility to the waterfront is ill-defined and obscure. The built and natural environments are neglected, dilapidated and unsightly. The river basin is highly polluted with mounds of garbage, raw sewage, and chemical wastes. Unplanned and unregulated development schemes proliferate, and the areas adjacent to the river are extremely dangerous and crime prone. This research studies the relationship between environments and human behaviour. The study employs Environmental Behaviour Research methods to establish how the forms and land uses along the Nairobi River corridor relate to the users' attitudes and resultant behaviour patterns. Observation methods are used to establish the land use activities and dominant behaviour patterns of the users. User perception and attitude are assessed through scheduled interviews which employ preference/judgment scales, open ended questions and visual aids, where respondents rate 80 photos representing a variety of urban scenes and urban waterfronts. 5 urban design professionals have also rated the photos, in order to establish their Complexity, Monumentality, Order, Openness, Balance and Commonness. The respondents rate the *best things* about the river corridor as the Commerce/Business environment, and the *worst things* as Environmental Issues, Social Issues, Poor Infrastructure and Poor Maintenance. They *like* Complex, Ordered, Open, Balanced and Commonplace urban scenes; and Complex, Monumental, Ordered, Open, Balanced and Unusual urban waterfronts. It is recommended that regeneration efforts enhance essential linkages through an integrated transportation network, giving priority to pedestrian circulation. A vibrant mix of uses, and cultural events should also be incorporated to attract users to a continuous waterfront promenade, in order to inject vitality and bring active participation by users with the water's edge.

