

City Case Study

A Case Study of Urban Design, Wellbeing and Mental Health in Lapua, Finland

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Abstract: According to the United Nations' Sustainable development goals (SDGs) ranking list, Finland is one of the most sustainable countries. At first glance, Lapua: a town in the Southern Ostrobothnia region of western Finland, seems to be safe and sustainable, however, extensive interviews and observation revealed interesting points that demand a reflection and amendments of customary views. This study reviews existing literature and expands on experts' and citizens' opinions on mental health (MH) and well-being within Lapua's urban design and planning. The reviewed literature examines the mental health status in Finland and the position of urban planning in Lapua, and its geographical significance. The semi-structured interview was conducted among 10 experts such as architects, psychiatrists, artists, etc. in Lapua. The qualitative data on their perception was obtained, transcribed, analyzed, and presented. The case study result suggests that some of the urban design factors that influence mental health are the availability of parks and green spaces, cultural heritage, housing, etc. Also, some opportunities identified for improving mental health-related urban planning and design in Lapua, include the concept of third space, age inclusivity in housing, integrating public art in urban design, etc.

Implications: Some opportunities identified in Lapua for improving mental health related urban design includes, the third place concept, preservation of culture and history, age inclusivity in housing schemes and public art integration.

Keywords: Mental health, urban design, well-being, third places, history and culture

1. Introduction

Mental health (MH) disorders are among the ten global causes of morbidity and mortality (Pryor et al., 2017). Although Finland is ranked as the happiest country in the world for the fifth consecutive time ahead of its peers in the World Happiness Report 2022 ranking (Bloomberg, 2022), Finland is however not without its mental health challenges. According to the Mental Health Analysis Profiles in 2014 (Patana, 2014), mental health disorders comprise one of Finland's highest burdens of disease. At any time, between 4% and 9% of the Finnish population of 5.5 million (Worldometers.info., 2022) suffer from major depressive disorders. Some 10–20% of the population experience depression during their lifetime, also bipolar depressive disorders affect 1–2% and schizophrenia is 0.5–1.5% of the population. The most common and most important mental disorders from the public health point of view across the Finnish population are mood disorders, anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, personality disorders, and psychotic disorders (Pirkola, 2005).

In line with Finnish legislation, Municipalities are responsible for organizing outpatient mental healthcare and rehabilitation through the primary healthcare system provided at health centres and through social services. Specialized mental health care comprises inpatient services arranged through hospital districts and outpatient services provided by hospital districts and health centres (Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Today, psychiatric or

mental health disorders are the most common diagnostic group for granting disability pensions (Pirkola, 2005). These services are funded by the local authorities, the Social Insurance Institution, employment pension providers, and the customers themselves. Central government funds are channeled to the local authorities (Pirkola, 2005).

However, with the renewed interest in urban design and planning on mental health, government policy, and plans can be evaluated using the 2019 GAPS framework developed by the Centre for Urban Design and Mental Health (UD/MH). This framework is summarised in the acronym: GAPS - Green, Active, Prosocial, and Safe Places (Layla, 2017). The GAPS framework indicates that **green places** and access to natural settings in neighborhoods and our daily routines are likely to improve and maintain mental health and well-being. Secondly, **active places** including active transport to outdoor gyms that foster exercise, social interactions, etc. into daily routines, may help improve mental health. Thirdly, **pro-social places in urban settings promote** a sense of community, integration, and belonging, especially for potentially vulnerable groups like refugees, migrants, and young and older people, with multi-faceted and active engagement. Finally, **safe places create** a sense of safety and security, integral to people's mental health and well-being such features may include appropriate street lighting and surveillance, distinct landmarks, and people-centric design of residential, commercial, and industry routes (Hosang, G., & McCay, L. 2016).

In the 1950s in Finland, the possibility of building isolated dwellings on one's land without an extant local detail plan was widely accepted as a form of common law-based civil rights and respected by local planning authorities and democratically elected decision-makers in Finland (Mäntysalo et al., 2011, Sireni, 2016). Such a traditional multifunctional approach (i.e., a mixed land use of dwellings, forest, and farmland in the countryside), has been described as environmentally and economically unsustainable. The purpose of this case study is to determine the components of the urban design in Lapua that influences the mental health of its populace based on the opinions of resident professionals.



