

# IMPORTANCE AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF INFORMAL PLACES WITHIN A CAMPUS UNIVERSITY: CASE STUDY OF LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY, PUNJAB.

**Mostafizur Rahman**, Assistant Professor, Lovely Professional University,  
**Sarita Sood**, Professor, Lovely Professional University.

## ABSTRACT

Campus universities are completely self-contained: you can eat, drink, sleep, learn, go to the doctors, shop, get your haircut and party all in one place. Campus living can engender a close knit community. Some campuses are practically 'mini towns' in themselves, feeling very secure and student-oriented. Campus universities have formal and informal places. Formal places are of immense importance for disciplined and controlled delivery of knowledge. Informal places are of great importance in universities where the gained knowledge is shared, doubts are cleared and mind is relaxed. Some of the informal places are liked by students and staff and are remembered throughout life as part of good memories. The research is aimed to understand why some informal places are considered better than other informal places in a university campus? What are their physical characteristics? The study is divided in four parts. First part is to list the informal places within university. Second part deals with grading of the places as per the number of times the place is used and diversity of people present at that place. Result of this section ranks streets, plazas and food courts separately. Third part deals with the comparison of high ranked places with low ranked places to understand the reason behind the diversity and multi-use of those places. Findings of this research contradict the typical land use zoning segregations and advocates mixed use planning at even smaller block level.

**Key words:** Campus University, Informal places, mixed use, accessible.

## INTRODUCTION

Universities are places for research, learning, and discussion, but why should learning be confined to a classroom? Universities provide a holistic growth to student's life by developing education, health and personality attributes. In this context every places within university campus plays important role [6]. The whole university can be divided in formal places and informal places [5]. Formal places in university are those where the regular teaching research or official works happen. In other words the formal places have fixed, regular and scheduled functions. For example, class rooms, lecture rooms, staff rooms, conference rooms, auditoriums, specified sports areas etc. Informal places are generally common places within university campus such as streets, plazas and food courts. Formal places are of immense importance for disciplined and controlled delivery of knowledge. Informal places are of great importance in universities where the gained knowledge is shared, doubts are cleared and mind is relaxed [2]. Some of the informal places are liked by students and staff more and are remembered throughout life as good memories of campus life. According to Jane Jacobs the areas that are having two or more prominent land uses, short blocks, sufficient density then the area is diverse and livable [4]. The research is aimed to understand how some informal places are considered better than other informal places in the campus? Do the dominant places follow theory of Jane Jacobs?

## METHODOLOGY

The study is divided in four parts. First part is to list the informal places within university. The listing is done as per three categories, streets, food courts and plazas. Selection of streets, food courts and plazas has been done through simple random sampling. Second part deals with grading of the places as per the number of times the place is used, diversity of people present at the place. Result of this section ranks streets, plazas and food courts separately. Third part deals with the comparison of high ranked places with low ranked places to understand the reason behind the diversity and multi-use of those places. Here three parameters have been used to understand reason behind diversity and multiple usage of the place; one is surrounding building uses, second is

accessibility of the place and third is availability of sitting places. Finally fifth part of the study selects the most common features of street, plaza and food court that makes them diversity and multi-use.

## CAMPUS UNIVERSITY

Grounds and buildings of an institution of learning can be collectively called as campus. University means a high-level educational institution in which students study for degrees and where academic research is done. Essentially, a campus university's student accommodation, teaching rooms, research labs and other facilities are all located in one place. Campus universities are different to collegiate universities, like Oxford and Cambridge, which are split across various different colleges and sites. Many campus universities are completely self-contained: you can eat, drink, sleep, learn, go to the doctors, shop, get your haircut and party all in one place. Campus living can engender a close knit community. Some campuses are practically 'mini towns' in themselves, feeling very secure and student-oriented. Some students thrive in this kind of environment, while others can find the whole 'campus bubble' a bit too claustrophobic.

### Campus universities in India

Since last 50 years India has seen rise in the number of campus universities. In particular, the campuses of the IIM at Ahmedabad and Bangalore have been experiments that have continued to teach us, with lessons in both architecture and urban design [3]. Private universities are also participating in race of campus universities. In 2020 there are as many as 100 university campuses in India which can be called as mini town.

