Public Housing and Defensible Space Concepts in Festac Town, Lagos, Nigeria

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The security of the communal environment otherwise known as the neighbourhood is of utmost concern to the residents to the residents and users of such environment. This is more so as the issue of security has been widely acknowledged to home grave economic, social, political and health implications for the general well-being of residents. Scholars have long recognized security as a potent indicator of sustainable development. This paper reports a field research in a public housing estate – FESTAC. It examines three elements of the Defensible Space Concepts namely; territoriality, surveillance and milieu, using the quantitative method, through the pathways of the neighbourhood types. The findings indicate that the investigated elements are stronger in those neighbourhoods that comprised. Single family units. Specifically, it identified certain indices, take maintenance signage, access control, eternal lighting commercial activities quality of surveillance and absence of undesirable properties as drivers of the disparity. The paper recommends strong commitment but the residents and managers to ensure continued sustainability of the similar estate.

Keywords: Territoriality, Surveillance, Milieu, Neighbourhood, FESTAC

Introduction

It has been said that a significant prerequisite for a sustainable environment is that it should not pose a threat to current or future users. A sustainable community, therefore, is one defined as safe, perceived as safe (by residents), and widely considered safe by others. In a sustainable environment, therefore, it is essential that the inhabitants have no cause to fear for their personal safety, the safety of their possessions, or the safety of other community members (Cozens, 2004).

The issue of security in residential environments demands attention, because it is central to most citizens' concerns, not least because it bears direct relevance to their overall well-being. This means that the community security has broader social, economic, health, and political implications. Socially, a lack of security engenders social exclusion, manifested in low community cohesion and ultimately leads to difficult social attachment (Cozens *et al.,* 2001). This makes residents shun association with strangers (Abodunrin, cited in Agbola 1997) and explains the common causes of isolation in urban communities. The residents also equally avoid going out at certain times of the day, especially at night, for fear of criminal attack. All these result in the loss of community appreciation.

It is also important to highlight that there have been considerable discussions on the role of public housing estate design in influencing the lack of security in residential environments (Matka, 1997). Such discussions and debates were encouraged by the fact that crime problems have arisen from time to time on a lot of public estates. In addition, the design of public estates has been associated with crime. Therefore, the study area - FESTAC Housing Estate - presents an ideal setting to investigate issues of security in a community.

However, recent trend in public housing have shown the need to critically look at this aspect of public housing so its negative impact on the houses and their users could be adequately addressed. This view is reinforced by the fact that a lot of studies have shown that much of the failure of public housing can be attributed to crime and the fear of crime. For example, Oscar Newman (1996). Another example in Australia was a public housing estate in Villawood (Matka, 1997) in which the estate experienced a series of disturbances, which focused media attention on the issue of crime in public housing. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, many large council estates, built in the intervening or immediate post-war periods such as Halton Moor in Leeds and Southmead in Bristol have come to be known as high crime areas (Shaftoe, 1998). These examples have shown that the issue of crime and the fear of the crime in public housing is a universal problem. Therefore, to seek reduction in this phenomenon one must seek to find out the cause of this trend, and to do this the issue of safety in public housing has to be adequately studied and for which no adequate attention has been paid. Given this background, this study aimed to examine these defensible space characteristics in the FESTAC Housing Estate. Specifically, it describes and

compares the defensible space characteristics across the different neighbourhoods in FESTAC Town. In addition, it identifies the indicators of the elements of defensible space as well as the performance of the different types of neighbourhoods with respect to defensible space elements.

