Our world is becoming more and more urbanized with people moving to the cities and cities growing around the sites of human activities. Urban live can be stressful with long commutes and traffic, crowded public areas and lack of greenery. I would like to present my ideal city, which would be built around the three main pillars of comfort, environmental sustainability and vibrant communities.

Comfort:

Polycentric cities

Traditional cities that I have seen usually have one major downtown area where major businesses and administrative entities are situated, and people working there need to commute from the outer areas of the city and the suburbs. This is not always convenient and not very environmentally friendly, especially in the locations where public transportation systems are underdeveloped or not widely used.

In my ideal city there will be multiple interconnected clusters, each consisting of a green park area, business center, health and educational facilities, comfortable housing, space for sport and cultural events. Organizing the city around such 'clusters' would help to reduce commute, have more cozy and close-knit communities, reduce traffic, energy use and air pollution.

Green belt

Spontaneous and often uncontrolled urban sprawl is a major problem nowadays. This does not only reduce comfort of living by adding to the distances and commute but causes harm to the environment due to the increased energy use, over-reliance on private transport, air pollution, and decline in community coherence. Such spreading of the cities happens due to the chaotic construction and irrelevant regulations, especially in developing countries. I saw such a situation in Almaty, Kazakhstan, where this led to the disappearance of the landmark apple gardens.

In my ideal city a green belt would help to prevent the extensive sprawl, make a positive environmental impact and serve as extra recreational spaces areas. Instead of enlarging the city's area, the green belt would push people to find creative solutions for a more productive use of space.

Environmental sustainability:

Eco-friendly transportation

Traditional passenger vehicles are one of the major contributors to air pollution. In my ideal city it would be feasible to rely mostly on public transportation due to the polycentric nature of its layout. So, major types of transportation would be tramways and electric buses. Use of private electric automobiles instead of gasoline vehicles would be incentivized and subsidized.

The city would regulate the use of private transportation in major public areas and provide its people with the safe and reliable pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Green city – Green housing

I am planning my ideal city with a perspective of the generations to come. I fully realize the responsibility any urban planner has in terms of ensuring the durability and self-sufficiency of the city.

My ideal city would rely on renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind to produce enough power to support the functioning of the city, and geothermal energy for heating. It will also carefully store rainwater in the park areas and wetlands, as well as in housing units, and use and re-use it with the application of effective filter systems. Rooftops of the city public buildings and private housing would be covered in greenery and vegetation and used both recreationally and for gardening.

'Sponge city'

Climate change poses a lot of threat of natural disasters globally. We have all seen the rise in hurricanes, for example. Extreme rainfalls with floods are also happening more and more often and are hard to predict. Flooding in the cities creates a major problem due to the density of living with potentially large number of victims and high cost of potential damage to infrastructure.

In my ideal city I would plan for resilient infrastructure to mitigate for potential hazard. I would use, for instance, permeable surfaces and sufficient green infrastructure to absorb the excess runoff, in accordance with the concept of a 'sponge city' being implemented in many Asian cities.

Housing – permanent structures

Housing is a major part of any city; it needs to be safe and comfortable. I also would like it to fit harmoniously into the city landscape and allow for the optimal air flow and sunlight penetration, as well as bigger green areas for community use. I would therefore use low rise and medium rise dwellings that have higher occupation capacity and are more comfortable for the people's living than high-rise apartment buildings. They would also help to build up communities and enhance personal communication.

Housing – mobile structures

In our interconnected global world people are constantly on the move. But, "East or West – home is best", so why not give people a chance to travel in the comfort of their own homes?

My ideal city, alongside the traditional permanent housing, would have specific infrastructural arrangements to accommodate for the detachable personal housing units, which can be transported anywhere and used as a travel or permanent house. Such a concept is also environmentally friendly as it reduces the volume of new construction, use of energy and materials.

Communities:

Public architecture

We have all been locked out of most of the public spaces due to the COVID-19 pandemic for almost a year now. Availability of comfortable outdoor and semi-outdoor public spaces could be a solution. Such spaces could be organized by having wall-less ground floors of public buildings. Open-air theaters could be another solution. These public areas would certainly be accessible, like other parts of the city, to allow for inclusivity.

Public events – flexible use of space

I would like to allow for a mixed use of some of the city spaces, like it is already done in many cities worldwide. Such spaces would be pedestrian-only on specific days with pop-up cafes, stores and other entertainment activities. Such spaces would not only provide for more community-bonding opportunities, but enhance the city inhabitants' sense of belonging, as well as be a tourist attraction.