

## RECREATIONAL COMMUNICATION SPACE OF A MODERN INTEGRATED URBAN SHOPPING CENTER

**Borysenko A.S.,**

PhD Arch., Senior Lecturer, Department of Architecture of Buildings and Structures,  
argeciy@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0001-5629-2768

*O.M. Beketov National University of Urban Economy in Kharkiv*

**Abstract.** Article is dedicated to studying the influence of shopping centers on the urban environment, with the goal of determining the preferable qualities of their recreational communication spaces. The main factors of their negative impact are the product of the inversion of their facades, autonomy of their spatial organization and function, as well as disparity of their scale with the smaller one of urban spaces. These issues can be traced to the qualities of an introverted spatial structure. Based on the aim of comprehensively integrating a shopping center to its urban context, it is proposed that its recreational communication space focus on providing accessibility, readability and permeability of its internal structure. The latter must be weighed against the need of keeping the mall's environment comfortable, which may be balanced by the use of a mixed system of enclosed and open-air recreational communication spaces, as well as buffer spaces and active visual connections.

**Keywords:** shopping center, shopping mall, recreational communication space, urban environment, sustainable development.

**Introduction.** Modern public shopping center – also known as shopping mall – is a massive multifunctional object with a complex inner structure. The urban impact of such an object is significant as well. With its commercial function, it is able to play the role of a catalyst in rejuvenating part of a city as a popular place for visiting, stimulate or drain activity on adjacent streets and in downtown in general. This influence is greatly dependent on the architectural spatial characteristics of its design, and it, in turn, is largely defined by its recreational communication space.

In this study, the public shopping center is interpreted as a shopping center with a significant part of social function in its operation, and, accordingly, an expanded public interpretation of its spaces. Historically, the first examples of shopping complexes, specifically styled as public commercial centers (centers of new cities in England, France, the Netherlands and Sweden in the 1960s), were intended to become the centers of public life of new residential formations, and most often had open connecting spaces that had become new squares [1]. At the same time, the first indoor shopping centers of the 1950s played a similar role for decentralized cities and towns in the USA [2].

The fundamental structural element that defines and embodies the specificity of a public shopping center is its recreational communication space (RCS). This connective space combines separate functions into a single system via pedestrian traffic, which it organizes with its spatial-environmental characteristics in order to realize the particular concept of the shopping center. The mall as an important structural element was more pronounced in the interior solutions of enclosed shopping centers, although their findings were soon adapted to open-air solutions as well.

Shopping mall as a distinct building type initially emerged and evolved in a suburban setting of mid-XX century USA. It has caused its structure to assume specific traits which were then transplanted into other countries and settings along with the highly successful formula of the building type. These traits mostly result in distinct introverted solutions of shopping center, isolating its main recreational communication spaces and limiting outside connections to the absolute minimum required for its operation – all for the goal of better control over the resulting

environment and its properties. Although the distinct new type of integrated shopping centers emerged soon, the shopping malls built in the cities often inherited the aforementioned introverted scheme as part of successful features package along with the rest of the qualities seemingly ingrained in the type. A number of new urban shopping mall built around the world continue to keep to the introverted spatial structure. Such a structure is primarily defined by its internal, technologically conditioned factors; conversely, the extroverted (or integrated) structure of a recreational communication space is shaped by external factors as well, placing greater importance on the context of its situation.

As the construction of shopping malls in Ukraine nowadays keeps to the trend of using introverted solutions in cities, even as the documented problems caused by such solutions in urban settings continue to grow, it becomes important to observe the connection of these problems with the structure of recreational communication space, particularly that of introverted type, and attempt to outline the qualities for the new, more sustainable and contextually adequate type of urban shopping center.

**Analysis of latest publications and studies.** J. Gosseye [1] described the genesis and particularities of evolution of purposefully designed urban shopping centers in Europe. The question of the interaction of the shopping center and the city was touched upon by B. Maitland [2], M. Beyard [3], J. Stillerman and R. Salcedo [4], A. Ilyash [5] from different points of view, including the morphology of the urban environment, functional diversity and social life of the urban population. The influence of the shopping mall on pedestrian traffic in the city center was analyzed in the study of B. Lorkh and M. Smith [6]. Features of the formation of the environment of recreational communication spaces of shopping centers and its perception by visitors were considered in the works of Z. Tan [7] and O. Berezko [8].