Literature Review

Several scholarly attempts have been made over the years to proffer solutions to the problems of crime in residential communities and urban neighbourhoods. One of the most notable of these was that of Jane Jacobs (1961) and C. Ray Jeffery (1971). Jacobs, in her book "Death and Life of Great American Cities", challenged the basic tenets of urban planning of the time. These tenets were that residential neighbourhoods should be isolated, that empty streets were safer than crowded ones, and that the car was more important than the pedestrian. She argued that the continued adherence to these tenets would make cities unable to develop the social framework needed for effective self-policing. She suggested that crime flourishes when people do not meaningfully interact with their neighbours. She then proposed three attributes she believed would make a city street safe. First is a clear demarcation of private and public space, second is diversity of use and third, a high level of pedestrian use of the sidewalks, which she termed 'eye on the street'. In the same vein, Jeffery (1971), a criminologist, was credited with originating the phrase "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" (CPTED) before Newman popularised it. The early development of the Defensible Space theory and a great deal of its application is attributable to one person, Architect Oscar Newman. Newman claimed that the theory is about a means of restructuring the residential environments of cities, so they can again become liveable and controlled not by police, but by a community of people sharing a common terrain (Newman, 1966). The theory is anchored on the fundamental assumption that most criminals exhibit rational behaviour (Monais & Hussein, 2021). This means that they select as targets locations which they believe will offer high rewards but very low risks of getting caught. To deter crime, therefore, the theory postulated that spaces that convey to would-be intruders a strong sense that if they entered, they were very likely to be observed, be identified as intruders, and have difficulty escaping were likely to be less prone to crime. According to Newman, "Defensible Space" is a surrogate term for the range of mechanisms, real and symbolic barriers, strongly defined areas of influence and improved opportunities for surveillance that combine to bring an environment under the control of its residents (Newman, 1996; Jegede *et al.*, 2018).

Elements of defensible space

Defensible Space, according to Newman, has four elements which act separately or in combination to foster a safer residential environment (Marzukhi, 2018; Muhyi *et al.,* 2019). First, they are the capacity of the physical environment to create perceived zones of territorial influence, which may otherwise be referred to as territorial ownership. Simply defined, it means the ownership and control of a geographical area by one or more individuals. Because the operative words are ownership and control, territories are demarcated and defended, and., by implication, reflect the area of influence of inhabitants.

Second is the capacity of the physical design to provide surveillance opportunities for residents and their agents; this is called 'Natural Surveillance'. The operation of this component involves the capacity of the building to function in such a way as to enable residents to observe and monitor activities outside of their unit. This involves carefully planning the constituent space in the unit to facilitate observation. It also involves the well-thought-out placement of building elements, such as windows, doors, corridors, stairways, and elevators (Newman, 1996; Al-Ghiyadh & Al-Kahfaji 2021).

The third element is the capacity of the design to influence the perception of a project's uniqueness, isolation and stigma; this is referred to as 'Image'. This largely concerns offenders' perception that areas are vulnerable to crime and that residents are so fearful that they would do nothing to stop a crime (Taylor & Harrell, 1996). Image also refers to the conception of the building forms and fabric in a way that would make people perceive that the building or community is vulnerable (Goyal & Jhav, 2021).

The fourth element of the theory is the influence of geographical juxtaposition with "safe zones" or the security of adjacent areas (Newman,1996). This is referred to as 'milieu'. This is described by Newman as the positive influence of property believed to be safe (e.g. police stations) on the security of surrounding areas. Other scholars, such as Agbola (1997), referred to this factor as functional location. The effectiveness of this element is based on the notion that the presence of those high activity areas, like schools and police stations, can easily provide security by their presence.

The economic implications are manifested in direct and indirect losses. Direct losses can be in the form of cash losses due to medical expenses incurred due to injuries. Indirect losses, on the other hand, could involve increased insurance premium on properties due to lack of adequate security in housing. In addition, a large portion of the gross domestic product (GDP) is utilised to secure residential buildings by providing locks and other target hardening devices. The health implication of insecurity is that it induces psychological stress through anxiety and depression

(on the residents) as a result of the fear of being victims of attack. The lack of safety can also result in injuries if residents are attacked. Moreover, the residents become vulnerable to health hazards and communicable diseases due to poor air circulation when small windows are used to secure residential properties. The political implications of a lack of security are that it could lead to a perception of government institutions as incompetent in combating crime, thereby portraying governments as incapable of discharging their basic responsibilities to the citizens in protecting their lives and properties. But by far the most significant impact of a lack of security is the reduction in investment in all economic/commercial activities in all facets of a neighbourhood (Akpan *et al*., 2022).

