



CHAPTER 7 – SOCIAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter is intended to provide BREC with the information it needs to evaluate the social impact of its programs, services and facilities on the citizens of the Parish. The evaluation is accomplished by: a) remembering our past by looking back at the history of parks and recreation; b) making the case for parks as special places; c) reviewing the most recent empirical research on the benefits of parks and recreation; and, d) comparing BREC with the national research.

A Look Back – History of Parks and Recreation

Although recreation may be "new" among professions, it is certainly not a new phenomenon. It is useful to take a brief look back at the history of recreation to help us understand where we 'are today. You will find that many of the reasons that our ancestors played or recreated continue to have meaning today.

From the earliest times recorded we know that people played. Most of this play was unstructured and was found in the daily activities being conducted to sustain life. Hunting and fishing, vital to survival, provided enjoyment as well. "Recreation was spontaneous; it just happened" (Chubb and Chubb, 1981). As the concept of fun progressed, competitions over who could make the finest utensils or the most ornate robe or pot evolved and the arts movement began. While this "play" provided enjoyment, it also was useful in a variety of other ways.

For children, play created a safe environment for learning the skills that would not only sustain them as adults, but would allow them to contribute to the overall well being of their tribe, or community. Games taught children the structure of roles in families and societal roles. Games and more specifically sport, also taught children organizational and coping skills including dealing with disputes and working on collective goals (Mannell and Kleiber, 1997). Play was a means of teaching the standards, mores and customs of a culture as well as the culture of the time influenced the nature of play.

For adults, play or recreation afforded them the opportunity to hone their skills, and develop relationships with others in the tribe. Societies progressed. Adults with strong skills in a particular area became artisans. Those who possessed these particular skills became the craftsmen who were charged with the responsibility of providing for their community. Hunters hunted, farmers farmed, weavers wove, and so on. Professions began to emerge. Those with less honed skill levels did jobs that required less skill, but contributed to the sustenance of the community. Over time people moved closer to each other, thus communities grew and needs grew with them. Work became less play-like and, in many cases, more routine. With evolving systems of industrialization individuals began to lose the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the re-creative value of recreation.



Parks as Special Places

Relative to the research completed by Godbey, Graefe and James and their conclusions about parks and recreation agencies *providing places where people go as recreation in addition to going for recreation*, additional research was completed last year (2003) by Jacquelyn Presley of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Jacquelyn’s personal experiences come from regular hiking trips in Juniper Canyon in Texas at Big Bend National Park. Experiences in the Park set the stage for the premise that a special feeling is developed because of the Canyon’s beauty, the fun of hiking with friends and the fact that it is a place where the desert, canyon landscape and mountain eco-regions converge. Jacquelyn’s position is that most recreation participants have places special to them, whether these places are wilderness areas, local parks or community centers.

Presley’s research was similar to Williams in 2002 when he states that “places are important parts of any recreation experience. People value their relationships to recreation places just as much as they might value relationships with other people or with recreation activities.” According to Williams, we choose leisure places not merely because they are useful for leisure, but to convey the very sense of who we are. Places provide spaces where individuals can create and develop personal and group identities.

Park and recreation professionals may want to consider how globalization and an increasingly diverse society will heighten claims over places. We should reflect on how we can manage land and services to serve diverse interests. We should work to understand what places mean to different groups of people beyond the white American culture that currently dominates our society. In addition, park and recreation professionals should consider how to reconcile competing claims on a place. Perhaps the park and recreation profession can initiate a discussion on how political conflicts over places may be transformed into meeting grounds where different groups can come together and work toward a common goal.

How will considering people’s sense of place benefit East Baton Rouge?

