

Safety And Security Considerations for Residential Buildings with Home Front Shops in Nigerian Urban Contexts: An Evaluation of Makurdi Residential Buildings

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ABSTRACT: This research investigated the safety and security considerations associated with residential buildings featuring home front shops in Nigerian urban contexts, with emphasis on residential buildings in Makurdi. The integration of commercial activities within residential areas has become prevalent in urban environments, presenting unique challenges and potential risks to the safety and security of residents. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the safety and security factors associated with residential buildings incorporating home front shops in Makurdi, Nigeria. The research combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The literature review conducted explored the existing knowledge and gaps in the field. Additionally, field surveys, interviews and observations were utilized to gather primary data. Primary data collected include information on types of home front shops, their spatial configurations, safety measures implemented, security provisions and residents' perceptions of safety and security. Findings from this study revealed the potential for increased crime rates, inadequate lighting and surveillance systems, inadequate fire safety measures, overcrowding and insufficient emergency exits. The study highlighted the perception of residents regarding safety and security, anxieties and suggestions for improvement. From the analysis, the research recommended encompassing urban planning and design guidelines, the establishment of regulatory frameworks, improved lighting and surveillance systems, enhanced fire safety measures, community engagement, and awareness campaigns.

KEYWORDS: safety, security, residential building, home front shop, urban centre

I. INTRODUCTION

Residential buildings with home front shops are a common feature in Nigerian urban contexts, where individuals combine residential spaces with small-scale commercial activities. The rapid urbanization in Nigerian cities has led to increased demand for commercial spaces, often resulting in the integration of informal home front shops within residential buildings (Buckley, 2016). This practice offers economic benefits for homeowners and contributes to the vibrancy of local economies. However, it also raises concerns about safety and security, as residential structures may not have been designed or equipped to accommodate commercial activities.

Home front shops refer to small-scale commercial activities that operate within or adjacent to residential buildings, providing convenience to residents and contributing to the vibrant street life of urban areas (Olatunji, 2017). The combination of residential and commercial activities in these buildings reflects the dynamic nature of urban life, where individuals seek to optimize living spaces while engaging in economic ventures (Oyewobi et al., 2019). This trend is particularly evident in major cities such as

Makurdi, where home front shops have become an integral part of the urban fabric.

The coexistence of residential units and commercial activities introduces potential safety hazards and security vulnerabilities. Structural integrity may be compromised due to alterations made to accommodate shops, potentially jeopardizing the stability of the building (Bouquerel, 2017). Fire safety risks increase when residential spaces lack proper fire-resistant materials or emergency exits (Aubrecht, 2015). Electrical overloads and faulty wiring pose hazards, and inadequate ventilation systems can lead to poor indoor air quality (Anomohanran, 2018). Moreover, the presence of commercial activities can attract criminal activities, posing security risks for residents (Adedire et al., 2019).

The integration of home front shops within residential buildings in Nigerian urban areas has created a pressing need to address the safety and security concerns associated with such structures. While regulations and guidelines exist, their effectiveness in ensuring the well-being of residents remains questionable, and implementation and enforcement may be lacking (Ogunsote, 2016). The absence of comprehensive studies examining safety and security considerations specific to residential buildings with home

front shops further compounds the problem. Therefore, there is a critical knowledge gap regarding the identification of key challenges and the development of effective strategies to mitigate risks and protect residents in these unique settings.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of researchers have highlighted the structural challenges faced by residential buildings with home front shops that may foist grave safety and security burdens to occupants. Olatunji (2017) emphasizes the importance of proper engineering considerations and adherence to building codes to ensure the structural integrity of these mixed-use structures. He noted that the modifications made to accommodate commercial activities can compromise the load-bearing capacity of the buildings, leading to safety concerns. Neglect and inadequate maintenance practices further exacerbate the risks. He emphasized the need for robust building design, adherence to structural standards, and regular inspections to ensure the structural stability of mixed-use buildings.

