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User Behaviour and Activity Patterns in Public Spaces: A Case Study of Akure, Nigeria

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Abstract

Public spaces are essential components of urban environments, providing venues for social interaction, cultural expression, and recreational activities. Akure, in Ondo State, Nigeria, public spaces face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor maintenance, and underutilization. This study investigates users' behaviour and activity patterns in twelve (12) public spaces across Akure's core, transitional, and peripheral zones. Using structured surveys and observational methods, data were collected from 334 respondents to analyse socio-economic characteristics, activity preferences, and spatial usage. The results revealed that social activities (36.2%) and religious gatherings (28.0%) dominate public space usage, with significant variations between zones. The findings highlighted challenges such as insufficient facilities, poor accessibility for vulnerable groups, and limited community engagement in Urban Planning processes. This research aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 3 (Good Health and Well-being), offering actionable recommendations to improve inclusivity, accessibility and functionality in public spaces. The study concludes by emphasising the importance of Participatory Planning approaches to enhance the utilisation of public spaces in Akure and similar urban centres.

Keywords: Public Spaces, Users' Behaviour, Spatial Behaviour, Urban Planning, Urban Sustainability, Recreational Infrastructure, Akure.

Introduction

Public spaces are vital components of urban environments, serving as arenas for social interaction, cultural expression, recreation, and economic activities. They are the "living rooms" of cities, where people gather to connect, celebrate, protest, or simply relax (Gehl & Svarre, 2013). Globally, well-designed public spaces contribute significantly to urban sustainability by fostering inclusivity, enhancing the quality of life, and promoting environmental resilience (UN-Habitat, 2022). However, in many developing countries, including Nigeria, public spaces are often neglected or underutilised due to inadequate planning, poor maintenance, and limited understanding of users' needs (Officha, Onwemesi, and Akanwa, 2013).

Akure, the capital city of Ondo State in South-West Nigeria, exemplifies the challenges faced by public spaces in rapidly urbanising regions. As a medium-sized city with a population exceeding 500,000 (National Population Commission-NPC, 2008). Akure is characterised by a mix of traditional Yoruba culture and modern urban development. Since Akure became the capital of Ondo province in 1915, the land cover has undergone various transformations due to the uses to which the land has been put for development (Adeoye, 2016). Its public spaces—ranging from parks and open squares to informal gathering spots—play a crucial role in the city's socio-cultural fabric. However, these spaces are increasingly under pressure due to rapid urbanisation, population growth, and competing land uses. Public spaces in Akure serve diverse purposes. They host social events such as weddings, burial ceremony receptions, and naming ceremonies, as well as religious gatherings. (Such as open-air crusades); cultural festivals; political rallies; and recreational activities. Despite their multi-functionality, many of these spaces are poorly maintained and lack adequate infrastructure to support their intended uses.

Moreover, there appears to be limited empirical research on how residents utilise these spaces and what factors influence their behaviour. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining users' behaviour in public spaces across Akure's core, transitional, and peripheral zones. By understanding how people interact with these spaces and identifying the challenges they face, the research aims to provide actionable insights for urban planners and policymakers to improve public space design and management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualising public space and user behaviour

Public spaces are not mere physical entities in an urban setting but a socio-spatial context in which human behaviour is shaped. Scholars have highlighted those public spaces provide opportunities for social engagement, recreation, and community cohesion, thereby promoting the general well-being of urban dwellers. Gehl and Svarre (2013) noted that the quality of public space influences the type and intensity of activities users engage in. Recently, public spaces have played a crucial role in social sustainability; they promote and encourage interaction across different socio-economic, religious, political and cultural groups.

Empirical Evidence on Activity Patterns in Public Spaces

Empirical studies on users' activity patterns in public spaces have shown controlled, predictable patterns influenced by physical spatial features, proximity, frequency of use, and time spent in public spaces (Hardilla, Garcia, and Dewanker, 2026).

Studies have revealed that public space behaviour includes activities such as recreation, economic engagement, and other informal activities with variations from place to place. A behavioural mapping study reveals that an uneven distribution of activity in spatial features in public spaces, which are greatly influenced by design, planning, the physical environment and user attributes (Ubani, Alabi, Chiemelu, Okosun Ans Sam-Amobi 2023).