Figure 1. Ariel view of Lapua

Urban Planning and Design in Lapua: Finland's land area is 300 000 square kilometers, but it has only 5.5 million inhabitants. In the country, there are large, sparsely populated areas (*Finland Population 2022*). In the Finnish land use planning system, formal decision-making has to a large degree traditionally been in the hands of the municipal councils. Both local master plans and local detailed plans which determine actual land use at a local level are prepared and approved by the local authorities and political decision-makers (Böhme, 2002). Local master plans set out the main goals and principles for detailed planning and development, and local detailed plans regulate land use and building rights at the grassroots level. In Finland, local governments have usually been highly autonomous from national-level guidance and central state controls (Sireni, 2016). In principle, the Finnish land use planning system is hierarchically organized into three tiers, and higher-level plans tend to

steer lower-level plans. The Ministry of the Environment has the right to define – and re-define – the national land-use guidelines (Sireni, 2016).

The Southern Ostrobothnia region of western Finland is usually characterized as a representative example of conservative and rural traditions, in comparison to the national average (Grover et al., 2019, Sireni, 2016). South Ostrobothnia is a small region, with a population share of 3.7% and a GDP share of 2.7%. The population is quite evenly spread among the five smaller sub-regions, with Seinäjoki at the centre of the region.

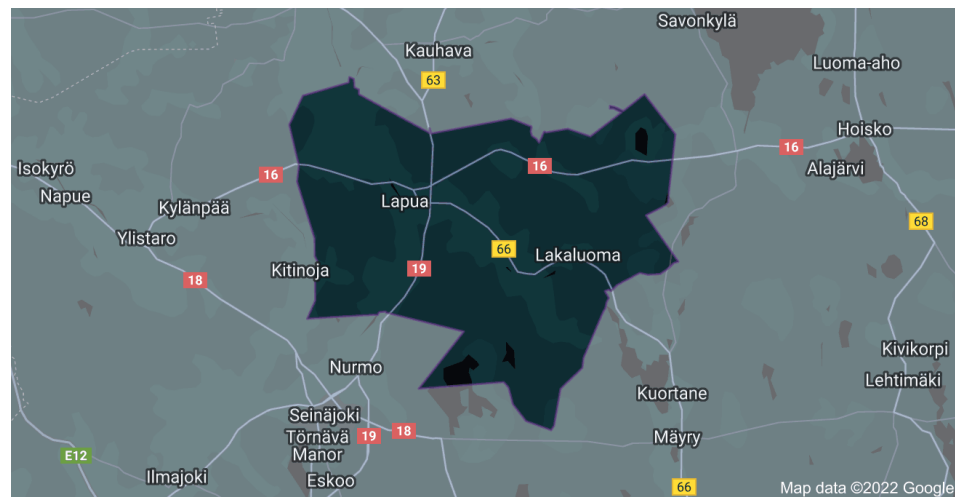


Figure 2. Map of Lapua

This case study focuses on Lapua. Lapua is located next to the Lapua River in the region of South Ostrobothnia. The town has a population of 14,208 (31 December 2021) and covers an area of 751.82 square kilometers (290.28 sq mi) of which 13.67 km² (5.28 sq mi) is water. The population density is 19.28 inhabitants per square kilometer (49.9/sq mi). Lapua is the seat of the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Lapua. The Lapua Cathedral, designed by Carl Ludvig Engel, was built in 1827. In the 1930s the radical anti-communist Lapua Movement was founded and named after the town. Lapua is also home to a large ammunition factory, which commenced operations in 1927 as the State Cartridge Factory. This factory was the primary supplier of ammunition to the Finnish Army during the Winter War and World War II. An explosion occurred in a production building of this factory on 13 April 1976, resulting in the deaths of 40 employees, mainly women. This is the worst accidental disaster in Finland's modern history (Böhme, 2002). In 1992, Lapua town was economically forced to acquire the area of the old State Cartridge Factory, to preserve jobs by affording a new building to the company as part of the compensation. In the subsequent decade, the old industrial buildings were renovated for cultural and commercial use (Grover et al., 2019).

2. Methods

This case study was conducted in Lapua, Finland, using a modified methodology of the Centre for Urban Design and Mental Health (UD/MH) (Layla, 2017, Akindejoye et al., 2021) This is as follows, a search was conducted within the Lapua district websites and official gazette and publications to identify relevant documents on urban design, planning, and mental health disorder. Retrieved resources were assessed, and relevant sections were extracted for further analysis. Feedback and input from interviewees were also explored and included.

This study recruited ten participants for a semi-structured interview through a convenient sampling technique. The ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals that have connections in Lapua: presently or formerly reside/work in Lapua. The respondents comprised two (2) Architects, two (2) Psychiatric nurses, three (3) Psychiatrists, one (1) Art instructor, and one (1) Ex. Military personnel and one (1) Municipal officer. The

demography of participants was 3 males and 7 females, aged 31- 40 years (4), 51-60 years (1), and 61-70 years (5). Table 1 below outlines the theme responses of participants to the interview.

