Urban Parks:
A Bibliography compiled for The City Parks Forum

Updated October 2001

Classic


The philosophical underpinnings of today's parks.


A revision of a classic in the parks management field. Among the topics Crompton addresses are taxes, bond campaigns, assessment districts, easements, public/private partnerships, land exchanges, exactions, and private sponsorship.


A classic in its field. Describes the basic concepts, methodology, and measures of urban recreation planning.


Classic appeal for urban open space - large and small. The summary of main suggestions is still useful and applicable to today's parks.


Another fascinating study by William Whyte. What draws people to an open space? Whyte focuses on plazas and squares primarily but does address urban parks.

Community engagement


A primer for both city officials and citizen advocates on how to obtain good urban design. Offers case studies, practical tips, and chapters on supporting design through grant programs, creating space for cultural activity, and educating everyone from public officials to school children. Includes glossary and bibliography.


Introduces the concept of "safe-haven playgrounds" as a place where children (especially in inner-city neighborhoods) can interact with the environment and each other. "Safe-haven playgrounds" would draw on members of the surrounding community to help provide some of the cultural and educational content necessary. The authors focus on the importance of creative play in childhood and what parks professionals can do towards that end.

Essays are grouped into 5 categories: Theoretical and philosophical issues, Critical issues and at-risk youth, HIV in adolescents, Enabling the disabled, and Outdoor and wilderness programs with international considerations. A collection of highly specialized and theoretical essays on youth at risk. Good background material.


The state of Iowa has a renewed commitment to parks and open space, in part because they are perceived as economic development tools.


Chapters cover not only planning, design, and development but financing, cultural heritage preservation, building public support, and safety. Includes bibliography, a list of greenway organizations, and federal funding sources.


Addresses the equity issues between suburban and urban parks, looking not only at financial support but community support each park receives. Part one summarizes the problems; crime, vandalism, loitering.


Addresses the equity issues between urban and suburban parks, looking not only at financial support but community support each park receives. Part two offers solutions and a set of policy guidelines to ensure future community support for parks.


One of the earliest examinations of community-developed and maintained urban parks. Overview chapters discuss U.S. and European examples; case studies focus on New York City. Includes bibliography.


Brings together ideas from three fields: alternative dispute resolution, citizen participation, and meeting management.


Local parks and recreation departments find themselves turning into social service agencies for at-risk youth.


A handbook for students and citizens interested in changing their world. Includes exercises and some case studies as to how change can be effected. Several examples focus on parks and outdoor space.


Mertes, James D., and James R. Hall. Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines. Washington, D.C.: National Recreation and Park Association, 1995? Advocates the systems approach to park planning; a model that is more responsive to local users and their needs and desires. Covers physical planning of park, facility space standards, and involving citizenry. Includes glossary, bibliography, and level of service standards developed by Dade County, Florida.

Nelson, Dennis A, Mary Lou Capple, and Dale Adkins. "Strengthening Families Through Recreation." Parks & Recreation 30, no. 6 (1995): 44-47. A challenge to parks and recreation programmers, directors, etc. to remember the family -- the entire unit, in all its diversity -- when creating programs and opportunities.

O'Sullivan, Ellen L. Marketing for Parks, Recreation, and Leisure. State College, Pa.: Venture Publishing, 1991. The author applies the four "Ps" of marketing to parks and recreation; these are Product, Place, Price, and Promotion. She explains target marketing and service marketing and analyzes future parks and recreation trends. References included at the end of each chapter.


Parks and Recreation Departments: Strategic Assessment. Washington, D.C.: Partners for Livable Places, 199? Presents six case studies of parks and recreation programs that have involved themselves in the community: focusing on the issues of social welfare, community partnerships, wellness initiatives, and the environment. Also includes a transcript of a parks and recreation forum held in 1991.


