

The Landscape Strategies and Usage of Laman Tun Perak as a Pocket Park in Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract

Pocket parks emerged as a rational solution to allow access to urban parks within the constraint of limited space. Although small in scale, they are treated as valuable urban green and community assets. Attention and studies on pocket parks are rare, especially in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Hence, the research explores and attempts to determine the landscape strategies of Laman Tun Perak and identify how the pocket park is being utilised. Observation, field notetaking, drawings analysis, and interview are methods employed. The research concluded that the landscape strategies of a pocket park are connectivity and permeability, safety, comfort, and activities.

Keywords: landscape strategies; Laman Tun Perak; pocket park; urban green space

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/ajeb.v6i20.398>

1.0 Introduction

Street corner parks, vest-pocket parks, and small-scale green spaces are alternative indications for pocket parks commonly accessible by the general public (Bruce, 2018). In Philadelphia, pocket parks are generally around 900 square feet; however, pocket parks are very flexible in size or area as they are adaptive and transformative (Blake, 2013). With population and migration from the countryside to cities and rapid urbanisation increasing, access to well-maintained green space becomes desolate (Balai Kerishnan et al., 2020). With the constraint of spaces, especially in urban areas, pocket parks are valued as a rational solution to generate the positive effect large common urban green parks would offer (Zhou et al., 2021). Pocket parks create the chance to interact with nature, offering spaces for relaxation and activities (Macedo and Haddad, 2016), enhance mental and physical health (Williams et al., 2020), instil good social relations and create sustainable communities (Schebella et al., 2019), which are highly appreciated as community assets. But, increasing demand for monetary benefit has caused unforgiving competition on land use, increasing the difficulty of developing new public parks. Additionally, the budget allocated for urban green spaces is not fully considered by the local authorities (Ersoy et al., 2019). Hence, pocket parks were introduced and appreciated as a sound solution to enable public green spaces within a dense environment where land is precious and limited (McDonald et al., 2018).

Most studies regarding pocket parks focused on the Western context (Danford et al., 2018; Peschardt et al., 2016) whereby relevant studies in Malaysia are generally only related to common urban parks (Malek et al., 2018; Sreetheran, 2017). Researches in Kuala Lumpur are still rare, with readily accessible sources only focusing on the problems of having pocket parks and their use (Balai Kerishnan et al., 2019), the restorative benefits offered by pocket parks (Hashim et al., 2019), or the effects of pocket parks (Hashim et al., 2019). The information gap is noticeable regarding landscape strategies for pocket parks. For example, in Kuala Lumpur, how are pocket parks generally utilised, and what are the landscaping strategies employed in the pocket parks. Hence, the goal is to investigate the significance of Laman Tun Perak in Kuala Lumpur to discover and rationalize the introduction of a pocket park in Kuala Lumpur and identify how Laman Tun Perak is being utilised as well as confirm its landscaping strategies. The findings will be applicable across pocket parks with similar contexts, acting as a guide to planners, architects, landscape architects and designers in designing pocket parks.

2.0 Literature Review

Highly densified development is limiting land use as standard city proposals inclined to conserve valuable land resources and shorten travelling distance, as Currie (2016) mentioned. The relentlessly increasing global population has led to non-stop expanding cities, jacking up land prices indefinitely, resulting in the harsh competition for land commonly shown in articles (Danford et al., 2018). This has led to the decline of natural features within the urban landscape, tightening stress against the proposal for new open

green spaces within a metropolitan. Hence, this causes many complications for proposals for public parks to be approved (Zhou et al., 2021).

The increasing demand for varying land-use options has caused the land competition to become harsher in the city context. Crippling fees, incompetence budget, the struggle for land availability, and poor management and maintenance have contributed to the restriction on the development of new urban public parks and the improvement of existing green spaces (Zhou, et al., 2021). As public parks are not directly generating any profit, they are often overlooked and cannot harness any investment (Abdullah et al., 2019). The small fees and budget allocated for urban green space in the local authority (Ersoy, et al., 2019) result in poorly maintained parks and rarely the development of new parks.