Studies have revealed that activity patterns are diverse and are influenced by time, proximity and available facilities in public spaces. Evidence of daily, weekly, holiday, and festive periods as key to use at specific times by users Lin, Lai, Hsueh, & Liao (2024), Hardilla et al. (2026). Socio-demographic characteristics of users are critical to how they use public spaces; variables such as age, gender, income level, and employment status can significantly influence the type and frequency of use.

The Role of Public Spaces in Urban Life

Public spaces have long been recognised as essential elements of urban life. From ancient Greek Agoras to modern-day parks and plazas, these spaces have served as hubs for community engagement and civic participation (Carr, Francis, Rivlin, and Stone, 1992). They provide opportunities for leisure, recreation, cultural expression, and economic activities while fostering a sense of belonging among residents. In contemporary cities, public spaces also play a critical role in addressing urban challenges such as social inequality, environmental degradation, and mental health issues (Mandeli, 2019). The benefits of public spaces include the following:

1. Social Inclusion: Public spaces can bridge socio-economic divides by providing free or low-cost venues for interaction among diverse groups.
2. Environmental Benefits: Green public spaces help mitigate urban heat islands, improve air quality, and promote biodiversity.
3. Mental Health: Access to well-maintained public spaces has been linked to reduced stress levels and improved mental well-being (Chitrakar Baker and Guaralda, 2017)
4. In line with the above benefits, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasise the importance of public spaces in achieving Sustainable Urbanisation. Specifically, the goals include:
5. SDG 11.7, which calls for "universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces."
6. SDG 3, which highlights the role of such spaces in promoting good health and well-being.

Despite their importance, public spaces in many Nigerian cities remain poorly managed. This is particularly evident in medium-sized cities like Akure, where rapid urbanisation has outpaced infrastructure development.

Urbanisation Trends in Nigeria

Nigeria is one of the fastest-urbanising countries in Africa, with an annual urban growth rate of 4% (World Bank, 2019). This rapid urbanisation has led to significant changes in land use patterns, often at the expense of public spaces. In cities like Lagos and Abuja, commercial developments have encroached on parks and other public open spaces (Ikoku, 2004). While larger cities such as Abuja and Lagos have received some attention from researchers and policymakers regarding public space management, medium-sized cities like Akure remain understudied.

The urbanisation trajectory of Akure reflects broader trends observed across Nigeria. These include:

1. Population Growth: The city's population has grown rapidly over the past two decades due to rural-to-urban migration.
2. Land Use Changes: Agricultural lands on the city's periphery have been converted into residential developments.
3. Infrastructure Deficits: Public infrastructure has struggled to keep pace with population growth.

The above trends have profound implications for the availability and functionality of public space. As informal settlements expand into peripheral areas of Akure, there is increasing competition for land use between residential developments and communal open spaces.

Challenges Facing Public Spaces in Akure

Public spaces in Akure face several challenges that limit their effectiveness. These include:

1. Inadequate Infrastructure: Many public spaces lack basic amenities, including seating, lighting, restrooms, and waste disposal facilities.
2. Poor Maintenance: Local authorities' neglect has led to the deterioration of existing infrastructure.
3. Encroachment: Informal markets and unregulated development often encroach on designated public spaces.
4. Safety Concerns: Inadequate lighting and poor policing make some public spaces unsafe for users.
5. Limited Accessibility: Persons with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing most public spaces.
6. Underutilization: Due to these challenges, many public spaces are underutilised or used for unintended purposes.

These issues above highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to public space planning that considers both physical infrastructure and users' needs.

Statement of Research Problem

There is growing recognition of the importance of public spaces in Nigerian cities. However, most studies have focused on larger metropolitan areas like Lagos and Abuja (Adegunloye, Folorunso, Taiwo, and Adegbehingbe, 2023). Medium-sized cities like Akure remain

underrepresented in academic literature despite their unique socio-cultural dynamics. Existing research has also tended to focus on physical aspects of public space designs (e.g., layout or infrastructure) without adequately exploring users' behaviour. Understanding how people interact with public spaces, their preferences, and the challenges they face is essential for creating inclusive environments that cater for diverse needs. This study addresses this gap by examining user behaviour across different zones of Akure. Specifically, the research seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What activities do users engage in within Akure's public spaces?
2. How do socio-economic factors influence users' behaviour?
3. What are the key challenges faced by users of the public places in Akure?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of this study are to:

1. identify the types of activities conducted in public spaces across Akure's core, transitional, and peripheral zones.
2. examine socio-economic factors influencing user behaviour.
3. assess challenges limiting optimal utilisation of these spaces.
4. propose recommendations for improving public space design and management.