Each participant responded to questions based on their perception of factors contributing to mental health, the prioritization of mental health in Lapua, barriers, and opportunities for urban design toward improved mental health. The majority of the interviews took place on-site, and only 30% were carried out via Zoom. All interviews were held between January-February 2022 at an average of 40 minutes per interview. The interviews and questionnaires were administered using English and Finnish languages, recorded, and finally transcribed using the Otter Ai software® (Akindejoye et al., 2021).

Thematic analysis was utilized for the analysis of interview data, which provided an adaptable approach to identifying and understanding common themes – topics, ideas, and patterns (Saukkonen et al., 2013).

3. Results

The table below summarizes the theme of urban design factors that respondents believed can influence mental health in Lapua, Finland.

Table 1: Growing themes from the opinions of interviewees on urban design and mental health and well-being in Lapua

Themes	Factors
Factors of Urban Design Considered to Influence MH in Lapua	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Availability of green and blue spaces 2. Availability of Public/commercial spaces 3. Cultural Heritage and Identity 4. Safety and Security 5. Housing 6. Climate Change
Perceived prioritization of MH in urban planning and design in Lapua	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Housing 2. Policy Enforcement 3. Sustainable Urban Development
Barriers identified for implementing MH in urban design in Lapua	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental Health stigmatization 2. Public Art Utilization 3. Economic Limitations
Opportunities for Implementing MH in Urban Design in Lapua	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mixed Housing for all ages 2. Integration of art into Urban Design 3. Increased Mental Health Awareness 4. Third Place Concept

3.1. Factors of Urban Design Considered to Influence Mental Health in Lapua

Respondents acknowledged some factors that impact mental health and well-being in Lapua. These factors include the availability of green and blue spaces, cultural heritage and identity, religion, availability of public space, housing, safety and security, and climate change. Even though Lapua has a strategy for “happiness” being granted to the town, there is still no direct evidence of achievements.

“The strategy of the town Lapua is in Finnish “Onnenresepti - Kasvava - ElinvoimainenHyvinvoiva” (= The recipe for happiness- growing - vital - well-being) Thus according to the town’s strategy, happiness should be granted here, but no one has defined or even described what happiness is” Architect(a)

3.1.1. Availability of green and blue spaces

The majority of the study respondents suggested that the availability of green and blue spaces in Lapua contributes significantly to the mental health of residents. According to one of the respondents, Finland has to follow the legislation, Land Use and Building Act (132/1999), which begins with a declaration: The objective of this Act is to ensure that the use of land and water areas and building activities on them create preconditions for a favorable living environment and promote ecologically, economically, socially and culturally sustainable development. Nature is valuable to urban design in Finland as well as recreational areas like parks and outdoor places where people can enjoy nature together. People need security for their everyday life, after their basic needs, like home and food, are fulfilled. Municipalities in Finland arrange the schools and daycare of children, health and elderly care, and Lapua is not left out, it possesses these services in order. Another respondent indicated that there are lots of green areas, trees, and parks in Lapua, however, it is hard to see them during the wintertime. The Simpsiö area was identified as a great example of outdoor activities, which offers both downhill and cross-country possibilities, and in the summer, there are a lot of paths to walk, run, or bike, and also berries and mushrooms.

"A green environment is ultimately important for all Finns, and here in Lapua we have the Simpsiö area. And with all the woods and recreations, one can do both downhill and cross-country skiing there" Architect(a)

"During the COVID19-pandemic, we learned in Finland that access to nature is very important. Due to the closure of most places, people began to walk more" Architect(b)

"The environment, its aesthetic, how beautiful and comfortable such places are can affect our mental health, for example, green areas" Psychiatrist nurse(b)

3.1.2. Availability and access to Public/ commercial spaces

Sports facilities: Lapua is characterized by several sports facilities for sports such as skiing, hockey, Finnish baseball, frisbee golf, and rugby among others. Such facilities and their associated activities are vital to the mental health of residents. There is a lot to offer in terms of sports in Lapua, for example, Ice sports, especially in ice springs.