Study Area

FESTAC Town, Lagos, Nigeria is a mix of open-access and gated residential neighbourhoods within a planned urban context. Originally designed as a model township for the 1977 Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC), the area has since experienced significant transformations, including the proliferation of gated communities, driven by urbanization pressures and socio-economic changes. Gated communities may offer perceived benefits such as safety and exclusivity, they also alter the spatial fabric of cities, often creating physical and social divisions (Ogundele *et al*., 2011). Festac Town, also known as Festival Town, is a significant residential and commercial area located in the Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area of Lagos. It is situated along the Lagos-Badagry Expressway, about 20 kilometres to the southwest of the central business district on Lagos Island. The town lies at Latitude 6.4950° N and Longitude 3.328° E, and is bordered by other key neighbourhoods. Including Mile 2, Alaba International Market, and Ojo. Festac Town's strategic location and its excellent road connectivity to various parts of Lagos and beyond make it a prominent and well-integrated part of the city's urban landscape (Abayomi & Olumide, 2019; Fasina & Omojola, 2004) (See Figure 1).

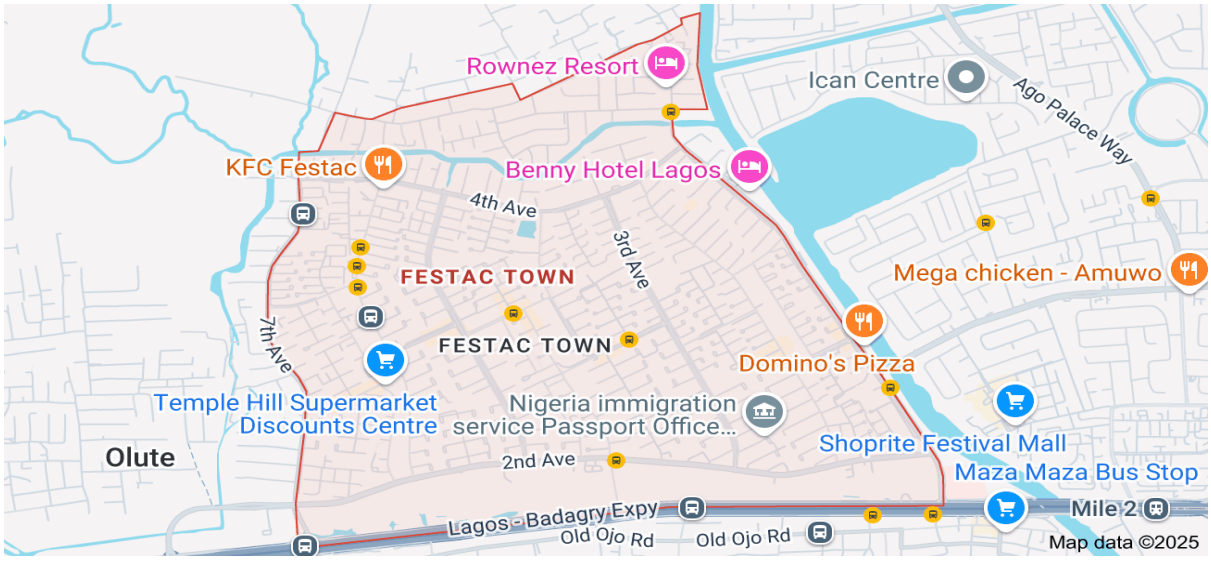

Figure 1: Map showing FESTAC Town Layout
Source: Google.com

Research Methodology

Mixed methods research design was adopted thereby necessitating the need for the development of two (2) instruments namely the questionnaire and the observation checklist. One thousand (1,000) questionnaires were distributed out of which 710 (71%) were returned. Table 2 shows the distribution of returned questionnaires across the neighbourhoods. Eight assistants were trained to collect data. Each assistant administered questionnaires and observation schedule to gather data about the neighbourhoods.