Akinwumi (2019) highlights the increased risk of fires due to the presence of flammable materials, electrical connections, and improper storage practices. The absence of fire-resistant construction materials, lack of fire extinguishers, and insufficient ventilation systems further contribute to the vulnerability of these structures. Akinwumi stresses the importance of comprehensive fire safety plans, including the use of fire-resistant materials, installation of fire alarms and smoke detectors, and regular fire drills to raise awareness and prevent fire incidents. Similarly, El-Diraby et al. (2015) highlighted the need for specific fire safety measures in mixed-use buildings, such as adequate fire exits, fire-resistant construction materials, and active fire protection systems. These measures are essential to mitigate fire hazards and ensure the safety of residents.

Oyewobi et al. (2019) emphasize the need for clear signage and regular drills to familiarize occupants with evacuation procedures. The mixed-use nature of these buildings presents challenges in terms of identifying primary and secondary evacuation routes and ensuring smooth and efficient evacuation during emergencies. Effective emergency preparedness and the presence of well-marked escape routes are crucial to ensure the safety of occupants during emergencies (Oyewobi et al., 2019). Collaborative efforts among building owners, residents, and relevant authorities are necessary to establish and maintain effective emergency response systems. Sridhar and Basha (2016) emphasize the importance of proper building design, including the provision of clear pathways and multiple emergency exits, to ensure the safe evacuation of occupants during emergencies. Additionally, a study by Madlener and Anable (2018) highlights the need for clear evacuation plans and sufficient emergency exits in mixed-use buildings to handle increased occupancy and potential safety risks.

Salami and Soyingbe (2020) stressed the vulnerability of these structures to crimes such as burglary, theft, and personal safety concerns. Weak doors and windows, inadequate lighting, and a lack of surveillance systems contribute to the security risks. They emphasize the importance of implementing robust security measures, including alarm systems, CCTV cameras, and access control mechanisms, as well as promoting community engagement and neighborhood watch programs to create safer environments for residents and businesses. Roncek and Maier (1991) found that areas with mixed land uses experienced higher rates of property crimes compared to purely residential areas. Similarly, a study by Wang and Zhan (2015) indicated that mixed-use areas were associated with higher rates of certain types of crimes, including theft and robbery.

Aderamo et al. (2021) accentuated the role of zoning regulations in managing the integration of home front shops. Proper zoning and land use regulations can ensure that these mixed-use buildings are designed in a way that addresses safety and security considerations. Urban planning strategies, including traffic management, parking provisions, and pedestrian safety, also play a crucial role in creating safe and secure environments for both residents and businesses (Durosinmi et al., 2018).

However, understanding residents' perceptions of safety and security is crucial in assessing the effectiveness of existing measures and identifying areas for improvement. Kihlstrom and Lönnqvist (2007) found that residents' subjective feelings of safety were influenced by factors such as physical aspects of the environment, social interactions, and personal experiences. A study by Steptoe et al. (2019) revealed that perceptions of safety were associated with factors such as lighting, visibility, and the presence of surveillance measures. Loukaitou-Sideris and Eck (2007) emphasized the role of lighting in preventing crime and improving the perceived safety of the environment. In a study by He et al. (2021), it was found that the presence of surveillance cameras in mixed-use neighborhoods had a deterrent effect on crime rates.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study involves a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. A purposive sampling technique will be used to select a representative sample of residential buildings with home front shops from different locations in Makurdi. Primary data will be collected through field surveys and observations, focusing on the types of home front shops, spatial configurations, safety measures, security provisions, and residents' perceptions of safety and security. The quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics. Factor analysis with a principal components procedure is utilized for the statistical analysis of these data, while the qualitative data will undergo thematic analysis. The

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findings from both approaches will be integrated to provide a comprehensive analysis of safety and security considerations. Ethical guidelines will be followed throughout the research process. This methodology will enable a thorough exploration of the subject matter and inform recommendations for enhancing safety and security in residential buildings with home front shops in Nigerian urban contexts.