Contrasting to common parks, planning for a pocket park is very different as it is made opportunistically (Balai Kerishnan et al., 2020). Unlike common parks with a predetermined location, pocket parks originated from spaces that are not used or wasted. Pocket parks can be situated along with any point within the urban fabric so long as the areas are available to cater to the needs of the urbanites. Their unique traits demand careful planning, innovative ideas and, most importantly, support from the immediate urbanite (Mohamed Anuar et al., 2018). Table 1 showcase the pocket park design criteria summarized by Abd El Aziz (2017) after reviewing various previous studies. It conveyed four features of pocket parks: Connectivity & Permeability, Comfort, Safety and Activities.

Table 1. Pocket Park Design Criteria

Pocket Park Design Criteria	Features
Area and location: The park must not exceed 5000m ² , and it must be situated close to surrounding buildings within a 5–10-minute walk.	Connectivity & Permeability
Access and linkage: Th park must be safe, accessible from various entry points with good connection to recreational, cultural and community facilities.	Connectivity & Permeability
Spatial: The park must offer a sense of welcome with a focal point and aesthetic value with functional spaces.	Connectivity, Permeability & Comfort
Uses and activities: The park must provide various activities for social and physical activities as well as therapeutic and sensory stimulation richness.	Safety, Comfort & Activities
Environmental: The park must be shaded and ventilated with a good plant selection but maintain visual control. The park also should provide bio-filter landscaping beds and solar-powered amenities.	Safety & Comfort
Landscape: The park should be open along its perimeter, with a waterscape, seating, lighting, and various activities for all users.	Comfort & Activities
Participation and maintenance: The community should be involve in planning to implantation. Support from the government is also valuable for securing funds while minimising the park's upkeep.	Activities & Safety

(Source: Abd El Aziz, 2017)

3.0 Methodology

The research carried out a qualitative approach separated into three phases to study the landscape strategies of Laman Tun Perak. Field observation and notetaking is the first phase (Hussein and Mohsin, 2019). Data obtained from field observation will then be archived in the documentation of plans and sectional drawings, similar to Currie's (2016) method. These documents will be utilised as primary data for the study. The final phase will be interviewing the project leader and landscape architect of Laman Tun Perak through a

semi-structured interview. The information and data received in the last step will be treated as auxiliary data and assist in refining the primary data.

First phase: Field observation and notetaking involved visitation to the site on a predetermined time to record the behavioural patterns of people in Laman Tun Perak. On 22 February 2022, the authors visited Laman Tun Perak to observe the behaviour and events that occurred in the park at 9 a.m., 12 p.m., 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., respectively. Documentation is recorded systematically in photographs and written notes on people's engagement with the landscaping elements in the park.

Second phase: Laman Tun Perak's layout plan and cross-sections were furnished to analyse the park's trait, topography, and the immediate context. The authors showed these drawings during the interview session with the project leader and landscape architect to verify the documented data compared to the designer's intentions employed in Laman Tun Perak. Thus, the pocket park design criteria (Abd EL Aziz, 2017), listed in Table 1, are the baseline and foundation knowledge for the analysis of Laman Tun Perak. However, this research summarized the criteria from a communicative perspective, i.e. Connectivity and Permeability; Safety; Comfort; and Activities. After all, pocket parks are highly appreciated as community assets, adapting to human behaviours (Macedo and Haddad, 2016).

Third phase: Listed questions used in the semi-structured interview targeted verifying the landscape architect's landscaping strategies and the information gathered from the archiving process. On 20 October 2020, the vegetation analysis, topography and the immediate context of various cross-sections from Laman Tun Perak were all projected to the landscape architect via Zoom meeting. The information and data gathered in this phase will be treated as auxiliary data to assist in refining the primary data.