Project for Public Spaces. How to Turn a Place Around: a Handbook for Creating Successful Public Spaces. New York: Project for Public Spaces, 2000. This volume summarizes 25 years of experience by the Project for Public Spaces. Based upon the work of William Whyte, it encourages planners and citizens to provide and ask for people friendly streets, sidewalks, parks, and plazas. Examples and photographs of spaces that work and those that don't are provided. Includes a bibliography.
Spangler, Kathy J. "Doing Our Part to Promote Healthy Lifestyles." *Parks and Recreation* 32, no. 10 (1997): 54-61. Article discusses the National Recreation and Parks Associations program "Active Living/Healthy Lifestyles"; this program was funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and reached over 520 communities. It examines successful programs and provide guidance for promoting an active lifestyle to consumers.

Spigner, Clarence, and Mark E. Havitz. "Social Marketing or Social Justice: a Dialogue on Access to Recreation for the Unemployed." *Parks & Recreation* 28, no. 11 (1993): 51-57. Prompted by a 1991 survey regarding recreational opportunities for the unemployed; this article prompts the reader to think about how parks are/are not meeting the needs of all their users.


Wilkins, Nathaniel O. "Cruising for a Solution." *Parks & Recreation* 33, no. 3 (1998): 68-73. The parks dept., community organizers, and municipal officials collaborated to solve the problem of what to do with 'cruising' youth. They incorporated part of a significant inner-city park into the loop and created programming aimed at high school age youth.

Witt, Peter A. *Public Recreation in High Risk Environments: Programs That Work*. Ashburn, Va.: National Recreation and Park Association, 1999. Profiles of programs in 21 communities in the United States. These programs are based on the idea of crime prevention through early intervention. Programs range from midnight basketball to summer performing arts camps to tattoo removal opportunities. Focus is on urban/inner-city parks. Includes a list of references and program contacts.


**Financing**


———. "To Keep the Tax Bills Down...Should the Community Build Homes or Parks." *Parks & Recreation* 36, no. 6 (2001): 80-85. A summary of a new NRPA publication documenting that, "it costs more to provide schools, streets, and other services than is returned in new taxes. Thus, in many instances, placing the land in recreation use may prevent a drain on the community's finances".


*Increasing Public Investment in Parks and Open Space*. Kim Hopper, ed. San Francisco: Trust for Public Land, 1998. Financing options covered include sales tax, impact fees, bonding authority, land banks, and a variety of special districts. Includes a matrix of local financing tools that displays type of financing tool, definition, who pays, why it's used, types of communities using it, and how long it lasts.

Leding, Chris. "Going Loco for GOCO: Great Outdoors Colorado Helps Fund Colorado's Municipalities' Outdoors Projects." *Colorado Municipalities* (1999): 12-14. The Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund receives and disburses the proceeds from the Colorado state lottery; in 1999 that amount was approximately 43 million dollars. The fund’s central focus is land conservation however recreation facilities (ball parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, etc.) also receive support. Municipalities that receive GOCO funds must provide matching funds and sweat equity.


Rose, Judith Robbins. "Fresh Directions for Elections: How to Sell a Concept." *Parks & Recreation* 27, no. 2 (1992): 25-30, 86. Details the campaign by the South Suburban Park and Recreation District (Denver metro region) to increase its tax levy and to pass a bond issue. Both efforts were successful.


Schnadelbach, R. Terry. "Parks That Pay for Themselves." *Urban Land* 50, no. 7 (1991): 21-24. Discusses creating parks that pay for themselves i.e. parks that contain privately-owned, revenue generating facilities. Examples include Central Park's Tavern on the Green, New York City's National Tennis Center, and the Wolman skating rink also in New York City.
General


Essays examine the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of parks. Diana Balmori's contribution, "Park Redefinitions" provides the most pragmatic analysis of parks today mentioning public/private partnerships, collaborative management, and new programming.


Summary of a longer report that examines the benefits and costs of greenways and trails in the areas of economics, ecological impacts, and human/cultural impacts. Includes short bibliography and worksheets for communities to conduct their own assessment.


