

Connective Cities SSA Dialogue Event on Land Management & Land Use Planning

Project: IMBUGA CITY WALK- CAR FREE ZONE
CLIENT: CITY OF KIGALI

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1. Project background & problem framing:



- Just like most Sub-Saharan Africa Cities, construction is eating up most of the green and open spaces and is causing the deterioration of the quality of life for city dwellers. Infrastructural investments have to a large extent neglected majority of street users (pedestrians).
- As cars compete for space with the pedestrians and cyclists, there can only be one winner!. Pedestrians stand high risks and they represent a majority of the street users within what some academics call the “asphalt and concrete jungle”.
- Women, children, and the elderly are among those most affected by increasing dominance of motorized means. They can barely step a foot into the streets, cannot cross streets with ease, have no places to rest and for children; no safe places to play.
- Also, unlike other major cities around the world, Kigali doesn't have a recognisable central park/open space like Nairobi has Uhuru Park and Central Park...
- Turning an active street into a car free zone, and later into an active open & public space would be hitting two birds with one stone.

2. The project:



Existing



Proposed



Existing



Proposed



Existing



Proposed





3. Approach:

- The City of Kigali hired a consultant to re-think the usage of the street, and to re-think traffic flow within the CBD. The Consultant employed a consultative model to design the street by engaging different stakeholders, organized design workshops with the school of architecture and awareness campaigns aimed at collecting as much feedback as possible.
- Property owners adjacent to the street were consulted and were kept informed about the plans.
- Reduced traffic means reduced emissions and has a positive effect on quality of the environment



4. Outputs:

- Imbuga City Walk will have the following features: Foodcourt, public benches, free WiFi, kids play ground, public plaza fitted with a sculpture, landscaped green areas for beautification, bicycle rack/station with bikes for the upcoming bike sharing scheme, and a public bus-stop at the end of the street.
- These activities will improve the vibrancy of the street and boost returns for all adjacent business.
- Children, women and the elderly will also get safe places to rest, play and gather.
- Students will take advantage of the free WiFi and street furniture to enhance their learning and research experience.
- The space will also provide space for exhibitions and events.



5. Lessons:

- Shopping experience is highly linked to safety of the shoppers
- The best form of urbanization is an inclusive one where every one feels part of the progress
- Huge costs lead to huge gains. When the project was first introduced, many were skeptical while others criticized the move. Most people thought taking away cars meant taking away business. It turns out, business is gaining back while environmental quality, health and safety are ensured at the same time.
- Going forward, we need to substantiate and monetize the gains being made as a result of this project. This would guide future decisions on projects of this type and policy.
- For us to have all gender classes fully participate in development, we need safer spaces for them.



6. Transfer:

- Replicability of this project is dependent on feedback from the primary beneficiaries. There is also the need for a thorough engagement exercise and awareness campaign to sell the benefits of having projects like these.
- For policy to adopt it, there is need to find financial justification for investment in such projects for the long term. There is therefore the need to make an economic case for investment in such projects. This can be achieved by drawing from concepts of ecological economics