AVAILABILITY AND PROXIMITY OF SOCIAL AMENITIES AS DETERMINANTS OF RESIDENT SATISFACTION IN LOW-INCOME HOUSING ESTATES IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Keywords

Social Amenities; Resident Satisfaction; Low-income Housing; Lagos State; Urban Planning

Abstract

Research Problem: *Low-income housing estates in Lagos State continue to grapple with inadequate social amenity provision, yet empirical evidence comparing how availability and proximity of these amenities determine resident satisfaction across public and private estate types remains insufficient for informed policy action.*

Methods/Theory: *A descriptive survey design was employed, with structured questionnaires administered to 385 residents selected through stratified random sampling from Gemade Estate (private) and Abesan Estate (public) in Alimosho Local Government Area, Lagos State. The study is anchored on Human Ecology Theory, which interrogates the dynamic relationship between inhabitants and their built environment as a basis for understanding quality of residential life.*

Results: *Satisfaction levels varied across five amenity categories: educational institutions recorded the highest satisfaction (approximately 70% in both estates), followed by public transportation (67–70%), recreational facilities (66–67%), and religious centers (65–68%), while healthcare facilities returned the lowest satisfaction (59–62%). Differences between the two estate types were negligible, ranging from only 0.3 to 3.4 percentage points.*

Conclusion: *Estate ownership type — whether public or private — does not significantly differentiate resident satisfaction with social amenity provision in low-income Lagos estates. Satisfaction is instead shaped by*

broader location-based and systemic urban planning factors, underscoring the need for integrated, equity-driven amenity planning that transcends the public-private divide.

Key Contribution to Knowledge: *This study establishes, within the Lagos low-income housing context, that convergence in resident dissatisfaction across public and private estates challenges the dominant assumption that privatization enhances residential service quality, thereby extending the scholarship on amenity-satisfaction relationships in sub-Saharan African cities.*

Recommendation: *Housing policymakers and urban planners should institutionalize proximity-based social amenity standards as mandatory criteria for all estate development approvals in Lagos State, irrespective of ownership classification, with priority attention to healthcare infrastructure.*

Introduction

The provision of social amenities encompassing healthcare facilities, educational institutions, recreational spaces, public transportation infrastructure, and religious centers has long been recognized as a foundational pillar of habitable urban environments. Ibem, Adeboye, and Alagbe (2015) established early in the Nigerian context that physical housing attributes alone are insufficient determinants of residential satisfaction; the surrounding service environment is equally, if not more, decisive. This baseline insight was substantiated and extended by Adeniran, Oladapo, and Aduwo (2020), who demonstrated that affordability concerns among Lagos low-income residents are inseparable from their perceptions of proximate amenity quality, effectively linking economic vulnerability to service geography. Dimuna and Olotuah(2020), examining multiple housing estates in Akure, found that deficits in healthcare and recreational provision consistently emerged as the dominant drivers of residential dissatisfaction, even where physical dwelling conditions were judged adequate. Internationally, Duncan, Kawachi, White, and Williams (2021) confirmed that geographic access to recreational open space materially mediates cardiovascular health outcomes, while Hwang and Lee (2020), working in Seoul, established that physical accessibility — not merely the nominal availability of facilities — is the critical variable shaping resident experience. Maina, Kariuki, and Wachira (2021) reinforced this position from a Kenyan public housing standpoint, finding that infrastructure satisfaction outweighed dwelling unit attributes in predicting overall residential satisfaction. In the Nigerian private housing sector, Obayomi and Ogunbayo (2021) found that private estate residents in Abuja applied more discriminating criteria to amenity evaluation, raising the question of whether tenure type shapes expectations alongside actual amenity conditions.

What this body of scholarship consistently leaves unresolved is whether, in the specific context of Lagos State low-income housing, estate ownership type constitutes a meaningful differentiator in resident satisfaction when the availability and proximity of social amenities are simultaneously assessed. Prior Nigerian studies have either examined amenity impacts without

disaggregating by estate type (Adeboye et al., 2020), or have compared estates on general satisfaction indicators without centering social amenity provision as the primary variable (Jegede et al., 2021). This study addresses that gap directly by comparing resident satisfaction across public and private low-income estates in Lagos, interrogating both the hierarchy of amenity importance and the explanatory weight of ownership structure. In doing so, it extends existing scholarship by offering the first systematic, comparative, amenity-focused analysis of this population in the Alimosho corridor of Lagos, thereby contributing empirical grounding to ongoing policy debates about how to improve livability in low-income residential environments across rapidly urbanizing West African cities.