Table 1: Division of the estate into homogenous neighbourhoods

Neighbourhood	SDUs	10%	MDUs	10%
A	946	95		
B			776	78
C			848	85
D	1308	130		
E			1648	165
F	722	72		
Total	2,976	296	3272	327

Legend: SDU - single dwelling units, MDUs - multiple dwelling units, NHD - neighbourhood

Table 2: Distribution of Returned Questionnaires

Neighbourhood	Number of Respondents	Percentage
NHD A (Single Dwelling)	95	13.4
NHD B (Multiple Dwelling)	104	14.7
NHD C (Multiple Dwelling)	81	11.4
NHD D (Single Dwelling)	137	19.4
NHD E (Multiple Dwelling)	166	23.7
NHD F (Single Dwelling)	125	17.7
Total	**708**	**100**

*2 of the questionnaires were invalid

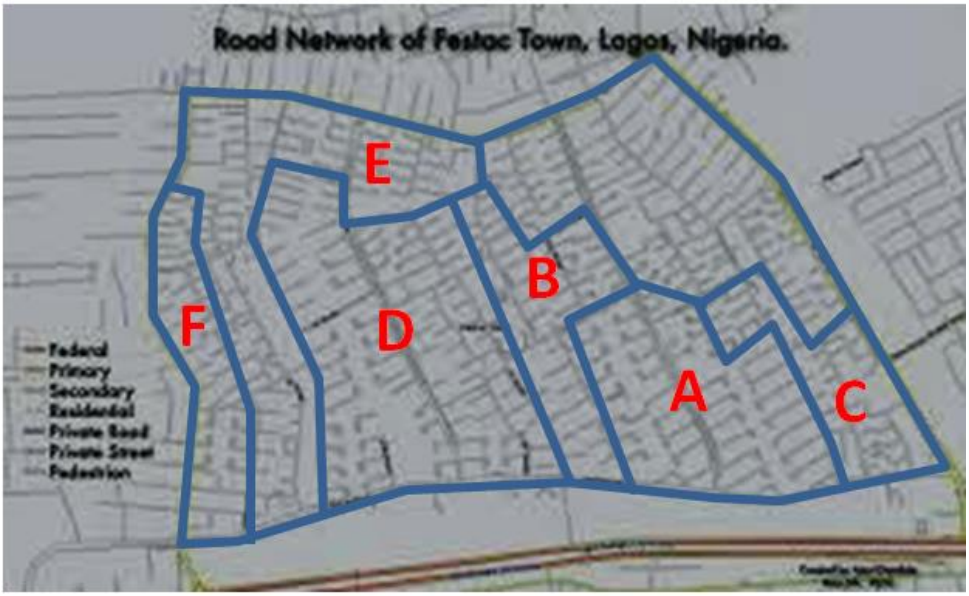

Figure 2: The different neighbourhoods in FESTAC Town

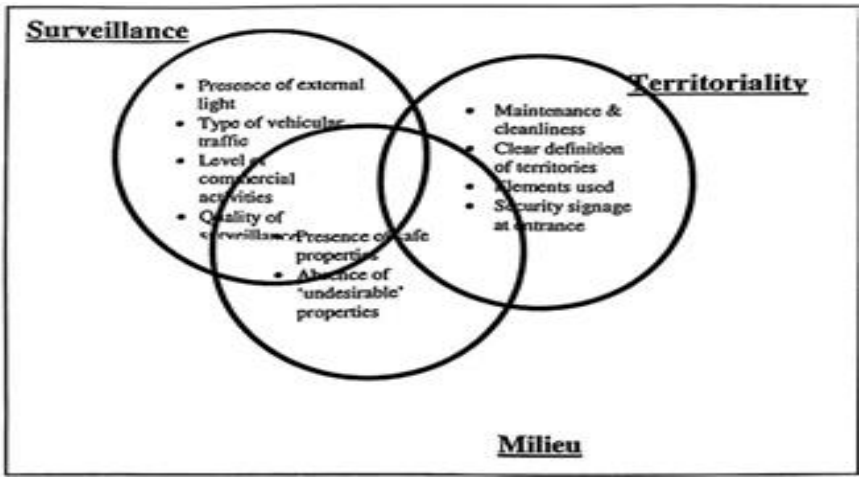

Figure 3: Defensible Space Elements and their Operationalization in the Study
Source: Authors

For the purpose of this research, the population of buildings was limited to the houses as built originally at FESTAC Town. It did not include later buildings, the designs of which vary significantly. The population for the study, which included all the original houses, was classified into six (6) distinct neighbourhoods labelled: A, B, C, D, E & F. All the six neighbourhoods were selected for this study, based on the physical characteristics of the neighbourhoods; three of them-A, D and F-have been found to be Single Dwelling Neighbourhoods; these comprise maisonettes, detached and semi-detached duplexes and bungalows, while the other three-B,C and E- are Multiple Dwelling Neighbourhoods, which are made up basically of flats of various sizes (1, 2 and 3 bedrooms). These neighbourhoods were observed to obtain data.

Sampling technique

The sampling technique employed was stratified systematic sampling. The study area was divided into six (6) neighbourhoods of which three (3) or them consists of Single Dwelling Units (SDU) and the remaining three (3) being Multiple Dwelling apartment blocks (MDU). Therefore, out of estimated sample size of 2976 single dwelling units, a projected minimum target of 10% which translates to 296 units was targeted to be sampled. Similarly, for the multiple dwelling apartments there is (Table 2) an estimated sample size of 3272 out which a minimum 10% which also translated to 327 units was targeted for survey.