Relevance to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This research aligns closely with two key SDGs. These include: SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), which emphasises promoting inclusive urbanisation through better-designed public spaces and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), which highlights the role of recreational areas in improving mental health outcomes.

The findings from this study provide actionable insights for policymakers seeking to enhance Urban Sustainability through improved public space management.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate user behaviour and activity patterns in public spaces across Akure, Nigeria. Mixed-methods research integrates both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques, providing a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). The methodology is designed to capture the socio-cultural, environmental, and psychological dimensions of public space usage, ensuring a holistic exploration of user experiences. This section outlines the research design, study area, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and analytical procedures.

The mixed-methods approach adopted in this study provides a robust framework for exploring users' behaviour in public spaces across Akure. By integrating qualitative insights with quantitative rigour, the methodology captures both subjective experiences and objective patterns of use. The findings inform evidence-based recommendations for improving the

design and management of public spaces in alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 & 11.

Research Design

The study adopts an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, which involves collecting qualitative data to explore the phenomenon and then using quantitative methods to test and generalise findings (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). This approach is particularly suited for urban studies as it allows for in-depth exploration of user experiences while providing statistically valid insights into broader patterns. The Rationale for the mixed-methods approach is:

Mixed-methods research is ideal for urban planning studies as it:

1. Combines numerical data with contextual narratives to provide a nuanced understanding of public space usage (Pant, 2023; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).
2. Enhances the validity of findings through triangulation (Xerez and Fonseca, 2011).
3. Captures diverse perspectives by integrating qualitative insights with quantitative generalisations (Greene, 2006).

Study Area

The research focuses on Akure, the capital city of Ondo State in South-West Nigeria. Akure is divided into three zones. Namely:

- The *Core Zone*: High-density areas with historical landmarks and political activities;
- The *Transitional Zone*: Medium-density areas characterised by mixed land use.
- The *Peripheral Zone*: Low-density residential areas with emerging informal settlements.

The selection of Akure as the study area is informed by its rapid urbanisation and the diverse socio-economic characteristics of its public spaces.

Sampling Techniques

A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure representation across all three zones of Akure. Public spaces were categorised into parks, squares, and informal gathering spots based on their primary functions. Stratification Criteria were geographic location (core, transitional, peripheral zones), type of public space (parks, squares, informal spaces), and socio-economic characteristics of users. The Sample Size was determined using Cochran's formula (n = {Z2pq} / {e2}), and a target sample size of 384 was calculated. After accounting for non-responses, 334 valid responses were analysed.

Method of Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected through ethnographic techniques to capture the subjective experiences of public space users. These include:

(a) Walking Interviews

Walking interviews were conducted with participants as they navigated public spaces. This method allowed for real-time exploration of sensory perceptions and emotional responses to the environment (Pallasmaa, 2016).

(b) Participant Observation

Participant observation involved documenting user behaviour during peak hours. Observations focused on activity types, group dynamics, and interactions with physical features of the space (PSRG, 2019).

(c) Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Focus groups comprising 6–8 participants were organised in each zone to explore collective perceptions of public space challenges and opportunities.

Quantitative data were also collected through structured surveys (Questionnaires) and direct observation. The methods include:

(a) Structured Surveys: Surveys (Questionnaire) were used to capture demographic information, activity preferences, and perceived challenges in public spaces. The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions for statistical analysis and open-ended questions for qualitative insights.

(b) Behavioural Mapping: Behavioural mapping involved systematic observation of user activities across selected public spaces at three time intervals: morning, afternoon, and evening (Cosco, Moore, and Islam, 2010). Data on gender, age group, and activity type were recorded.

Methods of Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically using NVivo software. Key themes included were social inclusivity, accessibility challenges and safety concerns. Thematic coding was guided by frameworks such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs to link findings to theoretical constructs (VTechWorks, 2023).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software to generate descriptive (tables, percentages and chi-square) and inferential (Regression) statistical analysis.

Descriptive statistics summarised demographic profiles and activity patterns, while Chi-square tests examined associations between socio-economic factors and activity preferences. The Regression analysis also explored predictors of public space utilisation.

