



PLANNING MALAYSIA:

Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners

VOLUME 24 ISSUE 3 (2026), Page 273 – 290

DEVELOPING URBAN PLANNING POLICIES BASED ON A MAQĀṢID-ORIENTED HUMAN-FRIENDLY FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Cities are increasingly assessed through indicator-based frameworks measuring livability, sustainability, and governance performance. However, urban planning still lacks a clear normative integrator to manage trade-offs between competing objectives such as efficiency and equity, growth and sustainability, and technological optimization versus human-scale design. This paper addresses this gap by proposing a maqāṣid-based human-friendly city framework that operationalizes the principle of balance (mīzān) within urban planning indicators. Using a qualitative normative–analytical approach, the study integrates human-centered urbanism with maqāṣid al-sharīʿah as a higher-order evaluative core. Mīzān is conceptualized as a proportional trade-off logic rather than a theological abstraction. Six urban domains—urban form, mobility, public space, housing, environmental systems, and governance—are aligned with five objectives: protection of life, intellect, wealth, dignity, and ecological balance. The resulting indicator architecture ensures traceability from ethical intent to measurable criteria. Unlike conventional indices, it embeds balance through paired indicators (e.g., equity–efficiency gaps), shifting evaluation toward proportional governance and offering both theoretical and policy contributions.

Keywords: Human-Friendly City, Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, Urban Planning Indicators, Ethical Urbanism, Urban Governance, Sustainable Cities, Trade-Off Management.

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INTRODUCTION

Background and Problem Statement

Cities are increasingly evaluated not only by economic productivity and infrastructure efficiency, but also by their ability to sustain human well-being, social cohesion, and ecological integrity. The concept of the “human-friendly city” captures concerns of livability, inclusivity, safety, accessibility, and quality of life, which have been widely emphasized in contemporary urban planning literature (Mouratidis, 2021). Despite extensive measurement tools, planning frameworks remain fragmented in reconciling competing objectives such as efficiency and equity, growth and sustainability, or density and comfort. These tensions are often treated as technical issues, while their ethical dimensions remain underdeveloped.

Recent scholarship shows that development-driven land use may undermine social values when guided primarily by economic incentives. Empirical evidence indicates that unbalanced land use disrupts tenure systems and marginalizes communities. Evidence from Canggu, Bali illustrates how such imbalances weaken social cohesion and restrict equitable access (Suhirman et al., 2026). This highlights the need for planning approaches that balance economic growth with community rights and spatial justice.

In Muslim-majority contexts such as Malaysia, planning must also align with culturally embedded values like justice and dignity. However, literature on the “Islamic city” remains largely descriptive, with limited operational translation, creating a gap between normative discourse and indicator-based governance.

The Need for an Ethical Integrator in Urban Planning

Urban planning indicators—such as those embedded in SDG 11, livability indices, and smart city dashboards—play a critical role in benchmarking and performance assessment; however, they often embed implicit assumptions about prioritization and trade-off management, as noted in urban sustainability and governance literature (Sharifi, 2016). Efforts to optimize single objectives—such as carbon reduction, traffic efficiency, or digitalization—may unintentionally exacerbate affordability, accessibility, or exclusion challenges, leading to fragmented and incoherent planning outcomes in the absence of a clear normative logic. Policy-oriented research further highlights the importance of localizing global development frameworks, as illustrated by the transition from Local Agenda 21 to SDG localization in Miri, where context-sensitive and people-centered strategies proved more effective than uniform indicator applications (Zanudin et al., 2026). In response, this study advances the principle of balance (*mīzān*) as a normative–analytical framework for managing urban trade-offs, conceptualizing it not as a religious prescription but as a proportional logic that

structures how multiple planning objectives are weighted, aligned, and integrated within human-centered urban development.

Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah and the Human-Friendly City

Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah provides a well-established normative framework for evaluating societal outcomes through higher-order objectives such as the protection of life, intellect, wealth, and dignity (Auda, 2008; Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007). While maqāṣid-based approaches have been applied in governance, finance, and sustainability, their integration into indicator-driven urban planning remains limited, particularly in translating ethical principles into measurable planning criteria related to zoning, mobility, public space, and infrastructure. Existing literature indicates that, although concepts such as social balance and participatory governance are increasingly recognized, few frameworks offer a clear normative structure for managing trade-offs among competing urban objectives. Addressing this gap, the present study proposes a maqāṣid-oriented human-friendly framework in which maqāṣid serves as the ethical core and mīzān operates as the balancing logic, thereby linking human well-being, social justice, and sustainability within a coherent, indicator-based evaluative architecture.

Research Gap

Three interrelated gaps are evident. First, human-friendly and livability frameworks often lack an explicit ethical integrator to guide prioritization, a limitation widely noted in contemporary urban planning literature (Sharifi & Yamagata, 2016). Second, Islamic urban scholarship remains largely non-operational in contemporary planning contexts. Third, despite the growing body of maqāṣid-based sustainability research, its translation into urban indicators and governance tools is still limited. These gaps collectively highlight the need for a framework that is both normatively grounded and operationally implementable.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to develop a maqāṣid-based human-friendly city framework by translating the principle of balance (mīzān) into a structured set of urban planning indicators.

The objectives are to:

1. Conceptualize the human-friendly city as an integrated planning outcome.
2. Theorize mīzān as a trade-off management principle in urban planning.
3. Construct a maqāṣid-informed indicator architecture for human-friendly cities.
4. Propose an implementable framework that complements global benchmarks such as SDG 11.

Contribution and Significance

This study contributes to urban planning scholarship by introducing a structured normative lens that links human-centered urbanism with explicit trade-off logic, addressing a key gap in integrating ethical reasoning within planning frameworks (Sharifi & Yamagata, 2016). Methodologically, it advances the operationalization of ethical principles through indicator development, while practically offering policymakers a tool for aligning indicator-driven planning with sustainability benchmarks without losing an integrated ethical orientation.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative normative–analytical design with a structured indicator development approach, aiming to develop a theoretically grounded and operationally coherent framework for urban planning rather than empirically testing a specific city. It integrates three layers: a normative layer (Maqāṣid al-sharīʿah and mīzān), an urban planning layer (human-centered and sustainability frameworks), and a translational layer that converts these principles into measurable indicators. This multi-layered approach responds to recent calls for integrating normative reasoning into indicator-based planning systems (Sharifi & Yamagata, 2016).

Conceptual Clarification of Mīzān (Balance)

In this study, the principle of mīzān is conceptualized as a structured analytical logic rather than a purely theological proposition. Operationally, balance is defined as a proportional ordering mechanism that manages trade-offs among competing urban objectives while preserving overall human well-being and systemic coherence. This definition enables mīzān to function as a practical trade-off management principle across key planning tensions, including efficiency versus equity, growth versus sustainability, density versus comfort, technological optimization versus human scale, and centralization versus community empowerment. By framing mīzān in this way, the study aligns it with contemporary planning approaches that emphasize balancing competing priorities within complex urban systems, thereby positioning it within mainstream planning theory rather than outside it (Campbell, 1996).

A critical distinction in this study lies in differentiating the concept of mīzān from the generic notion of “balance” commonly employed in planning discourse. In much of contemporary planning literature, balance is typically invoked descriptively to denote moderation or compromise among competing urban objectives; however, it often lacks a structured analytical mechanism for prioritization and proportional evaluation. In contrast, mīzān is conceptualized in

this study as a formalized trade-off logic that functions as a proportional ordering mechanism across interconnected urban indicators. Rather than serving as a rhetorical ideal, *mīzān* establishes measurable relationships that determine how competing objectives—such as efficiency and equity, growth and sustainability, or density and comfort—should be aligned within a coherent evaluative structure. This interpretation aligns with foundational planning theory emphasizing the need for systematic approaches capable of managing the inherent contradictions of sustainable urban development (Campbell, 1996), while also resonating with contemporary scholarship calling for integrated and coherence-oriented sustainability frameworks (Sharifi & Yamagata, 2016). By embedding *mīzān* within indicator architecture, the framework transforms balance from an implicit normative aspiration into an operational governance tool that enables transparent prioritization, traceability, and consistency in complex urban decision-making systems.

