



# SAVE YOUR PARK & RECREATION DEPARTMENT REFERENCE MATERIAL



National Recreation  
and Park Association

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01

SAVE YOUR PARK & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

# ECONOMIC IMPACT

National Recreation and Park Association | 2010

## Measuring the Economic Impact of Park and Recreation Services.

John Crompton

**Abstract:** Park and recreation departments are generally perceived as high cost public services in many annual city budgets because their operational costs outweigh revenue. Economic impact studies usually focus on determining the return of investment that residents receive because park and recreation services do indeed serve citizens. This publication provides a guide for professionals to measure the return on investments that residents make to park and recreation departments. Due to the simplistic methodology of these studies, external consultants are not needed to do the research. Park and recreation department personnel can conduct these studies in-house in order to cut costs. The publication includes a questionnaire to assist in data collection, a formula to calculate the economic impact of visitor spending and examples of how to present the data effectively to audiences. Moreover, the report reveals the results of more than 100 economic analyses conducted over the last 10 years at sports tournaments, special events, recreation facilities, and park facilities.

<http://www.nrpa.org/research-papers>

Active Living Research | 2010

## The Economic Benefits of Open Space, Recreation Facilities and Walkable Community Design.

Research Synthesis

**Abstract:** Over the last four decades, obesity rates have increased dramatically while physical activity rates have decreased. This has raised concerns over community design and the availability of open spaces to encourage physical activity. In addition to health benefits, walkable neighborhoods, parks and open spaces also yield economic benefits. This research synthesis reveals the economic value of outdoor recreation, open spaces and walkable communities. The following are some of the key findings: park and recreation areas have a positive effect on residential property values; the level of economic impact on real estate depends on the proximity of the homes to the park and recreation area; open spaces in urban areas generates greater economic benefits to surrounding properties than in rural areas; open space and recreation areas can provide fiscal benefits to municipal governments and open spaces and recreation areas increase the marketability of residential property around the area.

[http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/Synthesis\\_Shoup-Ewing\\_March2010.pdf](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/Synthesis_Shoup-Ewing_March2010.pdf)

The Trust for Public Land | 2009

## Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System.

Harnik, P. & Welle, B.

**Abstract:** The Trust for Public Land's Center for City Park Excellence has measured seven factors that make city park systems valuable. While not all aspects of parks systems can be quantified, this report takes a closer look at the following factors that can indeed be quantified: property value, tourism, direct use, health, community cohesion, clean water and clean air. For each of the factors mentioned above, the report provides a description of the methodological steps to determine the value of factor. Furthermore, the report provides detailed calculations of the economic value of each factor using specific examples from various cities in the United States. Studies have found that city park systems yield the following economic benefits: direct income, collective wealth, direct savings and environmental savings.

<http://cloud.tpl.org/pubs/ccpe-econvalueparks-rpt.pdf>



02

SAVE YOUR PARK & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

# HEALTH & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

University of California, School of Public Health | 2011

## **Park and Recreation Programs Help to Reduce Childhood Obesity.**

### **Policy Brief**

Abstract: Childhood obesity rates have been steadily increasing in the United States. Over 12 million children are overweight. This is partly due to sedentary behavior attributed to increased screen time. The built environment has also proven to have an influence on children's physical activity. A 10 year longitudinal study conducted of 3000 children living in 12 communities in Southern California found that those children who lived close to parks and recreation facilities have a lower Body Mass Index at the age of 18 than their counterparts who did not live close to parks and recreation facilities. The key findings from the study reveal that parks and recreational facilities reduce the risk of obesity among children and more than half of the children in the study had no structured recreational programming within 550 yard of their residence. The research findings have important implications for future policy decisions with respect to proximity to parks and recreation.

[http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/PolicyBrief\\_ParkProximity.pdf](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/PolicyBrief_ParkProximity.pdf)

The Trust for Public Land | 2006

## **The Health Benefits of Parks: How Parks Help Keep Americans and Their Communities Fit and Healthy.**

Gies, E.

Abstract: Parks, playgrounds, trails and open space provide several health benefits for citizens. Some of the health benefits include improving strength, endurance and mental well-being. Research has found that only 25% of Americans engage in the recommended levels of physical activity. Sedentary lifestyles are contributing to increasing obesity rates and one of the solutions that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has proposed is to increase the number of parks and playgrounds. This report provides data on three avenues through which the park and recreation sector influences healthy lifestyles. The first section discusses evidence to show that parks support physical activity and provide other amenities such as community gardens that contribute to achieving good health. The second section discusses how trails and greenways enhance health in new communities and the last section focusses on the psychological and social health benefits that parks and greenways provide.

<http://www.tpl.org/publications/books-reports/park-benefits/the-health-benefits-of-parks.html>

Active Living Research | 2010

## **Parks, Playground and Active Living.**

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Abstract: Physical activity has several health benefits for both adults and children. Parks and playgrounds provide ample opportunity for people to engage in physical activity. Research suggests that parks and playgrounds do indeed influence physical activity. Research has also proven that America's parks can be leveraged to promote physical activity for diverse groups. This synthesis presents evidence on various factors of parks and recreation that facilitate physical activity. Some of the factors that influence exercise include proximity to parks, park acreage, certain types of facilities such as trails and playgrounds, park aesthetics, structured recreation programming and park renovations. In addition, the synthesis also discusses the areas of research which can be improved upon to further substantiate the evidence that parks play a key role in encouraging physical activity in our communities.

