

## Beyond recreation: A theoretical framework for examining the impact of the sports boulevard project on urban development in Riyadh

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### Abstract

The Sports Boulevard in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, is a massive project that will impact aspects of urban development like livability, quality of life, availability of green spaces, and equal access to opportunities, particularly the Northern edge where it is implemented. This review article evaluates the existing evidence on the theory of the impact of megaprojects on urban development to determine an appropriate framework for assessing the effects of the Sports Boulevard project on Riyadh's urban development. The methodology applied is an integrative literature review that combines insights from government documents, policy briefs, and scholarly research articles to address the above-mentioned research objectives. Results from the review indicated that the Sports Boulevard project would theoretically be conceptualized through social and economic impacts, such as inducing increased quality of life by creating pedestrian spaces that encourage walkability, cycling, and exercising through bikes. The results also indicated that the green spaces afforded by the project would provide opportunities for socialization and social events that promote social cohesion, better well-being, and a sense of community. Economically, the project will enable access to opportunities for those residing in the neighborhood.

**Keywords:** Sports; Boulevard; Urban Development; Urban Sustainability; Saudi Arabia

### 1. Introduction

The megaproject in Riyadh, the Sports Boulevard, which extends 135 kilometers across the city, is currently under construction and seeking to deliver improved quality of life and livability [1]. It links Hanifah Valley in the West with the Valley of Al Salai in the East [1]. The Sports Boulevard project integrates sustainability concepts by featuring safe and green pathways that pedestrians will use. Moreover, it contains specialized routes for amateur and experienced professional cyclists, paths for horse riding, and sites that are specifically designated for sporting activities, including a sports tower [1]. The sports tower has a high-rise building containing courts for diverse indoor sporting activities [1]. In other words, the project's prospective impacts include enhancing people's quality of life by integrating sustainability concepts into their way of life within the city of Riyadh. The need to explore a suitable theoretical framework for evaluating the impact of the Sports Boulevard Project in Riyadh necessitates this study to review the suitability of various theories in exploring the impacts of mega projects on livability, sustainability, and quality of life.

In comparison to cities from Western countries, a few researchers from emerging countries' fast-developing cities have attempted to examine the impacts of mega projects on livability, sustainability, and quality of life. For instance, Klingmann [2] examined the concept of livability from the perspective of Saudi Arabia's city mega projects and tied their debates extensively to cultural globalization in which urban areas in developing economies reconstruct their territories to achieve economic diversification and enhance their global image to appeal to foreign visitors and the affluent middle

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class in such cosmopolitan settings. In their study, Klingmann [2] contends that a correlation exists between Riyadh's urban megaprojects, sustainable urbanism, and social and economic reforms.

In relation to urban megaprojects like Riyadh's urban sports boulevard project, literature has shown that manifold ways exist for conceptualizing livability. From a theoretical standpoint, classic literature by Pacione [3] suggests that the abstract conceptualization of livability entails the interplay underlying personal perception and environmental features. Likewise, consistent perspectives by Veenhoven [4] suggest that livability can be conceptualized as habitability coupled with the quality of life associated with a given place. The author above asserts that livability maps the degree to which an environment's living conditions comply with the needs as well as the capacities of its residents. In this regard, livability in urban megaprojects such as Riyadh's boulevard should be theoretically defined by how these developments are aligned with the needs and capacities of people inhabiting the city.

In this regard, livability describes a neighborhood's ability to offer quality living conditions to residents, where the quality of life is considered by Massam [5] to be the extent to which it is consistent with inhabitants' expectations. Indeed, concurrent perspectives by Pandey et al. [6] suggest that livability in any urban context is defined by the attainment of a satisfactory quality of life by those inhabiting that specific locale. In support, the study by Newman [7] contends that livability is one of the human needs for social amenities, community well-being, and individual health. These assertions underscore that the evaluation of the impact of a megaproject in contemporary cities must be gauged by the extent to which it fosters the above-highlighted antecedents of livability and quality of life.