**Formulation of the task.** The goal of presented article is to analyze the existing studies covering the systemic mutual influence between the shopping malls and the city in light of the shift in perspective in their design favoring their public functions and the actualized role of recreational communication spaces in their organization and outside connections. The analysis is conducted in order to formulate the preferable qualities of recreational communication spaces for the adequate sustainable urban solutions of these buildings.

**The basic material and results.** A sociological study of the visitors to "Keskus Mall" in the city of Thunder Bay (Ontario, Canada), conducted by B. Lorch and M. Smith [6], show that shopping centers in the urban environment can influence the behavior of pedestrians in certain ways, described as the "fortress", "distance decay" and "intervening alternative" effects. The "fortress effect" is manifested in the preference that pedestrians give to the comfortable, secure inner space of a shopping complex over ordinary streets. The "distance decay effect" is caused by people's desire to make the least effort. Wanting to minimize their walking routes, citizens who start and end their visit to the city center at the shopping mall move away from it only by a small distance. The shopping complex can also act in the role of "intervening alternative" – it can attract the attention of pedestrians who start their visit to the downtown outside of it, redirecting them from the part of the city located behind the shopping center.

These results confirm the reading of an enclosed shopping center as a fortified enclave with weak connections with its surroundings when situated in an urban fabric. Shopping complexes of an introverted type form new powerful centers of gravity and deprive the pre-existing downtown pedestrian system of social activity, which can negatively affect the city in the long run. The study indicates that the expected spillover effect, - that part of the visitors attracted by shopping center also visit the shopping establishments on the adjacent streets, - is limited by the "fortress" and "distance decay" effects, as well as being spatially dependent on access points to the internal space of the shopping mall, and, correspondingly, on the spatial organization of its recreational communication space.

B. Maitland [2] described the transformation of the morphology of urban spaces due to the introduction of a large shopping mall in the city structure. Streets lose their usual semantic and functional content when they are flanked by blank or underused facades of large-scale buildings; it

transforms them from the multifunctional location of urban life into a plain transit connection. This can be further understood in the categories of articles by K. Dovey [9] and E. Pafka [10] about the permeability of urban spaces and "public interfaces". Considered from this point of view, the shopping center occupies a large volume, often an entire city block, while having a limited number of points of active interaction ("interfaces") with citizens on nearby streets. This makes the large mass of the shopping center a "blind spot" in terms of its external links and relations, - it does not operate on the scale characteristic of the city center (as "public interfaces" of city streets are usually more saturated, their points of entry and interaction are located closer to each other).

Shopping center, unlike traditional commercial spaces, initially developed outside of the urban environment. Often, such a complex in the city continues to be designed as an autonomous object that ignores its surroundings. This allows designers to better regulate its comfort and security, but also increases the gap between it and traditional urban spaces. The contrast of the internal and external environments is aimed at favorably emphasizing the nature of the shopping environment. At the same time, increasing the contrast between the inner environment and the adjacent exterior spaces of the city streets confines the movement routes to the inner space of the shopping center and leads to a decrease in the intensity of pedestrian traffic and commercial and public activity in the surrounding area of the city. In turn, this distorts the connectivity and logic of "mixed use", a distinct feature of urban spaces. Accordingly, the activities and situations occurring inside the shopping center are not integrated into the continuity of urban life, instead forming its situational alternative.

Therefore, it can be summarized that the most characteristic disadvantages of large shopping centers in cities are:

- inversion of commercial facades;
- autonomy of the spatial organization and function of the shopping center;
- the disproportion of the architectural forms and spaces of the shopping center to the smaller and more diversified urban environment.

These shortcomings are largely related to an insufficient design effort aimed at the integration of a shopping center into an urban environment.

