

This Insert consists of 3 printed pages.

Passage 1. *An author explores the idea of liveable public spaces in cities.*

- 1 For generations, urban planning rested on a clear divide: the home was a private sanctuary for rest, while the street was a cold, public arena for commerce and transit. Today, this hard boundary is collapsing. As modern apartments shrink, real estate costs skyrocket, and urban loneliness rises, a new planning philosophy is taking over – the domestication of the public sphere. Healthy cities are now intentionally designed to create local, informal, liveable public spaces that feel like natural extensions of our own living rooms. Designing the city as a shared home has grown from an appealing concept into a psychological and social necessity. 5
- 2 The need for this ‘urban living room’ stems directly from a housing crisis where homes everywhere are shrinking. The private living room has historically been a sanctuary for unscripted conversation and downtime, but when a home is reduced to little more than a place to sleep and work, there is little room left for either. These everyday human needs do not disappear; they spill into the public realm. Without public spaces to absorb them, cities become places where people merely pass through, never truly connecting. If people cannot find an equivalent environment outside their front doors, loneliness and social isolation inevitably increase, taking a toll on our mental well-being. 10 15
- 3 Crucially, this approach to urban design democratises resources that market forces would otherwise price out of reach, helping ensure greater equity and access. Outdoor exercise corners and free sports courts give lower-income residents a place to keep fit without prohibitive gym fees. Sheltered, accessible pathways physically integrate the elderly and disabled into the landscape, reinforcing the message that they too are valued. 20
- 4 Moreover, contemporary urban design has transformed the concept of liveability, placing people’s everyday experiences at the centre of public space. Previously, making a city ‘liveable’ meant making the streets conducive for business instead of people. Today, urban designers have turned that idea on its head. Once, a plaza permitted one thing only – passage, hurried through on the way to somewhere else; now the same space tolerates whatever its residents want of it, whether that is a nap on a bench, a shared lunch, or nothing at all. And where the old streets were dictated by planners and authorities, laid out once and left unchanged, the new ones keep shifting, shaped from below as residents add potted plants, drag out chairs, and personalise sidewalks and alleyways until the space quietly becomes theirs. 25 30
- 5 Creating an urban living room also requires thoughtful design that encourages people to stay rather than simply pass through. Community features such as book exchange boxes invite residents to linger and interact. Public murals and heritage streetscapes provide a visual language that fosters community ownership, while well-lit, well-maintained parks speak of attention rather than neglect. Investing in these shared spaces sends a message to residents that their neighbourhood is worth caring for, fostering a stronger sense of community in the process. 35
- 6 Ultimately, human-centred public spaces force social mixing across class, race, and age groups who might not otherwise interact. Playgrounds serve as unmediated spaces where children from different backgrounds interact freely, while public eating spaces flatten hierarchies through the shared act of eating cheaply alongside strangers. By harmonising the public and private worlds, cities transform sterile transit corridors into true common habitats – turning strangers into neighbours, and neighbourhoods into homes. 40



Passage 2. *An author considers how the design of public spaces can work against the people who use them.*

- 1 Public spaces were once conceived as shared property – places for rest, encounter, and the small courtesies of communal life. Increasingly, however, we observe benches divided by armrests, studs embedded into ledges, and railings positioned with calculated precision. Urban planners argue that these are necessary to ensure orderliness, but aren't these just about managing people rather than welcoming them? 5
- 2 Design can conceal an underlying social affliction. A district looks more attractive to prospective investors when we eliminate all signs of poverty. Who cares if the suffering is shuffled elsewhere? Equally troubling is the proliferation of privately-owned public spaces. Teenagers seeking a spot to perfect their TikTok moves late at night would inevitably find themselves being escorted off the grounds. But so too would volunteers soliciting for charity if customers are made to feel guilty from their mindless spending. Instead of the state, businesses get to decide who has access, and when. 10
- 3 Then there is the pervasive matter of surveillance. Cameras installed for originally sensible reasons multiply until an entire neighbourhood is monitored from end to end. Its character gradually mutates from one where neighbours look out for one another into a space that breeds mutual suspicion. The end result is an estrangement from one's community in a time that urgently demands more cohesion. 15
- 4 Good design nudges people towards good behaviours. However, when designers assume that cooperation will follow naturally, spaces are opened indiscriminately to competing users. Take a public footpath with its myriad users – cyclists, pedestrians and e-scooter riders alike – with no shared understanding of who has the right of way. Nobody can agree upon who goes first: first come, first served? Ladies first? It is a stretch to expect users to suddenly play by the rules when nobody knows what the rules are in the first place. The space thus forces competition when there should be none. 20
- 5 Consider, too, any amenity serving an active minority, such as a recreational facility or an entertainment zone, situated adjacent to those who require peace. The gratification of the few supersedes the needs of the many. Such conflicts expose a more fundamental failure of consultation. Often, any response to mediate arrives too late. Ultimately, when bad design is allowed to rule, what is lost is possibility – the prospect of a space appropriated in ways its designers could neither anticipate nor regulate. In the end, a place that permits nothing unplanned is no longer fully public at all. 25 30