- Developing an awareness of the place meanings in the Parish can help build knowledge of and respect for places and foster environmentally responsible behavior toward such special places.
- Becoming aware of place meanings can help staff identify user groups that can be valuable assets to BREC as volunteers, donors, board members and supporters.
- Knowledge of people’s sense of place will help staff identify where place meanings overlap. Although overlapping place meanings can lead to political conflict, overlap also provides an opportunity for strengthening the Parish. This type of situation provides a mechanism to educate stakeholders on the diversity of place meanings and the potential conflicts that could arise out of such diversity, and include different stakeholders in developing a plan to manage the different place meanings and accommodate the diversity within the community. Including stakeholders in the decision-making process can empower them, hold them accountable for the constructive management of these places and generate a more cohesive community that’s accepting of differences.



How can park and recreation professionals incorporate place considerations into their management strategies?

- Facilitate a discussion of the various place meanings that different user groups in the Parish possess. Use this to generate awareness of the diversity within the Parish.
- Conduct a place assessment in the Parish. Interview user groups and find out what the different places in the Parish mean to them. Compile this information and use it to both manage facilities and to educate the public.
- Create a map of place meanings in the Parish. Survey users in the Parish and enter the meanings they discuss into a G.I.S. File. Overlay the place meanings on a map possessing other land-use information and present this information to the public. Allow the public to comment on this data to increase their commitment to how places in the Parish will be managed.

How Parks and Recreation can help build community

They come from all over your community. Players, coaches, referees, families and friends join together each fall Saturday for youth soccer games. The parks and recreation department has worked hard to ensure the benefits of participating in this program, including the new skills gained, the teamwork, the joy of competing with and against others, and the new friends made. Yet the benefits of such a program move beyond the participants to the families and friends watching these games. The spectators meet and greet one another, talk about the weather, the game and community events. As they connect with one another at many levels, they are in the process of building the social capital needed to increase the quality of life of their community.

Put succinctly, social capital refers to the collective value of all social networks (who people know) and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other. Researchers have determined that social capital is as important as economic capital for successful societies. Social capital encompasses such social elements as trust (social trust and inter-ethnic trust), connections with others (formal and informal) and diversity of friendships, participation in politics, giving and volunteering, faith-based management, and equality of civic engagement across the community.

Some indicators of social capital in a community include social trust, inter-racial trust, association involvement, informal socializing, diversity of friendships, giving and volunteering, faith-based engagement and equality of civic engagement across the community.

In parks and recreation, we can promote social capital by:

- Providing opportunities to perpetuate informal socializing
- Facilitating and encouraging diversity in friendships
- Creating opportunities for volunteerism and giving

Enjoyment and the Good Life provided by Parks and Recreation



One of the unique qualities of parks and recreation services is its goal of bringing about enjoyment and the good life. With its focus on individual, community, environmental and economic outcomes, the ***Benefits of Parks and Recreation Movement*** has served the profession well as a foundation for documenting important extrinsic benefits of parks and recreation. However, we cannot forget that the outcomes related to enjoyment are still at the core of what makes our profession unique and valuable among other human service areas – we facilitate fun and intrinsically motivating experiences. Although the values of our profession go beyond “fun and games,” enjoyment is, at all times, central to our work. Therefore, we must remember the unique thing we do best – providing people opportunities for enjoyment.

Nearly 2,500 years ago, Plato taught that one of the most important things people could learn was how foolish it was to run away from leisure by working too much. Other lessons learned from Plato’s academy had to do with choosing the “right things” to do with leisure. These right things were taught to be “living well.” Living well was the exercise of moral virtue and excellence of character through engaging in activities that had no end apart from themselves. Therefore, one approach leisure service providers can take is to educate people that the good life can be one in which a person doesn’t work excessively and uses freedom to seek activities that promote excellence of character and provide intrinsic satisfaction. As park and recreation professionals, we can work to educate citizens about the benefits of intrinsically satisfying activities can increase life satisfaction.

Understanding what people find enjoyable can help park and recreation professionals facilitate programs. Without enjoyment and happiness, parks and recreation is just another community service.