In the framework of the systemic approach, the co-existing shopping center and the city can be considered as a complex system consisting of two subsystems - the actual shopping complex, and the continuity of public spaces of the city. Both subsystems of the "Shopping Center - City" complex system are connected to each other with the help of pedestrian traffic and recreational communication spaces that serve as its channel and conductor. The systemic effect of synergy, which describes the benefits of the mix of functions in shopping complexes, is enhanced by the interpenetration of the systems - the adjacent streets receive a certain number of visitors for commercial purposes, and the internal spaces of the shopping center become the hub of urban life. According to this, a certain level of permeability of its envelope for the circulation and perception of citizens would be desirable for a successfully integrated solution. This brings us again to the concept of urban "interfaces", but in a broader sense than a morphological one - as points of interaction between the city and the shopping center become an important element of both the urban space and the public commercial complex in their connected state. In general, the shopping center in the city should be designed not only as a building, but needs to be integrated into its structure as a fragment of an improved urban fabric. For this purpose, an architect operates with connections of different levels (functional, visual, semantic), as well as with architectural forms as "public interfaces" of the building.

Shopping malls in cities still gravitate towards enclosed forms, as security and comfort are the characteristic qualities that distinguish their use as nodes of increased intensity of interactions in the system of urban spaces. At the same time, enclosed complexes can also be introverted or extroverted in terms of the organization of their recreational communication space. The extroverted organization is more in line with the logic of using large spaces in cities, since the shopping center of introverted structure confines attention to its interior and provides fewer transitional buffer spaces. As a result, it has less spatial (visual and functional) integration with its surroundings. This

highlights the existing conflict in implementing the logic of the negation of distracting factors and the permeability of structure, which both lead to the appearance of opposite properties of the recreational communication space. An appropriate compromise and an opportunity to approach the spatial complexity of a "natural", gradually evolved urban space may be found in a complex, mixed spatial structure of a shopping center combining both open and enclosed sections. Additionally, it provides more opportunities for flexible seasonal use and arrangement of buffer spaces. The activation of visual connections of external and internal space in addition to functional and transit ones can also be useful in this regard (fig. 1).

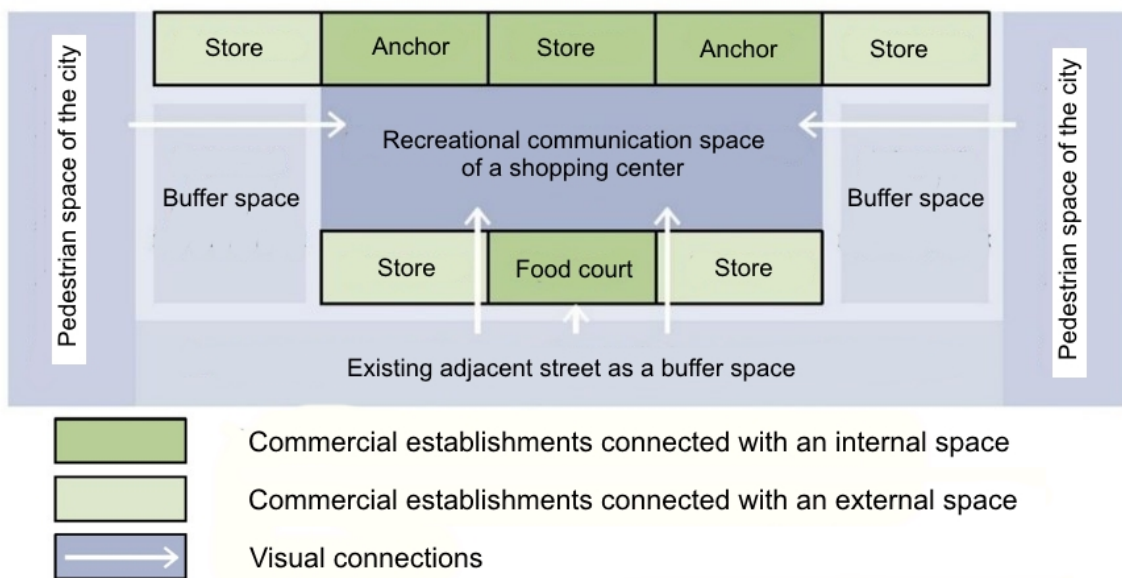


Fig. 1. Schematic representation of a recreational communication space of modern integrated urban shopping center