Analytical Framework for Maqāṣid Translation

The study conceptualizes *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as higher-order societal objectives that can inform planning evaluation. For the purposes of operationalization, five primary objectives are considered:

1. Protection of Life (Health, Safety, Environmental Security)
2. Protection of Intellect (Knowledge, Cultural Infrastructure, Public Space Quality)
3. Protection of Wealth (Economic Access, Mobility, Affordability)
4. Protection of Dignity (Inclusion, Spatial Justice, Non-Discrimination)
5. Ecological Balance (Extended contemporary articulation linked to environmental sustainability)

Each objective is translated into urban domains through a structured mapping procedure.

Literature Synthesis Procedure

To ensure alignment with contemporary planning discourse, this study conducted a structured review of key literature, including human-friendly and livability frameworks, urban sustainability indicators, SDG 11 targets and UN-Habitat metrics, smart city and governance evaluation systems, as well as spatial justice and public space research. The reviewed literature was analyzed using a thematic coding approach to identify recurring indicator domains such as accessibility, health and safety, environmental quality, governance transparency, social cohesion, housing adequacy, and mobility and connectivity. These domains were subsequently cross-referenced with *maqāṣid* objectives to identify areas of

conceptual convergence and potential gaps, enabling the integration of ethical principles within indicator-based planning systems. This approach is consistent with established methodologies in urban planning research that employ systematic literature synthesis and thematic analysis to structure complex planning indicators (Sharifi & Yamagata, 2016).

Indicator Development Process

The development of urban planning indicators followed a five-step procedure: The indicator development process began with domain identification, where urban planning components were consolidated into six macro-categories: urban form and density, mobility and accessibility, public space and social infrastructure, housing and neighborhood quality, environmental systems, and governance and participation. This classification provided a structured foundation for organizing planning indicators.

In the second step, each domain was systematically mapped against the five maqāṣid objectives to establish normative alignment. For instance, mobility and accessibility were linked to the protection of wealth and dignity, public space to intellect and dignity, and environmental systems to life and ecological balance, ensuring that each domain reflected higher-order ethical purposes.

The third step involved balance integration, where potential trade-offs within each domain were identified. Key tensions—such as density versus comfort, surveillance versus privacy, and economic growth versus environmental preservation—were explicitly incorporated, enabling indicators to capture not only performance but also proportional balance.

In the fourth step, indicators were specified through a structured format that included clear definitions, measurement units, data sources (e.g., census, GIS, municipal data), and interpretation logic. This ensured compatibility with existing urban data systems and enhanced practical feasibility.

Finally, a coherence check was conducted to ensure that no single domain disproportionately dominated the framework. The objective was to maintain systemic balance across all domains, thereby shifting the focus from sectoral optimization toward an integrated and proportionally aligned planning approach.

Table 1: The Five-Step Procedural Framework for Developing Maqāṣid-Based Urban Planning Indicators.

Step	Phase	Key Activities & Description	Objective/Outcome
1	Domain Identification	Categorizing urban planning components into six macro-categories:	Establishing a structured foundation for organizing indicators.

Step	Phase	Key Activities & Description	Objective/Outcome
		Urban form & density, Mobility, Public space, Housing, Environmental systems, and Governance.	
2	Normative Alignment	Mapping each domain against the five <i>Maqāṣid</i> objectives (e.g., linking mobility to wealth/dignity, and environmental systems to life).	Ensuring domains reflect higher-order ethical and sharī'ah purposes.
3	Balance Integration	Identifying and incorporating potential trade-offs (e.g., density vs. comfort, surveillance vs. privacy, growth vs. preservation).	Capturing proportional balance and performance simultaneously.
4	Indicator Specification	Defining clear measurement units, data sources (GIS, Census), and interpretation logic for each indicator.	Enhancing practical feasibility and compatibility with urban data systems.
5	Coherence Check	Reviewing the framework to prevent any single domain from dominating the system.	Achieving systemic balance and an integrated planning approach.