Laman Tun Perak is chosen as the case study due to its prominent location and inclusion under Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) City Plan 2020. DBKL City Plan 2020 has envisioned enhancing Kuala Lumpur into an attractive city; with accessible parks to promote recreation, health, education, and economic regeneration. The information collected by ThinkCity in 2017 assisted DBKL in planning a series of organised work proposing domaining three aspects: Energise, Connect, and Create. Laman Tun Perak falls under Energise, which involves urban renewal and placemaking. Thus, the pocket park has become one of the landscape strategies for greening the Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

Situated near the origin of the city's convergence of rivers, Located between three busy streets, Jalan Tun Perak, Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Jalan Raja Laut, Laman Tun Perak is a 680m² pocket park (Figure 1). Laman Tun Perak is close to Masjid Jamek and its respective Light Rail Transit station, DBKL headquarters, and several government offices. Laman Tun Perak became a pathway for people to pass by when going to offices and heading home. Before Laman Tun Perak was created by a collaboration between ThinkCity and SD2 Sdn Bhd in 2018, it was a water feature installation in the backdrop of the city, contradicting its prominent location (Figure 2).

Two issues have been hindering this study. 1) Due to the pandemic COVID-19, the government imposed a few movement control orders; thus, site observations and getting

respondents were hard to achieve. 2) The challenge of obtaining relevant information and data from appropriate personnel with the time constraint that is at hand.



Fig. 1: Notable landmarks and monumental buildings within 500m radius from Laman Tun Perak. (Source: Authors)



Fig. 2. Original water feature on-site that contradicts Laman Tun Perak's prominent location. (Source: ThinkCity, 2017)

4.0 Results

According to Joanne Mun of ThinkCity, the project leader of Laman Tun Perak, the park condition is well-maintained; the vegetation creates a lovely and comforting atmosphere, with a water feature flowing along Laman Tun Perak's centre. However, the visitors' frequency is noticeably scarce. This may be due to the park's site context, established as

a pathway rather than a destination. Five cross-sections showed the plant composition and landscaping strategies (Figure 3).



Fig. 3. Five cross-sections on a plan view of Laman Tun Perak. (Source: Authors)

4.1 Section A-A

Section A-A (Figures 4(a)(b)) portrays the overall journey and experience and enables the reader to have a general grasp of how the pocket park looks. It is also the only long section that cuts through Laman Tun Perak among the five cross-sections.

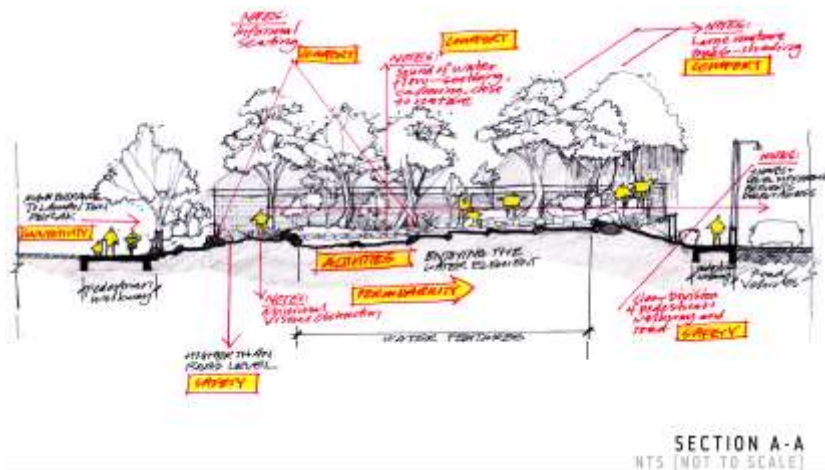




Fig. 4. (a) Sectional study of Section A-A (above); (b) Rejuvenated Laman Tun Perak (below)
(Source: Authors)

4.2 Section B-B

This section highlights the formal accessway into and out of Laman Tun Perak. It describes the connection with the street, walkway, and its geographical location to the pocket park (Figure 5(a)(b)).