Passage 3. *An author reflects on her experience of public spaces in the city.*

- 1 While exploring the city, my friend and I came across a lonesome sight: three stone chess tables, underneath the silhouette of a public parking garage. Presumably, some well-meaning planners had hoped strangers would chance on each other and decide to sit down for a game of chess. But it was empty, with both the unimpressive location and absence of people giving the impression that the space was rarely used for its intended purpose. Why would the city put the chess tables here? Was there a sort of quota, or someone important to impress? 5
- 2 The idea of the ‘third place’ – spaces where people gather outside of home and work – is often promoted as a way to foster community and belonging. Yet I’ve often noticed gaps between the intentions behind public spaces and the experiences they actually create. Many people I know prefer to mingle within their own social and class bubbles in their neighbourhoods despite the best intentions of architects. 10
- 3 When designed to accommodate or enhance informality, public spaces arguably can draw a range of users and benefit the communities associated with them. Although such spaces usually gain order and manageability when they are redesigned for more programmed or commercial uses, flexibility is often lost – people can no longer adapt the space to their own rhythms or needs. Over time, this changes how social life works. In my opinion, if the human agency in a place is lost, then the sense of place is also lost, as is its soul and spirit. 15





TAMPINES MERIDIAN JUNIOR COLLEGE

JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

CANDIDATE
NAME

CIVICS GROUP

H1 GENERAL PAPER

8881/02

Paper 2

31 August 2026

1 hour 30 minutes

Candidates answer on the Question Paper.

Additional materials:

Insert

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your **full name**, **Civics Group** and **GP Tutor's name** on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black ink on both sides of the paper.

Do not use staples, paper clips, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **all** questions.

The Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

Note that **15** marks out of **50** will be awarded for your use of language.

At the end of the examination, submit your Question Paper. You do not need to submit the Insert. The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.

For Examiner's Use (Language)	
Marker 1	/15
Marker 2	/15

For Examiner's Use	
SAQ	/11
Summary	/8
CPQ	/4
AQ	/12
Language	/15
TOTAL	/50

This document consists of **7** printed pages, **1** blank page and **1** Insert



Answer **all** questions.

For
Examiner's
Use

Your answers should be:

- written in **your own words as far as possible**. Where you select the appropriate material from the passage for your answer, you must still use your own words to express it.
- written in **continuous prose**.

From Passage 1

- 1** In paragraph 1, explain why the author says that for generations, urban planning rested on a 'clear divide' (line 1).

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.....[2]

- 2** In paragraph 3, what does the phrase 'democratises resources' (line 16) suggest about the approach to urban design?

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.....[1]

- 3** Using paragraph 4, how does the contemporary urban design of a 'liveable' city differ from the past?

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.....[3]



- 4 In paragraph 5, explain **two** ways in which the author illustrates the role of shared public spaces in fostering a stronger sense of community.

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.....[2]

- 5 How does the author's use of language in paragraph 6 show the idea that the design of public spaces breaks down social divisions?

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.....[3]



6 Summarise the problems with the design of public spaces.

Write your summary in **no more than 120 words**.