"There is a lot of activity to be done at Simpsiö, one could ski and go bike riding. Also, in the winter, there is downhill skiing" Psychiatrist nurse(b)

"For sports facilities, the town of Lapua has lots of spaces. And these spaces and sports organizations are very important for people's mental health and well-being" Architect(a)

"The Jokilaakso Garden is another place to visit and experience nature and beauty in Lapua, it used to be a place for schooling in homemaking. It's an important garden and public place, here in Lapua." Psychiatrist(c)

Jokilaakso Garden: This is a popular summer destination in Lapua, located next to Lapua Cathedral. The garden was established at the turn of the century. The area used to serve as a school for teaching domestic skills to women in rural areas and the main building is about one hundred years old. Jokilaakso Garden is filled with beautiful wooden farm buildings and amazing plants, flowers, and trees. Amongst these Jokilaakso gardens have perennial plants, bushes, trees and yearly changing summer flower plantings. It is one of the biggest show gardens of useful plants in Finland. Jokilaakso Garden is about 2 hectares. The garden is free to visit (Grover et al., 2019).



Figure 3. Jokilaakso Garden Centre

Case study 1: Simpsiö Outdoor and Ski Centre

The slopes of Simpsiö Ski Resort are up to 600 meters long and there is a ten-kilometer illuminated ski run in the area (Saukkonen et al., 2013).

"In Lapua, there are several places like the Simpsiö area. It's a well-planned space and the administrators take very good care of the area and a very important part of Lapua" Psychiatrist(b)

The Simpsiö Centre consists of:

- 5 slopes, training slope, sled hill,
- half-pipe meeting international standards
- jumping hill K-55 m
- upper and lower cafés
- illuminated ski tracks/trails
- caravan site and cottage area
- football pitch
- marked trail
- observation tower (Lapua. fi. 2022)



Figure 4. Simpsiö Slope

Commercial places: Commercial places such as retail chain stores like Tokmanni, S and K markets, HalpaHalli, etc., are observed to be located far away from the city centre and further away from residential areas. Thus, there is a need to own a car in Lapua in order to move from one end to the other, as public transportation is not in existence in Lapua.

“having commercial areas and markets far away from residential areas is not a very good thing, especially for elderly people. Also, public transportation is not operational because it is a small town, and although we have quite a lot of cars, elderly people rarely drive” Psychiatrist(a)

3.1.3 Cultural Heritage and Identity

Cultural heritages are properties, on religious or secular grounds, designated by each state as being of importance to archeology, prehistory, history, literature, art, or science (Rousin, 2003). Social identity and cultural heritage are interconnected. Such shared identity between one’s culture and history may initiate feelings of pride (Rosilawati et al., 2020).

Half of the study respondents indicated that the 1976 explosion at the then-former cartridge factory was of historical and cultural significance to the city. They also confirmed that the conversion of the factory into the now Old Paukku Cultural centre is thoughtful and commendable. One respondent stated that the cultural centre reminds her of her history, and another indicated that culture is vital to happiness.

Having buildings from different eras, both new buildings and buildings with history creates a feeling that draws one closer to their culture, and identity, and increases understanding of one’s culture.

“For example, the Cultural Centre area reminds us of our connection to history. It is a very special place here in Lapua. It is a commendable thing the way the place has been rebuilt to conserve the memories of the people who worked there and lost their lives after the explosion. People still remember and talk about the event of the explosion. I think Lapua authorities have done a great job in rebuilding the cultural centre” Psychiatrist(b)

“Preserving history is very vital, especially this kind of history that was hurtful to the people. I think it forms part of the healing process” Psychiatrist(b)

Religion: Religion can have a positive impact on mental health, and it is perceived to give people a sense of structure and offers connection to other people. There are Lutheran and Orthodox churches as well as Pentecostal, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Free Church congregations, which all have their buildings. A historical religious feature in Lapua is the Lapua Cathedral (see plate 5) which houses the largest pipe organ in Finland. A respondent stated that Lapua is a very religious place with churches, there are very important churches in Lapua, where important services are held.

“The church has been much more important in former times. Although some people do not consider it as important today, it is still of great importance to many people” Psychiatrist(a)



Figure 5. Lapua Cathedral

3.1.4. Safety and Security

The "S" in the GAPS framework stands for "safe places", most of the study respondents affirm that safety and security is an important factor in promoting mental health. In addition, they revealed that Lapua is a safe and secure place. Stating that people need security for their everyday life, after all the basic needs, like home and food, are fulfilled.

Architect(a)

"Lapua is quite safe, even in the evenings and nights, children can go to school and find their way back home from school, all alone. If the distance is not very long" Psychiatrist(a)

"As a practicing architect, I always try to consider several aspects. For example, walking by the corridor of public space, one must have a clear view of the without any hindrances to prevent and avoid any safety threat." Architect(b).