For our consideration, we should:

- Think about the potential fun outcomes that might result from involvement in our activities
- Assess our facilities and programs by asking citizens how much these facilities and programs contribute to their happiness and overall life satisfaction

Where we are Today – Benefits of Local Recreation and Park Services

The most recent empirical research on the benefits of local recreation and park services was completed by Geoffrey Godbey, Alan Graefe and Stephen James from Pennsylvania State University in the early 90’s. Data was collected from citizens around the nation in a mail/phone survey. Their research concluded:

- Local recreation and park services are used by the vast majority of the American Public. While park and playground use is more prevalent than other forms of use, the notion that local recreation and parks services serve only a narrow segment of the public appears to be incorrect.
- Use of such services continues across the life cycle. While participation in activities sponsored by local recreation and park services generally declines somewhat with age, use of parks generally does not. Those between the ages of 65 and 74, for example, are as likely to use local parks frequently as any age group from age 15 and older.



- While the benefits received from such services are to some extent a function of the degree of use of those services, the majority of those who do not use parks and recreation services still perceive substantial benefit from them.
- While considerable benefits are perceived at the individual, household and community level, over six out of ten respondents perceive a great deal of community benefit from such services and less than five percent of the respondents do not attribute any community benefit to such services.
- Benefits cover a broad spectrum, but benefits to the individual and society constitute the majority of perceived benefits. In particular, few individuals associated local recreation and park services with economic benefits. In terms of specific individual benefits, exercise and health related benefits were most frequently mentioned.
- Ethnic status and gender are minimally related to local recreation and park use. Females were as likely to use both local parks and to participate in activities sponsored by local recreation and park services as were males. Non-whites were as likely to participate in activities sponsored by local recreation and services as were whites. While blacks were slightly less likely than whites to make any use of local parks, Hispanics and other ethnic minorities were more likely than whites to make some use of them. In terms of benefits, race and gender are not related to the degree of personal benefit received from local parks but females perceive higher levels of household and community than do males.
- The vast majority of respondents believe that local recreation and park services are worth as much or more than the average they pay for them.

Godbey, Graefe and James concluded that *local recreation and park services provide places where people go as recreation in addition to going for recreation*. In other words, the act of being in a park or other local recreation setting, in and of itself, is consistently viewed as a benefit. It provides a meeting place for the public, a place for families, and a place for kids to go. Similarly, many non-users perceive a benefit from such services and areas just because they are there. The high level of benefits perceived by non-users may imply that attendance itself is an irrelevant measure for documenting such benefits.

They go on to say that the public views local parks and recreation benefits, primarily, to be “people” benefits. Those people benefits occur at the individual, household and community level. To a surprising extent, the perception of such benefits transcends age, race, gender and political affiliation. In this lies the strength of local government recreation and park services in the future.

Definition

Social Change is the consequence of almost any intrusion into the community life of any society. The intrusions can be in the form of specific development projects, or non-specific, less tangible forms such as increased exposure to other cultures, technological change and so on.

To assess the social impact of intrusions, the methodology requires: a) assessment – determination of the potential impacts of a specific intrusion on a community before the commencement of any change; b)



mitigation – involves an ongoing role in the development process by practitioners in order to minimize any impact that does occur; c)

To further the appreciation of culture among the people, to increase respect for the creative individual, to widen the participation by all the processes and fulfillment of art - this is one of the fascinating challenges these days."

--John F. Kennedy

"Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us. We need hours of aimless wandering or spates of time sitting on park benches, observing the mysterious world of ants and the canopy of the trees."

--Maya Angelou

"Self confidence is the first requisite to great undertakings."

--Dr. Samuel Jackson

"Writing off parks as an unaffordable elitist frill would be a hideous, city-killing mistake."

--The New Yorker magazine

"It takes a whole community to raise a child."

--An African Proverb

"An outdoor lover is a person who, when treed by a bear, enjoys the view."

--Anonymous

"If you make children happy now, you will make them happy twenty years hence by the memory of it."

--Kate Wiggin

"The way to keep children out of trouble is to keep them interested in things. Lecturing to children is no answer to delinquency. preaching won't keep kids out of trouble, but keeping their minds occupied will."

