

Urban Planning Education: Why Mobile Games Matter

Olawale Akogun (Ph.D.)

waleakogun@gmail.com

As urban environments grow increasingly complex, educating the next generation of urban and regional planners has never been more critical. I firmly believe that incorporating mobile games like Township into the first-year curriculum of urban planning undergraduate programs could revolutionize how students understand and engage with urban design concepts. Township, like many city-building simulation games, allows players to develop and manage their own virtual towns. While it may seem unconventional, these games offer a unique, interactive platform for students to grasp fundamental urbanism principles.

Firstly, these games provide an intuitive understanding of urban layout and design. Students can experiment with different city structures, learning firsthand how various elements like residential areas, commercial zones, and industrial sectors interact. This hands-on experience can make abstract concepts tangible and memorable.

Secondly, games like Township excellently demonstrate city functionality and systems. Players must manage resources, balance budgets, and ensure the provision of essential services. This gives students insight into the interconnected nature of urban systems, from transportation networks to utility management. Perhaps most importantly, these games allow students to experience long-term planning

challenges in a compressed timeframe. They can see how their decisions impact city growth and residents' quality of life over time, fostering an appreciation for sustainable urban development.

In conclusion, integrating mobile games like Township into first-year urban planning curricula could provide students with a valuable, engaging way to understand urbanism and city functionality. By combining theoretical knowledge with practical, albeit virtual, experience, we can better prepare the urban planners of tomorrow for the challenges they will face in shaping our future cities.