The modern shopping centers of “City Creek Center” (Salt Lake City, USA), “Cabot Circus” (Bristol, UK) and “Liverpool One” (Liverpool, UK) can be listed as examples of this approach. Their recreational communication spaces illustrate the implementation of a mixed system of open and enclosed sections (entirely open-air in the third case), along with the introduction of seamless transitive buffer spaces in places of contact between their internal and external urban structure (fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Recreational communication spaces of integrated urban shopping centers, left to right: “City Creek Center”, USA, 2012 (photo: Uncle Alf, CC0), “Cabot Circus”, UK, 2008 (photo: Arpingstone, Public Domain), “Liverpool One”, UK, 2008 (photo: Alex Liivet, CC0)

V. Raimers [11] noted how the technological means of maximizing the situational attractiveness of a shopping center increasingly harm the very usability of such a center, forcing visitors to spend additional time and effort to move inside – which is usually done in order to increase the time spent and provide additional coverage of related goods. Such means result in greater isolation of the recreational communication space and functional autonomy of the shopping complex. In this case, the integration of a shopping center into the structure of the city with the goal of maintaining its role as important focus of urban life should be oriented towards accessibility of its recreational communication space. Said space should provide a logical, convenient internal structure to the complex, favoring an easier and more casual visit.

The concept of readability also plays an important part in integrating a public commercial complex into the urban fabric. The actualization of the semantic hierarchy of spaces and forms may help in ensuring the continuity and logical consistency of the connections of recreational communication spaces of the shopping center with the individual landscape of people's perception of the city. The similar structural nature of the organization of a recreational communication space and a traditional urban space, together with their genetic connection and the reminiscing visual images of the former, allow designers to make an analogy in the means of describing and structuring the perception of both. An example of such an approach may be seen in the system of visual and semantic perception markers of the recreational communication spaces of shopping centers as described by Z. Tan [7], based on the methodology of K. Lynch [12]. On the other hand, the issue of scale disparity between naturally massive forms of shopping center and the smaller elements of urban environment may be resolved by regulating the scale of architectural and compositional solutions by means of terracing the volumes, employing greenery and compositional division of the mass, introduction of visually active human-scale elements, etc. These means can help design more coherent and situationally adequate forms for the architecture of urban shopping centers.

The logic of sustainable development require paying attention to local cultural resources that can be used or actualized in the process of creating new solutions. Such resources may involve existing buildings whose function can be changed within the framework of revitalization programs, architectural references and styles specific to the city, information about memorable places and objects along with related semantic content, etc. This makes the choice of a semantic concept of a shopping center based on local narrative semantic resources particularly relevant. Examples of such involvement of local cultural resources may be observed, in particular, in such shopping centers as "Faneuil Hall Marketplace" (Boston, USA), "Ghirardelli Square" (Los Angeles, USA) and "Coal Drops Yard" (London, UK) that used old buildings and local semantic narratives in their program.

**Conclusions.** Modern shopping centers are large multifunctional objects with a complex internal structure that can have a significant impact on the urban environment. It has been established that the main disadvantages of shopping center solutions in cities are the inversion of shopping facades, the autonomy of the spatial organization and function of the shopping center, the weakening of ties with the system of public spaces of the city, as well as the scale disparity with a smaller and more diversified urban environment. These shortcomings are largely related to an insufficient design effort aimed at the integration of a shopping center into an urban environment.

The shift in perspective in shopping center design observed since 2000s favors their public functions and actualizes the role of recreational communication spaces in their spatial organization and outside connections. Based on the aim of comprehensively integrating a shopping center to its urban context, it is proposed that the design of its recreational communication space focus on providing accessibility, readability and permeability of its internal structure. The preferable level of permeability may be achieved by increasing the number of functional and visual connections of the shopping center with its surrounding environment, and the implementation of buffer spaces. Improving accessibility requires designing a recreational communication space with effective internal logic and amenities aimed at saving the time and effort of its visitors. The readability in practice may be implemented by articulating the perceived system of urban spaces using the K.

Lynch method [12] (as proposed by Z. Tan [7] for the interior spaces of a shopping center) and regulating the scale of architectural and compositional solutions by means of terracing of volumes, employing greenery and compositional division of the mass, introduction of visually active human-scale elements, etc.