3.1.5. Housing

Mixed housing for all ages: According to some of the study respondents, elderly people tend to live in areas different from young people, generally, there appears to be some disparity in age and housing. This kind of disparity occurs because people usually live in one-family houses and such buildings are built in relatively new areas (not in the centre of the city). At a certain age, children of such homeowners begin to migrate to different cities, for the purpose of study and employment. Such a process has been going on for many decades.

"Mostly persons from certain backgrounds or age groups live in a particular area different from others. I think it is better if people from different age groups lived together in a mixed community. Such that both kindergartens and elderly people's homes are in close proximity. Thus, creating natural connections and engagements between persons of different age groups and social backgrounds" Art instructor

"Most elderly persons are alone due to the pandemic, and this is worsened by the unavailability of their family members and friends" Psychiatrist(a)

3.1.5. Climate change

Some of the respondents identified some climate-related factors such as climatic season, day lightening, renewable energy, etc. as influencing urban design and thus mental health in Finland and invariably in Lapua. According to a respondent, in the summer, for example, Lapua is green and bursting with life but in the winter, people tend to stay indoors more, thus weather can influence people's mental health.

"The development of urban communities has several cultural and climatic differences. For example, China is a warmer country than Finland and vice versa" These conditions continue to adapt and change, thus it is important to learn from other countries." Architect(b)

"Especially in Finland where it is dark most times in the winter, we use natural lightening for the rooms and also use spaces that do not have hidden places" Architect(b)

Case Study 2: Vanha Paukku Cultural Centre

Vanha Paukku is a cultural and business centre with a unique environment and history on the banks of the Lapuanjoki River. The Lapua Art Museum is located in the area consisting of the old factory buildings of the former Lapua cartridge factory, as well as cultural history museums, the Patruuna Gallery, and the Ostrobothnian Photography Centre Gallery, City Library (Vanhapaukku. fi. 2022).

"I think Lapua has done a great job conserving this special place. Vanha Paukku, is a place where people can do a lot of activities and socialize" Psychiatric(b)

History: The case of "Old Paukku 1993-2003" concerned the process of planning an old industrial area, its renovation, and re-use. Lapuan Patruunatehdas, an ammunition factory belonging to the Ministry of Defense had since 1923 been situated in Lapua, a little agricultural town with 14000 inhabitants. The industrial area was in the city centre but because the process was secret only workers could go inside: most of the citizens had never entered

the area. It was a hidden and forbidden area to non-employees (Teräväinen, 2010). At no point did the Finnish army have a shortage of rifle cartridges. The factory's workforce rose to a thousand during the Winter War, and production in 1941 was about 97 million cartridge units. In 1976 the factory came out to be dangerous: with a big explosion that killed 40 workers. After the accident, operations gradually began to move away from the centre of Lapua. The last operations were moved to a new area in Jouttikallio in the mid-1990s (Teräväinen, 2010). In the 1990s the state decided to privatize the factory and demanded the town municipalities buy the area (15, 000 built sq. meters, the zone circa one hectare). After the purchase of the old factory in 1993, the town councils in Lapua decided in 1994 to renovate the Paukku area into an entrepreneur and culture centre (Teräväinen, 2010). In addition to the city's library and cultural activities, the area has a music school, a community college (earlier an adult education centre), a factory shop, a museum shop, companies and associations in various fields, a theater, a gym, a cinema, and a lunch restaurant, as well as a café (Café Patruuna). The riverboat operating on the Lapuanjoki River also has a homeport in the Old Paukku area. The entire area is protected on the state level as cultural heritage and the town plan includes conservation decisions for the buildings. Old Paukku still exudes the atmosphere of the factory times and "the spirit of Paukku" (Paukku = cartridge).



Figure 6. Vanha Paukku Cultural Centre

3.2. Perceived Prioritizations of mental health in urban planning and Design in Lapua

The majority of the correspondence agreed that Mental Health is a priority in the urban design of Lapua.

3.2.1. Social Housing

In Finland segregation in housing is avoided. Thus, social housing and private housing are not separated in different areas. In Lapua, one might find small family houses next to the urban centre but may not be able to distinguish whether it is social housing or privately built housing. This helps to curb any form of stigmatization of different socioeconomic classes. It is usually an active housing policy by the government, where they promote and fund such housing towards equity, and equal opportunities.

"We have a housing system in Finland which has been quite successful, where the housing types are mixed. *Free market housing is mixed with social housing, thus there is no stigma associated with housing ownership*" Architect(b)

3.2.2. Policy Enforcement

The Centres for Economic Development, Transport, and the Environment come under the administrative branch of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. ELY Centres also deal with tasks coming under the administrative branches of the Ministry of the

Environment, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Education and Culture, and Ministry of the Interior (Mitchell & Heiskanen, 2011). Such a legislature is not limited only to architects and planners or policymakers but is responsible for the regional implementation and development tasks of the central government.