--Walt Disney

"Jogging is good for your legs and your feet. It is also good for the ground, it makes it feel needed." -- Snoopy (Charles M. Shultz)

"Those little lines around your mouth, those crows feet around your eyes, the millimeter your derriere has slipped in the last decade, they're all nature's way of telling you that you have nine holes left to play, so go out there and have a good time."

--David Addison, Moonlighting



"In my view, wholesome pleasure, sport and recreation are as vital to this nation as productive work and should have a large share in the national budget."

--Walt Disney

"Nature is the one place where miracles not only happen, but happen all the time."

--Thomas Wolfe

INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS

- You can learn more about a man in one hour of play than a lifetime of discussion." Plato
- "In Columbus at 6:10 a.m., twenty some early risers walking or jogging with gusto around the warm brightly lit gym . . . are not members of some private club. They are participants in Pace Yourself for Life, a program for individuals interested in staying active year round." The Dividend, Columbus Recreation and Parks Department. A study conducted by Brown University stated that the nation could save \$20 billion per year in the United States if every sedentary American walked an hour a day.
- "In the City of Swanton, 75% of the senior high school students stated in their exit surveys that their 6th grade, week-long visit to 4H Camp Palmer was the most memorable experience in their school careers." Betty Jo Sadowsky, Teacher at Crestwood Middle School.
- "The opening of the Villa Angela addition in the Wildwood Park section of Cleveland Lakefront State Park in August not only enhances the service of public access to Lake Erie for boaters, anglers, and swimmers, but also attracts picnickers, joggers, and bicyclists and boosts tourism in the Cleveland area." 1995 Annual Report, Ohio State Parks.
- "Your 1994 summer camp program was fantastic! My daughter Marissa had a most rewarding, fun, and enjoyable time. She made lots of new friends and learned valuable information and exercises to help in her "dramatic career." Letter from a mother to Mike Schertzinger, Director, Davis Youth Program, Columbus Parks and Recreation.
- In a recent community survey performed by Sapperstein Associates, nearly all of the respondents (93%) believe that the Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks contribute to the quality of life in central Ohio. Most (77%) also believe that the Metro Parks contribute to their own quality of life.
- A senior from Stow wrote to the Parks and Recreation Department recently and said, "Thank you for accepting me into the 'Stow Sunshiners.' I've been down in the dumps for a while. By being a member, my self-esteem has gone way up." Ann Ceranic, Stow Resident.
- In Kettering, the 1996 Citizen Leisure Survey found that 94.4% of the respondents felt that parks provide safe areas for youth (ranked #2).
- "Frank L. Smoll and Ronald E. Smith, two pioneering University of Washington sports psychologists who have studied youth sports for 25 years. . . ." Smoll says, "Youth sports are not viewed as a baby-sitting experience. They are more than a recreational experience for children. This is an important opportunity for children to learn lifetime coping skills." USA Today, September 11, 1996.



- A comprehensive literature search related to the potential of recreation in delinquency intervention found that there were increases in self-esteem and improved overall self-concept, and there were decreases in the sense of hopelessness of at-risk or delinquent youth (McKay, 1993).

Historical Perspective

Historically, public parks and recreation programs have been a critical part of our heritage locally, regionally, nationally, and even globally. Born out of need, park and recreation programs constantly evolved due to changing cultural, societal, and demographic demands and desires. Why then, are park and recreation budgets, staff, and programs the first to be cut?

Everyone Benefits

Everyone in the world has somehow benefited by public park and recreation programs at some time in their lives-directly or indirectly. The time has come to make the connection between past experiences and today's success, yesterday's activities, and tomorrow's physical and mental wellness, and today's taxpayer support and safe communities for our children and grandchildren! So, whether an avid participant or occasional observer, enjoy the benefits. It's everyone's right.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Beyond Fun and Games

Often people need to be reminded of how vital parks and recreation are to the quality of their lives. While fun, happiness, and play are vital to growth and development, the expanded role of public parks and recreation is more critical than ever. Whether we know it or not, programs, services, events, and opportunities offered by local, state, and national park and recreation agencies positively impact lives and society as a whole. National and local research documents this.