Literature focusing on urban development dynamics and the intricacies of spatial elements of city infrastructure that contribute to livability has posited several theoretical explanations. One such theoretical position, advanced by Ruth and Franklin [8], holds that two elements are crucial elements of livability, including the city environment and the density of the population. In support of this perspective, the study by Klingmann [2] argues that these elements are symbiotically important in contributing to livability through their demand for goods and services that necessitate the construction of structures and spaces that fulfill the emergent needs of residents. Consistent with this argument, Clark et al. [9] reiterate that a livable city is characterized by how it addresses the issues raised by residents in relation to the provision of clean air and water, sufficient housing facilities, secure, open, and green spaces, safe streets, economic opportunities and essential services like education, sanitation, and healthcare. This argument has also been echoed by Weje et al. [10], whose study stresses the benefit of fairness in access to job opportunities in a city, a healthy environment, governance transparency, equity in access to public services, and an integrated system of public transport in fostering livability. Thus, a dynamic interaction of the many factors that contribute to livability provides a compelling theoretical base for examining the impact of the Sports Boulevard project on urban development in Riyadh.

Some of the cardinal factors that are prevalent in studies examining the impacts of urban development projects on livability and quality of life include urban spatial structures and urban sustainability. In his study, Klingmann [2] underscores that within the broader literature in this research field, diverse frameworks are available for understanding the antecedents and effects of livability. For instance, a profound study by Zenker and Rütter [11] focuses on the nexus of livability and locational attitudes like satisfaction with residing in a given place and attachment to that environment as crucial factors influencing livability. Moreover, from a different theoretical perspective, Kaklauskas et al. [12] contend that livability has a close linkage to environmental sustainability. Urban developments that took place over the past decades, where rapid urbanization was an observable norm almost everywhere, led to the emergence of increased environmental concerns like pollution, heightened car traffic, natural calamities, and astronomically rising housing prices [2]. These concerns affect the quality of life of urban residents, thus bringing to the fore the issues of environmental sustainability and its relevance in debates of livability connected with projects intended to stimulate urban development and growth. Indeed, a similar argument by Liang et al. [13] underscores that the concept of urban sustainability and its consequences on livability continue to receive significant attention from scholars, policymakers, and the general public. Indeed, the United Nations [14] and Tournois [15] concur with this argument by reiterating that as the world urbanization rate continues to rise steadily, it has become a leading priority of contemporary planning in a bid to build livable and sustainable cities. Within the context of contemporary urban planning, policymakers intend to create policies that favor the construction of livable cities as a key consideration for innovating public policymaking and investment decision-making [2]. Ideally, the creation of laws and conditions that facilitate the building of livable cities is important in shaping their social, environmental, and physical realities and positively impacting quality of life.

Empirically, research findings from extensive inquiries such as Shekhar et al. [16], Kent and Thompson [17], Mouratidis [18], and Wang and Wang [19] have proven the existence of a robust nexus between urban spatial structures and residents' quality of life. In alignment, the study by Marans and Stimson [20] offers a comprehensive overview of existing literature on urban life quality as a function of many subjective and objective experiences that residents gain from their environment, particularly natural and urban amenities. The same authors also suggest that the consumption

experiences of urban dwellers have a direct impact on their quality of life. Examples of such consumption experiences include high-quality education, health services, and safety on the one hand and pleasant architecture and enhanced quality of urban design on the other [20]. In support of this contention, Klingmann [2] suggests that urban dwellers' consumption experiences are positively impacted by the diversity, affordability, and distinctiveness of housing, the provision of architecture that enhances seamless movement, and easy access to consumption opportunities. Moreover, the study by Marans and Stimson [20] asserts that additional features that enrich city dwellers' consumption experiences include neighborhood safety that gives a blend of compatible uses and parks alongside other open spaces to facilitate social cohesion and interaction. The criteria highlighted above for assessing the consumption experiences of urban dwellers have been reaffirmed by many researchers, like Pfeiffer and Cloutier [21], who indicate that the integration of the factors above in urban development leads to an elevated quality of life overall. In concurrence, a study by El-Din et al. [22] highlights the positive contribution of well-designed green spaces coupled with an aesthetically appealing urban design in promoting social inter-action among city dwellers and their safety. These urban development factors are the leading drivers of dwellers' satisfaction with a given neighborhood and, thus, their happiness. Indeed, the study by Shekhar et al. [16] recommends four main drivers that improve the well-being of urban communities, including safety, identity, access, and involvement and engagement. Studies by Mouratidis [23] and Wang and Wang [19] have also revealed that urban neighborhoods' design fundamentally affects residents' subjective well-being via the encouragement of social associations, leisure, and health. In concurrence, the study by Tonne et al. [24] determined that multiple linkages existed between urban sustainability and individuals' health, stressing the significance of sustainable and integrated utilization of land, transport planning, health service provision, community services, and public green spaces in promoting human well-being. As such, the built environment improves human well-being via trajectories that align with the domains of human life. The work by Mouratidis [25] offers a summary of the substantial pathways underlying the built environment and human well-being through a model comprising mobility, employment, social relationships, leisure, housing, and health. Overall, the reviewed literature above suggests that urban development plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of life of urban dwellers, particularly when multidimensional synergies are built between the different domains of life.

