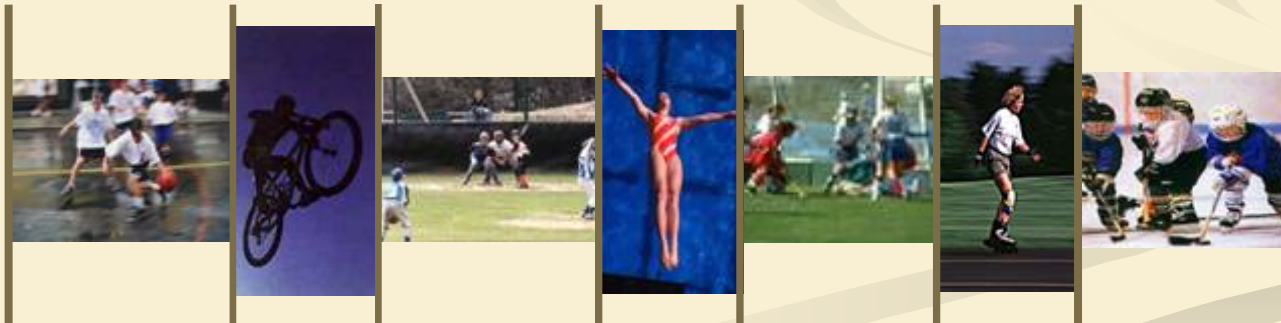




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Trends in Parks and Recreation

2008 PRO Educational Forum and Trade Show



Overview



- A long-term vision for parks, recreation, and leisure requires a solid understanding of the past and present, which in turn provides the basis for identifying current and future trends.
- A successful long-term vision responds to the undesirable trends and embraces the positive ones.
- Identification of local, provincial, national and international trends is the first step in the process, followed by an assessment of the likely implications of these trends within the local context.



Overview



- The collection and analysis of applicable trends research is a considerable undertaking and is a significant resource to the development of the Master Plans, Feasibility Studies, and Needs Assessments.
- Sources include, Statistics Canada publications, relevant Provincial Government studies, CFLRI studies, Sport Canada releases, watershed American studies such as the NSRE and SuperStudy of Sports Participation.



Activity Levels and Preferences



Lack of Free Time is the Main Barrier to Participation

- In every survey we have conducted “lack of time” is the most significant variable affecting participation in leisure activities.
 - East Gwillimbury – 68% (2008)
 - Vaughan – 77% (2007)
 - Mississauga – 70% (2004)
 - Brant – 55% (2000)



Activity Levels and Preferences



Lack of Free Time is the Main Barrier to Participation

- Lack of time as a barrier to participation is largely a result of the evolving employment (e.g. commuting, home-based occupations, night-shifts and weekend work) and family structures in Canada.
- Whether real or perceived – lack of time is impacting every aspect of recreation and leisure and therefore our health – mental and physical.



Activity Levels and Preferences



Lack of Free Time is the Main Barrier to Participation

- The time crunch is generally the greatest in the age groups between 15 and 54, where burdens of school, work and child rearing are heaviest.
- Not surprisingly, the 65+ age group has the greatest amount of free time.
- The implication will include the demand for services during non-traditional hours, drop in activities, and the continued popularity of multi-purpose facilities.



Activity Levels and Preferences



Lack of Free Time is the Main Barrier to Participation

- The time crunch is also impacting participation in arts and cultural activities.
- The average Canadian has only 6 hours of free time a day (including 2 hours devoted to the TV).



Activity Levels and Preferences

Tools - Lack of Free Time



- Create more opportunities for causal and unstructured activities. {Basketball, skateboarding, free swim time, fitness centres, walking trails, drop in times}
- Create more opportunities for events and programs for older adults.
- Encourage the development of multi-use facilities that provide a range of activities for all family members at the same time.



Activity Levels and Preferences



Health and Obesity

- A 2004 survey by the Canadian Federal Government found that 6.8 million Canadians between the ages of 20 and 64 are overweight. An additional 4.5 million Canadians are obese.
- The number of overweight Children between the ages of 7 and 13 has increased by up to 300% between 1981 and 2001.
- The World Health Organization estimates that obesity rates worldwide will increase by 50% over the next 6-7 years.



Activity Levels and Preferences

Health and Obesity



- Women, low-income adults, and older adults are less likely to be physically active than other demographic groups.
- It is estimated that the cost of obesity and physical inactivity in Canada is up to \$4.3 Billion a year, which accounts for both the direct (healthcare) and indirect costs.

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Activity Levels and Preferences



Tools - Health and Obesity :

- Prepare Physical Activity Plans to identify specific tasks to increase participation in recreation and leisure.
- Provide information regarding government tax credits for parents with children in recreation and leisure programs.
- Consider replacing the traditional seniors subsidy with an ability-to-pay model, where those most in need of financial assistance receive subsidies.