Triangulation

Findings from qualitative and quantitative analyses were triangulated to enhance validity and provide a comprehensive understanding of user behaviour. (Xerez and Fonseca. 2011)

Ethical Considerations

Participants provided informed consent before participating in interviews or surveys. Key ethical considerations included ensuring anonymity by assigning each participant a unique identifier, obtaining permission from local authorities to conduct observations in public spaces, and providing participants the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide insights into the usage patterns, challenges, and user preferences in public spaces across Akure's core, transitional, and peripheral zones. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, thematic analysis, and inferential methods to identify trends and relationships between socio-economic factors and public space utilisation.

Overview of Activity Patterns in Public Spaces

Public spaces in Akure are predominantly used for social and religious activities, as shown in Table 1. Social gatherings accounted for the highest proportion of activities (36.2%), followed by religious events (28%). Recreational activities accounted for only 15% of total usage.

Table 1: Activity Patterns in Public Spaces.

Activity Type	Frequency (%)	Core Zone (%)	Transitional Zone (%)	Peripheral Zone (%)
Social Activities	36.2	25.5	32.1	42.8
Religious Activities	28.0	18.7	24.5	38.6
Economic Activities	20.8	35.3	25.2	8.3
Recreational Activities	15.0	20.5	18.2	10.3

Source: Authors' Compilation (2026)

Social activities were most prominent in the peripheral zones, reflecting the residential nature of these areas, while religious gatherings were more frequent there due to the availability of open spaces for worship. Others include: economic activities concentrated in the core zone, where informal markets and trading dominate, and recreational use is limited, indicating a lack of leisure-oriented infrastructure.

The dominance of political, social and religious activities in the zone reflects the cultural significance of public spaces in Akure's urban fabric. These findings align with a previous study by Ikoku (2004), which highlights the multifunctionality of public spaces in Nigerian cities. However, the underrepresentation of recreational activities suggests a gap in leisure-oriented infrastructure. The high prevalence of religious activities underscores Nigeria's deeply rooted religious culture, where open spaces are often repurposed for worship (Adegunloye et al. 2023). Similarly, the frequent use of public spaces for social events

(wedding and burial receptions, naming ceremonies, etc.) highlights their roles as venues for community bonding. The variations in activity patterns across zones reflect differences in land use and socio-economic characteristics. These can be categorised as:

1. Core zones, which are more politically active due to their proximity to administrative centres.
2. Transitional zones that balance cultural events with economic activities.
3. Peripheral zones prioritise social gatherings due to their residential nature.

Gender Influence on Activity Preference

The influence of gender on the preference for activity in Akure public spaces was analysed. The result, as shown in Table 2, indicates differences in the pattern of activity among genders. Political activity is male-dominated, with 73% compared to females. These results show that males participate more in public political activity. This pattern aligns with the findings by Nwagwu, Iwuala and Ebeh (2004), who posit that political roles are heavily dominated by men.

The result further, indicates that 56.5% of female attends religious activity in the study area, while male respondents accounted for 43.5%, Cultural activity revealed that almost equal participation with male 49.5% and Female 48%, these results corroborate the findings of Silaci and Vitkova (2017) showed that public spaces performed other civic functions in the cities such as social, political, physical as well as economic and symbolic functions.

Table 2: Cross-tabulation of gender and pattern of activity

Activity	Male	Female	Total
Religious	143 (43.5%)	190 (56.5%)	333 (100%)
Cultural	160 (49.5%)	156 (48.0%)	316(100%)
Social	170 (51.0%)	160 (48.3%)	330 (100%)
Economic	97 (29, 0%)	237 (71.0%)	334(100%)
Political	244 (73.0%)	90 (27.0%)	334 (100%)

Source: Authors' Compilation (2026)

Employment Status and Pattern of Activity

The cross-tabulation results in Table 3, on employment status of respondents and activity patterns indicate that self-employed demonstrated highest level of participation across all the activities, which include, social, economic, political, religious and cultural, this show that self-employed respondents have keen interest in the use of public spaces, this could be a result of flexibility in their work schedule and freedom of time control they enjoy, While other categories show a selective participation of respondents in activities pattern.