In order to develop a new agenda that fits the economics, needs, and expectations of Americans in this new century, Garvin studied the details of successful parks and open space projects throughout the country. He distilled a set of principles to guide the actions of public and private leaders in all aspects of park, recreation, and open space development. His ideas - many of which challenge existing practices and "conventional wisdom" - fit new times and circumstances in America. This beautiful report is extensively illustrated with plan drawings and the author's own color photographs of parks across America.


The largest component of this book, and the most significant, is the collection of case studies. The studies are drawn from large and small communities around the country. Also included are essays on parks history and a short primer on the value of parks.


Five landscape architects and parks professionals talk about what makes a good urban park. How you plan it, how you maintain it.


Within the context of the livable city, lots of ideas are provided for creating more inviting public space. Most examples are drawn from Europe but are applicable everywhere. Heavily illustrated.


Sucher, David. *City Comforts: How to Build an Urban Village*. Seattle: City Comforts Press, 1995. While not a guide to urban parks, every "rule" that Sucher espouses for the creation of a livable city can be applied to the park situation. Each concept is concisely described and illustrated.


———. *The Last Landscape*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1968. A wonderful argument for the role of open space in towns and cities. Especially germane are the chapters on "Defending Open Space", and "Play Areas and Small Spaces".
Healthy communities

Report emphasizes the roles urban parks and green spaces play in crime reduction and community mental health. Discusses TPL's Green Cities Initiative, a plan to place and replace parks in the inner city.

Introduces the concept of "safe-haven playgrounds" as a place where children (especially in inner-city neighborhoods) can interact with the environment and each other. "Safe-haven playgrounds" would draw on members of the surrounding community to help provide some of the cultural and educational content necessary. The authors focus on the importance of creative play in childhood and what parks professionals can do towards that end.

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The state of Iowa has a renewed commitment to parks and open space, in part because they are perceived as economic development tools.

Local parks and recreation departments find themselves turning into social service agencies for at-risk youth.

Australian study examining children's response to their neighborhood. Showed that children in high risk areas (based on neighborhood health, income, employment, education) particularly valued parks.

Study performed in Robert Taylor Homes demonstrates that tree density, placement, and grass maintenance do have an impact on residents' sense of safety. Contrary to popular belief, the increased presence of trees and vegetation creates a sense of safety rather than reduces it.

Kuo, Frances E, Rebekah Levin Coley, and Liesette Brunson. "Fertile Ground for Community: Inner-City Neighborhood Common Spaces." American Journal of Community Psychology 26, no. 6 (1998): 823-51. Details the results of a research project based upon interviews with residents of Robert Taylor Homes and Ida B. Wells Homes. The article indicates that the presence of greenery supports common space use and fosters neighborhood social ties. Significant green space also has an impact on resident's sense of safety.

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Discusses the trend of "socio-ecological activism" where landscape architecture is used as a means for social justice. Discusses projects in Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, and Oakland, Calif.


A challenge to parks and recreation programmers, directors, etc. to remember the family -- the entire unit, in all its diversity -- when creating programs and opportunities.

Parks and recreation need to play a role in motivating citizens to be more active. The four E's mentioned in the title are Educate, Engage, Empower, and Evaluate. Education involves creating and raising awareness of the benefits of physical activity; Engagement includes programming and scheduling; Empowerment allows people to use facilities in self-directed pursuits; and Evaluation promotes the values and benefits of activity.

Identifies the ways in that parks and recreation planners and staff can aid in strengthening families including developing family sensitivity training for park staff, promoting activities for couples, and expanding parent and child activities.

Provides "Case Studies" and "Best Practices" of parks and recreation programs that have successfully served at-risk and underserved youth. Each study or practice includes an abstract, an analysis, and a contact name. Includes a bibliography.

Presents six case studies of parks and recreation programs that have involved themselves in the community: focusing on the issues of social welfare, community partnerships, wellness initiatives, and the environment. Also includes a transcript of a parks and recreation forum held in 1991.

Studies indicate a link between park usage and good health, especially in older adults. Municipal parks are well situated to initiate and provide programming to encourage park use by this population segment. Presents summary of survey results. Contains concise bibliography.