### Lovely Professional University campus

Lovely Professional University is one of the largest university campuses in India, sprawling over 600 acres having 30000 to 40000 students residing in campus, with approximately 3500 faculties and staffs. The university has residential, institutional, commercial and recreational buildings. Since 2005 the campus has developed in bits and parcels. Other than formal places, lots of informal spaces like streets, plazas and food courts have been developed inside the campus.

## INFORMAL PLACES IN CAMPUS UNIVERSITY

Informal spaces in a campus university are places of interaction and discussion. It is a place where various groups from different discipline, age and gender meet. Informal places do not hold specified events but these places are important for after class discussions [1]. Informal places in Lovely Professional University can be categorized in streets, plazas and food courts. The study focuses on these three types of informal places in the university separately in detail.

## FOOD COURTS

Food courts in LPU are of open to air cluster of shops. Students, faculty, staff and families use food courts one or other time of day. Combinations of foods starting from breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks for verity of cosine are available in these food courts. The selected food courts for the study are Campus Café (CC) food court, 34 block food court, 41 block food court, BH1 food court and BH4 food court. At first all the food courts have been visually surveyed and marked on the basis of its use during breakfast, lunch, evening snacks and dinner time. 1 mark was given when the food court is full to its capacity and 0.5 is given when the food court is comparatively less crowded.

**Table 1: Marking of food court in LPU w.r.t its multiple use**

Fully used 1, Half used 0.5

	CC Food court	34 block food court	41 block food court	BH1 food court	BH4 food court
Breakfast	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Lunch	1	1	1	0.5	0.5
Evening snacks	1	0	1	0	0.5
Dinner	0	0	1	1	0.5
Total	2.5	1.5	3.5	2	2

Campus Café food court is surrounded by entry plaza, Pharmacy block and Architecture block. The food court is comparatively empty during morning hours, very busy during lunch period, busy during evening snacks

period, relatively empty during dinner period. 34 block food court is a secluded one. The food court remains busy during lunch period but relatively empty during breakfast, evening snacks and dinner time. 41 block food court remain relatively empty during breakfast, busy during lunch, evening snacks and dinner. BH1 food court remains busy during evening snacks and dinner time. BH4 food court remains moderately busy during breakfast, lunch, evening snacks and dinner.

Secondly the food courts have been ranked as per the presence of faculty and students. In this case food courts have been marked 1 when faculty and students both are present. It is marked 0.5 when only faculty or only students are present.

**Table 2: Marking of food court w.r.t presence of students, faculty and staff**

Faculty and student present 1, only student present 0.5, only faculty present 0.5

	CC Food court	34 block food court	41 block food court	BH1 food court	BH4 food court
Breakfast	0.5	0.5	1	0	0.5
Lunch	1	1	1	0	1
Evening	1	0	1	0.5	0.5
Dinner	0	0	1	0.5	0.5
Total	2.5	1.5	4	1.5	2.5

It is observed that block 41 is highly marked as it is used most of the time of day and by all the groups. Whereas, BH1 food court is marked less because, most of the time it is visited by students only.

**Table 3: Overall marking for food court**

	CC Food court	34 block food court	41 block food court	BH1 food court	BH4 food court
Table 1 total	2.5	1.5	3.5	2	2
Table 2 total	2.5	1.5	4	1.5	2.5
Grand total	5	3.0	7.5	3.5	4.5

Marking of both the stages, the marks given for the use and marks given for presence of diverse groups have been calculated and are found that 41 block food court is ranked top whereas BH1 food court is ranked last.

### Analysis of marks of food courts

To understand the reason behind the vibrancy of 41 block food court, the surrounding building use, accessibility and availability of sitting infrastructure were analyzed and compared with least marked food court. In this it is found that 41 block food court is surrounded by residential, commercial, Sports and institutional building use whereas the 34 block food court does only have institutional buildings nearby. 41 block food court is accessible within (200m) to institutional block 25 and 38, residential block 41 and BH1. Whereas 34 block food court is not accessible during evening and night. 41 block food court have sitting places provided by food stalls but 34 block food court does not have such infra.