The rating scale techniques was used by Garlands and Stokols (2002) and also by Moran and Dolphin (1986), Garlands and Stokols employed this technique to obtain data on the visitors, subjective perceptions of meaning, fear of crime and behaviour affordance in the neighbourhood (inner-city) setting. Five indicators were selected measure territoriality in the neighbourhoods. These are maintenance and cleanliness of the neighbourhood; clear definition of territories; the elements used to define the territories; presence or absence of security signage at entrance to the neighbourhood, and elements used to restrict access.

For the measurement of surveillance, four indicators were used; these are the presence of external light to eliminate blind spots, the type of vehicular traffic, level of commercial activities around the neighbourhood and quality of surveillance. To measure milieu, only two indicators were used, namely: the presence of properties believed to be safe and the absence of 'undesirable' properties.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study are as presented.

Demographic characteristics

The selected characteristics are household size and length of residence.

Household size

The highest percentage pf household size is 4-6 (51.4%).

Table 3: Number of Persons/Household

	1-3		4-6		7-10		11-15		16-23		24-45		
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Total
A	18	20.4	43	48.8	18	20.4	6	10.4	-	-	-	-	88
B	16	17.7	52	57.7	21	23.3	-	-	1	1.3	-	-	90
C	12	16.0	40	53.3	18	24.0	4	5.3	-	-	1	1.4	75
D	20	16.4	59	48.3	32	26.2	10	8.2	-	-	1	0.9	122
E	19	12.2	82	52.9	49	31.6	3	1.9	2	1.4	-	-	155
F	19	18.2	47	45.2	29	27.8	8	7.7	1	1.1	-	-	104
Total	104	16.4	326	51.4	167	26.3	31	4.9	4	.6	2	.3	634

Length of residence

Majority of the residents are long term residents when viewed from those that have lived there from 11 years and above.