Table 1: Sample Size Selection Plan

S/N	Ward	Population of HFS	Population in Sample Size Framing	% of the Sample Size
1	Judges quarters	170	21	12.82
2	Owner occupier	110	16	9.76
3	Wadata	210	28	17.07
4	Awe Street	140	22	13.41
5	Kanshio/ New GRA	130	18	10.97
6	Welfare Quarters	180	25	15.24
7	North Bank	340	34	20.73
	Total	1280	164	100

Source: Researchers Field Data

IV. RESULTS

This section presents the results of the analysis on safety and security considerations for residential buildings with home front shops in Makurdi, Nigeria. The analysis includes descriptive statistics and factor analysis. The findings reveal insights on the types of shops, spatial configurations, safety measures, security provisions, and residents' perceptions. These results contribute to understanding the factors influencing the residential environment and offer implications for policy, urban planning, and enhancing safety and security measures.

A. TYPE OF HOME FRONT SHOPS COMMON IN MAKURDI

In Makurdi, Nigeria, various types of home front shops can be observed within residential buildings, contributing to the unique architectural landscape of the city. These shops are integrated into the front facades of residential structures, seamlessly blending commercial and residential functions. Common architectural configurations include ground-floor spaces that feature storefronts or open-front designs, allowing direct access to the shops from the street.

These shops encompass a diverse range of businesses, such as small convenience stores, boutiques, local eateries, or service-oriented establishments. The architectural design of these home front shops aims to accommodate the commercial activities while maintaining a harmonious coexistence with the residential aspect of the building. This integration of home front shops adds a distinctive architectural character to the urban fabric of Makurdi within its residential areas.

The home front shops primary architectural consideration seems to be features that facilitate their visibility and accessibility to potential customers. They have large doors with very few having any other fenestrations for ventilation. The facades of these shops are adorned with signage, awnings, or decorative elements, reflecting the individual character of each business. The architectural layout of the residential buildings themselves often includes designated spaces or designated sections specifically allocated for these home front shops. This spatial arrangement ensures a seamless integration of commercial activities within the residential context, providing convenience for both residents and customers. Overall, the architectural design of these home front shops in Makurdi showcases a harmonious coexistence of residential and commercial functions, contributing to the dynamic urban atmosphere of the city.



Fig. 1: Images of Home Front Shops Common in Makurd

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SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES OF HOME FRONT SHOPS IN MAKURDI

Table 2: Safety and Security Features Considered by Home Front Shops in Makurdi

S/N	Safety and Security Feature	N	%
1	Locking mechanisms (doors, windows)	164	100
2	Alarm systems	23	14.02
3	Surveillance cameras	4	2.44
4	Security grilles or shutters	79	48.20
5	Panic buttons	-	-

6	Fire safety equipment (fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, fire alarms)	37	22.60
7	Emergency lighting	-	-
8	Cash handling safeguards	14	8.53
9	Secure storage areas or safes	123	75
10	Training and procedures	-	-
11	Adequate lighting	82	50
12	Safety signage	13	7.92
13	Cash register placement	26	15.24
14	Background checks	-	-
15	Regular maintenance and inspections	6	3.7

Source: Researchers Field Data

From table 2 above, all 164 (100%) of the surveyed shops have locking mechanisms on their doors and windows indicating a basic level of security measure of securing entry points is universally implemented among the surveyed shops. However, only 23 (14.02%) of the surveyed shops have alarm systems installed. This suggests that a relatively small percentage of shops have invested in alarm systems to provide an additional layer of security and to alert authorities or owners in case of unauthorized entry or suspicious activity. Similarly, a mere 4 (2.44%) of the surveyed shops have surveillance cameras. This indicates a low presence of video surveillance for security purposes, which could potentially deter criminal activity and provide valuable evidence in case of incidents. Contrastingly, approximately 79 (48.20%) of the surveyed shops have security grilles or shutters installed. This signifies that almost half of the shops have taken measures to physically fortify their premises against break-ins and vandalism.

None of the surveyed shops have panic buttons. This absence limits the ability of shop owners or employees to quickly alert authorities or call for help in emergency situations, potentially delaying response times and increasing risks. 37 (22.60%) of the surveyed shops have fire safety equipment installed. This is mostly just fire extinguishers with no fire alarms or smoke detectors. While not a majority, it shows that a significant portion of shops have taken steps to mitigate the risk of fire and protect occupants and property. 116 (70.80%) of the surveyed shops have emergency lighting installed in the form of generators, solar systems. This mitigates safety concerns during power outages or emergencies, as proper illumination is crucial for safe evacuation and navigation within the premises and for stable commercial activities.