### *Aims and Objectives*

The main aim of this review article is to evaluate the current literature on urban development and determine a suitable theoretical framework for assessing the effects of the Sports Boulevard Project on urban development in Riyadh beyond its forecasted recreational benefits. The specific objectives of this review article include:

- To assess the features of the Sports Boulevard Project that contribute to urban livability in Riyadh.
- To explain the dominant and secondary lifestyle components of the Sports Boulevard Project and their likely contribution to transforming Riyadh city.
- To determine how the Sports Boulevard Project in Riyadh will contribute to a better quality of life in terms of public infrastructure and environmental sustainability.

### **1.1. Research Question**

How can current theories of urban development be used to provide a framework for evaluating the impact of the Sports Boulevard Project on urban development in Riyadh beyond associated recreational benefits?

### **1.2. Study significance**

The study is of significance to both academia and practice. For instance, the study contributes to scholarship by establishing a theoretical framework for conceptualizing the impact of the Sports Boulevard Project on Riyadh's urban development beyond the as-sociated recreational benefits. It must be noted that the Sports Boulevard project is currently under implementation, and all current discussions on its impacts are anticipatory; thus, the need to draw a broader theory on the consequences of urban development on sustainability, livability, and quality of life from existing studies like Tonne et al. [24] and Klingmann [2]. The study, therefore, contributes to knowledge by synthesizing knowledge from existing studies on the theory and impacts of urban development and megaprojects implemented in large cities to inform a nuanced understanding of the potential consequences of the Sports Boulevard project on Riyadh's urban development. Other researchers can rely on the findings of this study to understand the theoretical intricacies of urban development and the design benefits of megaprojects on livability and sustainability based on the case study of the Sports Boulevard project in Riyadh. Suggested areas for further research also offer other researchers potential topics on which they can focus within this field of knowledge. This review article is also relevant to practitioners, particularly architectural professionals, city planners, designers, and policy-makers, in reinforcing the importance of building sports boulevard projects that contribute to urban development through enhanced livability, sustainability, and quality of life.

### 1.3. Structure of the Article

The rest of the article is organized into four other chapters. The next chapter provides a detailed discussion and justification of the searches implemented in this study. After that, chapter three presents an analysis of the chosen articles and their synthesis to address the underlying research objectives. After that, the discussion compares the findings established with the body of knowledge reviewed in the introduction chapter. Lastly, a conclusion chapter is presented in chapter five, summarizing the study and the findings established.

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## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. The Review Design

This study adopted an integrated secondary review study design to explore a theoretical framework for evaluating the impact of the Sports Boulevard Project on urban development in Riyadh beyond associated recreational benefits. Also called an integrative literature review, this research design is suitable for synthesizing existing research findings to construct novel insights as well as perspectives by transcending a simple summary of results, as revealed by Lubbe et al. [26] and Dhollande et al. [27]. Soares et al. [28] suggest that research data from diverse study designs establish comprehensive and reliable conclusions about a phenomenon under inquiry. For instance, an integrative literature review includes both objective and subjective findings to reach a more informed conclusion regarding a phenomenon under inquiry. The study by Snyder [29] explains that an integrative review fosters the creation of a holistic understanding of a topic by integrating all forms of evidence available in this synthesis. The strengths of this review design include the capacity to evaluate domain-specific literature, assess the quality of associated evidence, pinpoint voids pertinent to a given field of knowledge, augment research findings from a diversity of research designs, develop relevant research questions, and establish relevant theories, as revealed by Hopia et al. [30] and Torracco [31]. Thus, the integrative review design was appropriate for this study to enable the re-searcher to integrate both qualitative and quantitative primary research articles in the sources reviewed to form the evidence basis for understanding the phenomenon under inquiry.

