



The State of Sustainable Urbanism in the Caribbean

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Working Definition of Sustainable Urbanism in The Caribbean

- The practices of urban planning focusing on the growth and the management of the growth of town and cities , which denote the processes of planning, designing, and building urban settlements based on clearly stipulated criteria and principles.
- According to Carlos Balsas, “Sustainable urbanism recognizes environmental designs which place emphasis on the symbiotic relationships between the natural world and the built environment. These relationships go beyond acknowledging the existence of natural systems to also fully utilizing their defining features to the advantage of both urban metabolism processes and the protection of fauna and flora.” (Balsas, 2018)



St. John, Antigua

Components of Sustainable Urbanism

Sustainable Urbanism is grounded in the 3 Cs

Compactness

Achieving a compact urban form at the city level requires compact neighborhoods—narrow streets, limited setbacks. These new approach would challenge the newer codes for city development in most Caribbean towns and cities

Achieving Compactness

minimizing land take up, and the encouragement of urban density

Conserving of identity, strengthening of neighbourhood and encouragement of its cultural diversity and distinctiveness

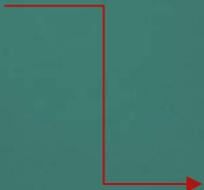


Downtown Kingston, Jamaica

Components of Sustainable Urbanism

Connectedness

This supports the notion that neighborhood blocks within cities should be connected inside a particular community as well as connectivity to adjacent systems.



Components of Sustainable Urbanism

Achieving Compactness of Cities

- the expansion of public transport and its interconnection with existing and new developments;
- safeguarding and interconnecting green spaces with networks working towards quality standards and the conservation of public spaces;
- the assurance of social harmony and advancement of social and functional interaction

Components of Sustainable Urbanism



Completeness

Completeness is a design goal equated with high degrees of autonomy and self-sufficiency in terms of daily human habitation, consumption, rest, work, recreation, circulation, access, and socialization opportunities.

Actions taken by the government in Jamaica, to “lock down the city of Portmore,” as a result of the pandemic highlights the fact that our towns and cities are missing this component of sustainable urbanization.

Achieving Completeness

- safeguarding existing jobs and creating new and innovative ones;
- advancing a culture of discourse;
- creating long-term partnerships between the community, and the public and private sectors;
- participation in lifelong learning processes, seeing urban life in its wider context.

Components of Sustainable Urbanism

Completeness

The completeness suggest a governance process. The size, socio-cultural and historical development of Caribbean cities provides significant challenges for cities to the region to achieve this component of sustainable urbanism

Challenges to Sustainable Urbanism in the Caribbean

New Urbanist design and branding creates certain kinds of spaces and excludes other formulations of space and place in what has been referred to as “the tournament of urban entrepreneurialism” (Bell and Binnie 2004).

To achieve sustainable urbanism in the Caribbean requires continued update of design manuals and guidebooks (Gordon, Carrigan, & Hastings, 2011)

Challenges to Sustainable Urbanism in the Caribbean

Another challenge is the increasing difficulty in reaching those most in need of the sustainability innovations. Quite often, many with higher education backgrounds command relatively high disposable incomes, which enable them to self-seclude themselves into neighborhoods with many amenities.

On the contrary, those in the lower societal echelons are disproportionality burdened by structural changes in the economy, which pushes them to neighborhoods with low energy and environmental performance levels, if not to former contaminated sites in close proximity to noxious land uses and other environmental nuisances.



Challenges to Sustainable Urbanism in the Caribbean

“Caribbean space is being socially and politically produced under new conditions of commercialized sovereignty, virtual cyber-property, and fictional residency. Software-supported logistics, data processing, property development, building design, marketing, banking, travel, and surveillance together enable island space to move from structures of local governance and territoriality.” (Sheller, 2009)