The table also shows that 14 (8.53%) of the surveyed shops have implemented cash handling safeguards aiming to reduce the risk of theft or fraud during financial transactions. Also, a majority of 123 (75%) of the surveyed shops have secure storage areas or safes. This high percentage suggests

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that a significant number of shops prioritize securing valuable items or cash, reducing the risk of theft or unauthorized access. Nevertheless, none of the surveyed shops have specific training and procedures in place. This indicates a potential missed opportunity to enhance safety and security through structured training programs and well-defined protocols for handling various situations. 82 (50%) of the surveyed shops have adequate lighting contributing to visibility, deterring criminal activity, and ensuring safety, especially during evening hours.

Only 13 (7.92%) of the surveyed shops have safety signage. While the percentage is relatively low, the presence of safety signage can help communicate important information, such as emergency procedures or safety precautions, to customers and employees. 26 (15.24%) of the surveyed shops have considered the placement of cash aiming to minimize theft and improve the security of cash handling processes. None of the surveyed shops have conducted background checks on their employee potentially missing an opportunity to identify potential risks and create a safer working environment and only 6 (3.7%) of the surveyed shops perform regular maintenance and inspections. While a small percentage, this demonstrates that a few shops prioritize the upkeep of security features and equipment, ensuring their effectiveness and reducing vulnerabilities.

In general, the analysis highlights both positive and areas of improvement in safety and security features among home front shops in Makurdi. While some measures like locking mechanisms, emergency lighting, security grilles or shutters, and secure storage areas are prevalent, other crucial elements like panic buttons, training and procedures, and background checks are lacking. It is recommended for shop owners to consider implementing additional security measures to enhance the safety and security of their establishments.

B. RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AND SECURITY

Table 3: Residents' Perceptions of Safety and Security of the Study Area

S/N	Likely problems	N	\bar{X}	Std	Remark
1	Visibility and surveillance	164	2.90	1.05	Accepted
2	Crime prevention measures	164	2.85	1.07	Accepted
3	Lighting	164	2.90	.95	Accepted
4	Foot traffic	164	2.90	.95	Accepted
5	Neighborhood vitality	164	2.85	.80	Accepted
6	Potential for community engagement	164	2.52	1.01	Accepted

7	Impact on property values	164	2.82	1.17	Accepted
8	Crime prevention collaboration	164	2.45	1.08	Not accepted
9	Noise and disturbance	164	2.00	1.03	Not accepted
10	Perception of business activity	164	3.41	.75	Accepted
11	Impact on traffic and parking	164	2.85	.99	Accepted
12	Shopkeepers' involvement in community safety	164	3.10	.89	Accepted
13	Perception of property maintenance	164	3.63	.66	Accepted
14	Impact on local economy	164	2.57	1.18	Accepted
15	Sense of familiarity	164	3.10	.89	Accepted

Source: Researchers Field Data

To determine the perceptions of residents on the safety and security of the research area, a principal components analysis of data obtained from residents using a safety and security perceptions index is carried out. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to measure research variables. A cut-off point of 2.50 was used for the decision making. Mean scores of 2.50 and above was accepted as having the desired effect while mean scores of below 2.50 were rejected as not having the desired effect.

Residents generally perceive the presence of home front shops to have positive effects on various aspects related to safety and security. These include visibility and surveillance, crime prevention measures, lighting, foot traffic, neighborhood vitality, perception of business activity, shopkeepers' involvement in community safety, perception of property maintenance, and a sense of familiarity. The mean scores for visibility and surveillance, crime prevention measures, lighting, foot traffic, and neighborhood vitality all indicate that residents perceive these factors to have a positive effect on their sense of safety and security. This suggests that the presence of home front shops contributes to a more secure environment by enhancing visibility, implementing security measures, improving lighting conditions, increasing foot traffic, and fostering a vibrant neighborhood atmosphere.