[http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/Synthesis\\_Mowen\\_Feb2010.pdf](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/Synthesis_Mowen_Feb2010.pdf)



03

SAVE YOUR PARK & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

# CRIME & AT-RISK YOUTH

National Recreation and Park Association | 2010

## The Rationale for Recreation Services for Youth: An Evidence Based Approach.

Witt, P. & Caldwell, L.

**Abstract:** There is a perception that youth only create problems that need to be solved. On the contrary, youth are valuable resources to be invested in; however, they need to be provided with opportunities and guidance to assist them in their development. The purpose of this research synthesis is to provide park and recreation professionals and elected officials with data to better understand how park and recreation can be further leveraged to foster youth development. This publication emphasizes the role that parks and recreation can play in influencing youth developmental outcomes. Park and recreation departments are appropriately positioned to promote positive youth development through providing organized, structured programming that is supervised by adults. Participation in youth programs offered by park and recreation agencies has the potential to yield positive outcomes for youth in several developmental areas such as autonomy, identity development, social relationships, conflict resolution skills, academic success, mental health and civic engagement.

<http://www.nrpa.org/research-papers>

Canada Games Council, the Ontario Track and Field Association and Brockville Sports | 2008

## Youth Sport vs. Youth Crime: Evidence that Youth Engaged in Organized Sport Are Not Likely to Participate in Criminal Activities.

Carmichael, D.

**Abstract:** Youth crime gets a lot of media attention. Youth crimes have been increasing in both the United States and Canada. High youth crime rates are attributed to an increase in street gangs. Important to note that not only are street gangs are prevalent in urban areas but in rural and non-metropolitan areas as well. There is very limited evidence to illustrate that punitive methods such as incarceration, boot camps, etc. are effective in reducing youth crime. Several criminologists have reported that the most effective way to prevent youth crime is to guide youth away from negative social activities prior to them becoming involved in criminal activities. In fact, social development programs such as organized sport reduce the risk of youth crime through helping youth developing problem solving skills, positive peer interactions, etc. Since the root of youth crime is complex, organized sport itself does not reduce youth crime; however, research has shown that it does indeed contribute to preventing crime via positive social development. This creates a need to develop non-traditional partnerships between community sports networks, law enforcement, social service agencies, etc. in order to effectively reduce youth crime.

<http://www.fairplayforchildren.org/pdf/1299566926.pdf>

Allen, L. & Barcelona, R. (eds.). | 2011

## Recreation as a Development Experience: New Directions for Youth Development.

Volume 130

**Abstract:** This publication is organized into 9 articles that focus on various dimensions of the relationship between adolescent development, leisure and recreation. The first article discusses under what conditions recreation and play contribute to youth development. The second article is a literature review on family leisure and its impact on youth development. The third article discusses four stages of integrating leisure and educational outcomes. The fourth article discusses how recreation is positioned in a community youth development framework and presents three case studies on this topic. The fifth article presents evidence that camp participation yields positive youth development outcomes. The sixth article presents arguments for a new outdoor-based play movement. The seventh article discusses the association between adventure-based programming and positive youth development. The eighth article presents the competencies of recreation and youth development staff and discusses how to integrate these into education and training. The ninth article discusses the importance of including recreation as a public policy priority due to the potential role that recreation can play in addressing social and academic issues.

<http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=IV8riqDMzagC&oi=fnd&pg=PP8&dq=parks+and+recreation+and+youth+crime&ots=k84fLY3rfy&sig=BMIQXSEenBAsPaaX00d6pMfzSlc#v=onepage&q&f=false>



04

SAVE YOUR PARK & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

# TRANSPORTATION

Rails to Trails Conservancy | 2008

## Active Transportation for America: The Case for Increased Federal Investment in Bicycling and Walking.

**Abstract:** Current circumstances surrounding increased congestion, gas prices and obesity rates have made it necessary to discuss investments in a more diverse transportation system that provides increased opportunities to use walk, bike and use public transportation. The use of active transportation has several advantages. This report quantifies the benefits that active transportation yields via climate change, less dependence on oil and obesity prevention. It is argued that return on investment from active transportation is so significant that Americans must strive to walk and bike more. The analysis of the data used in this report reveals that modest increases in walking and biking could potential result in a reduction of approximately 70 billion miles in automobile travel per year. Furthermore, substantial increases in walking and biking could lead to avoiding 200 billion miles of automobile travel per year.

[http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/whatwedo/atfa/ATFA\\_20081020.pdf](http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/whatwedo/atfa/ATFA_20081020.pdf)

Political Economy Research Institute | 2011

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure: A National Study of Employment Impacts.

Garrett-Peltier, H.