"...we have quite strict legislation, for example, we are always required to have access roads to the housing and accessibility to every space in a building. However, there might be a local variation of how it is done and what is obtainable in certain conditions. For example, bigger cities might have a more active policy than a smaller city like Lapua" Architect(b)

3.2.3 Sustainable Urban Development

The existence of features of non-motorized transportation (such as lanes for pedestrians and cyclists) and numerous green spaces clearly indicate the prioritization of mental and physical health in Lapua. The design of Lapua supports physical health, as there are very good pathways and lanes for pedestrians and bikers in Lapua.

"Architects and planners, are actively trying to build to improve physical health, of course, it is impossible to build against any form of health and well-being" Architect(a)

"*Living in Lapua has encouraged me to walk more. I think people in Lapua are very fit as people are always walking, cycling, or cross-country skiing*". Ex. military.

Nonetheless, some of the respondents stated that they are not aware of the prioritization of mental health in the urban design and development of Lapua, as one respondent answered:

"In Lapua is characterized with several supermarkets and retail shops however residential houses are quite a distance from them, thus people have to travel long distances to make their purchases" Psychiatrist(a)

3.3. Barriers Identified in implementing mental health in Urban Design in Lapua

3.3.1 Mental Health Stigmatization

Affective disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse disorders are among the most common types of mental illness in the homeless population. Several studies have shown, however, that individuals with mental illnesses often find themselves homeless primarily as the result of poverty and a lack of low-income housing (Tarr, 2018). Thus, mental health stigmatization may have an indirect link with such displacement, this will be further addressed in the discussion section.

About half of the respondents indicated that mental health stigmatization is still present in the city of Lapua, nevertheless, there has been increased mental health awareness and acceptance in recent times. mental health stigmatization is gradually becoming a relatively normal topic as normal as a physical health condition.

"In my perception, people are quite aware of mental health issues and fairly talk about it openly. I believe that everyone has one form of mental health issue or another other but there are those with an actual diagnosis" Municipal officer.

"Here in Lapua, *I consider people who seek help for their mental health, very courageous, because when one visits the clinic, everybody can see that his/her car is parked outside*" Psychiatrist(b)

"Some patients feel ashamed visiting the psychiatric hospital, and most times they try to avoid people from seeing them coming into the hospital" Psychiatric Nurse(b)

3.3.2 Public Art Utilization

Most of the respondents stated that art has not been utilized to its full potential in the city of Lapua. One respondent suggested that more attention is been given to the visual and aesthetic looks of buildings. Stating that there needs to be a balance between the visual looks, the cost of development, and the nature of development.

"There is too much advertisement for shopping, stores, or businesses. For example, at the K market, there are a lot of poles and advert flags. Perhaps those can be replaced with some interesting things like public art" Ex-military.

"We have the policy of using a certain percentage of the building budget for artistic and aesthetic design in Finland, but Lapua is yet to accept and work with that" Municipal officer.

3.3.3 Economic Limitations

Economic limitation in an urban environment is usually a major issue, especially in cases where the budget is minimal, and preference is usually given to basic needs such as education and health care.

"When it comes to development in a place like Lapua, money is always a major factor. This is because the budget of the town is minimal, and we have to give priority to schools, children, and elderly people" Municipal officer.

3.4. Opportunities for Implementing Mental Health in Urban Design in Lapua

3.4.1 Mixed housing

Respondents suggested a deliberate blend of young and old people in residential places, they suggested that this will help promote positive mental health for all age groups. In rural areas, in previous years it was quite conventional for younger and older generations to live in the same courtyard, but in separate households. Today the residential areas are in some manner segregated in different ages, and the sprawl of new one-family housing is springing up in the town.

"Having elderly people and young people living in the same area is a good thing as against young people living in a different area from elderly people. For example, I live in a tall building, where there are 24 flats, and I am one of the youngest people there and I am over 65 years old". Psychiatric(a)

3.4.2 Integration of Art into Urban Design

Some of the respondents suggested the adaptation of public art in Lapua in promoting mental health. Public art creates a shared identity, elicits awe, decreases stress, and promotes positive health behaviors (Public Health Post. 2022).

"Introduce a portion of building budgets into arts and beautification. For example, the professionally designed public art at one of the roundabouts in Lapua has a potential for future development and encourages local politicians to commit a certain percentage of their budget to public art" Municipal officer.