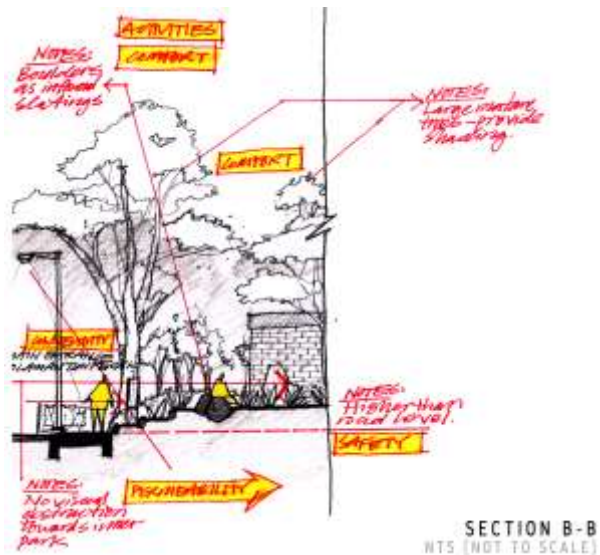




Fig. 5. (a) Sectional study of Section B-B (above); (b) Clear sightline towards the end (below)
(Source: Authors)

4.3 Section C-C

This section shows the water feature and pond, with the composition of landscaping features and its relation to Laman Tun Perak's overall scheme (Figure 6(a)(b)).

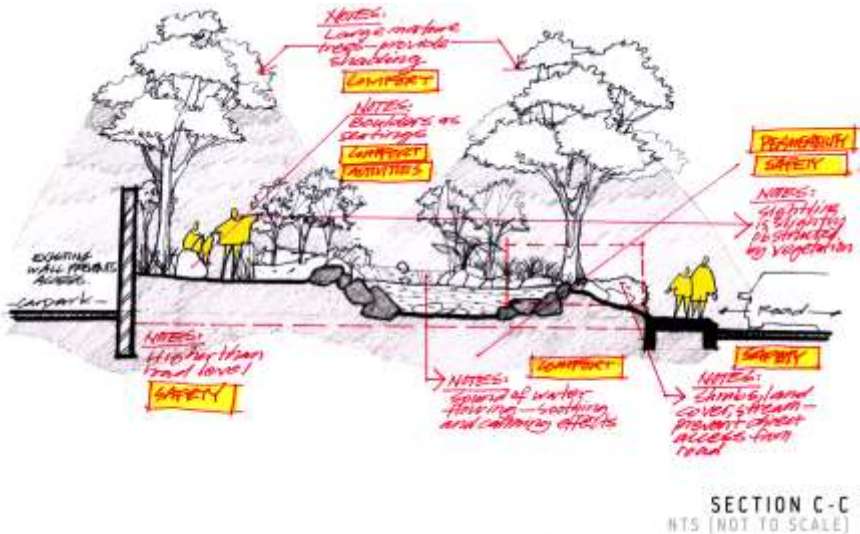




Fig. 6. (a) Sectional study of Section C-C (above); (b) Users observed taking photos while resting under the shade (below)
(Source: Authors)

4.4 Section D-D

This section illustrates the existence of a pedestrian pathway and how it transforms in contour and composition within Laman Tun Perak, highlighting a barrier in the form of level difference and water feature (Figure 7(a)(b)).

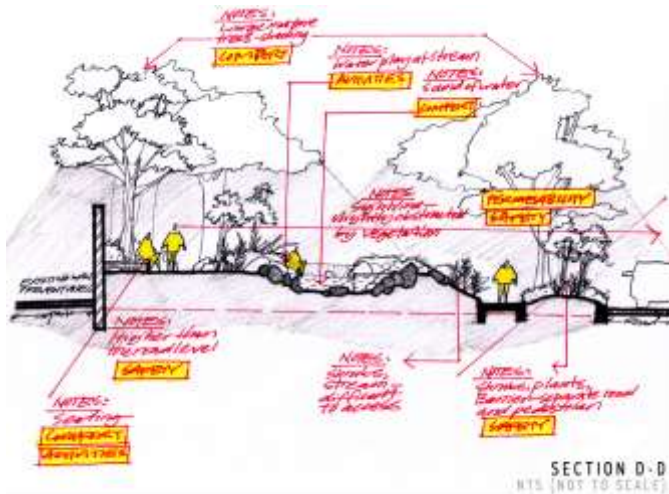




Fig. 7. (a) Sectional study of Section D-D (above); (b) Users observed playing with water and sitting on the boulder (below)
(Source: Authors)

4.5 Section E-E

This section is the most elevated ground in Laman Tun Perak. It confirms people's engagement with the stream and its surrounding landscape composition (Figure 8(a)(b)).