The perception of potential for community engagement receives a moderate mean score, indicating that residents see the opportunity for community involvement provided by home front shops as having a moderate effect on

their sense of safety and security. The impact on property values is also perceived positively by residents, suggesting that the presence of home front shops contributes to a well-functioning and desirable community, which can enhance residents' feelings of safety. However, there are areas of concern. The mean score for crime prevention collaboration indicates a relatively low effect, suggesting that residents perceive a need for improved collaboration between home front shop owners and the community in terms of crime overall perception of property maintenance. These factors contribute to residents' sense of safety and security by creating a vibrant atmosphere, promoting economic stability, fostering community engagement, and maintaining a well-kept environment.

Overall, the analysis highlights the importance of home front shops in shaping residents' perceptions of safety and security in Makurdi. While there are areas that require attention, the findings suggest that the presence of these shops can have a positive impact on various aspects of safety and security, contributing to a favourable living environment for residents.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data suggests that residents' perceptions of safety and security in home front shops in Makurdi are influenced by factors such as visibility and surveillance, crime prevention measures, lighting, foot traffic, neighborhood vitality, potential for community engagement, impact on property values, crime prevention collaboration, noise and disturbance, perception of business activity, impact on traffic and parking, shopkeepers' involvement in community safety, perception of property maintenance, impact on the local economy, and the sense of familiarity. The positive perception of factors such as visibility and surveillance, crime prevention measures, lighting, foot traffic, neighborhood vitality, perception of business activity, shopkeepers' involvement in community safety, perception of property maintenance, and the sense of familiarity indicates that these aspects contribute to residents' feelings of safety and security. These findings align with the understanding that well-designed and maintained environments with active community engagement can positively impact safety perceptions (Francis, 2003; Nasar, 1998).

However, the low mean score for crime prevention collaboration suggests that there may be a need for improved collaboration between home front shop owners and the community in terms of crime prevention efforts. This emphasizes the importance of fostering partnerships and cooperation between stakeholders to enhance safety and security in the area (Innes, 2004). The low mean score for noise and disturbance indicates that residents perceive the presence of home front shops to have a negative effect on noise levels and potential disturbances, which may impact their sense of safety and security. Addressing noise-related

prevention efforts. The perception of noise and disturbance also receives a low mean score, suggesting that residents perceive the presence of home front shops to have a negative effect on noise levels and potential disturbances, which may impact their sense of safety and security.

The analysis also reveals that residents perceive the presence of home front shops to have a positive effect on the perception of business activity, local economy, shopkeepers' involvement in community safety, and the concerns through design interventions and regulations can help create a more comfortable and secure environment (Davies & Adams, 1997).

The high mean scores for variables such as perception of business activity, shopkeepers' involvement in community safety, and perception of property maintenance indicate that residents perceive these factors positively in relation to safety and security. This suggests that an active and engaged business community, along with well-maintained properties, can contribute to a sense of safety and security among residents. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of a vibrant business environment and community involvement in promoting safety and security (Taylor et al., 2001; Brown & Altman, 1981).

On the other hand, the lower mean scores for variables like crime prevention collaboration and impact on the local economy suggest areas that may require improvement. Strengthening collaborations between stakeholders, including residents, business owners, and law enforcement agencies, can lead to more effective crime prevention efforts (Ekblom, 2002). Additionally, addressing the perceived impact on the local economy may involve strategies that balance the economic benefits of home front shops with the need for safety and security measures (Hughes et al., 2010). The findings also emphasize the significance of factors such as lighting, visibility, and surveillance in shaping residents' perceptions of safety and security. Adequate lighting and effective surveillance systems can enhance the perception of safety by reducing the opportunities for criminal activities and increasing the overall visibility and control within the area (Cozens et al., 2007; Branas et al., 2009).

The findings also highlight the importance of factors such as foot traffic, neighborhood vitality, and the potential for community engagement in shaping residents' perceptions of safety and security. Higher mean scores for these variables suggest that residents perceive a vibrant and active neighborhood with a strong sense of community to be positively associated with safety and security. These findings align with research that emphasizes the role of social interactions, community cohesion, and informal surveillance in creating safer environments (Sampson et al., 1997; Perkins et al., 1992).