Article discusses the National Recreation and Parks Associations program "Active Living/Healthy Lifestyles"; this program was funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and reached over 520 communities. It examines successful programs and provides guidance for promoting an active lifestyle to consumers.

*Physical Environment and Crime*, Ralph B. Taylor, and Adele V. Harrell. [Washington, D.C.]: National Institute of Justice, 1996. An introduction to crime prevention through environmental design. Report focuses on four sets of physical features often associated with crime or fear of crime. They are housing design or block layout, land-use and circulation patterns, resident-generated territorial features, and physical deterioration. While not about parks specifically, the implications and solutions are easily transferred. Includes bibliography.


Witt, Peter A. *Public Recreation in High Risk Environments: Programs That Work*. Ashburn, Va.: National Recreation and Park Association, 1999. Profiles of programs in 21 communities in the United States. These programs are based on the idea of crime prevention through early intervention. Programs range from midnight basketball to summer performing arts camps to tattoo removal opportunities. Focus is on urban/inner-city parks. Includes a list of references and program contacts.


**Park design**


Brett, Arlene, Eugene Provenzo, and Robin Moore. "Child's Play." *American School Board Journal* 180 (1993): 22-25. Introduces the concept of "safe-haven playgrounds" as a place where children (especially in inner-city neighborhoods) can interact with the environment and each other. "Safe-haven playgrounds" would draw on members of the surrounding community to help provide some of the cultural and educational content necessary. The authors focus on the importance of creative play in childhood and what parks professionals can do towards that end.
Chapters cover a wide variety of open space including plazas, neighborhood parks, and miniparks. Each chapter consists of design guidelines, case studies, and references.

The philosophical underpinnings of today's parks.

Chapters cover not only planning, design, and development but financing, cultural heritage preservation, building public support, and safety. Includes bibliography, a list of greenway organizations, and federal funding sources.

Focus is on larger park facilities (the former title of this publication was State Park Planning Guidelines). Types of uses covered include picnicking, swimming, winter use areas, archery, and horseback riding. Appendices include cost estimating information, glossary, and bibliography.

The focus is on large, rural park and recreation areas but many of the issues discussed are applicable to any size or location. Issues include maintenance, design psychology, trails, and play areas.


Everyday nature is defined as parks, open space, corporate grounds, vacant lots, backyard gardens, fields, and forests. The authors rely on "patterns" that focus on the relationship of people to the environment. Includes case studies, lots of illustrations, and a bibliography.

Within the context of the livable city, lots of ideas are provided for creating more inviting public space. Most examples are drawn from Europe but are applicable everywhere. Heavily illustrated.

27 case studies from across the U.S. though majority are east coast.

Advocates the systems approach to park planning; a model that is more responsive to local users and their needs and desires. Covers physical planning of park, facility space standards, and involving citizenry. Includes glossary, bibliography, and level of service standards developed by Dade County, Florida.

An introduction to park design for the layman/non-designer -- board and commission members, parks directors, citizens, and recreation leaders.

Intended to help landscape designers and planners understand the importance of plants in play settings. Plants are organized into plant function tables that include fragrance, texture, play props, fall color, fruits, herbs and nuts, winter flowers, shade quality, and wildlife enhancement.


Analyzes the efforts of the Parks Revitalization Initiative to bring three Philadelphia city parks back to life from 1993-1996. Includes initial 1993 park analysis, management plan, vision statement, and future plan for each park. An excellent blueprint for other public/private partnerships to follow.


Guide covers design and management issues including playground design and safety, traffic island beautification, public relations, volunteer programs, and ball field management. Includes a chapter on appropriate plant materials.


This volume summarizes 25 years of experience by the Project for Public Spaces. Based upon the work of William Whyte, it encourages planners and citizens to provide and ask for people friendly streets, sidewalks, parks, and plazas. Examples and photographs of spaces that work and those that don't are provided. Includes a bibliography.


A discussion of the many shapes and sizes parks and playgrounds can be...and how standard playground equipment can be a deterrent to play rather than an encouragement.


The featured case studies focus on school environments but the concepts can, and should be, applied in the broader context of community parks. Good illustrations and bibliography.