Table 4: Length of Residence

	1-5		6-10		11-15		16-20		21-25		26-30		31-35		36-40		
NHD	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Total
A	22	23.6	19	20.4	10	10.7	19	20.4	15	16.1	7	7.5	1	1.3	-	-	93
B	29	30.5	23	24.2	10	10.5	14	14.7	5	5.3	13	13.7	1	1.1	-	-	95
C	19	24.6	14	18.2	10	12.9	11	14.3	7	9.0	15	19.5	1	1.5	-	-	71
D	34	26.7	22	17.3	9	7.0	18	14.1	17	13.4	25	19.7	1	0.9	1	0.9	12
E	37	23.2	29	18.2	14	8.8	13	8.2	23	14.4	41	25.8	2	1.4	-	-	159
F	39	33.9	25	21.7	10	8.7	11	9.6	12	10.4	17	14.8	-	-	1	1.9	115
Total	180	27.0	132	19.8	63	9.4	86	12.9	98	11.8	118	17.7	6	0.9	2	0.5	666

Territoriality indices

The results in Table 5 show that neighbourhood F seems to be the best maintained of the entire neighbourhood, with an index of 4.8, while neighbourhood B, on the other hand, appears to be the least maintained, with an index of 3.0. Going by these indices, it seems that conscious efforts are being made by residents, particularly, and this is probably in conjunction with the relevant government agencies in maintaining the respective neighbourhoods. Maintenance and cleanliness appear to be the strongest indicators of territoriality (of potential and direct resident intervention in their neighbourhood). This is reinforced by the fact that maintenance has the highest index of all indicators on territoriality. In addition, Single Dwelling Neighbourhoods appear to have higher scores on this indicator (maintenance and cleanliness) than the Multiple Dwelling Neighbourhoods.

Therefore, in terms of aggregate index, neighbourhood F has the highest index (3.92), while it is to be noted that neighbourhood D, in spite of its brilliant showing, only came third, most probably because it did badly in elements used to define territories. However, Single-Dwelling Neighbourhoods appear to have (on average) better territorial definition than Multiple-Dwelling Neighbourhoods

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Figure 4: A Well-maintained Neighbourhood

Table 5: Indices on Territoriality of the Neighbourhoods

Indicators	Neighbourhoods					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Index	Index	Index	Index	Index	Index
Maintenance and cleanliness of NHD	4.2	3.0	3.2	4.0	3.6	4.8
Clear definition of territories	3.2	2.2	2.4	3.4	2.8	3.6
Elements used (walls, etc.)	2.6	NR	2.6	1.0	4.0	3.0
Security signage at the entrance to NHD	4.2	1.8	1.0	5.0	1.8	4.2
Elements to restrict access	4.2	3.4	1.2	4.4	3.0	4.0
Average	3.68	2.28	2.08	3.58	3.04	3.92

NHDS A, D, F - Single Dwelling Units, NR - not relevant, B,C,E - Multiple Dwelling Units

Surveillance

The surveillance results in the neighbourhoods are discussed using the indicators identified earlier in the methodology. The first of these was the use of external light to eliminate blind spots. Here, neighbourhood A seems to have the highest index (3.6), while neighbourhood C has the least index (1.8). A close look at Table 6 shows that, generally, Single Dwelling Neighbourhoods seem to do relatively well, while Multiple Dwelling Neighbourhoods did not seem to do as well. However, it should be noted that the indices of even the Single Dwelling Neighbourhoods are still average. This may be a direct result of decayed infrastructure on the whole estate.

When it comes to the level of commercial activities, neighbourhood B seems to enjoy the highest level of activities with an index of 4.6, while neighbourhood D appears to have the least index (1.6). From the foregoing, it appears that there is no direct relationship between vehicular traffic and commercial activities. Second, it appears that there are more commercial activities around multi-family dwelling neighbourhoods than their single-family counterparts, which may be a consequence of inherent economic disparities.