Four Major Benefit Areas

American and Canadian organizations have identified four major benefit categories: Community, Individual, Economy, and Environmental. Within each category are specific benefits which are substantiated by facts, field studies, testimonials, and research findings. The following pages highlight some of the few ways that Ohio's parks and recreation work for you, your neighbors, your kids, and your communities.

- "We have an obligation to try to do something to counter this social and spiritual plague. Too many people have simply given up." Arthur Ashe in Days of Grace.
- "Upon opening a community center in a Cincinnati neighborhood, the overall crime rate dropped 40%"-Myra Madison, North Fairmont Community Center Director.
- In Kettering, the 1996 Citizen Leisure Survey found that 95.8% of the respondents felt that parks make their communities more attractive places (ranked #1) and 89.3% stated that parks protect open space from development (ranked #3).
- "On behalf of the Ohio Hispanic Coalition I would like to express our sincerest appreciation to the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department for its first Festival Latino held on Friday, June 21, 1996. Its success can be attributed to the spirit of collaboration of those who worked hard to



see it happen, bringing together not only Latinos from central Ohio, but a much larger and diverse population." Julie Arbini Carbonell, Ohio Hispanic Coalition.

- "The City of Stow is to be commended for its role in the creation of the Stow Bikeway . . . a resource regularly used by many residents. Stow is experiencing a dramatic growth in bicycle use. One can cite several advantages to encouraging bicycle use: it is a low impact, health promoting activity; it gets people back to nature; it is nonpolluting; it does not use scarce resources (oil); it reduces traffic congestion; and it supports two of the largest bike stores in the area, both of which are in Stow." Tim Teyler, Stow Resident.
- The Cincinnati Recreation Commission (CRC) realizes that the underlying causes and risk factors of youth crime and violence cannot be eliminated, but their impact can be reduced through effective programs. In a 1996 master plan, commissioned by CRC and conducted by Brandstetter/Carroll Incorporated, respondents indicated that those aged 13 to 17 years were the most important segment of the population to serve. City residents felt that "CRC's primary role should be in providing activities to help keep teens out of trouble."
- "In a time when all we hear about in the media is the drug use, gang violence, and teenage pregnancy, it is refreshing to see this age group do and be interested in giving enjoyment to others." From a letter to Columbus Parks and Recreation commending the members of their dramatic group.
- "I want to say how much I appreciate the Ford Nature Center being a resource for all people, young and old, to help us learn about the many interesting life forms and nature that surround us in this community." Callum B. Johnston, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Education, Youngstown State University.
- "Your staff's participation also reinforced to our students that members of our professional community do care about where our children's futures are heading." Officer John W. Angelo, GREAT/DARE officer, Jackson Township Police Department in a letter to Jackson Community Parks, Massillon, Ohio.
- The Ohio State University's Polymetrics Lab performed a random telephone survey for Ohio State Parks and found that on the average, current park users were middle income families with three members, . . . and drove approximately 37 miles to reach their most frequently visited state park. . . 1995 Annual Report, Ohio State Parks.
- "The National Recreation and Park Association released a nationwide study of prevention programs, which offered compelling evidence that recreation and training can contribute directly to declines in crime and juvenile-arrest rates." Time, November 14, 1994.

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ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Four Major Benefit Areas

