

Housing, Sustainable Community & Healthy Living

Case study: Iranian Traditional Cities

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In the past decades there has been a growing concern with the environmental sustainability of the community. This has significant implications for the design and operation of the hard infrastructure. But a community is much more than its physical form. A community is composed of people as well as the places where they live; it is as much a social environment as a physical environment. Thus, communities must not only be environmentally sustainable, they must also be socially sustainable so neither social nor environmental sustainability can be created simply through the physical design alone. It can't ensure that individuals, families and communities will lead environmentally sustainable lifestyles, although it can help to make such environmentally sustainable choices more easy. Equally, while there is much that can be done on the "design" of the soft infrastructure of the community to ensure its social sustainability, the physical design of the community can make it either easier or more difficult for communities to be socially sustainable. Thus there is a vital need to integrate the physical and social design of communities if there is a need for creating communities that are both environmentally and socially sustainable. This paper proposes to introduce how traditional housing projects of arid regions in Iran could achieve to this aim.

From environmental view point, in these regions good environmental performance enhances physical and mental health as well sustainability of the community. Sustainable housing responded to the local climate and natural environment through natural ventilation, solar heat gain, thermal comfort and daylight which concerns both indoor environmental qualities and external community spaces.

From social view point, four key elements considered in Iranian traditional housing are community building, comfortable home, nature for community and accessibility. These elements are interrelated and collectively contribute to the physical, mental and social realm of healthy living.

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- *Community building comprises of 4 ingredients, namely, identity, social interaction, community participation and support, and heritage preservation.*
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- *A comfortable home contributes to the physical and mental health of the residents. It is achieved by enhancing thermal comfort, usability of space and creating the best connection between outside and inside.*
- *Integrating nature with the community provides fresh air, tranquility and visual amenity. It enhances physical and social well being. In many of traditional concepts ecological characteristics of the site are respected and reinforced.*
- *These cities with unique identity are "cities of short distances" where made possible connections via pedestrian networks. This is to assure that they can secure adequate support from the community. Accessibility also increases mobility particularly of the elderly people and encourage activities like social interaction.*

The move towards a sustainable community is a rediscover of nature and the basics. Sustainable community and healthy living are two sides of the same coin. They are to be achieved by a holistic approach in design. Traditional housing in arid regions of Iran has raised the public aspiration for healthy living, not just in the physical sense, but also in the mental and social sense.

Key words: *Sustainable Community, Iranian Traditional Housing*