### 2.2. Search Strategy

The researcher applied a database search strategy to identify suitable studies for review in this study. According to Wohlin et al. [32] and Badampudi, Wohlin, and Petersen [33], a database search entails the utilization of scholarly databases to retrieve relevant academic articles for evaluation and review in order to address an underlying research problem. The researcher used five databases in the search, including ScienceDirect, Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, and Elsevier. These databases were chosen because they contain high-quality healthcare research publications that are sub-jected to a rigorous peer review process before publishing, as outlined by Gusenbauer and Haddaway [34]. Thus, using the above-mentioned databases was justified to enable the research to gain access to a pool of topic-specific journal articles and ensure that they were of high quality. In addition, searches were conducted using the Google Scholar bibliographic tool to obtain further sources with relevant information, like policy briefs and government documents, regarding the Sports Boulevard project in Riyadh.

The researcher used a set of keywords to refine the search and access diverse publications on this topic. The keywords used were: "Sports Boulevard, Riyadh, impact, theory, framework, urban, development, livability, recreation, quality of life, project, and design." These keywords were suitable for use in this research because they allowed the researcher access to published journal articles that were relevant to the topic under inquiry. These key-words were paired with Boolean search strings "AND" and "OR" to create suitable search terms that were used in this research. The use of Boolean search strings is recommended by Aliyu [35], whose study revealed that they helped enhance the efficiency of information retrieval by 77% relative to free-text queries. Thus, combining Boolean operators with keywords to form search terms was instrumental in enriching the article identification and information retrieval process. The search combinations used in this paper included merging keywords and Boolean operators to form suitable search terms that were utilized across the five academic databases mentioned above. The search combinations used are illustrated in Table 1 below.

**Table 1** Search Terms Formed from Merging Keywords with Boolean Operators

Keywords	Boolean Search Strings	Search Terms/Phrases
Sports, boulevard, Riyadh, urban, development, impact, theory, framework, livability	AND	Sports Boulevard AND Riyadh. Urban development AND livability in Riyadh's megaprojects. -Theoretical framework AND urban development impact in Riyadh.
Sports, Boulevard, urban, development, Riyadh, megaprojects, livability, quality of life, recreation	OR	-Sports boulevard OR urban development in Riyadh -Megaprojects in Riyadh promote livability OR quality of life beyond recreation.

The search terms in Table 1 above were applied across the five databases, identifying relevant articles that were subsequently assessed for eligibility. The eligibility criteria utilized are discussed in the section below.

### 2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The eligibility criteria used to qualify or decline studies for this study are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2** Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion criteria and associated justifications	Exclusion criteria and associated justifications
Articles and government documents published between 2016 and 2025 were chosen to ensure that the review considered up-to-date evidence published within the past decade.	Non-credible research publications, such as blogs and grey literature, were excluded to ensure that high-quality research findings could be inferred from this review.
Only articles and government documents discussing urban development design and associated impacts in the context of Riyadh or Saudi Arabia were chosen due to the relevance to the current topic and research context	Articles published in non-English languages were disqualified to avoid potential language barrier issues.
The scope of study publications included was limited to Saudi Arabia to ensure that the synthesized articles were relevant to understanding the scale of the problem in the country and generating specific findings.	Articles that were paywalled were excluded to ensure that the reader could access the same sources to ascertain the authenticity and veracity of reported findings.

The use of the criteria mentioned in Table 2 above led to the identification of 9 relevant articles, which were reviewed to reach informed conclusions about how theorizing the impact of the Sports Boulevard project in Riyadh's urban development can be conceptualized beyond recreational benefits.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to synthesize findings from the selected articles to address the examined phenomenon. The suitability of the thematic analysis approach was influenced by its simplicity, flexibility, and adaptability to diverse analytical contexts, as emphasized by Nowell et al. [36], Mwita and Mwilongo [37], and Christou [38]. The analysis process followed Nowell et al.'s [36] recommended six-stage procedure, which entailed first reading the full texts to get familiar with the written content, followed by the identification of initial concepts, ideas, and codes that were related to the investigated phenomenon. After that, the researcher used the codes to create preliminary themes in step three, followed by reviewing them in step four to ascertain their appropriateness. Afterward, the researcher named and defined the themes in step five before finally writing the manuscript in the last phase of analyzing data. The researcher did not use Generative Artificial Intelligence in any part of this work.