3.4.3 Increased Mental Health Awareness

Awareness is one of the factors that can promote improved mental health in society today. People need to be aware of their mental health issues as well as sustainable options for tackling such. The study respondents stated that people should have more knowledge about how to improve their mental health and how to get the support that is necessary.

"Awareness is vital, with many celebrities coming out with their issues and mental difficulties, this is one area that has helped raise awareness, so that the average person can also open up and talk about their needs and challenges" Psychiatrist nurse(a)

3.4.4 Third Place Concept

The third place is the social surroundings separate from the two usual social environments of home ("first place") and the workplace ("second place"). Examples of third places include churches, cafes, clubs, public libraries, bookstores, and parks (En.wikipedia.org. 2022). As one psychiatrist suggested, it is possible to have places where anybody can freely walk in when they have issues they want to share and seek help. It is not psychotherapy but a third space or a public living room. It is a place where one can share with professionals with lots of other activities going on such as a library, games place, or a cafeteria. It is important to have mental health clinics at busy locations like the Lapua Cultural Centre area. It makes it much easy for people to seek professional help without fear of stigmatization because

everybody goes to the cultural centre thus there is no stigma. Such a strategy can make a significant difference.

"The Vanha Paukkucultural centre is such a place where people can visit, engage and interact with others...." Municipal officer

"I have been reading about this so-called third space, it is like a *temporary place where one can come in and just share their thoughts regardless of status or profession*. People with common interests can come together not because of any psychiatric need but to get support from the community. Such spaces are usually operated by the third sector, its neither the government nor the private sector, but mostly charity organizations" Psychiatrist (b)

4. Discussion

Green spaces: The availability of green spaces was identified as an important urban design factor that influences mental health in Lapua. Similarly, a study that explored the relationships between exposure to urban green spaces, physical activity, and self-rated health in Finland, showed that the presence of and access to green space is evident in the suburbs, where outdoor recreation was related to leisure-time physical activity and self-rated health. In contrast, in more urban residential areas, green spaces were more connected to frequent physical activity in association with commuting, indicating that investing in infrastructure for safe walking and bicycling could promote public health. The study suggests that to promote health to suburban residents, access to close-to-home green spaces suitable for recreation should be secured (Grover et al., 2019).

Preservation of History and Culture: The case study results also showed that the preservation of history and cultural heritage were important urban design factors influencing mental health. This factor closely corroborates with the Cultural Environment Strategy 2014-2020 (a national-level program). The strategy resulted from a project, which the Finnish state administration organized to enhance cooperation and share responsibility in different spheres of the cultural environment (cultural heritage) or the built heritage. To recognize the possibilities of the cultural environment to restrain and adapt to climate change. The implementation plan was given out later with a total of over 50 concrete actions, most of them the responsibility of the public administration and guided flexibly and calculating financial benefits (Teravainen, 2021). Throughout history, religion and religious places have been very important in Finland, and many religious features have become parts of the culture. The first public parks in Finland were actually graveyards, and still, they are popular places to visit even without any funeral services. Church buildings are seen as important cultural heritage today, even though belonging to the evangelical Lutheran church congregation. Lapua is a more conventional town, where religion constitutes an important part of many people's life.

Climate change: In addition, the study identified climate change as a factor that influences urban design for mental health, stating that the development of urban communities depends on both cultural and climatic differences and aspects of the weather like the duration of daylight. Similarly, the Cultural Environment Strategy 2014-2020 stated strongly that climate change and its consequences also affect the cultural environment (Teravainen, 2021). Finland's obligations to the Cultural Environment commitment reflect her commitments to the United Nations Sustainable development goals which are founded on a common understanding of the compelling need for change (Teravainen, 2021).

Third Places: Another significant theme that stood out from the study result is the development of third places or temporary places. Usually, people spend more time firstly at home, and secondly at the workplace, but then third places can vary between different physical places which are open and safe, they can be public (like libraries) or sometimes semi-public, commercial spaces. Such places could be poetry, literature, a café, or a youth café. Years ago, Lapua had a "Youth Café" on weekends in Old Paukku however the canteen building is now empty – the café was organized by parents but then the town (technical division) decided to try to dismantle it (but because it is part of the state-level important cultural heritage area - the Canteen building is still standing there - without any use). The idea of a temporary place, where people can come in and just share their thoughts

and pass time is one that many voluntary organizations are eager to have many kinds of actions and also free – but such spaces need buildings – and most of these voluntary organizations would like to use the free – and the town should pay the cost of the maintenance. In Lapua the most highly appreciated are the sports activities, another well ongoing “hobby” is singing in the many choirs – a lot of people get joy and well-being from that.