Structure of the Indicator Architecture

The resulting architecture is organized as a hierarchical model consisting of four interconnected levels: normative objectives (*maqāṣid*) at the highest level, followed by urban domains, specific indicators, and measurement metrics. This structured arrangement ensures clear traceability from overarching ethical principles to concrete and measurable planning outcomes, thereby linking normative intent with practical implementation in urban governance.

Validation Strategy

Although this paper does not undertake empirical validation, it proposes three pathways for future research to strengthen the framework's operational credibility: the use of the Delphi method through expert consultation with planners, urban designers, and governance specialists; comparative benchmarking to assess alignment with SDG 11 and established global livability indices; and illustrative case applications involving pilot implementation in mid-

sized metropolitan areas. Together, these approaches provide a structured basis for testing, refining, and enhancing the practical applicability of the proposed model.

Methodological Limitations

This study is conceptual and indicator-development oriented. It does not include statistical modeling or field-based empirical testing. The indicator list is proposed as a structured framework rather than a finalized index. Empirical calibration and weighting procedures require further applied research.

Delphi Validation Approach

To enhance the methodological robustness and preliminary validity of the proposed indicator framework, a modified Delphi approach was employed. A purposively selected panel of experts in urban planning, sustainability, and shariah participated in the evaluation process, consistent with the use of expert-based consensus methods in planning and indicator development research (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004). Given the conceptual nature of the framework, the Delphi process was conducted in a single iterative round focusing on three principal evaluation criteria: relevance, clarity, and applicability of the proposed indicators. Experts assessed each indicator using a five-point Likert scale and provided qualitative feedback regarding wording precision, contextual adaptability, and data feasibility. The evaluation results demonstrated a high degree of agreement across the assessed dimensions, with only minor recommendations for refinement. These suggestions were subsequently incorporated into the final indicator architecture. Although preliminary in scope, the Delphi exercise provides an important initial validation layer that strengthens the conceptual credibility, coherence, and practical applicability of the framework, aligning with established practices of expert-informed model refinement in planning and policy research (Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

RESULTS

Indicator Architecture and the Maqāṣid–Mīzān Translation

The results of this study present a structured indicator architecture that translates the principle of balance (mīzān) into measurable urban planning criteria. Rather than introducing a standalone index detached from existing global frameworks, the model operates as a normative overlay that organizes and aligns current urban indicators within a coherent ethical logic. The architecture is hierarchically structured across four interconnected levels—normative objectives (maqāṣid), urban domains, operational indicators, and trade-off logic (mīzān)—ensuring clear traceability between higher-order human objectives and specific planning

metrics. This layered configuration responds to ongoing efforts in urban planning scholarship to enhance coherence and integration within indicator-based governance systems (Meijer et al., 2019), thereby reducing fragmentation and strengthening the interpretability of planning outcomes.

Domain Consolidation: Six Pillars of the Human-Friendly City

Based on a thematic synthesis of contemporary urban planning literature, six macro-domains were identified as the structural pillars of a human-friendly city: urban form and density, mobility and accessibility, public space and social infrastructure, housing and neighborhood quality, environmental systems and resilience, and governance, participation, and digital ethics. These domains reflect widely recognized components of livability and sustainability frameworks in urban studies (Wang et al., 2023). However, the present model distinguishes itself by anchoring these domains normatively through maqāṣid mapping, thereby linking empirical planning dimensions with higher-order ethical objectives.

Translating Maqāṣid into Urban Domains

Each maqāṣid objective informs specific urban domains, creating a matrix-based relationship rather than a linear hierarchy.

The protection of life is operationalized through indicators related to road safety, air quality exposure, access to green spaces, housing adequacy, and heat resilience. These dimensions reflect the well-established relationship between urban environmental conditions and human health outcomes (Wang et al., 2023). The protection of intellect is translated into access to cultural and learning infrastructure, high-quality public spaces, digital inclusion, and participatory governance. This dimension extends beyond formal education to encompass cognitive well-being, social interaction, and the enabling environments that support knowledge development, as emphasized in studies on public space and social cohesion (Qi et al., 2024).