**Abstract:** Active transportation infrastructure can be used for multiple purposes. Recreation, transport and fitness are some of the ways in which people use active transport infrastructure. Not only does active transport infrastructure yield transportation and health benefits but it also generates economic benefits. Some of the economic benefits of active transportation infrastructure include increased revenues and jobs for local businesses. The purpose of this study is to understand the employment impacts of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. This study examined 58 transportation projects and the number of jobs created through each type of project in 11 cities in the United States. The study uses an input-output model to determine the direct, indirect and induced employment that is created by the various projects. The data analysis revealed that overall, for every \$1 million spent, cycling projects create 11.4 jobs in the state in which the project is executed. Pedestrian only projects create 10 jobs per \$1 million. Road only projects create the least number of jobs at an average of 7.8 jobs per \$1 million.

[http://www.peri.umass.edu/fileadmin/pdf/published\\_study/PERI\\_ABikes\\_June2011.pdf](http://www.peri.umass.edu/fileadmin/pdf/published_study/PERI_ABikes_June2011.pdf)

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation | 2011

## The Power of Trails for Promoting Physical Activity in Communities.

Active Living Research

**Abstract:** One of the national health objectives is to promote physical activity for adults and children to lower the rate of obesity and chronic diseases in the United States. The built environment (streets, parks, trails, etc.) plays an important role in encouraging physical activity. Rails to Trails Conservancy has reported that there are approximately 19,000 miles of rail trails in the United States with approximately 1,100 trail projects that are currently in the development process. This research synthesis highlights the findings on the influence that trails have on physical activity. The research reveals that proximity, trail conditions (surface conditions), trail amenities and trail side facilities are factors that are associated with trail use. While the use of trails is a cost effective method to promote physical activity, the evidence of the effect of trail usage on physical activity is mixed.

[http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/ALR\\_Brief\\_PowerofTrails.pdf](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/ALR_Brief_PowerofTrails.pdf)



05

SAVE YOUR PARK & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

# DISPARITIES IN ACCESSING PARKS & RECREATION

Policy Brief drafted for Active Living Research | 2011

### Disparities in Park Space by Race and Income.

University of California Berkeley

**Abstract:** Parks are an appropriate resource for people to engage in active living. Parks are also a valuable resource in the battle against rising obesity rates. There are numerous studies suggesting that park proximity has an influence on physical activity. For those that live closer to parks, integrating physical activity into their daily lives is relatively easier than for those who live further away from parks. A study conducted in Los Angeles illustrates that there exists significant disparities in accessing parks. This policy brief outlines the results from the study which reveals that unequal access to parks and recreation impacts low income communities and racial/ethnic communities in the Los Angeles area. Latinos and African American are more likely to live in areas that have a limited number of parks. Research has also revealed that parks in low income communities are not well maintained and have fewer services and facilities. The policy brief ends with recommendations to improve access to parks based on the research findings.

[http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/PolicyBrief\\_ParkDisparities.pdf](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/PolicyBrief_ParkDisparities.pdf)

Active Living Research | 2011

### Do All Children Have Places to Be Active?

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

**Abstract:** One of most significant health problems the United States is childhood obesity. Obesity rates in children have almost quadrupled in the in the last 40 years. Physical activity provides several valuable benefits for children. This research synthesis presents data on how the built environment, parks and playgrounds in particular, can provide resources for children to engage in physical activity. The main research findings illustrate that racial/ethnic and children from lower income communities are more likely to be obese and overweight. Communities that are characterized by racial/ethnic and low income populations are less likely to have features that support active transportation and have limited access to parks that are well maintained and safe. Furthermore, racial/ethnic and low income populations are more likely to reside in communities that have high crime rates. Public perception of a neighborhood is unsafe is associated with lower levels of physical activity. The synthesis concludes with areas in which additional research could be conducted to further understand the association between the built environment, physical activity and access.

[http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/Synthesis\\_Taylor-Lou\\_Disparities\\_Nov2011.pdf](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/Synthesis_Taylor-Lou_Disparities_Nov2011.pdf)

The City Project | 2011

### Healthy Parks, Schools and Communities: Green Access and Equity for Orange County.

Garcia, R.

**Abstract:** Parks and green space provide numerous benefits that improve the overall quality of our lives, however, not all residents in Orange County, CA are able to easily access parks and green space in order to reap these benefits. This publication discusses the importance of equal access to parks and green space for all citizens as a vehicle to improve physical health, psychological health, community pride, economic vitality and environmental conservation. Research conducted by The City Project reveals that Orange County has 41 acres of green space per 1000 of the population. The communities with the least access to parks reside in north Orange County. These communities are occupied by low income populations and have a high concentration of people of color. The report also presents recommendations on achieving equitable development so that all residents are able to benefit from parks and green space.

[http://www.cityprojectca.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/CityProject\\_OCReport\\_ENGLISH1.pdf](http://www.cityprojectca.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/CityProject_OCReport_ENGLISH1.pdf)

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**National Recreation  
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22377 Belmont Ridge Road

Ashburn, VA 20148-4501

703.858.0784 **LOCAL**

800..626.NRPA (6772)

[www.nrpa.org](http://www.nrpa.org)