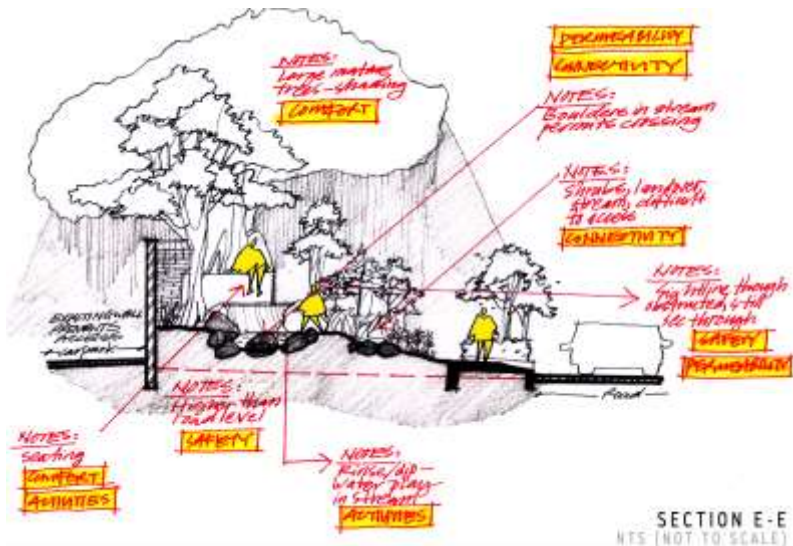




Fig. 8. (a) Sectional study of Section E-E (above); (b) Users mentioned they enjoy being in Laman Tun Perak while hearing the flow of the stream (below)
(Source: Authors)

4.6 Summarised findings

Relevant results of all five cross-sections are accentuated in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary findings of pocket park's features in sections of Laman Tun Perak

Section	Pocket park's features					Supporting Comments from Interview
	Connectivity & Permeability	Safety	Comfort	Activities		
A-A	One entry point with an accessed perimeter into the park and an unobstructed sightline towards the endpoint of the park.	A higher inner level to prevent vehicular access and unobstructed sightline.	Calming sound from the flowing stream with existing mature trees as shading encourages users to sit on boulders.	Children enjoy playing in the water while adults rest and have their meals.		The design intention is to have a clear sightline toward the pavilion.
B-B	The entry point faces a wider and level area; thus, users can see an unobstructed sightline towards the park's endpoint.	An unobstructed sightline with a higher inner level prevents vehicular access, and a non-slip floor surface prevents slipping.	Preservation of mature trees for shade with minimal horizontal tree branches obstructing the path, thus encouraging users to sit on the boulders.	Stone signages are provided for park information, allowed activities, and interest spots.		The entry point is strategically located due to the wider walkway for safer access.
C-C	A good selection of plant composition does not obstruct the main walkway with less	A higher level and watercourse act as a buffer zone. Shrubs surrounding the	Preservation of mature trees for shade with calming sound from flowing	Various recreational activities are generated for		The landscape design is intended to emulate a forest-like walkway, providing a natural

	branching, and a less compact tree canopy allows visual access.	watercourse prevent children from falling in.	water encourages users to sit on the boulders.	children with their carers or parents.	experience in an urban environment.
D-D	There are differences in levels, which obstruct access. However, the trees have less branching and sparse leaves that allow visual access.	A higher inner level prevents vehicular access with planted shrubs along the water stream to prevent users from falling in.	Existing mature trees as shading create comfortable visual permeability with soothing sound from the flowing water.	Activities are offered for children so the parents can supervise them while sitting on the boulders.	The Park was not a destination point; the Park intended to create a natural environment for flora and fauna within an urban fabric.
E-E	There are differences in levels, which obstruct access. However, the vegetation has less branching and sparse leaves that allow visual access.	A higher inner level prevents vehicular access.	Existing high canopy trees for shade create comfortable visual permeability, and with adequate seating provided, users can relax.	A meeting point and sit on the boulders.	Boulders are positioned strategically to create a more natural setting, reducing the artificial elements.