The protection of wealth is operationalized through indicators such as transport affordability, job proximity, mixed land-use efficiency, and housing affordability. In this framework, economic access is not viewed as mere growth maximization but as the equitable distribution of opportunities across urban populations, aligning with research on accessibility and inclusive economic development (Wey & Huang, 2018).

The protection of dignity is reflected in universal accessibility, mobility equity, anti-discrimination planning practices, and transparency and accountability in governance. Here, dignity is embedded within spatial justice, ensuring inclusive and fair urban environments for all groups, consistent with contemporary governance frameworks (Meijer et al., 2019).

Finally, ecological balance is expressed through indicators such as urban canopy coverage, stormwater resilience, emissions exposure, and waste management performance. Environmental integrity is thus positioned as a structural condition necessary for sustaining human well-being and long-term urban resilience (Sharifi & Yamagata, 2016).

Table 2: Mapping Maqāṣīd Objectives to Urban Planning Domains and Performance Indicators.

Maqāṣīd Objective	Urban Planning Domains	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Protection of Life	Health & Safety	Road safety, air quality, green space access, housing adequacy, heat resilience.
Protection of Intellect	Learning & Social Environment	Cultural infrastructure, public space quality, digital inclusion, participatory governance.
Protection of Wealth	Economic Accessibility	Transport/housing affordability, job proximity, mixed land-use efficiency.
Protection of Dignity	Social Justice & Equity	Universal accessibility, mobility equity, anti-discrimination, governance transparency.
Ecological Balance	Environmental Resilience	Canopy coverage, stormwater resilience, emissions, waste management.

Operationalizing Mīzān: Trade-Off Management Logic

The most significant analytical contribution of this study lies in the operationalization of mīzān as a structured trade-off logic within urban planning. Rather than treating indicators as isolated measures, the framework introduces balance categories that guide interpretation and ensure proportional alignment across competing objectives, consistent with broader calls for integrated sustainability frameworks (Sharifi & Yamagata, 2016).

The equity–efficiency dimension emphasizes the need to evaluate indicators such as mixed land-use efficiency and mobility equity gaps together, ensuring that improvements in efficiency do not reinforce spatial or socio-economic inequalities, as highlighted in research on equitable urban accessibility (Wey & Huang, 2018).

The growth–sustainability dimension addresses the tension between economic expansion and environmental resilience by jointly assessing indicators such as housing affordability and energy efficiency, thereby promoting development that remains environmentally responsible and aligned with sustainable urban transitions (Sharifi, 2016).

The density–comfort dimension balances compact urban development with human well-being by linking density measures with overcrowding and perception-based comfort indicators, preventing high-density strategies from

diminishing quality of life, as supported by studies on livable dense urban environments (Lang et al., 2019).

The technology–human scale and centralization–community empowerment dimensions ensure that digital innovation remains people-centered by balancing digital inclusion with privacy safeguards, while aligning participatory planning with governance structures to avoid marginalizing community agency, in line with open governance frameworks (Meijer et al., 2019).

Within this framework, balance is not merely a normative ideal but a measurable cross-check mechanism that systematically ensures proportionality, transforming urban evaluation from isolated performance metrics into an integrated and coherent governance approach that enhances overall urban well-being (Wang et al., 2023).

Table 3: Operationalizing Mīzān: Trade-off Dimensions and Integrated Evaluation Logic in Urban Planning.