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Activity Levels and Preferences



Polarization of Income Groups

- Statistics Canada has identified that the richest 10% of the Canadian population have seen an increase in their income by 14%, while the poorest 10% have seen an income increase of less than 1%.
- The higher the income the greater the level of participation in recreational activities.
- Increased use of private facilities and programs by higher income brackets individuals may also place increased pressure on municipal programs to assist those who cannot afford to participate.

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Activity Levels and Preferences



TOOLS - Polarization of Income Groups

- Consider implementing an Ability-to-Pay Model.
- Focus municipal programs that are at an introductory level and focus on basic skills development.



Activity Levels and Preferences

Persons with Disabilities



- Barriers can be physical, architectural, informational, communicational, attitudinal, technological, or through a policy/practice.
- For recreation and parks facilities, this could include accessibility to facilities, ramps to entrances, proper lighting, clearly marked identification signs, benches, washrooms, and hand rails.



Activity Levels and Preferences

Tools - Persons with Disabilities



- The process for establishing detailed accessibility standards for implementation of the AODA is ongoing and should be monitored.
- Undertake an Accessibility Audit of all public-use facilities.



Activity Levels and Preferences



Participation in Organized Sports is Declining

- Participation in sport has declined significantly in Canada during the last decade (although there are exceptions, such as soccer).
- Sport participation levels decline with age, beginning at the age of 12 and dropping off considerably beyond the age of 20.



Activity Levels and Preferences



Participation in Organized Sports is Declining

- There are gender preferences for sport; women generally prefer swimming, golf, baseball and volleyball, while men generally prefer hockey, golf, baseball or basketball.
- Children whose parents participate in sport are more likely to be active (two-thirds of active children have one or more parent engaged in sport).



Activity Levels and Preferences



TOOLS - Participation in Organized Sports is Declining

- Promote non-competitive, active programs that focus on self-esteem.
- Create more equitable allocation policies



Activity Levels and Preferences



Community Diversity Increases

- Many cultures see recreation and leisure as a family event.
- Research has found that those with an East and South Asian cultural enjoy picnicking, social gatherings, urban fishing and tennis, while those of West Asia and Middle Eastern background prefer cultural festivals, family gatherings, swimming, badminton, cricket and soccer.
- However, research also shows the immigrant youth try to assimilate to the North American culture, by participating in activities such as basketball and baseball.



Activity Levels and Preferences



Tools - Community Diversity Increases

- Map ethnic enclaves in the community and ensure that appropriate recreation and leisure programming is available.
- Liaise with community leaders to understand the specific needs of each culture.



Activity Levels and Preferences



Children and Youth

- Walking, soccer, bicycling, swimming, running/jogging, and basketball are some of the more popular activities for children and youth.
- Skateboarding is finally being recognized by municipalities as an vital component in the provision of recreation facilities for children and youth.



Activity Levels and Preferences



Children and Youth

- A number of research studies have found a correlation between youth activity patterns and various socio-demographic circumstances. For instance, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth found that the children who were least likely to participate in organized facilities were those:
 - in lower income families;
 - with very young parents;
 - whose primary care-giver had less than a high school education; and/or
 - in single-parent families.



Activity Levels and Preferences



TOOLS - Children and Youth

- Consider the provision of skateboard parks and as play apparatus.
- Consider converting under utilized baseball diamonds to soccer fields, basketball courts and skateparks.
- Again, assess the need to consider implementing an ability-to-pay model to assist low-income families in participating in recreation and leisure programs.



Activity Levels and Preferences



Adults

- The most popular activities continue to be walking and gardening.
- Team sports and racquet sports attract a smaller market segment than do individual activities and sports.
- Men are more likely to participate in physical activity than women.



Activity Levels and Preferences

TOOLS - Adults

- With the time crunch the greatest for adults, promote drop-in activities.
- Encourage the development of multi-use facilities where all family members can participate in various activities at the same time.



Activity Levels and Preferences



Older Adults (come to other session)

- By and large, this older cohort will live longer and generally will have a higher disposable income than previous generations. With the increase in “active” older adults, it is expected that there will be a shift to:
 - activities that are more informal, casual and self-scheduled;
 - higher expectations in terms of quality services and facilities;
 - more arts and cultural activities to serve this age group;
 - opportunities for life long learning; and
 - a greater emphasis on “active living”.



Specific Activity Trends



Soccer

- After major growth in the 1990s, soccer still enjoys great popularity but has plateaued.
- As youth soccer players of today become adults, it is expected that demand for adult soccer will increase.



Specific Activity Trends



TOOLS - Soccer

- Consider building multi-field sport parks through partnerships to achieve operational efficiencies and the desire to capture the tournament market.
- Consider providing lighting at existing soccer fields to increase the number of playing hours.
- Consider artificial turf as land costs increase – greater usage for half the land.