The negation of distracting factors (protection against adverse weather conditions and the creation of a secure, controlled space) remains an important consideration. The conflict between means for maintaining this quality and the means of implementing the permeability of the shopping center's envelope can be partially resolved by employing a mixed system of open and enclosed recreational communication spaces in the complex.

Further studies may consider the semantic part of reinforcing the integration of a shopping mall to the urban fabric and the specific aspects of readability of its recreation communication space in the larger urban narrative as perceived by the visitors.

### References

- [1] J. Gosseye, "The Janus-Faced Shopping Center: The Low Countries in Search of a Fitting Shopping Paradigm", *J. of Urban Hist.*, № 44(5), pp. 862-886, 2018. DOI:10.1177/0096144216641374
- [2] B. Maitland, *Shopping Malls: Planning and Design*, NY, USA: Nichols Pub Co, 1985
- [3] M. Beyard, M. Corrigan, A. Kramer, M. Pawlukiewicz, and A. Bach, *Ten principles for rethinking the mall*, Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 2006. [Online]. Available: [https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Tp\\_MALL.ashx\\_.pdf](https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Tp_MALL.ashx_.pdf) Accessed on: September 20, 2023.
- [4] J. Stillerman, and R. Salcedo, "Transposing the Urban to the Mall: Routes, Relationships, and Resistance in Two Santiago, Chile, Shopping Centers", *J. of Contemporary Ethnography*, 2012, № 41(3), pp. 309–336, 2012. DOI:10.1177/0891241611434551
- [5] A. M. Illiash, "Pryntsypy formuvannia bahatofunktsionalnykh kompleksiv u strukturi "Velykoho mista" (na prykladi m. Kharkova)", *dys. kand. arkh.*: 18.00.01. KNUCEA, Kharkiv, 2015.
- [6] B. Lorch, and M. Smith, "Pedestrian movement and the Downtown Enclosed Shopping Center", *J. of the Amer. Planning Assoc.*, № 1, pp. 75–86, 1993.
- [7] Z. Tan, "Townscape in a High-rise: Imageability and Accessibility of Vertical Malls in Hong Kong", *Int. J. of High-Rise Buildings*, № 4(2), pp. 143–152, 2015.
- [8] O. V. Berezko, "Arkhitekturno-planovalna orhanizatsiia komunikatyvnoho prostoru u strukturi torhovo-rozvajalnykh tsentriv Архітектурно-планувальна організація комунікативного простору у структурі торгово-розважальних центрів", *dys. kand. arkh.* : 18.00.02. LPNU, Lviv, 2017.
- [9] K. Dovey, and S. Wood, "Public/Private Urban Interfaces", *Journal of Urbanism*, № 8(1), pp. 1–16, 2015. DOI:10.1080/17549175.2014.891151
- [10] E. Pafka, and K. Dovey, "Permeability and interface catchment: measuring and mapping walkable access", *J. of Urbanism Int. Res. on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, № 10(2), pp. 1–13, 2017. DOI:10.1080/17549175.2016.1220413
- [11] V. Raimers, and V. Clulow, "The role of convenience in the evolution of the mall", in *Proc. of the ANZMAC 2009 Conf.*, 2009, pp. 1–9.
- [12] K. Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT Press, 1960.

### Література

- [1] J. Gosseye, "The Janus-Faced Shopping Center: The Low Countries in Search of a Fitting Shopping Paradigm", *J. of Urban Hist.*, № 44(5), pp. 862-886, 2018. DOI:10.1177/0096144216641374
- [2] B. Maitland, *Shopping Malls: Planning and Design*, NY, USA: Nichols Pub Co, 1985