The perception of property maintenance, as indicated by the high mean score, suggests that residents associate well-maintained properties with increased safety and security. This finding supports the notion that physical disorder and neglect can contribute to perceptions of an unsafe environment (Kelling et al., 1996; Skogan, 1990). Thus, emphasizing the importance of property upkeep and maintenance can help enhance residents' perceptions of safety. On the other hand, the lower mean scores for variables such as crime prevention collaboration and impact on the local economy highlight areas that may require attention. Strengthening collaboration between different stakeholders, including residents, businesses, law enforcement, and local authorities, can lead to more effective crime prevention strategies and foster a sense of collective responsibility (Innes, 2004; Worrall, 2008). Additionally, balancing the economic benefits of home front shops with the need for safety measures is essential to ensure sustainable development and community well-being (Bowers et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2010).

It is important to consider these findings in the broader context of urban planning, community development, and crime prevention strategies. Designing and managing home front shops with a holistic approach that incorporates principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and community engagement can contribute to creating safer and more secure environments (Cozens et al., 2007; Atlas & Leventhal, 2019). For instance, the positive perceptions of factors such as visibility and surveillance, lighting, and foot traffic indicate the importance of incorporating design elements that enhance these aspects. This can involve strategic placement of windows and surveillance cameras, adequate lighting installations, and thoughtful spatial planning that promotes natural surveillance and a sense of openness (Cozens et al., 2007; Branas et al., 2009).

Moreover, the findings related to community engagement and shopkeepers' involvement in community safety highlight the significance of fostering partnerships and collaborations. Architects and designers can explore strategies to create spaces that facilitate interactions between residents, business owners, and local organizations, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility for safety (Innes, 2004; Ekblom, 2002). The perception of property maintenance as a contributing factor to safety and security underscores the importance of incorporating design features that promote a well-maintained and attractive environment. This can include proper landscaping, cleanliness, and regular maintenance of buildings and public spaces, which not only enhance safety but also contribute to the overall livability and desirability of the area (Kelling et al., 1996; Francis, 2003). To address concerns related to crime prevention collaboration and the impact on the local economy, policymakers can

consider initiatives that encourage cooperation among stakeholders and establish mechanisms for communication and coordination. This can involve community-led safety programs, public-private partnerships, and policies that support economic development while ensuring safety measures are in place (Worrall, 2008; Hughes et al., 2010).

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the importance of factors such as visibility, lighting, foot traffic, community engagement, and property maintenance. Positive perceptions of these factors suggest that well-designed environments with adequate lighting, surveillance systems, and opportunities for community engagement contribute to a sense of safety and security. Property maintenance and upkeep also play a significant role in shaping residents' perceptions. However, areas requiring attention include crime prevention collaboration and balancing the impact on the local economy. Strengthening partnerships between stakeholders and implementing coordinated strategies can address these concerns. It is important to note that the findings are context-specific, and further research is recommended. By integrating these findings into the design and management of home front shops, architects, planners, and policymakers can create safer environments, enhance community well-being, and promote inclusive and resilient neighborhoods.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be made:

1. Implement design strategies that prioritize visibility and adequate lighting in and around home front shops. This can include the strategic placement of windows, well-lit pathways, and effective lighting installations to improve visibility and deter potential criminal activities.
2. Encourage active community participation and collaboration among residents, business owners, law enforcement agencies, and local authorities. This can be achieved through initiatives such as neighborhood watch programs, community events, and partnerships that promote a shared responsibility for safety and security.
3. Promote regular maintenance and upkeep of home front shops and surrounding areas. This includes landscaping, cleanliness, and property repairs to create an attractive and well-maintained environment that instills a sense of safety and pride among residents.
4. Establish and strengthen partnerships between stakeholders involved in crime prevention, including residents, businesses, law enforcement agencies, and local government. This collaboration

can enhance communication, information sharing, and coordinated efforts to address safety concerns effectively.

5. Strive for a balance between the economic benefits of home front shops and the implementation of safety measures. Develop policies and guidelines that ensure the integration of safety features without compromising the vitality and economic growth of the area.
6. Further research and site-specific investigations are recommended to understand the unique needs, challenges, and dynamics of the local community. This will enable tailored interventions and design strategies that align with the specific context of home front shops in Makurdi.

These recommendations aim to create safer and more secure environments in home front shops while fostering community engagement, promoting property maintenance, and balancing economic development with safety measures.

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