Research Problem

Despite decades of housing estate development in Lagos State, both under public and private auspices, low-income residents in these estates continue to experience inconsistent and often inadequate access to social amenities that are fundamental to their daily wellbeing. While prior research has examined general housing satisfaction and physical infrastructure conditions, there remains a critical empirical gap concerning how the specific dimensions of social amenity availability and proximity determine resident satisfaction, and whether the public or private character of an estate makes any meaningful difference to this satisfaction — a gap that this study directly confronts.

Research Objectives

Based on the analysis contained in the results of this study, the following objectives guided the inquiry:

1. To assess residents' levels of satisfaction with the availability and proximity of healthcare facilities, educational institutions, recreational facilities, public transportation, and religious centers in Gemade and Abesan Estates, Lagos State.
2. To determine which social amenity category exerts the strongest influence on overall resident satisfaction in low-income housing estates in Lagos State.
3. To compare social amenity availability and satisfaction between public (Abesan) and private (Gemade) low-income housing estates in Alimosho Local Government Area.
4. To identify the policy and planning implications of social amenity satisfaction patterns for sustainable low-income housing development in Lagos State.

Conceptual Framework

The concept of social amenity accessibility in residential environments goes beyond the physical presence of facilities to encompass the functional relationship between residents and those facilities. Availability refers to whether a given amenity category health, education, recreation, transportation, or religious centers exists within or sufficiently near an estate to be practically usable by residents on a regular basis. Proximity, on the other hand, captures the spatial distance and ease of reach, acknowledging that a facility that exists but is inaccessibly distant yields little satisfaction and may generate active dissatisfaction through the costs of travel.

Resident satisfaction is understood in this study as a subjective but measurable evaluation of the degree to which the residential environment including its surrounding amenities meets the needs and expectations of inhabitants. Satisfaction is not a passive outcome; it is continuously shaped by the comparison residents draw between what they experience and what they consider reasonable or necessary, making it sensitive to both objective amenity conditions and resident characteristics such as income, household size, and duration of residence.

The public-private distinction in housing estate development introduces a structural dimension into the amenity-satisfaction relationship. Public estates, developed by government agencies and theoretically planned with integrated social infrastructure, carry an expectation of coordinated amenity provision. Private estates, developed commercially, are more likely to depend on surrounding municipal infrastructure for social services. This distinction creates the analytical basis for comparing whether ownership type translates into meaningfully different amenity experiences for residents.

Taken together, these three conceptual pillars amenity availability and proximity, resident satisfaction, and estate ownership type form an integrated framework that allows this study to interrogate not just whether residents are satisfied, but why satisfaction levels take the patterns they do, and whether the structural character of the estate in which a resident lives offers any explanatory leverage in understanding those patterns.

Theoretical Framework: Human Ecology Theory

This study is grounded in Human Ecology Theory, a perspective that examines the interdependent relationship between human populations and the environments they inhabit. Originating in the sociological tradition of Robert Park and Ernest Burgess at the Chicago School and later elaborated through the work of Amos Hawley (1950), Human Ecology Theory posits that human communities are not merely collections of individuals but are organized systems that adapt to, and are shaped by, the spatial and resource characteristics of their environments. The theory directs attention to how the distribution of resources including social infrastructure within a spatial environment determines the quality of life and adaptive capacity of the populations who inhabit that environment.

In the context of residential satisfaction, Human Ecology Theory provides a powerful explanatory lens because it insists that satisfaction cannot be located solely within the dwelling unit or within the individual resident's psychology. Instead, satisfaction is understood as an emergent property of the interaction between inhabitants and the broader environmental system that surrounds and sustains them. The availability of healthcare, educational, recreational, transportation, and religious amenities within accessible proximity constitutes, in ecological terms, the resource base upon which residential communities depend for their social reproduction and collective wellbeing.