Table 3: Employment Status and Pattern of Activity

Activity	Social	Economic	Political	Religious	Cultural
Unemployed	75	70	84	80	75
Self-employed	131	130	126	128	127

Activity	Social	Economic	Political	Religious	Cultural
Civil/public service	57	56	45	45	5
Private sector	39	48	40	40	10

Source: Authors' Compilation (2026)

Chi-square Test of Independence (Employment and Pattern of Activity)

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between employment status and activity patterns in public spaces, to determine whether the pattern of activities (political, religious, cultural, social, and economic) differs by user's employment status. The results show a statistically significant association (p-value < 0.017). Cramer's V test was conducted to measure the strength of association between employment status and the pattern of activities. The result shows a statistically significant association between the variables, with a Cramer's V value of 0.473, indicating a relatively strong relationship, which supports the observed pattern of self-employed having the highest participation in Table 331 of the cross-tabulation result. The results show there is a significant relationship between status and activity patterns (< 0.05), which indicates that employment status plays a significant role in shaping how respondents engage with public spaces

Income Level and Pattern of Activity

Income level of respondents is a key socio-economic variable that can influences how people interact in public spaces, it can also have impact on frequency of use and duration of stay. The intensity and type of participation vary significantly across income level. Respondents were asked to pick one activity important to them based on their income level, the activity include political, social, economic, religious and cultural activity, the results as shown in Table 4, reveals that 132 of respondents representing 39.5% with total monthly income less than 50, 000 was the highest, indicated that political activity in public space is important to them than other activity. Social activity, with 93 respondents representing 27.8% and religious activity 34(10.2%) respondents.

Table 4: Income Level and Pattern of Activity

	Social	Economic	Political	Religious	Cultural
<50,000	-	-	132(39.5)	-	-
50,000-99,000	-	-	-	34(10.2)	-
100,000-149,000	93 (27.8)	-	-	-	-
150,000-199,000	-	19(5.7)	-	-	-
200,000 Above	-	-	-	-	10(3.0)

Source: Authors' Compilation (2026)

Chi-square Test of Independence (Income Level and Pattern of Activity)

A chi-square test of independence is used to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between income level and activity patterns. The results reveal a p-value of 0.014, indicating a significant relationship between income level and activity patterns in public spaces. The strength of this relationship was measured using Cramer's V test (V = 0.523). The value indicates a strong relationship between income level and activity patterns, which suggests that income significantly shapes how public spaces are used. Low-income respondents were predominantly engaged in politics, while middle-income earners participated more in social activities.

Challenges Identified

The qualitative data from the focus group were analysed using thematic analysis, and the themes to investigate the challenges faced by respondents include poor maintenance, inadequate facilities, safety, encroachment and accessibility. Respondents highlighted several challenges that hinder optimal utilisation of public spaces in Akure (See Table 5). Poor maintenance (42%) was the most frequently reported issue, followed by inadequate facilities (28%) and safety concerns (15%).

Table 5: Challenges Faced by Public Space Users

Challenge	Frequency (%)
Poor Maintenance	42
Inadequate Facilities	28
Safety Concerns	15
Encroachment	10
Limited Accessibility	5

Source: Authors' Compilation (2026)

Key findings from the qualitative data revealed that poor maintenance culture was a recurring issue across all zones, with unkempt landscapes, inadequate waste management systems, and inadequate facilities, such as restrooms, poor lighting, and broken seating areas, discouraged prolonged use of public spaces. Broken seating areas were observed in parks across all three zones, and waste disposal systems were either absent or poorly managed. Lastly, safety concerns were particularly pronounced in the core zone due to insufficient lighting and poor policing. Safety concerns limit accessibility during evening hours, especially for women and other vulnerable groups. Improved lighting and the introduction of directional signage in public spaces are essential to address safety and security concerns (Adegunloye, Folorunso, Taiwo, and Adegbehingbe, 2022). The poor state of facilities undermines the usability of the public spaces and discourages frequent visits Agboola & Oluyinka, 2019). Encroachment by informal markets in the core area reduces the availability of open space for intended uses (Chitrakar *et al.,* 2017). This challenge is particularly acute in the core zone, where land pressures are highest.

Zone-Specific Usage Patterns

The study revealed distinct patterns of public space usage across Akure's three major categorized zones, (Table 6) showed that the dominant activities in the core zone to be political gathering and trading, which shows that people in the core zone engages more in politics and economic activities, the study of Amin (2009) posits that public spaces are used for mass political and cultural gathering. Major challenges identified in the zone include encroachment and poor maintenance of public spaces (plate 1). In the transitional zone, cultural events and social activities are prominent, while accessibility and the lack of adequate facilities are the major challenges. The study by Kruszynska and Poczta (2020) posits that a lack of access to adequate facilities that enhance physical recreational activities is common in most public spaces. Furthermore, the study revealed that people in the peripheral zone prefer religious and social activities (plate 2) and that poor infrastructure and safety concerns in public spaces pose challenges.

