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Masterplanned Communities for Healthy Living

Bajracharya, Bishna

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OVERVIEW

With increasing demand for housing in large metropolitan regions, private developers are building new masterplanned communities on the fringe of major cities. Unlike conventional housing subdivisions, masterplanned communities are large scale integrated housing developments with provision for diversity of housing, shopping, open spaces and recreation facilities (McGuirk and Dowling, 2007; Minnery and Bajracharya, 1999; Schmitz et al., 1998). Due to growing health concerns linked to inactive living, a number of new masterplanned communities in South East Queensland are creating supportive environments for physical activities.

Varsity Lakes in Gold Coast is an example of such a community, which provides both infrastructures and programs to encourage active living (Bajracharya and Khan, 2010). Started in 2002 by developer Delfin Lend Lease, it covers an area of 343 hectares and contains a range of residential, mixed use, community and business land uses, focussed along the foreshore of Lake Orr and a range of open space areas (Delfin Lend Lease, 2010).

There is a growing body of literature that examines the links between built environment and health. Frank et al. (2003) argue that the design of built environment can play an important role on physical activities by exacerbating or mitigating physical and mental well-being outcomes among people. In another study, Frank et al. (2006) found that single use, low density developments with disconnected street networks can result in reduced walking and transit use which in turn adversely affect health by limiting physical activity.

According to Sallis et al. (2011), built environment attributes such as mixed land use, street connectivity, residential density, pedestrian infrastructure, aesthetics and access to recreational facilities can enhance physical activity in a community. Giles-Corti and Donovan (2003) argued that there needs to be supportive social and physical environment for walking (such as provision of attractive open spaces) as well as strategies to influence individuals (such as encouraging them to walk in small groups).

THIS RESEARCH

The objective of the research is to examine the emerging role of masterplanned communities in promoting active and healthy living. The research has developed a conceptual framework focussing on three critical themes to support active and healthy living applied to Varsity Lakes as a case study area. They comprise:

- 1) provision of supportive built environment and infrastructure;
- 2) development of recreational programs; and
- 3) governance mechanisms.

This research has also identified key issues and opportunities Varsity Lakes is facing in terms of provision of services for active living and drawn conclusions for planning future masterplanned communities. This study has laid the foundation upon which future research can be based to refine the framework and test its robustness by applying it to other masterplanned communities.

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Amenities for active living in Varsity Lakes



Framework for active living in Varsity Lakes