[8]

From all the passages

- 7** Passage 1 states that 'cities transform sterile transit corridors into true common habitats – turning strangers into neighbours, and neighbourhoods into homes' (lines 42 – 43).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine this statement. Justify your answer.

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.....[2]

- 8** Passage 2 states 'what is lost is possibility – the prospect of a space appropriated in ways its designers could neither anticipate nor regulate' (lines 29 – 30).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support this statement. Justify your answer.

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.....[2]



- the ideas and opinions from **at least** one of the reading passages
- examples drawn from your own experience and that of your society.

[illegible]



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Tampines Meridian Junior College
2026 JC2 General Paper Preliminary Examination Paper 2

From Passage 1:

1. In paragraph 1, explain why the author says that for generations, urban planning rested on a 'clear divide' (line 1). [2]

From the passage	Answer
For generations, urban planning rested on a clear divide: the home was a private sanctuary for rest	The author means that
while the street was a cold, public arena for commerce and transit .	A. The home was seen as a personal space for relaxation , [1] BOD - exclusive/secluded/enclosed
	B. while the street was viewed as a public/impersonal space meant for business/economic activities and travel/passing through. [1] BOD – trading/buy & sell/transactions Om - shopping/retail/work/buy/sell
	- Accept lift of 'public' - Need to mention personal vs private (not just describe the activities)

2. In paragraph 3, what does the phrase 'democratises resources' (line 16) suggest about the approach to urban design? [1]

From the passage	Answer
Crucially, this approach to urban design democratises resources that market forces would otherwise price out of reach, helping ensure greater equity and access .	It suggests that the approach to urban design ensures that
	public facilities/amenities are made affordable / available to everyone [1] Om - goods/materials/equipment (wrong context)
	- Accept - equal/equality/fair/inclusive/ - Context of access to public spaces must be correct



3. Using paragraph 4, how does the contemporary urban design of a 'liveable' city differ from the past? [3]

From the passage	Answer
Previously, making a city 'liveable' meant making the streets conducive for business instead of people . Today, urban designers have turned that idea on its head.	(Priority: Business vs People) A1. In the past, a 'liveable' city focused on supporting commercial/economic activity 0m – work/shop A2. whereas today it focuses on meeting the human's well-being/comfort/enjoyment/needs. [1]
Once, a plaza permitted one thing only – passage , hurried through on the way to somewhere else; now the same space tolerates whatever its residents want of it, whether that is a nap on a bench, a shared lunch, or nothing at all.	(Purpose: Transit vs Freedom of choice) B1. Previously, public spaces served only one function OR as routes/places of transit 0m – pass through (lift of 'passage') B2. whereas now they can be used for anything/according to residents' wishes/desires/flexibly OR for many/different/variety/range purposes/multipurpose/multifunctions [1] 0m – needs/leisure/recreation/relax/rest
And where the old streets were dictated by planners and authorities , laid out once and left unchanged , the new ones keep shifting, shaped from below as residents add potted plants, drag out chairs, and personalise sidewalks and alleyways until the space quietly becomes theirs.	(Top Down vs Bottom Up) C1. Formerly, urban spaces were controlled by officials/governments C2. whereas today they are customised by the people who live there. [1] OR (Permanent vs Changing) D1. Formerly, urban spaces were permanently planned, D2. whereas today they are continually adapted/adjusted. [1] Note: Don't double reward for C & D. Max 1 mark awarded for either C or D.



4. In paragraph 5, explain **two** ways in which the author illustrates the role of shared public spaces in fostering a stronger sense of community. [2]

From the passage	Answer
Creating an urban living room also requires thoughtful design that encourages people to stay rather than simply pass through. Community features such as book exchange boxes invite residents to linger and interact. Public murals and heritage streetscapes provide a visual language that fosters community ownership, while well-lit, well-maintained parks speak of attention rather than neglect.	The author cites examples of how shared neighbourhood spaces like A. public book drops encourage people to foster a sense of community by meeting points that spark spontaneous conversations/build mutual trust/connect. [1] B. Public art and old streets give people shared visual spaces they can identify with, helping build a deep sense of pride/identity/belonging /culture/memory/responsibility for their neighbourhood. [1] C. Bright and clean parks act as safe/welcoming/inviting/inclusive spaces where residents can interact and build social ties. OR encourage users to keep the place clean as a community. [1] 1 pt = 1 m No need to paraphrase the examples. Specific egs must be mentioned – book exchange boxes/murals/parks