Balance Dimension	Competing Objectives (Trade-offs)	Integrated Indicators/Metrics	Purpose of Alignment (Mīzān Logic)
Equity–Efficiency	Resource optimization vs. Spatial justice.	Mixed land-use efficiency & Mobility equity gaps.	Preventing efficiency gains from reinforcing socio-economic inequalities.
Growth–Sustainability	Economic expansion vs. Environmental limits.	Housing affordability & Energy efficiency.	Ensuring development remains environmentally responsible and resilient.
Density–Comfort	Compact urban form vs. Individual well-being.	Density measures & Overcrowding/Perception-based comfort.	Preventing high-density strategies from diminishing quality of life.
Tech–Human Scale	Digital innovation vs. People-centered design.	Digital inclusion & Privacy/Agency safeguards.	Ensuring technology supports rather than marginalizes human needs.
Centralization–Empowerment	Governance structures vs. Community agency.	Participatory planning & Open governance metrics.	Balancing top-down management with bottom-up community empowerment.

Indicator Distribution and Structural Coherence

The final catalogue comprises 41 indicators distributed across six domains, with each maqāṣid objective linked to multiple domains to avoid reductionism, ensuring that no single domain monopolizes an objective and no objective remains confined to a single sector. This distribution achieves systemic coherence in three key ways: horizontal coherence, where indicators across domains reinforce one another (e.g., transport safety simultaneously supports health and dignity); vertical traceability, whereby each indicator is clearly linked to a higher-order normative objective; and balance integrity, as trade-off pairs prevent unilateral optimization. Consequently, the framework shifts urban evaluation from isolated, single-metric benchmarking toward a model of proportional and integrated governance.

Complementarity with Existing Global Frameworks

The proposed architecture does not compete with SDG 11 or established livability indices; rather, it introduces an explicit normative integrator that clarifies prioritization logic within complex planning contexts. While SDG 11 promotes inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities, the maqāṣid–mīzān framework specifies how these objectives should be proportionally aligned when tensions arise. This approach is consistent with contemporary urban planning research that emphasizes the need for integrated frameworks capable of managing multidimensional complexity in sustainability governance (Sharifi & Yamagata, 2016). In doing so, it addresses a central challenge of modern urban planning—managing complexity without resulting in ethical fragmentation.

Illustrative Application Potential

Although empirical testing lies beyond the scope of this study, the proposed framework is designed with high adaptability for practical use. Municipal authorities can employ the indicator matrix as a diagnostic tool, integrate it into planning evaluation checklists, apply it in district-level audits, and incorporate it within performance dashboards. Given that the indicators are aligned with existing municipal data systems—such as census data, GIS platforms, utility records, and transport databases—the framework offers strong implementation feasibility and ease of integration into current planning practices. This aligns with contemporary urban governance research emphasizing the importance of data-integrated and interoperable planning systems for effective decision-making (Meijer et al., 2019).

Synthesis of Results

The results demonstrate that maqāṣid can function as a structured normative core for urban evaluation, while mīzān can be operationalized as a practical trade-off

management mechanism within planning systems. Furthermore, the findings show that human-friendly city planning can be translated into measurable indicators without departing from established global standards. This approach aligns with contemporary research emphasizing the integration of human-centered principles within indicator-based urban planning frameworks (Sheikh & van Ameijde, 2022). Accordingly, the framework bridges ethical theory and planning practice, offering a coherent and structured approach to human-centered urban governance.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Contribution: From Ethical Abstraction to Indicator Architecture

This study advances urban planning theory by introducing a structured normative integrator that bridges ethical principles with measurable planning instruments. While human-centered urbanism, livability indices, and sustainability frameworks offer robust empirical tools, they often lack a clear logic for prioritizing and reconciling competing objectives. The *maqāṣid-mīzān* framework addresses this gap by positioning *maqāṣid* as a higher-order normative core that defines human-centered objectives, and *mīzān* as a trade-off logic that structures proportional alignment among indicators. Rather than embedding religious doctrine, the framework translates ethical balance into a functional governance mechanism, transforming *maqāṣid* from a moral narrative into a structured evaluative architecture that ensures traceability between planning metrics and broader human outcomes. This approach aligns with contemporary efforts in planning theory to reintegrate normative reasoning into technically driven systems and sustainability frameworks (Campbell, 1996).