Park use


The results of a survey conducted in urban parks in San Francisco, Houston, Atlanta, Chicago, and Boston. Results are summarized briefly -- older users come more than once a week, have a regular time of day when they come, stay a usual amount of time, plan their visits, and have used the park for many years. Preferences are for mornings over afternoon/evening and weekdays over weekends. Planners and park officials need to keep the usage habits of older Americans in mind when programming parks.


Australian study examining children's response to their neighborhood. Showed that children in high risk areas (based on neighborhood health, income, employment, education) particularly valued parks.


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Identifies the ways in that parks and recreation planners and staff can aid in strengthening families including developing family sensitivity training for park staff, promoting activities for couples, and expanding parent and child activities.

Provides "Case Studies" and "Best Practices" of parks and recreation programs that have successfully served at-risk and underserved youth.

Studies indicate a link between park usage and good health, especially in older adults. Municipal parks are well situated to initiate and provide programming to encourage park use by this population segment.

Reviews the warning signs of a park becoming a "crime hotspot" and discusses what park managers can do to combat this problem. There are four stages to a parks criminal life: the threat of disorder and the rise of fear (graffiti, vandalism, littering), diversification and escalation (conflicts between legitimate and criminal users), risk and danger (application of dangerous label), and assuming guardianship (taking back the park).

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A survey of college students in Illinois, Michigan, and Georgia revealed that a majority of participants perceived greater safety in developed urban parks and felt least safe in densely forested areas. The presence of litter, graffiti, and other visible signs of abuse were highly influential. Article contains sample photos used in survey and additional information.

An introduction to crime prevention through environmental design. Report focuses on four sets of physical features often associated with crime or fear of crime. They are housing design or block layout, land-use and circulation patterns, resident-generated territorial features, and physical deterioration. While not about parks specifically, the implications and solutions are easily transferred. Includes bibliography.

The parks dept., community organizers, and municipal officials collaborated to solve the problem of what to do with 'cruising' youth. They incorporated part of a significant inner-city park into the loop and created programming aimed at high school age youth.

Profiles of programs in 21 communities in the United States. These programs are based on the idea of crime prevention through early intervention. Programs range from midnight basketball to summer performing arts camps to tattoo removal opportunities. Focus is on urban/inner-city parks. Includes a list of references and program contacts.

**Public-private partnerships**

A revision of a classic in the parks management field. Among the topics Crompton addresses are taxes, bond campaigns, assessment districts, easements, public/private partnerships, land exchanges, exactions, and private sponsorship.


One of the earliest examinations of community-developed and maintained urban parks. Overview chapters discuss U.S. and European examples; case studies focus on New York City. Includes bibliography.

Legacy Projects are a grant program of Great Outdoors Colorado, a trust funded by lottery proceeds. These multi-year, multimillion dollar projects advance the goals of land conservation, wildlife conservation, and open space recreation in the state of Colorado.


27 case studies from across the U.S. though majority are east coast.

Reviews the history behind Hartford, Conn.'s Riverside Park, an urban waterfront park and recreational site. Riverside Park fronts the Connecticut river and is maintained by a regional authority (Metropolitan District Commission) in partnership with a private organization (Riverfront Recapture). It serves East Hartford as well as Hartford.

Presents six case studies of parks and recreation programs that have involved themselves in the community: focusing on the issues of social welfare, community partnerships, wellness initiatives, and the environment. Also includes a transcript of a parks and recreation forum held in 1991.
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The Tennessee Riverpark is a 22 mile long greenway paralleling the Tennessee river; it was developed collaboratively by the city, county, state, and federal governments, local foundations, private citizens, and the RiverValley Partners, a public-private economic development company. Article details the efforts leading to its establishment and its many successes.

As part of the ongoing evaluation of the Urban Parks Program, this report examines partnerships between public and private agencies.

Examines four urban spaces in downtown Los Angeles developed through public/private partnerships: Grand Hope Park, Pershing Square, Maguire Gardens, and Bunker Hill Steps.