



# Impacting Social Change through Urban Planning!



Urban Planning plays a very integral role in the overall growth and development of a country. Some might ask questions like, what is the impact of planning? Or how does it matter? For this month the Belize Association of Planners is diving into ways urban planning impacts social change in the diverse country of Belize. We will be looking at various elements in which urban planning is a key factor of not only the environmental and structural development of a country, but also the social development. With that said, we are focusing on three major pillars that are impacted by urban planning through the social lens. These are Crime Prevention, Poverty Reduction, and Community Engagements.

## Crime Prevention



*(Image from Prezi, 2022)*

The systemic issue of crime has been embedded in the depths of society for years. Throughout history and research, there are various interconnected contributing factors from the social to the economic sectors that cause issues of crime in communities. However, let us take a look at how the field of urban planning can help to reduce the crime rate within communities. Urban planning plays a key role in the prevention of crime, as planning contributes to identifying root causes, establishes a local presence of the state and helps to build trust between marginalized groups and institutions – a key strategy for crime prevention (Urban Gateway, 2022).

Urban planning interventions such as, ‘Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design’ (CPTED) is a crime prevention theory geared towards a tactical design and the effective use of the built environment, which when applied, reduces both crime and the fear of crime (Design for Security, 2022). This intervention is aimed at reducing the incident of crime in environments and promoting positive interactions in spaces with people. For example, interventions in public spaces like improving the sidewalks, proper lighting, or closing streets to car use, can already make a huge difference in social interactions of people. It is also critical that urban planning policies are placed into perspective to help balance the inequities of education, health care, employment, housing, and finance through the social lens.

## Poverty Reduction



Poverty is known to be a complex global phenomenon, for years humans have been fighting against this issue which has caused suffering to the lives of many. Through this process of change the elimination of urban deprivation was one of the goals of the founders of modern city planning. Let's take a look at some ways urban planning helps in the reduction of poverty:

1. Urban planning helps to develop new platforms of education for children from low income and culturally deprived homes through the constructive planning of homes and schools within communities.
2. It reduces unemployment, as it fosters new opportunities of jobs and skills training for people within the community.
3. It also encourages self-sustainability from an individual and group standpoint through community organization methods that stimulate neighborhood participation.
4. Urban planning extends the amount and quality of social services to the low income population through the provision of modern facilities and programs of public recreation, public health and community center activities.

## Community Engagements



Community engagement is a concerted values-based tool in planning that addresses core concerns of residents and stakeholders in a targeted community. Impoverished or minority populations are often under-served in community development decisions. Community Engagement must be a meaningful two-way conversation that accounts for a community's individual and collective history, perceptions, opinions, and successes and failures. Thus urban planning through the means of consultation with communities helps to build three underlying principles of community engagement which are relationships, trust and partnership.

Looking at principle one, a relationship is built between stakeholders and community members through common interest, a shared goal, a desire to take action regarding an issue or subject matter, and a willingness to collaborate with others. This strengthens the second principle which is trust between the research team, partner organizations, and stakeholders through investing time in the community, dedicating intellectual resources to the study area, and contributing to existing efforts. By building relationships with existing local organizations. And lastly, there is strong possibility of long term partnerships formed that can be mutually beneficial to both organizations and communities that are equally valued and incorporated in communities to create sustainable development.



## Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association Celebrates Biodiversity Day

On May 22nd, 2022, Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association joined the international community in celebrating Biodiversity Day. The Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association is committed to raising awareness about the importance of preserving biodiversity, and worked earnestly to ensure that there is a diverse population of fishes, corals and other marine life across the Turneffe Atoll Marine Reserve.

With the assistance of their supportive partners, they have become great enforcers and protectors of one of Belize's most remarkable ecosystems. They strive daily to maintain the integrity of the reserve, so that future generations can witness the magic of one of Belize's most diverse ecosystems. (Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association, 2022).

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