(Source: Authors)

Connectivity and permeability: Social equity and quality of life are promoted by connection and access to urban parks (Macedo and Haddad, 2016). Laman Tun Perak only possess one formal accessway. The landscape architect intends to craft a sense of journey for visitors, encouraging them to explore alternative means rather than relying on one entry. Moreover, the selection of plants with scarce leaves enables visitors to see the surroundings, allowing good visual permeability and providing excellent navigation. The choice of vegetation which does not block views increase landscape connectivity (Hussein and Mohsin, 2019), thus, increasing the number of visitors, safety and accessibility.

Safety: A study by Williams et al. (2020) looked into the safety of a park, which affects visitors to visit the place frequently. Several key principles summarised by Luymes and Tamminga (1995) for planning and design of safer public spaces: 1) visibility of others; 2) visibility by others; 3) choice and control; 4) environmental awareness and legibility, and 5) solitude without isolation. Jansson et al. (2013) highlighted the importance of the user's involvement in the planning and design, maintenance, and surveillance of public spaces. They supported these principles that emphasised 'seeing and to be seen'. These principles highlighted the importance of clear sightlines and freedom of movement within a park, justifying the visual permeability within Laman Tun Perak, allowing visitors to be more discerning towards their surroundings. Laman Tun Perak is designed with a slightly higher ground level than its surroundings to prevent vehicles from accidentally crashing into the park.

Comfort: Vegetation is a prime factor in providing shade and reducing solar radiation in hot climates (Fan, 2020). Furthermore, mature trees are generated easily by a wider shaded area and bigger comfortable spaces. The decision to preserve matured trees with dense canopy is well received as they provide shading means to the park. Both landscape architect and project manager of Laman Tun Perak intend to keep the park as natural as possible with boulders, enabling visitors to sit and rest. The water feature plays a part in

further cooling the environment with its soothing sound generated through flowing water. This calming effect breaks the visitors away from the buzzing city life.

Activities: Parks are essential for enjoying nature and recreational activities (Macedo and Haddad, 2016). They offer restorative psychological experience, physical activity, and social interaction (Schebella et al., 2017). Activities such as strolling, jogging, exercising, and aesthetic experience should be essential in developing any urban park (Zhu et al. 2020). Laman Tun Perak was intentionally planned not as a destination but for people to rest and continue their journey, as mentioned by the landscape architect. Although no formal seating is provided, large boulders and remnants of the previous fountain were utilised as impromptu seating. It is evident from the site observation that visitors engaged with the stream.

5.0 Discussion

The utilisation of Laman Tun Perak: Activities in Laman Tun Perak were relatively subtle during the field observation phase. Pocket parks provide a favourite destination for walking trips (Currie, 2016). Nevertheless, Laman Tun Perak is not intended as a destination but as a pause along the way to individuals' endpoint, as justified by the landscape architect. Additionally, on-site evidence confirmed and verified the statement via public engagement carried out by the project team. The result showed users' preference for the Park not being a destination.

Pocket parks are needed in cities, especially in the business district, for recreational benefits, as Balai Kerishnan et al. (2020) mentioned. On the other hand, documented photographic shows the absence of recreational equipment within Laman Tun Perak. Aside from sitting and resting, visitors can immerse themselves in the soothing atmosphere crafted through the sound of the flowing stream water, shaded by the lovely natural canopy, taking their time and enjoying natures' presence. This creates an opportunity for close interaction with nature, causing benefits such as restoration from mental fatigue, improved stress recovery, and positive changes to one's mood to the urbanites (Schebella et al., 2017). Thus, Laman Tun Perak is being used as a subtle background within a busy metropolitan setting where hard-working officers can take a break and enjoy nature along their way to work in a densely populated area.