Table 6: Zone-Specific Usage Patterns

Zone	Dominant Activities	Challenges Identified
Core Zone	Political gatherings, trading	Encroachment, poor maintenance
Transitional Zone	Cultural events, social use	Limited accessibility, inadequate facilities
Peripheral Zone	Religious gatherings, social use	Poor infrastructure, safety concerns

Source: Authors' Compilation (2026)



Plate 1: Dilapidated facilities at Oyemekun Rocks



Plate 2: Political gathering at Democracy Park



Plate 3: view of Game Reserve Amusement Park

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Public spaces are essential components of urban life, serving as venues for political gathering, social interaction, cultural expression, recreation, and economic activities. This study explored users' behaviour and activity patterns in public spaces across Akure, Nigeria, with a focus on understanding how socio-economic factors (gender, employment status and income level) and spatial characteristics influence usage. The findings reveal that public spaces in Akure are predominantly used for political, social and religious activities, with significant variations across the core, transitional, and peripheral zones. The study establishes a statistically significant relationship between respondents' gender, employment status, and income level and patterns of activity. However, challenges such as poor maintenance, inadequate facilities, safety concerns, and encroachment hinder their optimal utilisation. The dominance of political, social and religious activities reflects the cultural significance of public spaces in Akure's urban fabric. However, the underrepresentation of recreational activities highlights a gap in leisure-oriented infrastructure. Furthermore, challenges such as poor maintenance and safety concerns disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, limiting the inclusivity of these spaces.

This research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable urban development by aligning its findings with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 11: (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 3: (Good Health and Well-being). By addressing the identified challenges, Akure's public spaces can be transformed into inclusive hubs that enhance community well-being while promoting sustainable urban growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the functionality, inclusivity, and sustainability of public spaces in Akure:

1. Provide basic amenities, including adequate seating, restrooms, waste disposal systems, and sufficient lighting, to enhance users' comfort.
2. Install recreational infrastructure such as playgrounds, jogging tracks, and fitness equipment to promote leisure activities.
3. Introduce soft landscape elements, such as trees, gardens, hedges, and water features (fountains, swimming pools, etc.), to improve aesthetics and mitigate urban heat islands.
4. Design eco-friendly spaces that promote biodiversity and environmental sustainability.
5. Increase police patrols in public spaces to ensure safety for all users.
6. Install surveillance cameras and emergency response systems in high-traffic areas.
7. Provide adequate lighting in parks and open spaces to improve visibility in the evening.
8. Use solar-powered lights to reduce energy costs and promote sustainability.

Community Engagement

9. Involve local residents in the planning and design of public spaces to ensure that they meet community needs.
10. Conduct regular feedback sessions to gather user input on improvements.
11. Establish community-led initiatives for routine maintenance tasks such as cleaning and landscaping.
12. Partner with the local community to organise events that promote social cohesion.

Policy Implementation

13. Protect designated public spaces from encroachment by informal developments or unauthorised activities.
14. Implement strict penalties for violations to deter misuse.
15. Create a comprehensive policy document outlining roles and responsibilities for maintaining public spaces.
16. Allocate dedicated funding for regular maintenance and upgrades.

Promote Inclusivity

17. Design public spaces with ramps, tactile paving, and other features that accommodate persons with disabilities.
18. Provide signage in local languages to cater to diverse user groups.
19. Designate specific areas within public spaces for different activities such as sports, cultural events, religious gatherings, and relaxation.
20. Encourage multi-functional use to maximise space efficiency.

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 11 (Sustainable Cities) and 3 (Good Health)

21. Focus on creating inclusive public spaces that are accessible to all demographics.
22. Promote sustainable urbanisation by integrating green infrastructure into public space designs.
23. Encourage recreational use of public spaces to improve physical activity levels among residents.
24. Enhance mental well-being by providing tranquil environments for relaxation.

Public spaces are critical assets for fostering social inclusion, cultural expression, recreation, and environmental sustainability in urban areas. By addressing the challenges identified in this study through targeted interventions and inclusive planning processes, Akure's public spaces can be transformed into vibrant hubs that enhance community well-being while contributing to Sustainable Urban Development Goals.

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