**From the results it can be concluded that, the food courts are informal and interaction places for various groups of people within university campus. Favorable physical characteristics of a vibrant food court are small mixed use blocks of approximate size of 200m by 200m, accessible by walking and availability of infrastructure for sitting.**



Fig 1 : 41 block food court surrounding

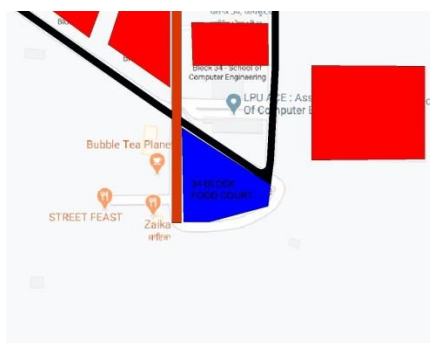


Fig 2 : 34 block food court surrounding

## STREETS

The streets are always places of interaction in urban areas. But in campus universities we generally don't see vibrant streets. Lovely Professional University in its campus has some streets that can be considered as vibrant and encourages good interactions between student, faculty, researchers and many more. Some of those are, the street connecting 25 block to 34 blocks via auditorium and the street that connects CC to Architecture block. It has been observed that both the streets are interactions zones for student faculty and staffs of Lovely Professional University and remains busy most of the times.



Fig 3 : 25 to 34 block street

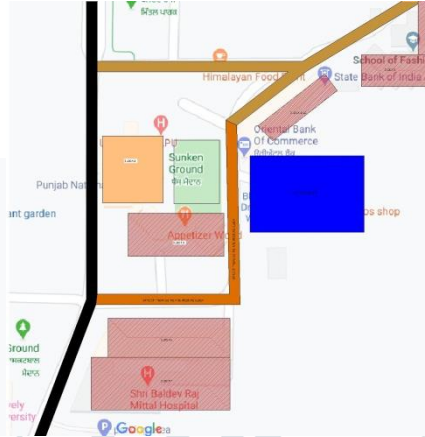


Fig 4 : CC to Architecture block street

## Analysis of streets

The reasons behind these streets act as interaction zones are that, both the streets are purely pedestrian and very few vehicular movements are allowed in these two streets. These streets remain shaded, and cool during summer. Both the streets have small places favorable for sitting.

To further understand the reasons of vibrancy of these streets, surrounding building uses have been analyzed. In case of the street connecting 25 block to 34 block via auditorium.. It is connection between academic blocks, library, auditorium and administration blocks. The street is climatically favorable for seating because it gets shades from south sun, also wind from east and west fills the street with fresh air. The other street that is the CC to architecture block street. The street also has many uses on it as hospital, bank, food court, auditorium, academic college, two gardens. **Hence it can be concluded that streets act as interaction places when these are pedestrian friendly and surrounded by mixed use buildings.**

## PLAZAS

Plazas are public square or open space in built up area. Plazas often have significant buildings surrounding them. Plazas include paved floor, fountain, and trees. In contrast to streets, plazas are bigger open space allowing functions like congregation happen. There are five prominent plazas in LPU. Campus Café Plaza, Mall plaza, Microscope plaza, 41 block plaza and 56 block plaza. These plazas have been marked on the basis of its use throughout a day and on the presence of people from diverse groups.

Campus café plaza is specially used by passerby, e-rickshaw stop, evening exercise by National Cadet Corps and mini cricket games. The plaza is partially paved and partially shaded. Mall plaza is open paved open space in front of Uni mall at LPU. The plaza is used by small kiosks and by mall goers. The plaza remains shaded partially due to shadow of the mall building. Microscope plaza is main plaza in LPU, it is open and very big. A part of the plaza remains shaded. This plaza is used for passing by, sitting, any university level congregation for students or staffs. 41 block plaza is partially shaded by trees and buildings. The plaza is used for sitting, eating and playing purpose. 56 block plaza is partially shaded by trees and used for breaks and sitting.