The theory is also attentive to spatial inequality the uneven distribution of environmental resources across different communities and neighborhoods. In rapidly urbanizing cities like Lagos, this spatial inequality manifests as differential amenity endowment between centrally located, higher-income areas and peripheral, lower-income estates. Low-income residents, who lack the financial resources to compensate for local

amenity deficits by purchasing private alternatives or travelling long distances, are therefore most ecologically vulnerable to inadequate social infrastructure provision. This vulnerability makes the study of amenity satisfaction in low-income estates not merely an exercise in consumer preference analysis but a substantive inquiry into the ecology of urban disadvantage.

Chatterjee and Roy (2020) applied Human Ecology Theory specifically to the built environment, arguing that housing satisfaction in contemporary urban settings is fundamentally an ecological outcome determined by the constellation of resources, services, and spatial relationships that constitute the living environment of residents. This study operationalizes that argument empirically, treating the five amenity categories assessed in Gemade and Abesan Estates as the key ecological resources whose availability and proximity determine whether residents can lead functionally satisfying residential lives.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to examine how the availability and proximity of social amenities influence resident satisfaction in two low-income housing estates in Lagos State. A descriptive survey design is appropriate for studies seeking to document the characteristics, perceptions, and satisfaction levels of a defined population at a specific point in time, and it is well established in housing satisfaction research across the Nigerian context (Maina et al., 2021).

Population and Sample

The study population comprised residents of Gemade Estate (private) and Abesan Estate (public), both located in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. These estates were purposively selected to enable a comparative analysis of social amenity satisfaction across public and private low-income housing development models. Using the Yamane formula ; $n = N / [1 + N(e^2)]$ with an assumed combined population of 10,000 residents and a margin of error of 0.05 at the 95% confidence level, a sample size of 385 residents was determined and distributed proportionally across both estates.

Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling was employed, with the two estates constituting the strata. Within each stratum, systematic random sampling was used to select participating households, ensuring equal probability of inclusion for all households and minimizing selection bias while maintaining demographic representativeness.

Research Instrument

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising three sections. Section A gathered socio-demographic information including age, gender, household size, education level, income, and duration of residence. Section B assessed resident satisfaction with five social amenity categories healthcare facilities, educational institutions, recreational facilities, public transportation, and religious centers — using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Very Satisfied to Very Dissatisfied, alongside items on perceived proximity and adequacy. Section C captured overall residential satisfaction to enable correlation between amenity-specific and general satisfaction. Content validity was established through expert review by a housing studies specialist, and face validity was

confirmed through a pilot test with residents from both estates prior to full deployment.

Data Collection

Questionnaires were administered face-to-face over four weeks, with the researcher visiting selected households at varied times to ensure broad demographic coverage. This direct approach yielded high response rates and enabled clarification of ambiguous items in real time.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations computed using SPSS version 25. Cross-tabulations were produced to enable systematic comparison of amenity satisfaction across both estate types. Results are presented in tables accompanied by narrative interpretation.

Results

Impact of Social Amenity Availability and Proximity on Residents' Satisfaction

Healthcare Facilities Satisfaction

Table 1: Satisfaction with Healthcare Facilities

Estate	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Abesan	Very Satisfied	48	25.3
Abesan	Satisfied	64	33.7
Abesan	Neutral	40	21.1
Abesan	Dissatisfied	25	13.2
Abesan	Very Dissatisfied	13	6.8
Gemade	Very Satisfied	53	27.2
Gemade	Satisfied	68	34.9
Gemade	Neutral	38	19.5
Gemade	Dissatisfied	24	12.3
Gemade	Very Dissatisfied	12	6.2

Source: Authors, 2024

Table 1 shows that healthcare facility satisfaction was moderate in both estates. Abesan Estate recorded 59.0% combined satisfaction (very satisfied + satisfied), while Gemade Estate showed 62.1% combined satisfaction. However, substantial proportions remained neutral (21.1% in Abesan, 19.5% in Gemade) or dissatisfied (20.0% in Abesan, 18.5% in Gemade), indicating significant healthcare access challenges for approximately one-fifth of residents in both estates.

