Active Living Research

Building the Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity and Support Active Communities

Parks and Recreation Programs among Lower-Income Communities and Communities of Color

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Learning Objectives

- Identify racial/ethnic and income disparities in access to parks and recreation.

- Describe how preferences for parks and recreation use differ among various minority groups.

- Identify tools and strategies that can make park and recreation resources more accessible, equitable, and appealing to minorities and lower-income communities.
Defining the Problem

• Obesity rates are too high, especially among minorities and lower-income groups

• People are not active enough

• People of color and lower-income people have lowest rates of recreational physical activity

• Environments and policies often discourage physical activity
Disparities in adult leisure time physical activity

Environments and Policies Can Support Active Living
Disparities in Parks and Recreational Resources

- Communities with higher poverty rates and those that are predominantly African-American are significantly less likely to have parks and green spaces.

- Public parks and recreation areas are especially important to lower-income, inner-city children who often lack private backyards.

- Economic and racial disparities also exist for other types of recreational facilities, including both public and private ones.
Perceived park aesthetics, condition and safety may be associated with park visitation and physical activity levels within parks.
Tools and Strategies for Improving Access to, and Quality of, Parks and Recreation Resources.....
Advocating for Parks and Recreation

- Form Park Friends groups
- Develop community leaders and alliances
- Design a successful parks campaign
- Develop effective communication and outreach plan
- How to make your parks safer
Community Mapping for Health Equity Advocacy

Example: The City Project, Los Angeles

The report:

*Healthy Parks, Schools, and Communities: Mapping Green Access and Equity for the Los Angeles Region*
Joint Use Agreements

• Official agreement between two entities (e.g. school and city) to share a facility

• Schools and communities share a gym, pool, or athletic field

• Low-cost and quick solution

• NPLAN can help with technical assistance and model JUA’s
Urban Greening

San Joaquin River Parkway

Atlanta’s Beltline
Recognizing and Meeting Different Cultural Preferences

- Ethnic minority and cultural uses are an increasing aspect of open space and parks in the United States.
- Park managers and designers need to consider the cultural uses and preferences when designing parks.
- There are many survey studies that can help park managers identify overlooked preferences, barriers, and useful patterns when designing for different cultures or ethnic minorities.
Whites

- More likely to use park on their own
- Walking, jogging
- 50% value parks for their aesthetic qualities
Chinese

- Rare in parks
- Mostly elderly men, socializing or doing Tai Chi
- See park as an aesthetic element of gorgeous design, not as expanse of green space for recreation and sport.
Latinos

- Use parks in large social groups
- Food is involved
- Social, celebratory, and relaxation purposes are high priority.
African Americans

- Open spaces used mostly for sport.
- Prefer organized recreational activities vs. conservation
- High preference for social and relaxing benefits.
Strategies for Park Design

• Incorporate natural or design elements that have cultural or homeland meaning

Bamboo Park
Providence, RI
Leave room for adaptation
Example: Latino New Urbanism

“Latinos come here looking for public space and they create it where they can find it.” -James Rojas

Chapultepec park, Mexico City

Pico Union, Los Angeles
Strategies for Park Management and Programming

• Tailor the health message and get the word out through the community

• Encourage people to come together for cultural celebrations

• Schedule activities with diverse schedules, constraints, and preferences in mind

• Racial and ethnic diversity of park staff

• Bilingual staff and signage

• Make sure that park rules do not exclude certain cultural activities.
Do All Children Have Places to be Active?

This synthesis summarizes the growing body of evidence indicating that racial and ethnic minority, and lower-income, communities do not provide as many built and social environmental supports for physical activity. Research on racial, ethnic, and economic disparities in obesity and physical activity rates among children is also summarized.
Vision for the Future...

More of this

Less of this