Nassau, Bahamas

Way Forward

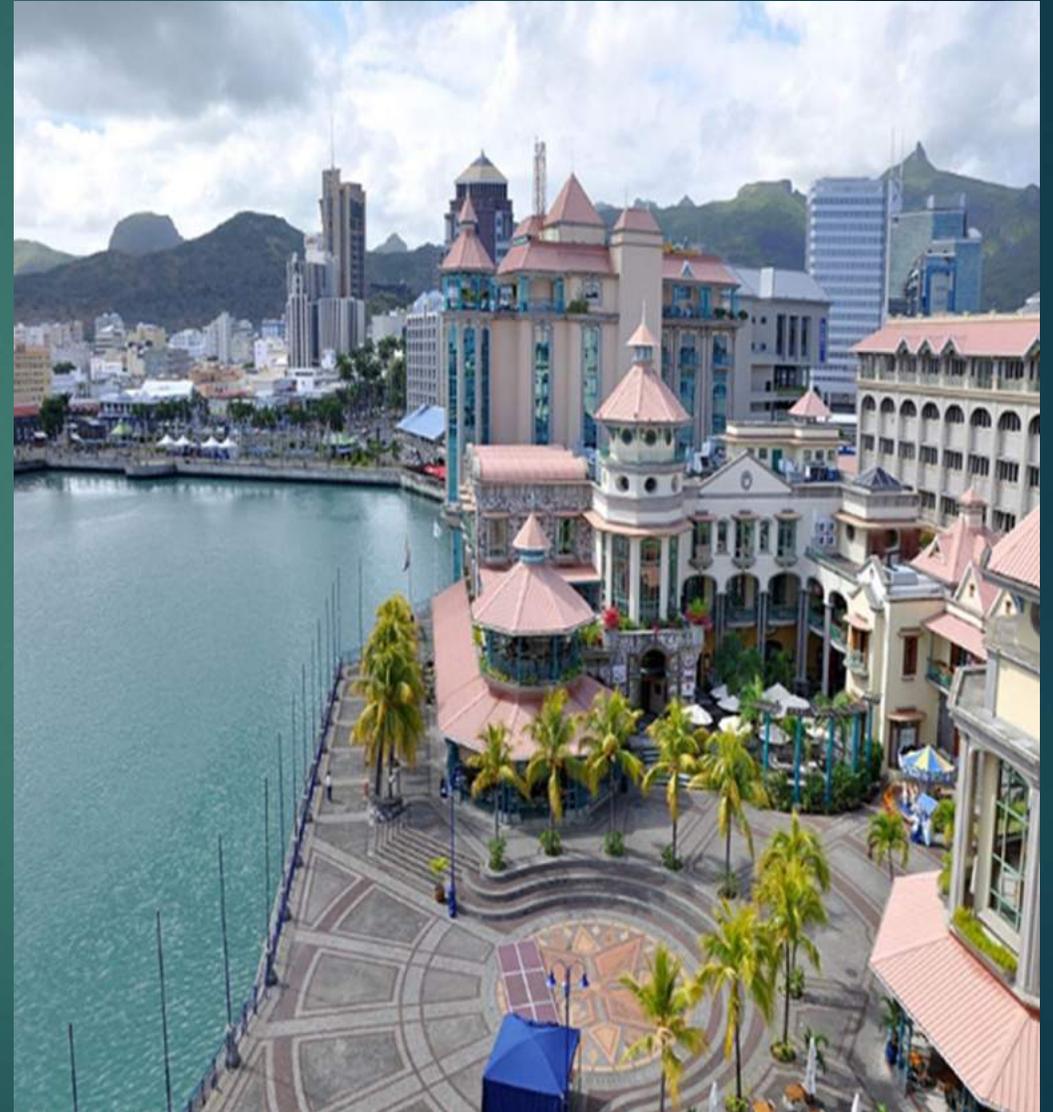
Perhaps more than building new neighborhoods, many opportunities exist in retrofitting second and third inner-ring suburbs, while implementing infill redevelopment programs within existing city boundaries, henceforth, accentuating the positive advantages of desirable urban forms only found in cities.



Conclusion

To create Sustainable Cities of the future in the Caribbean we must first start with our own reality based on empirical data collection at the national, subnational and local/community level as appropriate, and be open, transparent and consistent with the purpose of respecting privacy rights and all human rights obligations and commitments.

Smart Cities of the Caribbean must be based on a global people-based definition of cities and human settlements not the market driven approach to the provision of goods and services



Futurist Caribbean City

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