Finally, considering the aggregate index on surveillance, neighbourhoods A and C jointly seem to have the best index (4.2), while neighbourhood D comes last with an index of 2.85. This could mean that neighbourhood D's apparent deficiency in commercial activities could be significant in determining the value of surveillance (Table 6).

Table 6: Indices of Surveillance in the Neighbourhoods

Indicators	Neighbourhood					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Index	Index	Index	Index	Index	Index
External light to eliminate blind spots	3.6	2.8	1.8	3.0	2.0	3.0
Type of vehicular traffic	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.0	3.0	2.6
Level of commercial activities	2.8	4.6	4.0	1.6	2.2	3.0
Quality of surveillance	3.0	3.0	3.6	3.8	2.4	3.6
Average	4.2	3.45	4.2	2.85	2.4	3.05

A,D,F Single **Dwelling** Neighbourhoods, B,C,E Multiple Dwelling Neighbourhood

Milieu

The study also collected data on indicators of milieu, which suggests that neighbourhood A has the highest presence of properties believed to be safe, with an index of 3.6, while neighbourhood C has the least, with an index of 1.8 (Table 7). This may not be unconnected with the fact that neighbourhood A is home to such high-profile 'safe' properties as the Nigeria Police Area/Divisional Headquarters and secondary schools. In the case of the absence of 'undesirable' properties, neighbourhood A seems to have the highest index of 4.0, while neighbourhood B has the lowest index of 1.4. This means that neighbourhood B seems to have the highest preponderance of kiosks and abandoned cars.

With respect to aggregate in the milieu, neighbourhood A appears to be the best with an index of 3.8, while neighbourhood B is the lowest with an index of 2.3. However, it must also be noted that the aggregate index on milieu is not that impressive across all neighbourhoods.

Table 7: Index of Milieu in the Neighbourhoods

Indicators	Neighbourhoods					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Index	Index	Index	Index	Index	Index
Presence of 'safe' properties	3.6	3.2	1.8	3.0	2.2	3.0
Absence of 'undesirable' properties	4.0	1.4	3.6	3.8	2.8	2.0
Average	3.8	2.3	2.7	3.4	2.5	2.5

A,D,F Single Dwelling Neighbourhoods, B,C,E Multiple Dwelling Neighbourhoods

Summary of findings

Overall the defensible space concepts are stronger in the single Dwelling Neighbourhood shown their multiple dwelling counterparts. As for the elements: in territoriality three indices initiated to the stronger showing namely maintenance and cleanliness of the neighbourhood; security signage at the entrance and access control elements. For surveillance, the significant indices are external light, level of commercial activities and quality of surveillance. As for milieu the stand quality of surveillance. As for milieu, the stand-out indices is absence of undesirable.

Table 8: Summary of Indices for Neighbourhood Defensible Space

Elements of Defensible Space Concept	Neighbourhoods					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Territoriality	3.68	2.28	2.08	3.56	3.04	3.92
Surveillance	4.20	3.45	4.20	2.85	2.40	3.05
Milieu	3.80	2.30	2.70	3.40	2.50	2.50
Average	3.89	2.68	2.99	3.27	2.65	3.16
Neighbourhood Type	*SD	*MD	*MD	*SD	*MD	*SD

*SD Single Dwelling * MD Multiple Dwelling

Conclusion

Though the study examined three of four elements of the concept, the results clearly demonstrated the significance of defensible space concepts in ensuring the defensibility of the constituent neighbourhood. the study is an indication of the importance of the active role of the residents in ensuring that the elements of the concept which has been identified in this study are continuously maintained and improved upon to ensure the continued defensibility of the residential environment designers of new residential environments should also be painstaking in incorporating these elements in new schemes for a better, liveable environment.

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