The landscape strategies applied in Laman Tun Perak: Humans interact with urban parks and receive beneficial feedback (Zhao, 2020). Thus, a more humane approach is adapted to assess Laman Tun Perak through its Connectivity and Permeability, Safety, Comfort, and Activities. From the analysis done on the documented data of Laman Tun Perak using this approach with additional reference to the features setup by Abd El Aziz (2017), various landscaping strategies were identified and summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of landscape strategies and features in Laman Tun Perak

Landscape Strategies	Features
Provide an entry point for a walk in the park	Connectivity

Good visual connection surrounding the park	Permeability & Safety
A higher floor level from the surrounding area	Safety
Mature trees for shade	Comfort
Interactable water feature with constant movement	Comfort & Activities
Natural elements used as seating	Activities

(Source: Authors)

Connectivity and Permeability: The design intention of Laman Tun Perak is to create a sense of journey via one entrance. A good selection of plants with a less compact canopy creates visual permeability to make visitors aware of the surroundings and good wayfinding.

Safety: Elevated levels of Laman Tun Perak create a safer environment for the visitors. These higher levels prevent any vehicles from accidentally crashing into the park. Good visual permeability within the park also plays an important safety factor.

Comfort: The landscape architect took the initiative in conserving existing mature trees for shade and comfort for visitors. In addition, the watercourse act in lowering the temperature in the urban environment with its soothing sound created by the running water. This provides the park users tranquillity and breaks them away from the buzzing city life.

Activities: Engagement with the stream attract visitors, especially children. Adults also afford to interact with the water. Even though there are no benches to sit on, visitors use large boulders and remnants of the previous fountain as seating.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Laman Tun Perak can be a symbolic pocket park, contributing to a place for urbanites in Kuala Lumpur. Understanding the park's functional uses and landscape strategies have determined its significance as a noticeable node and rest point, not as a destination for visitation. The findings of this study can be applicable across common pocket parks with identical contexts and can guide professional designers in planning pocket parks in the coming era. However, a further question can be asked regarding the possibility of the Laman Tun Perak being treated as a destination, not a slight pause for passers-by, or its latent ability to improve its landscape strategies to increase users' activities within the site's premise.

As a recommendation for improving the little study on pocket parks, especially in Malaysia's context, this paper will be taken as one of the few papers that convey information and wisdom on pocket parks in Malaysia. Despite the narrow scope, this study instilled the background and function of Laman Tun Perak, promoting awareness to the design professionals on the significance of including pocket parks in the city planning and development projects. Consequently, future research could explore the relationship between users' activities and well-being when they engage with landscape strategies employed in Laman Tun Perak. Potential research on pocket parks in Malaysia could be studied in conjunction with other research expertise, such as health and well-being or therapeutic psychological that encloses positive mood, improved stress recovery, and mental fatigue.

The end-users preference is more prominent than insight and suggestions from professional designers as end-users are the ones that frequent and visit the pocket park. Thus, upcoming research should engage with the end-users from the early stage of planning and design to implementing a pocket park. This could furnish a more suitable and detailed direction on the future refinement of pocket parks.

Acknowledgement

Thank you, Universiti Malaya, for readying a research platform for the Master in Architecture; The landscape architect and project leader of Laman Tun Perak readily accepted the interview and provided insightful data for this research. Manual illustrations are a credit to Nur Ameelia Rokhaza'ain Mohsin.

Article Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper contributed to the landscaping elements employed in Laman Tun Perak, highlighting the cause that affects people's visitation to the park and the composition that suggests various activities. Landscape strategy provided a basic understanding of a pocket park. This could also demonstrate a reference for a functional pocket park with a similar context. As pocket parks are notable alternatives to urban parks due to space limitations, the knowledge conveyed would suggest positive insight to design professionals.

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