5. How does the author's use of language in paragraph 6 show the idea that the design of public spaces breaks down social divisions? [3]

From the passage	Answer
Ultimately, human-centred public spaces force social mixing across class, race, and age who might not otherwise interact.	A. The word 'force' implies that the public spaces makes it unavoidable/compulsory/inevitable/compels makes people integrate with others. [1] Om – push/encourage/allow
Playgrounds serve as unmediated spaces where children from different backgrounds interact freely,	B. The term 'unmediated' means that these areas are free from the rigid/pre-existing social filters/prejudices of the adult world/ without any intervention/filtering/structural barriers , hence allowing all children to bond. [1] BOD- openly/naturally
while public eating spaces flatten hierarchies through the shared act of eating cheaply alongside strangers.	C. The phrase 'flatten hierarchies' explains how the shared public space erases/abolishes class distinctions/social status/backgrounds , allowing people to mingle. [1] BOD – equal/no differences Om – stereotypes
By harmonising the public and private worlds, cities transform sterile transit corridors into true common habitats – turning strangers into neighbours, and neighbourhoods into homes.	D. The word 'harmonising' suggests that the gap between public life and private spheres is bridged/ well integrated . [1] E. The phrase 'common habitats' shows how public spaces are shared places where anyone/everyone can feel welcomed, regardless of their social background. [1]

**From Passage 2:**

6. Summarise the problems with the design of public spaces.
Write your summary in **no more than 120 words**.

No	Points (Paragraph 1)	Paraphrased
1	MANAGING RATHER THAN WELCOMING PEOPLE: Urban planners argue that these are necessary to ensure orderliness, but aren't these just about managing people rather than welcoming them ?	Design controls how people behave instead of accommodating them.
No	Points (Paragraph 2)	Paraphrased
2	DESIGN CONCEALS SOCIAL AFFLICTION: Design can conceal an underlying social affliction . A district looks more attractive to prospective investors when we eliminate all signs of poverty,	Such design hides problems to appeal to businesses.
3	PROLIFERATION OF POPs: Equally troubling is the proliferation of privately-owned public spaces.	The rapid and sudden rise in privately-owned public spaces is concerning/ problematic.
4	BUSINESSES DECIDE ACCESS: Instead of the state, businesses get to decide who has access, and when .	Corporate interests/ Private owners determine who is welcomed in/ gains admission to the space / when users can utilise the space.
No	Points (Paragraph 3)	Paraphrased
5	PERVASIVE SURVEILLANCE: Then there is the pervasive matter of surveillance .	There is also widespread/ prevalent monitoring .
6	SURVEILLANCE CHANGES CHARACTER OF NEIGHBOURHOOD: Cameras installed for ostensibly sensible reasons multiply... Its character gradually mutates from one where neighbours look out for one another into a space that breeds mutual suspicion .	[When a place is increasingly monitored] a friendly/ community-minded residence/ area changes over time to a place where nobody trusts each other . [Context needed]
7	ESTRANGEMENT: the end result is an estrangement from one's community in a time that urgently demands more cohesion.	Neighbours become unfamiliar with one another/ become distant .
No	Points (Paragraph 4)	Paraphrased
8	NO SHARED UNDERSTANDING: spaces are opened indiscriminately...a public footpath with its myriad users ... with no shared understanding of who has the right of way.	Users lack a common grasp/ awareness of rules/norms when using a space.
9	CREATES COMPETITION: The space thus forces competition when there should be none.	This compels/ gives rise to unnecessary struggle/ conflict/ rivalry .
No	Points (Paragraph 5)	Paraphrased
10	GRATIFICATION OF A FEW: ... amenity serving an active minority... situated adjacent to those who require peace. The gratification of the few supersedes the needs of the many .	The enjoyment/ pleasure/ happiness of a minority/ small group replaces/ supplants the majority. //Competing demands that share the same space leave only one side happy.
11	FAILURE OF CONSULTATION: Such conflicts expose a more fundamental failure of consultation .	These reveal residents' views/ opinions were ignored/ rarely sought .