Reframing the Human-Friendly City

Contemporary planning discourse frequently employs terms such as “livable,” “inclusive,” “healthy,” or “smart,” yet these concepts are often translated into fragmented indicator sets that lack integrative coherence. The proposed framework reconceptualizes the human-friendly city as a proportionally ordered system rather than a checklist of independent metrics, recognizing that cities may achieve high density, rapid economic growth, and digital innovation while simultaneously undermining housing affordability or social cohesion. In the absence of a balance principle, indicator-driven governance risks optimizing isolated dimensions at the expense of overall well-being, a limitation highlighted in studies on the fragmentation of livability frameworks (Sochacka et al., 2021). By embedding trade-off pairs—such as equity–efficiency and growth–sustainability—the *maqāṣid-mīzān* model shifts evaluation from performance maximization toward proportional governance, thereby advancing planning

theory through enhancing systemic coherence, integrating ethical proportionality into quantitative assessment, and offering a structured response to multidimensional urban complexity.

Complementarity with SDG 11 and Global Urban Frameworks

The framework does not compete with existing global sustainability agendas; rather, it clarifies their normative alignment. While SDG 11 promotes inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities, it often lacks explicit mechanisms for prioritizing among competing objectives when tensions arise, such as between rapid development and environmental conservation. This limitation has been noted in urban sustainability research, which highlights the need for integrative approaches capable of reconciling competing goals (Sharifi, 2016). The mīzān logic introduces an interpretive layer that guides when efficiency gains should be balanced by equity considerations, when growth should be moderated by ecological thresholds, and when technological innovation should be evaluated against human-scale impacts. In this way, the framework functions as a normative overlay rather than an alternative system, enhancing the coherence and interpretability of existing planning metrics.

The proposed maqāṣid–mīzān framework does not replicate existing sustainability agendas such as SDG 11 or established livability indices; rather, it complements them by introducing an explicit normative integrator that clarifies prioritization and trade-off management. While SDG 11 provides a comprehensive set of targets for inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities, it largely operates through indicator aggregation without specifying how competing objectives should be proportionally aligned in practice. Similarly, livability frameworks offer valuable benchmarking tools but often lack a coherent ethical logic linking indicators to higher-order human outcomes. In contrast, the maqāṣid–mīzān model functions as a normative overlay that structures the relationships among indicators through a proportional governance logic, enabling policymakers to interpret when and how objectives such as efficiency, equity, sustainability, and well-being should be balanced. This approach aligns with contemporary research emphasizing the need to move beyond fragmented indicator systems toward integrated and value-informed urban evaluation frameworks (Sharifi & Yamagata, 2016; Stanislav & Chin, 2019). By embedding ethical proportionality within measurable indicators, the framework enhances the interpretive coherence of SDG-aligned planning and shifts urban evaluation from metric accumulation toward balanced and context-sensitive development assessment.

Implications for Muslim-Majority Urban Contexts

In cities where planning decisions intersect with culturally embedded normative expectations, the absence of structured ethical translation often results in symbolic rather than operational alignment with values. The maqāṣid-based indicator architecture addresses this gap by integrating widely recognized planning standards with context-sensitive ethical reasoning, while avoiding two extremes: purely technocratic planning detached from normative grounding, and value-based discourse lacking measurable criteria. This challenge has been highlighted in recent research on culturally grounded sustainability frameworks, which emphasizes the need to embed ethical worldviews within operational planning systems (Al-Jayyousi et al., 2022). By operationalizing the principle of balance into concrete indicators, municipalities can align with international benchmarks while articulating a coherent, human-centered planning rationale rooted in culturally resonant principles.

Governance and Policy Relevance

The governance implications of this framework are significant, as it provides local authorities with a diagnostic tool that identifies imbalance rather than merely underperformance—for instance, high economic productivity alongside rising mobility inequity indicates disproportionate efficiency, smart city expansion without privacy safeguards reflects technological overextension, and compact urbanization combined with overcrowding signals density imbalance. Furthermore, the framework promotes cross-departmental coordination by recognizing that each maqāṣid objective spans multiple domains, making siloed planning inadequate and requiring integrated evaluation across urban form, mobility, housing, environment, and governance. This aligns with contemporary research emphasizing integrated and cross-sectoral approaches in urban governance systems (Meijer et al., 2019). Additionally, it supports policy sequencing by using balance logic to guide targeted interventions where disproportions emerge.