Mixed Housing: Furthermore, the study results recognized age disparity in housing occupancy. Most of the respondents thought that the housing in Lapua is such that there is age group segregation in the pattern of living and housing. Respondents suggest that it is best to ensure a mix of age groups such that there are natural connections and engagements between persons of different age groups. A study on Senior Housing as a Living Environment That Supports Well-Being in Old Age (Jolanki, 2021) suggests that housing for seniors should not only encourage and enable residents to be physically active and independent but also provide social activities.

Public Art: A deficiency was noticed in the utilization of art including public art in Lapua. Respondents stated that art has not been fully maximized. Mitchell and Heiskanen (Mitchell et al., 2011), have characterized the Finnish cultural policy system as both highly centralized and highly decentralized. Study on Reveries and Realities – Recent Developments in Finnish Urban Cultural Policy, concludes that there has been quite a lot of debate about how cultural services are diminishing if not completely disappearing from smaller municipalities, but these surveys show that a certain centralization seems to be taking place also among larger cities. Between the two rounds of gathering expenditure data, the increase in local cultural expenditure could for a significant part be explained – in addition to municipal mergers and the reform of the state transfer system – by the growth in cultural spending in a limited number of larger cities in Southern Finland (Saukkonen et al., 2013).

Mental Health Awareness: Mental health knowledge among actors and MH stigmatization was identified as a perceived prioritization and barrier respectively in implementing MH in urban planning in Lapua. According to the international recreation and park association (2022), public parks play a unique role in the lives of many people experiencing homelessness. And park and recreation professionals play a vital role in supporting and advancing the health and well-being of all individuals and our communities, including people who are experiencing homelessness. Thus, they must understand the extent of homelessness, its root causes, and how they can approach the issue with empathy, and be a contributor to local solutions (Nrpa.org. 2022). In addition, Finland’s “Housing First” principle, which makes housing unconditional for the homeless (instead of the staircase model of different stages of temporary accommodation before they finally earn a home such as night shelters, and short-term hostels: staircase model), has reduced the number of long-term homeless people in Finland by 35% (as of 2019) since its launch in 2008 (The Guardian. 2022).

Finally, the study results identified Sustainable architecture as a common theme in influencing urban design for mental health. Sustainable architecture seeks to minimize the negative environmental impact of buildings through improved efficiency and moderation in the use of materials, energy, development space, and the ecosystem at large (En.wikipedia.org. 2022). The findings of a study that investigated Sustainable development and architectural practice: Framing strategic approach, reconceptualize sustainable design paradigms, and reveal new opportunities for enhancing practice. This has implications for professional organizations, which can shape practice through recognized standards and designers themselves. It also has significance for the education of architects who can explore new avenues for sustainable design (Grover et al., 2019).

Table 1: A table showing the strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of the urban design of Lapua to mental health and wellbeing.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Availability and access to green and blue spaces ▪ Non-motorized transportation ▪ Social Housing ▪ Preservation of history and cultural heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Age disparity in housing ▪ Economic limitations
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Cultural Environment Strategy ▪ Integration of art into urban design ▪ Rejuvenation of the third-place concept 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Climate change ▪ Isolation of the elderly

5. Conclusions

Lessons from Lapua that could be applied to improve mental health through urban planning and design in other cities:

1. The availability of green spaces and parks across the city is an ideal model to emulate.
2. The mixed housing system in Lapua i.e., comprising both Free-market and social housing makes it possible for the different socio-economic classes to own a home without discrimination.
3. Lessons from the conversion of Old Paukku into a cultural centre, show the importance of the preservation of cultural heritage and provide an innovative and sustainable way of doing so.
4. We observe an active and functional non-motorized transportation (NMT) design in the city of Lapua. Cities and towns are encouraged to build and invest in non-motorized transportation, which is beneficial in terms of safety and physical health among others.

Recommendations for Lapua to improve public mental health and well-being through urban planning and design:

1. Housing and aging (Establishing intergenerational living): Studies have shown that older and younger adults need one another: Mixed-age interactions make seniors feel more purposeful, and young people benefit from their elders' guidance and problem-solving skills. One solution is establishing residential communities that are designed to nurture these bonds (The Washington Post. 2021).
2. Public Transportation: Establishing adequate and efficient public transportation within Lapua is vital to residents' mental health and well-being.
3. Rejuvenation of third places: There is a need to utilize the organizations within the city, especially voluntary organizations, who are willing to take up such courses but may require the town to support the maintenance of such places. An important avenue is the utilization of sports activities and participation in different interest groups such as a choir group.

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