12	LOST POSSIBILITY/ NOTHING UNPLANNED: Ultimately, when bad design is allowed to rule, what is lost is possibility – the prospect of a space appropriated in ways its designers could neither anticipate nor regulate. In the end, a place that permits nothing unplanned is no longer public at all.	Ineffective design/ planning removes the opportunity for the public to /prevents the public from using a space organically/ authentically/ spontaneously //without restriction.
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Points	1 – 2	3 – 4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Marks	1m	2m	3m	4m	5m	6m	7m	8m

Sample Paragraph

Some designs **control** how people behave instead of **accommodating** them. Others **hide problems** to appeal to potential businesses. The **rapid and sudden rise** of privately-owned public spaces is also concerning since **corporate interests now determine** who is welcomed in a particular space. When there is prevalent monitoring in a residence, a friendly area changes over time to a place where **nobody trusts each other**. In time, neighbours **become distant**. Furthermore, users **lack a common grasp of norms** when using communal spaces. This **compels** unnecessary **struggle**. In other instances, the **enjoyment** of a minority **supplants** the majority's because residents' **views were not sought**. Ultimately, any space that **prevents** the public from using a space **organically** can no longer be deemed public.

(11 points - 120 words)

From all the passages:

7. Passage 1 states that 'cities transform sterile transit corridors into true common habitats – turning strangers into neighbours, and neighbourhoods into homes' (Lines 42 - 34).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine this statement. Justify your answer. [2]

From the passage	Answer
Specific Idea: "planners had hoped strangers would chance on each other and decide to sit down for a game of chess. But it was empty, with both the unimpressive location and absence of people giving the impression that the space was rarely used for its intended purpose." (Lines 3-5) OR "The idea of the 'third place' – spaces where people gather outside of home and work – is	<u>Specific Idea:</u> Identified point: Passage 3 states that designers hope for spontaneous interactions between people who do not know each other in public spaces, but this does not happen. [1m] OR Passage 3 states that designers hope public spaces will cause individuals to develop communal bonds, but in reality this does not happen. [1m]



often promoted as a way to foster community and belonging. Yet I've often noticed gaps between the intentions behind public spaces and the experiences they actually create. Many people I know prefer to mingle within their own social and class bubbles in their neighbourhoods..." (Lines 7-11)	<u>Justification:</u> This undermines the statement from passage 1 that urban planning can lead to community because <u>Principle:</u> the way in which public spaces are used often differs from what designers expect due to low footfall / odd choice of location / factors they did not predict [1m] OR the way in which public spaces are used often differs from what designers expect due to human nature / people wanting to stick to their comfort zones [1m] <i>Students should show contrast between intention and reality to score principle mark.</i> <i>Students also need to match the correct pair of ideas and principles (ie spontaneous interactions must pair with low footfall). A mismatch should not be awarded as it shows lack of understanding.</i>
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8. Passage 2 states 'what is lost is possibility – the prospect of a space appropriated in ways its designers could neither anticipate nor regulate' (lines 29 - 30).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support this statement. Justify your answer. [2]

From the passage	Answer
Specific Idea: "flexibility is often lost – people can no longer adapt the space to their own rhythms or needs" (lines 15-16)	<u>Specific Idea:</u> Identified point: Passage 3 highlights how the design of spaces results in loss of customisation. [1] <u>Justification:</u> This supports Passage 2's argument that restrictions caused by design prevent the public from deciding what they do with a place because <u>Principle:</u> both show how a space loses its versatility / individuals are unable to



	decide what to do in a space / the public loses choice regarding the use of a space once there is a prescribed plan for it. [1] <i>Must include idea of someone controlling the plan for the area in order to score principle mark</i>
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9. The reading passages cover a range of views about public spaces.

How far do you agree that public spaces improve the lives of people?

Support your answers with reference to:

- the ideas and opinions from **at least** one of the reading passages
- examples drawn from your own experience and that of your society. [12]