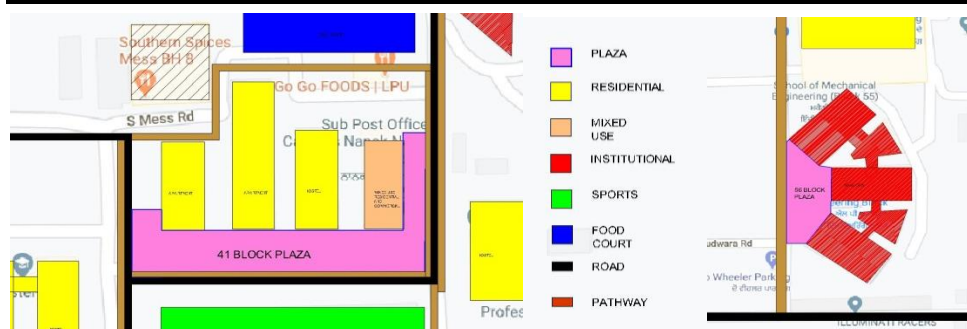


Fig 5 : 41 block plaza

Fig 5 : 56 block plaza

**Table 4 : Marking for multiple use of plazas in LPU.**

Fully used 1, moderately used 0.5

	Campus café plaza	Mall plaza	Microscope plaza	41 block plaza	56 block plaza
Morning	1	0	0	0.5	0
Lunch	1	1	1	1	1
Afternoon	0.5	0.5	1	1	1
Evening	1	1	0.5	1	0
Night	0	0	0.5	1	0
Total	3.5	2.5	3	4.5	2

**Table 5 : Marking for use of plazas by diverse group of people.**

Faculty and students 1, only student 0.5, only faculty 0.5

	Campus café plaza	Mall plaza	Microscope plaza	41 block plaza	56 block plaza
Morning	1	0	0	0.5	0
Lunch	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	0.5
Afternoon	0.5	0.5	0.5	1	0.5
Evening	1	1	1	1	0
Night	0	0	0.5	1	0
Total	3.0	2.5	3.5	4.0	1

**Table 6 : Overall marking for plazas.**

All present 1, Only student 0.5, only faculty 0.5

	Campus café plaza	Mall plaza	Microscope plaza	41 block plaza	56 block plaza
Table 4	3.5	2.5	3	4.5	2
Table 5	3.0	2.5	3.5	4.0	1
Grand total	6.5	5	6.5	8.5	3

41 block plaza shows better sign of presence of diverse types of people and multiple use of the plaza throughout a day and night time. 41 block plaza gives a sense of safety and it is happening place. To understand the reason behind the vibrancy of the plaza, surrounding building use and accessibility is compared with the least marked plazas. **It is found that 41 block plaza the plaza is surrounded by buildings of multiple uses like residential, commercial, sports and institutional and is highly accessible from surrounding buildings.**

## RESULTS

The study was concerned about three types of informal places in the Lovely Professional University, food courts, streets and plazas. The results indicate that, the food courts are informal and interaction places for various groups of people within university campus. Favorable physical characteristics of a vibrant food court are small mixed use blocks of approximate size of 200m by 200m, accessible by walking and availability of infrastructure for sitting. Results for streets indicate that streets act as interaction places only when these are pedestrian friendly and surrounded by mixed use buildings. In case of plazas the study indicate that a plaza vibrant active and safe

when it is surrounded by buildings of multiple uses like residential, commercial, sports and institutional and is highly accessible from surrounding buildings.

## CONCLUSION

Informal interaction between students, teachers and staff initiates formal and informal discussions. These discussions develop critical thinking of participants. Places that provide suitable environment for informal interactions within campus universities are streets, plazas and food courts. Further independent investigation of the streets, plazas and food courts reveals some common physical characteristics of dominance. First common feature of dominance is that the place is surrounded by buildings and that too of different uses. Second is the place does not have any vehicular intervention. Third the place is accessible to a minimum walking distance. Fourth the place remains shaded and has sitting infrastructure at place. Hence it can be concluded that the Jane Jacobs theory of diversity works well for the informal places within Campus University as well.

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