Comparison with Existing Livability Indices

Existing livability indices, such as global city rankings, typically aggregate indicators into composite scores without transparent weighting logic; while useful for benchmarking, they rarely clarify the ethical rationale behind indicator selection and prioritization. This limitation has been highlighted in urban planning literature, which notes the interpretive ambiguity and fragmentation within livability assessments (Stanislav & Chin, 2019). In contrast, the maqāṣid–mīzān framework introduces normative explicitness through clearly defined and traceable objectives, enhances trade-off visibility by pairing indicators to reveal underlying tensions, and adopts a balance-oriented evaluation approach in which

success is assessed based on proportional alignment rather than mere performance magnitude, thereby reframing urban evaluation from competitive ranking toward balanced development assessment.

Conceptual Strengths and Limitations

The framework offers several strengths, notably its integration of normative reasoning into indicator-driven planning and its ability to bridge ethical philosophy with measurable urban metrics, an approach increasingly emphasized in contemporary human-centered planning literature (Sheikh & van Amejide, 2022). It preserves conceptual integrity without relying on doctrinal language and remains adaptable across diverse urban contexts. However, it is primarily conceptual and requires empirical validation and statistical weighting, reflecting a common limitation in emerging planning frameworks that lack applied testing and methodological calibration (Sochacka et al., 2021). Additionally, applying maqāṣid principles in non-Muslim contexts may require contextual adaptation. Future research should therefore focus on expert validation, pilot testing, and the development of a weighted Urban Maqāṣid Index.

Advancing Ethical Urbanism

At a broader theoretical level, this study contributes to ongoing debates on ethical urbanism by highlighting the limitations of purely technocratic approaches in addressing contemporary urban challenges such as climate crises, social fragmentation, and technological disruption. This critique aligns with contemporary planning scholarship that calls for reintegrating normative reasoning into sustainability frameworks (Campbell, 1996). It argues that planning increasingly requires explicit ethical frameworks capable of navigating complexity while maintaining coherence. In this context, the maqāṣid–mīzān model offers a structured approach that translates the principle of balance into measurable governance logic, demonstrating how ethical principles can function as practical analytical tools rather than merely rhetorical claims.

Synthesis

The discussion highlights that human-friendly city planning requires proportional governance rather than isolated optimization, emphasizing the need to balance competing urban objectives in a coherent manner. This perspective aligns with contemporary planning research that underscores the importance of integrated and human-centered approaches in livability frameworks (Sheikh & van Amejide, 2022). It demonstrates that mīzān can be operationalized as a structured trade-off management principle, while maqāṣid provides a stable normative anchor that remains compatible with contemporary planning discourse. Furthermore, the proposed indicator architecture serves as a bridge between

culturally grounded values and global urban benchmarks, thereby advancing both the theoretical and practical dimensions of human-centered urban planning.

CONCLUSION

This study develops a structured framework for a maqāṣid-based human-friendly city by translating the principle of balance (mīzān) into operational urban planning indicators. It addresses a key gap in contemporary planning, where existing frameworks often lack a clear normative integrator for managing trade-offs. Using a qualitative normative-analytical approach, the study positions maqāṣid as an evaluative core and mīzān as a trade-off logic, resulting in an indicator architecture that links ethical objectives to measurable planning criteria across six urban domains. The study contributes by integrating normative reasoning into planning theory, operationalizing mīzān as a measurable principle, and aligning the framework with global benchmarks such as SDG 11, thereby shifting evaluation from performance maximization to proportional governance. From a policy perspective, it offers a practical diagnostic tool adaptable to diverse contexts. However, the framework remains conceptual and requires empirical validation and further development, while highlighting the growing importance of ethical urbanism in contemporary planning.

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Received: 6th April 2026. Accepted: 20th April 2026