

Urbanization & Transformation in Building use of Small Hill Cities

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Abstract:

Urbanization has emerged as a major driving force affecting land use and building-use transformation in small and medium-sized towns across India. Una, the district headquarters of Himachal Pradesh, has experienced rapid urban expansion over the past three decades, resulting in considerable spatial and functional transformations within the Municipal Council area. This study investigates the impact of urbanization on changing building-use patterns in Una town from 1991 to 2025 and examines its implications for sustainable urban development. The research focuses on variations in built-up area, land-use conversion, and functional transformation within predominantly residential zones. Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized for the study. Secondary data were collected from Town and Country Planning reports, municipal records, and satellite imagery, while primary information was obtained through field surveys and site observations. Geographic Information System (GIS)-based spatial analysis was employed to prepare built-up maps for different time periods and to assess temporal changes in land use and building functions. The findings reveal a substantial increase in built-up area, expanding more than six times compared to 1991. Simultaneously, agricultural land and open spaces have reduced significantly due to continuous urban expansion. Residential areas, particularly along major transportation corridors, have increasingly transformed into mixed-use and commercial zones. These rapid changes have intensified pressure on urban infrastructure, resulting in issues such as traffic congestion, insufficient parking facilities, inadequate drainage systems, and growing environmental stress. The study concludes that unplanned and largely uncontrolled urban growth has generated serious planning and management challenges for the town. It emphasizes the need for effective zoning regulations, integrated infrastructure planning, and sustainable land-use management practices to ensure balanced urban growth. By analysing the spatial and temporal dynamics of building-use transformation, the study provides valuable insights for planners, policymakers, and urban development authorities working towards sustainable development in emerging urban centres like Una.

Keywords:

Urbanization, Building Use Transformation, Built-up Growth, Mixed Land Use.