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- The Hamilton County Park District protects approximately six million trees within its 12,000+ acres. These trees have the ability to absorb 240 million pounds of air pollutants each growing season. The oxygen meets the daily needs of over 75,000 people.
- Mill Creek Park Makes Region Livable: "When asked my reasons for moving here, and I reply Mill Creek Park for one, most people raise their eyebrows in disbelief. As urban sprawl continues to devour the remaining wooded areas in Boardman and the surrounding communities, it is such a relief that Mill Creek Park will be left intact for future generations. Mankind's survival depends on a healthy environment, and I'm proud to live in a community that recognizes the necessity of preserving a piece of the natural world." Linda Boardsman, The Vindicator, Youngstown, Ohio.
- "The University/Parks Trail in the Toledo area opened in 1995 and connects the main campus of the University of Toledo with Wildwood Preserve Metropark and on to King Road, a distance of over six miles. Demand for the trail was so great that thousands of people used it before it officially opened to the public. The project is an important urban to rural connector; offers a path for walking and biking and can accommodate people with disabilities; protects natural habitat as an uninterrupted wildlife corridor; and economically impacts numerous bicycle shops in and around the Toledo area." Jack Gallon, Toledo attorney and Park Board Commissioner.
- Approximately 625 acres of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District's landholdings were farmed this year through contracts with local farmers to prevent weed growth on land awaiting restoration or development. Planned crop rotation and other soil conservation practices preserve the quality of the soil for the future.
- With volunteer assistance, over 4,000 seedlings of native wetland plants were transplanted into the Shake Trace Wetlands, part of Hamilton County Park District. These rare plants will add



valuable wildlife food and cover at the wetland. The Park District is also home to 44 species of rare plants, twenty of those were re-established by the Hamilton County Park District. To date, a total of 20 state endangered, 2 threatened, and 18 species of special interests have been seen in the Park District.

- In response to a survey conducted by Saperstein and Associates, respondents stated that the Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks should give highest priority to developing parks along rivers and streams throughout Franklin County. The next highest priority is purchasing land before development occurs and holding it until additional Metro Parks are needed.

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ECONOMIC BENEFITS

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- "For a relatively modest investment in what we generally term preventive programs, the return is extraordinary. A choice between prison and preventive services is a false choice. Simply, we do not have a choice." Pete Wilson, Governor of California.
- "You can pay me now or pay me later!" Tag line from a car repair commercial that emphasizes prevention!



- "In Ohio, citizens paid approximately \$40 per person for parks and recreation services as compared to almost \$40,000 to jail one teenager. It costs almost 100 times more for incarceration versus recreation." Michelle Park, Ohio Parks & Recreation Association.
- Nonusers tend to be highly involved in extracurricular activities, spend more time with their family and less time with peers/friends than do drug abusers (Shilts, 1991).
- The Center for Urban Studies in Youngstown, Ohio identified estimates of the financial contribution of selected activities provided by the Mill Creek Metropolitan Park District to the local economy:

Table 7.1: – Financial Contribution of Selected Activities

Golf	119,700 rounds at \$4/round	\$478,800
Hiking	63,000 user days at \$4/day	\$252,000
Jogging	69,300 user days at \$3/day	\$207,900
Bike riding	49,000 user days at \$4/day	\$196,000
Tennis	40,600 user days at \$4/day	\$162,400
Football	700 participants at \$180/year	\$126,000
Baseball/ softball	1,000 participants at \$120/year	\$120,000
Fishing	30,000 user days at \$3/day	\$90,000
Hockey	160 participants at \$200/year	\$32,000
Soccer	300 participants at \$80/year	\$24,000
Boating	4,000 user days at \$4/day	\$16,000
Total		\$1,710,700

- Park visitors spent over ten million dollars at Hamilton County Parks in 1996. Since they can offer local, high quality recreational facilities, many citizens spent their leisure time locally, saving themselves time and keeping their recreational dollars, as well as tourist dollars, at work in the local economy. Also, the Hamilton County Park District conducted business with 2,169 different vendors in 1996, adding to the economic stability of the county.
- In Xenia, a major 300+ unit bicycle-friendly housing development is under construction; a new bicycle-friendly McDonald's is now open; and, downtown Xenia is being revitalized resulting from a new bikeway system.
- "In Miamisburg, the proximity of a new golf course encouraged the growth of upscale housing. Before the construction of a golf-course, there were fewer upper-middle and upper-class housing developments, whereas following the golf course \$250,000 to \$400,000 houses emerged in the surrounding neighborhoods. This emergence of upscale housing contributed significantly to tax and service revenues." Becky Benna, City of Miamisburg.
- According to the National Sporting Goods Association, Americans spent \$3.25 billion on sports equipment in 1992.

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