Educational Institutions Satisfaction

Table 2: Satisfaction with Educational Institutions

Estate	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Abesan	Very Satisfied	63	33.2
Abesan	Satisfied	70	36.8
Abesan	Neutral	32	16.8
Abesan	Dissatisfied	18	9.5
Abesan	Very Dissatisfied	7	3.7
Gemade	Very Satisfied	62	31.8
Gemade	Satisfied	75	38.5
Gemade	Neutral	35	17.9
Gemade	Dissatisfied	17	8.7
Gemade	Very Dissatisfied	6	3.1

Source: Authors, 2024

Table 2 reveals that educational institutions generated the highest satisfaction levels among all amenities assessed. Abesan Estate achieved 70.0% combined satisfaction, while Gemade Estate recorded 70.3%. Dissatisfaction remained low at approximately 13% in both estates, with only 16.8% and 17.9% neutral responses in Abesan and Gemade, respectively, indicating strong positive sentiment regarding educational facility availability and accessibility.

Table 3: Satisfaction with Recreational Facilities

Estate	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Abesan	Very Satisfied	52	27.4
Abesan	Satisfied	73	38.4
Abesan	Neutral	36	18.9
Abesan	Dissatisfied	20	10.5
Abesan	Very Dissatisfied	9	4.7
Gemade	Very Satisfied	57	29.2
Gemade	Satisfied	74	37.9
Gemade	Neutral	35	17.9
Gemade	Dissatisfied	20	10.3
Gemade	Very Dissatisfied	9	4.6

Source: Authors, 2024

Table 3 demonstrates moderately positive satisfaction with recreational facilities. Abesan Estate recorded 65.8% combined satisfaction, while Gemade Estate showed 67.1% combined satisfaction. Approximately 15% of residents in both estates expressed dissatisfaction, while 18-19% remained neutral, suggesting a reasonable but not exceptional level of recreational facility provision.

Table 4: Satisfaction with Public Transportation

Estate	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Abesan	Very Satisfied	58	30.5
Abesan	Satisfied	70	36.8
Abesan	Neutral	35	18.4
Abesan	Dissatisfied	19	10.0
Abesan	Very Dissatisfied	8	4.2
Gemade	Very Satisfied	63	32.3
Gemade	Satisfied	73	37.4
Gemade	Neutral	32	16.4
Gemade	Dissatisfied	19	9.7
Gemade	Very Dissatisfied	8	4.1

Source: Authors, 2024

Table 4 shows strong positive ratings for public transportation accessibility. Abesan Estate achieved 67.3% combined satisfaction, while Gemade Estate recorded 69.7%. Only approximately 14% of residents in both estates expressed dissatisfaction, reflecting their strategic locations within Lagos's transportation network and their good access to major roads and diverse transportation modes.

Table 5: Satisfaction with Religious Centers

Estate	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Abesan	Very Satisfied	41	21.6
Abesan	Satisfied	82	43.2
Abesan	Neutral	40	21.1
Abesan	Dissatisfied	14	7.4
Abesan	Very Dissatisfied	13	6.8
Gemade	Very Satisfied	48	24.6
Gemade	Satisfied	85	43.6

Gemade	Neutral	37	19.0
Gemade	Dissatisfied	14	7.2
Gemade	Very Dissatisfied	11	5.6

Source: Authors, 2024

Table 5 indicates high satisfaction with the availability and proximity of religious centers. Abesan Estate recorded 64.8% combined satisfaction, while Gemade Estate showed 68.2% combined satisfaction. Dissatisfaction remained low at approximately 14% in both estates, reflecting the abundance of religious facilities (churches and mosques) within and around the estates, which provided residents with accessible worship options.

Table 6: Summary of Amenity Satisfaction Across Both Estates

Amenity Category	Abesan Combined Satisfaction (%)	Gemade Combined Satisfaction (%)	Difference (%)
Healthcare Facilities	59.0	62.1	3.1
Educational Institutions	70.0	70.3	0.3
Recreational Facilities	65.8	67.1	1.3
Public Transportation	67.3	69.7	2.4
Religious Centers	64.8	68.2	3.4

Source: Authors, 2024

Table 6 presents a comparative summary of amenity satisfaction across both estates. The minimal differences (ranging from 0.3 to 3.4 percentage points) across all amenity categories indicate that the estate ownership model (public versus private) exerts little influence on amenity satisfaction. Educational institutions achieved the highest satisfaction in both estates (approximately 70%), while healthcare facilities showed the lowest satisfaction (59-62%), suggesting differential success in amenity provision across categories. The similarity in satisfaction levels suggests that geographic location, proximity to municipal infrastructure, and broader urban context matter more than estate-specific ownership or management for determining amenity access and resident satisfaction.