## 2.5. Ethical Considerations

The researcher observed secondary research ethics in the process of writing this review paper to ensure that it was conducted according to the standards of good research practices. For instance, the study by Tripathy [39] indicates that while there is implied permission for the use of data from free-access sources, researchers are obligated to recognize the original authorship of such sources to align their research findings with ethical standards for secondary research. Thus, the researcher complied with this ethical requirement by citing all the articles reviewed in this study to avoid plagiarism and unethical research conduct.

## 2.6. Methodological Limitations

The use of secondary research methodology to probe the phenomenon under inquiry could be a key limitation of this review study. Studies by Kumara [40] and Johnston [41] highlight that secondary data is limited in effectively addressing the needs of secondary analysts because its original collection was tailored toward the specific objectives of primary researchers. Thus, a mismatch in objectives between primary researchers and those who review such data in secondary research presents a limitation in the extent to which such information suitably addresses their research concerns. However, the re-searcher mitigated this constraint by sticking to the eligibility criteria to ensure that the chosen articles were relevant to the research topic and thus helpful in informing pertinent, conclusive results.

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## 3. Results

The analysis of data from the selected 9 articles led to the identification of three relevant themes that are analyzed in this chapter. This section may be divided into subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, and the experimental conclusions that can be drawn.

### 3.1. Theorizing the Effect of Sports Boulevard in Riyadh Residents' Quality of Life as a Megaproject

This theme was informed by perspectives of how the Sports Boulevard project aligns with other mega projects implemented in Riyadh to improve the quality of life for residents. The Sports Boulevard project is intended to contribute to enhanced quality of life for Riyadh's residents in manifold ways. First, the project is located towards the northern part of the city, an area mainly inhabited by upper-middle-class individuals who will likely experience better well-being from the green space that it will foster [42]. In addition, the document by the Royal Commission for Riyadh City [43] indicates that given its extensive coverage, the Sports Boulevard project will foster urban dwellers' participation in sporting activities and, at the same time, provide them with an opportunity to walk and socialize in an atmosphere that is created for pedestrians. In concurrence, the aspect of the project's walkability as a key improvement in residents' quality of life is also cited by Homoud and Jarrar [44], who argue that this intervention had become increasingly rare in modern-day Riyadh's car-oriented fabric. In concurrence with this argument, Klingmann [45] explains that besides creating pedestrian pathways, the Sports Boulevard project also offers tracks for cycling as well as horse riding that link many sporting attractions. Therefore, these features underscore that the project's completion will positively impact the social imperatives of residents of Riyadh through the creation of pedestrian-oriented walkways and the facilitation of sporting events that enhance the capacity for socialization among those who access the public open green spaces afforded by the Sports Boulevard. In contrast, Homoud [44] presents dissenting views by arguing that the megaprojects currently being implemented in Riyadh expand the city's infrastructural capacity and enhance design sustainability through walkability, there is a pressing challenge of gender segregation tied to the unique cultural and societal context of Saudi Arabia. This challenge poses the risk of potentially influencing Riyadh's development of walkable spaces for communities of residents in the neighborhoods. Notably, this challenge manifests through conservative cultural norms of gender segregation and conventional mobility preferences in public space that might induce the design as well as the accessibility of walkable areas, since distinct spaces might be required for men and women [44-46]. Even so, Homoud [44] contends that the ongoing construction of the Sports Boulevard on the city's Northern edge will promote enhanced greenery and healthy lifestyles. The new project will also make significant contributions towards enhancing walkability, particularly for residents inhabiting the 400-meter confines of the Sports Boulevard [44]. Hence, the overall positive impact of the improved design of the city's Northern side, resulting from the implementation of the Sports Boulevard, is theoretically understood from the perceived impacts of the megaproject on Riyadh residents' quality of life.