- [3] M. Beyard, M. Corrigan, A. Kramer, M. Pawlukiewicz, and A. Bach, *Ten principles for rethinking the mall*, Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 2006. [Online]. Available: [https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Тр\\_MAll.ashx\\_.pdf](https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Тр_MAll.ashx_.pdf) Accessed on: September 20, 2023.
- [4] J. Stillerman, and R. Salcedo, “Transposing the Urban to the Mall: Routes, Relationships, and Resistance in Two Santiago, Chile, Shopping Centers”, *J. of Contemporary Ethnography*, 2012, № 41(3), pp. 309–336, 2012. DOI:10.1177/0891241611434551
- [5] А. М. Ілляш, “Принципи формування багатофункціональних комплексів у структурі «Великого міста» (на прикладі м. Харкова)”, дис. канд. арх.: 18.00.01. ХНУБА, Харків, 2015.
- [6] B. Lorch, and M. Smith, “Pedestrian movement and the Downtown Enclosed Shopping Center”, *J. of the Amer. Planning Assoc.*, № 1, pp. 75–86, 1993.
- [7] Z. Tan, “Townscape in a High-rise: Imageability and Accessibility of Vertical Malls in Hong Kong”, *Int. J. of High-Rise Buildings*, № 4(2), pp. 143–152, 2015.
- [8] О. В. Березко, “Архітектурно-планувальна організація комунікативного простору у структурі торгово-розважальних центрів”, дис. канд. арх.: 18.00.02. ЛПНУ, Львів, 2017.
- [9] K. Dovey, and S. Wood, “Public/Private Urban Interfaces”, *Journal of Urbanism*, № 8(1), pp. 1–16, 2015. DOI:10.1080/17549175.2014.891151
- [10] E. Pafka, and K. Dovey, “Permeability and interface catchment: measuring and mapping walkable access”, *J. of Urbanism Int. Res. on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, № 10(2), pp. 1–13, 2017. DOI:10.1080/17549175.2016.1220413
- [11] V. Raimers, and V. Clulow, “The role of convenience in the evolution of the mall”, in *Proc. of the ANZMAC 2009 Conf.*, 2009, pp. 1–9.
- [12] K. Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT Press, 1960.



## РЕКРЕАЦІЙНО-КОМУНІКАЦІЙНИЙ ПРОСТІР СУЧАСНОГО ІНТЕГРОВАНОГО МІСЬКОГО ТОРГІВЕЛЬНО-ГРОМАДСЬКОГО ЦЕНТРУ

**Борисенко А.С.,**

к. арх., ст. викл. каф. архітектури будівель і споруд,  
argeciy@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0001-5629-2768

*Харківський національний університет міського господарства ім. О.М. Бекетова*

**Анотація.** Статтю присвячено проблемі формулювання бажаних якостей сучасних міських торгівельно-громадських центрів та особливостей сформованого ними архітектурного середовища в зв'язку з міським. Особливу роль в цьому відіграють рекреаційно-комунікаційні простори – поєднувальні простори, що слугують структуроформуючими елементами цих значних за розмірами об'єктів. Розташування торгівельно-громадських центрів у містах потребує реалізації особливих властивостей їх структури, але торгівельні центри більш традиційної структури продовжують споруджуватися в міських умовах, зокрема, і в містах України. Аналіз існуючих досліджень вказав на інверсію торгівельних фасадів, автономність функції та структури ТГЦ та неспівмасштабність їх рішень більш дрібному та диверсифікованому міському середовищу, як основні проблеми архітектурних рішень, що викликають негативні наслідки для оточуючих просторів міста. Їх характер прямо пов'язаний з традиційним способом проектування рекреаційно-комунікаційного простору, як автономного, орієнтованого переважно на внутрішню логіку, з мінімальною функціональною та візуальною проникністю результуючої структури. Відповідно, рішення цих проблем лежать у площині підвищення проникності, прочитуваності та досяжності внутрішніх просторів ТГЦ до міста. В зв'язку з цим вони можуть трактуватися, як фрагмент вдосконаленої міської тканини, вбудований в існуючі міські простори площ та вулиць своїми рекреаційно-комунікаційними просторами, усвідомленими в аналогічному, хоча і більш інтенсивному способі використання. Способами досягти цього може стати більш активне використання змішаних відкритих та закритих рекреаційно-комунікаційних просторів, артикуляція буферних просторів перехідних характеристик в місцях поєднання систем ТГЦ та міста, а також збільшення точок візуального, функціонального та змістового контакту цих систем. Подальший напрямок досліджень в зв'язку з цим може лежати в сфері аналізу прочитуваності структури та семантичного наповнення просторів ТГЦ у містах в поєднанні з соціологічними дослідженнями, що фіксували би якість їх інтеграції в міську структуру в сприйнятті відвідувачів.

**Ключові слова:** торгівельний центр, молл, рекреаційно-комунікаційний простір, міське середовище, стійкий розвиток.