Discussion

Resident Satisfaction with Healthcare Facilities

The first objective sought to assess resident satisfaction with the availability and proximity of social amenities across both estates, and healthcare facilities returned the most troubling results in the entire study. With combined satisfaction rates of only 59.0% in Abesan Estate and 62.1% in Gemade Estate, and with approximately 40% of respondents in both estates expressing neutral or outright dissatisfied

positions, healthcare provision represents the most significant amenity failure documented by this study. This finding demands engagement with a fundamental conceptual question: if healthcare is the most critical of all social amenities the one most directly tied to life, health, and human capacity why does it return the lowest satisfaction of any category assessed?

The answer lies not in estate-level conditions alone but in the structural character of healthcare delivery in Lagos's peripheral districts. Alimosho is Lagos's most populous local government area, yet its healthcare infrastructure has not scaled proportionally with population growth (Adedeji et al., 2021). Facilities are overcrowded, understaffed, and often functionally inaccessible not because they are geographically distant but because they cannot absorb the demand placed upon them. From a Human Ecology Theory standpoint, this is precisely the resource scarcity condition that the theory predicts will generate dissatisfaction: a population whose resource needs exceed the environmental capacity available to meet them. This study's findings both confirm and deepen Adeboye et al.'s (2020) conclusion that amenity access and satisfaction are significantly related in Lagos housing estates. However, this study goes further by demonstrating that the deficit is most acute precisely where the human need is greatest.

The Hierarchy of Amenity Satisfaction and Its Implications

The second objective required identification of which amenity type most strongly influences overall satisfaction, and the results reveal a clear hierarchy: educational institutions (70%), public transportation (67–70%), recreational facilities (66–67%), and religious centers (65–68%) all outperform healthcare. Educational satisfaction topping the hierarchy is a noteworthy finding that merits critical interrogation rather than simple celebration. Does 70% satisfaction with educational institutions mean that educational provision is genuinely adequate? Or does it reflect the proliferation of low-cost private schools in the Alimosho corridor that residents access as a substitute for underfunded public provision, inflating satisfaction ratings without reflecting actual government performance?

This distinction matters conceptually and theoretically. Human Ecology Theory would regard satisfaction with private educational substitutes as a population adapting to environmental deficiency rather than evidence of a well-resourced educational ecology. Adesoji et al. (2021) found comparable dynamics in Ado-Ekiti, where private institutional proliferation masked public infrastructure inadequacy in resident satisfaction surveys. This study differs from Adesoji et al. in that it operates in a megacity context where the sheer density of Lagos's informal education market creates far more substitution options, making satisfaction rates higher but perhaps less indicative of genuine public amenity success. Future research should disaggregate satisfaction by facility type public versus private to resolve this interpretive ambiguity.

Public Versus Private Estate: Does Ownership Type Explain Satisfaction?

The third objective directly interrogated whether estate ownership type public or private generates meaningfully different satisfaction outcomes, and the findings deliver a clear and theoretically significant answer: it does not. With satisfaction differences of only 0.3 to 3.4 percentage points across all five amenity categories, the gap between Abesan (public) and Gemade (private) is statistically and practically negligible. This is, arguably, the most consequential finding of the study, and it runs

counter to a persistent assumption in Nigerian housing policy discourse that private sector involvement in housing development produces superior residential environments.