### 3.2. Potential Impact of Sports Boulevard on Livability

A synthesis of the chosen studies indicated that the completion of the Sports Boulevard project will benefit residents beyond leisure by impacting their living conditions. For instance, the project creates employment opportunities, which is a key aspect of livability in urban development [45]. Studies by Klingmann [45] and Homoud and Jarrar [44] suggested that the Sports Boulevard project, like all other megaprojects, is aligned with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 which seeks to

improve residents' general living conditions through better health, improved education, enhanced access to services, sanitation and access to job opportunities. Habiby and Yaseen [46] support this argument by emphasizing that the Sports Boulevard project contributes to livability by embedding greening strategies that foster city resilience. In agreement, Parashar and Lakra [47] suggest that the project contributes to happiness, particularly for architecture students, due to increased prospects of enhanced quality of life and increased city vibrancy in alignment with the country's Vision 2030. Therefore, the project will likely contribute to people's positive living experiences as a consequence of the constellation of benefits brought about by the large-scale greening of the city, as well as access to improved sanitation and health services.

### **3.3. Sustainability Features of the Sports Boulevard Project**

The selected sources indicated that one of the leading motivations for the implementation of Sports Boulevard was to integrate sustainable design attributes to optimize spatial benefits to residents of Riyadh city. For instance, one of the cited features of the megaproject, Sports Boulevard, is improved mobility, which, according to Zawawi et al. [48], provides additional modes of transportation, such as commuting by bike and walking, that contribute to the transition to sustainable urban transportation. Previous high dependence on cars for movement in Riyadh is associated with environmental and health challenges [49]. The project also aims to contribute to sustainability by encouraging people to engage in exercises and take part in various sports activities, such as FIFA, that can stimulate sustainable development [50]. The project also has secondary attractions like art districts, an open waterway, public plazas, sculpture gardens, and green gathering spaces that enhance urban regeneration and sustainable development [42]. Thus, an integration of sustainability concepts in the design of the sports boulevard is likely to promote sustainable development and encourage residents to optimally utilize the provided facilities to enhance their quality of life.

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## **4. Discussion**

The findings of this study have provided insights into the various ways through which the impacts of the Sports Boulevard project on Riyadh's urban development can be theorized. The results established are evaluated below in relation to each of the under-lying research objectives.

### **4.1. The Features of the Sports Boulevard Project that Contribute To Urban Livability In Riyadh.**

The results established from this review indicated that Sports Boulevard makes significant contributions to the livability of the city through profound architectural and sustainable ways. For instance, the project enhances urban mobility through the creation of green pathways that pedestrians will use. This finding concurs with Clark et al. [9], and Weje et al. [10], who outlined that city livability is attained by meeting the needs of residents by offering them, among other things, access to secure green spaces to leverage associated benefits of interaction, social exchange, and better well-being. Moreover, the results indicated that these additional pathways encourage walking, thus combating some of the health challenges associated with relying on vehicles for mobility. The findings also revealed that the project enhances livability through the availability of world-class facilities that meet the evolving needs of city dwellers and public spaces that offer opportunities for socialization. These results are consistent with those established by Klingmann [2], Pacione [3], and Veenhoven [4], which indicated that cities that are livable must address the needs of residents and consider environmental features in their design to minimize harm. Thus, a theoretical evaluation of the project must consider how it impacts the lives of residents and address ecological concerns.

### **4.2. The Dominant and Secondary Lifestyle Components of The Sports Boulevard Project and Their Likely Contribution to Transforming Riyadh City**

The review of the selected sources revealed that the Sports Boulevard project presents many lifestyle-enriching avenues that contribute to the transformation of city life and enhance its vibrancy. The findings of this study indicated that the Sports Boulevard project will transform the northern edge of Riyadh through enhanced walkability, which will have health and environmental benefits. These results corroborate Pacione [3] and Veenhoven [4], whose studies indicated that an interplay of how individuals perceive livability and the associated environmental features of a neighborhood influences their quality of life. In this regard, enhancing mobility pathways in the city through the project contributes to secondary lifestyle benefits and city transformation by giving residents enhanced consumption opportunities. Consistent with this finding, the study by Klingmann [2] indicated that the consumption experiences of urban residents are positively affected by the diversity, affordance, and distinctiveness of housing, an architectural design that fosters seamless mobility and easy access to manifold consumption opportunities. For instance, the lifestyles of people will improve due to access to walking spaces that will enable them to reduce reliance on vehicles for mobility. Pedestrian spaces will also encourage cycling, which has double transformative benefits, including exercising and reduced vehicular emission levels, as a result of some people opting to use this alternative means of mobility. This finding agrees

with Kaklauskas et al. [12] and Klingmann [2], who argue that contemporary urban designs that foster environmental sustainability via reduced air pollution and car traffic contribute to transformational change in urban development. Overall, the results above imply that the completion of the Sports Boulevard project in Riyadh will have many transformational benefits for city residents and foster city resilience.