What this convergence reveals, when viewed through the lens of Human Ecology Theory, is that both estate types are embedded in the same ecological system: the same local government area, the same municipal infrastructure networks, the same regional amenity distribution patterns. The estate boundary, whether the estate is labeled public or private, does not constitute an ecologically meaningful barrier. Residents of both estates draw on the same surrounding healthcare facilities, educational institutions, transportation corridors, and commercial religious centers. Obayomi and Ogunbayo (2021) found in Abuja that private estate residents applied more discriminating satisfaction criteria than public estate residents, yet their absolute satisfaction levels did not dramatically diverge. This study extends that finding into the Lagos low-income context and demonstrates that even the evaluative criteria appear to converge when residents share the same ecological environment, regardless of tenure classification. The policy implication is direct: improving amenity satisfaction in low-income Lagos estates cannot be achieved by adjusting ownership structures. It requires addressing the broader urban ecology in which all these estates public and private alike are situated.

Policy and Planning Implications

The fourth objective called for an identification of policy and planning implications, and the findings collectively point toward several critical directions. First, the healthcare deficit identified in this study is not merely a housing problem; it is an urban equity problem demanding a dedicated public health infrastructure response targeted at high-density, low-income peripheral districts. The convergence of public and private estate residents in healthcare dissatisfaction signals a systemic failure that no estate-level developer public or private can resolve independently. Second, the success of educational satisfaction, however qualified, suggests that density of provision whether public or private does generate meaningful satisfaction gains, lending support to policies that incentivize educational facility development in undeserved corridors through zoning adjustments, land grants, or public-private co-investment.

Third, and most fundamentally, this study's findings support what Adewale, Bello, and Aina (2022) described as the integrated urban planning imperative: the recognition that housing development and social infrastructure development must be planned, approved, and implemented as a unified system rather than as sequential or independent processes. Lagos's current practice of approving residential estate development and subsequently expecting municipal agencies to catch up with infrastructure provision is ecologically untenable. The evidence from Gemade and Abesan Estates demonstrates what happens when this integrated approach is absent: residents of both public and private estates converge in moderate satisfaction scores that reflect not contentment but resigned adaptation to an environment that partially, but insufficiently, meets their social and service needs.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how the availability and proximity of social amenities determine resident satisfaction in low-income housing estates in Lagos State, comparing public and private estate contexts through the

explanatory lens of Human Ecology Theory. The findings carry conceptual, theoretical, and policy implications that extend meaningfully beyond the specific estates studied.

Conceptually, this study affirms that resident satisfaction in housing environments is not reducible to dwelling unit conditions. It is an ecological outcome shaped by the service geography of the surrounding built environment. The five amenity categories assessed operate not as independent satisfaction inputs but as an integrated ecological resource system: deficiency in any one category most acutely demonstrated here by healthcare depresses the overall quality of the residential ecology regardless of performance in other categories. This conceptual position extends Ibem et al.'s (2015) earlier work on Nigerian housing satisfaction by demonstrating, a decade later and in a megacity context, that the service environment remains the dominant satisfaction determinant even as housing construction volumes have expanded.

Theoretically, the findings both confirm and refine Human Ecology Theory as applied to sub-Saharan African urban housing. The theory's prediction that human satisfaction is shaped by the resource distribution of the surrounding environment is confirmed emphatically: residents whose ecological environment provides poor healthcare resources are dissatisfied with healthcare, regardless of the administrative character of their estate. The theory's attention to spatial inequality is equally confirmed: the peripheral location of both estates within Lagos's urban hierarchy far from the healthcare concentrations of Lagos Island and Ikeja produces the amenity deficits that residents report. What this study adds to the theoretical framework is the specific finding that estate ownership type does not constitute an ecologically significant variable. The boundary between public and private estate is administratively meaningful but ecologically transparent: residents of both types draw on the same urban resource environment and report essentially identical satisfaction outcomes. This finding differs from international scholarship in private housing contexts such as Obayomi and Ogunbayo (2021) in Abuja where private estate residents demonstrated more discriminating satisfaction criteria, suggesting that the low-income character of the estates studied here may be the moderating variable, rather than estate type per se, in determining the ownership-satisfaction relationship.

The practical conclusion is unambiguous. Improving the residential quality of low-income Lagosians requires integrated urban planning that coordinates housing estate development with social infrastructure provision, prioritizes healthcare investment in peripheral, high-density districts, and establishes mandatory amenity proximity standards as conditions of estate development approval. As Lagos continues to urbanize at scale, the sustainability of its low-income residential environments will depend not on who builds the estates government or private developers but on whether the ecological system surrounding those estates can genuinely sustain the populations it houses.

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