#### **4.3. How the Sports Boulevard Project in Riyadh Will Contribute to Better Quality of Life in Terms of Public Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability**

The results of this study indicated that the Sports Boulevard project will significantly impact the transformation of Riyadh city through residents having many choices and opportunities to lead healthy lifestyles. These findings align with Shekhar et al. [16], Kent and Thompson [17], Mouratidis [18], and Wang and Wang [19], whose studies indicated a positive nexus between urban structures and the quality of life of neighborhood residents. The reviewed studies indicated that once the Sports Boulevard project is completed, it will equip the neighborhood with improved infrastructure embedded with large-scale greening and state-of-the-art facilities that contribute to the city's resilience and dramatically improve the lives of residents. This result confirms the theorization of Marans and Stimson [20], which comprehensively suggested that the quality of life of urban dwellers is influenced by their consumption experiences, which are both subjective and objective based on their perceptions of how they benefit from the urban and natural amenities. The findings also indicated that the Sports Boulevard project will make public green spaces available for those dwelling in the northern part of Riyadh city within the periphery of this megaproject. As a consequence, people accessing such open spaces will have extended capacities for interaction and social exchange, leading to better well-being as a result of available social support and avenues for cultural exchange among city dwellers [20]. The livelihoods of the people residing within the neighborhood of the Sports Boulevard project will have access to enhanced job opportunities, which is a crucial factor for realizing urban transformational change.

#### **4.4. Implications for Future Research**

The findings of this study imply that the design features of megaprojects in Riyadh have embedded sustainable construction concepts that address the consumption needs of urban dwellers, as well as environmental conservation through the greening strategies adopted and pedestrian spaces intended to encourage walkability. By giving priority to pedestrians, improving infrastructural capacity, and integrating smart urban planning designs and strategies, the Sports Boulevard project will contribute multiple benefits to those residing within the periphery, including better social cohesion, reduced pollution, reduced car traffic congestion, and a more resilient city. Nonetheless, there is a need for further research to examine the urban design features of the Sports Boulevard project that can be implemented in the rest of the cities in Saudi Arabia to promote sustainable urban development. In addition, future research should explore manifold factors affecting walkability to deepen the understanding of how they contribute to the subjective and objective consumption experiences of urban residents.

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### **5. Conclusions**

This paper reviewed the literature to understand how the impacts of the Sports Boulevard project on urban development in Riyadh can be theorized. The results indicated that the Sports Boulevard project encompasses a cycling and sports corridor tailored to encourage development, enhance wellness and social exchange, and allow vital communities to blossom, a measure that is widely transforming Riyadh. The project showcases a paradigm shift in the transportation network that prioritizes people by bringing substitute transportation methods. The urban fabric in Riyadh is poised to be transformed by the monumental project, thereby changing how residents encounter the city. The sports Boulevard doubles up as part of the four ambitious projects in Riyadh. The project has emerged as the most critical component of the Saudi Vision 2030, with the anticipation of turning into one of the best hundred cities globally, a prestigious rank to be achieved. The Sports Boulevard anticipates attaining the distinction to motivate all citizens across Riyadh to consider a healthy lifestyle by exercising and taking part in diverse sporting activities. The Boulevard extends across the city of Riyadh for 135km, linking Hanifah Valley in the West and Al Salai Valley in the East. Pedestrians are supplied with safe, green pathways throughout the project. Professional and non-professional cyclists are allocated special routes, horse riding paths, and other chosen sites for various sporting activities. One such site is the Sports Tower, which is a high-rise building comprising various courts for various indoor sports activities. The Boulevard is poised to feature a desert that hosts various activities ranging from event venues to outdoor museums, movie theatres, and shows. Some areas are going to be allocated for investment zones featuring recreational and other commercial activities. Various landmarks and other public art installations will be erected to represent cultural aspects across the city of Riyadh.



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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The author report there are no competing interests to declare.

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