Specific Activity Trends



Other Field Sports

- In Ontario, tackle football appears to be gaining popularity especially for players in between 7 and 19 years of age.
- Provincially, there is growing interest in sports such as rugby and cricket, although participation remains modest and localized as it is often reflective of ethnic composition.



Specific Activity Trends



TOOLS - Other Field Sports

- Consider adopting a multi-use approach to sports fields as they attempt to accommodate field needs for soccer, lacrosse, football, cricket, rugby and even Ultimate Frisbee.
- Consider artificial turf – handles the rugby and still playable for soccer



Specific Activity Trends



‘Extreme’ Sports

- Skateboarding is one of the country’s fastest growing sports and demand for skateboard parks is high.
- BMX / trick cycling has also become a growth area in recent years.
- Rollerblading / Inline Skating has increased in popularity as skaters can make use of paved infrastructure such as roads, sidewalks and trails.



Specific Activity Trends



TOOLS - 'Extreme' Sports

- Assess the local demand for 'extreme sports' and map the geographical distribution of youth to determine the need and location for a skateboard/BMX park.
- Develop play apparatus skateboard facilities at neighbourhood level



Specific Activity Trends



Aquatics

- Swimming is a favoured activity for people of all ages, however, aquatic facilities are expensive to maintain and operate.
- Swimming lessons are the primary market for indoor pools and participation in such activities tends to decline after age 10.
- With the aging of the population has come increased demand for therapeutic pools and programs aimed at rehabilitation.



Specific Activity Trends



TOOLS - Aquatics

- Consider a leisure design pool (slides, climbing walls, etc.) instead of the traditional 25-yard pools.
- Consider twin tank pools – cost efficiencies similar to twin pad arena
- Consider therapeutic / warm water / lane and aquafit pools for older adults

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Specific Activity Trends



Special Events and Festivals

- Festivals are reflective of the community, creating a sense of local pride and encouraging people to leave their homes and offering a greater variety of leisure opportunities.
- Festivals can promote cultural awareness



Specific Activity Trends

TOOLS - Special Events and Festivals:



- Assess parks, recreation, and cultural facilities for their contribution to the tourism market.
- Ensure select parks can accommodate the electrical, sound system, stage requirements of special events.
- Ensure there are spaces – indoor and out - large enough for “gathering”.



Facility and Parks Provision



Indoor Facility Planning – Key Trends

1. The desire for multi-purpose facilities to serve the cross-programming demands, family recreation and library outings and rising expectations for quality service and value for money.
2. As the younger, fitter, older adult (“aging boomer”) reaches retirement, the traditional stand-alone older adult centre will not be able meet all of their programming needs. Integrating activities for older adults into multi-use and multi-generational community centres is the preferred approach.



Facility and Parks Provision



Indoor Facility Planning – Key Trends

- Need for flexible space to provide a range of opportunities, which can include:
 - multi-purpose rooms
 - gymnasiums with retractable walls
 - swimming pools with floors that can be raised and lowered)
- Multi-pad arena facilities are a key opportunity from a design perspective to accommodate the ranging needs of a community, from women's hockey leagues to large tournaments and achieving operational cost efficiencies.



Facility and Parks Provision



Outdoor Facility Planning

- Outdoor recreation represents a growing market in the leisure sector, including:
 - nature study
 - hiking and walking
 - eco-tourism
 - golf
- These pursuits are self-programmed, resource-based, and self-scheduled.
- Trails and pathways are a cost effective way to provide year round use for all age groups and to promote physical activity.
- Outdoor facility planning in Ontario presents several challenges, with cold winters and very hot summers. This hinders the ability of outdoor facilities to achieve operational efficiencies, as their open season is relatively short.

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Facility and Parks Provision

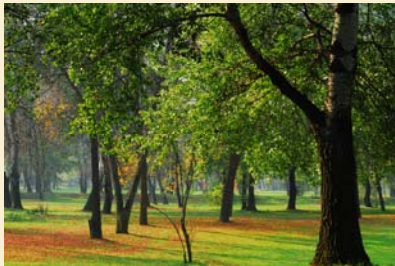


Outdoor Facility Planning

- More frequently, municipalities are building multi-field sport parks through partnerships to achieve operational efficiencies and the desire to capture the lucrative tournament market.
- Across the province, many municipalities are struggling to meet the demands for high quality soccer pitches. The lighting of fields/installation of artificial turf may extend the usage of limited resources.
- Outdoor facilities, such as parks or sports fields, are also seeing an increasing demand for ancillary amenities (washrooms, recycling stations, concessions, and benches).



Facility and Parks Provision



Environmental Stewardship in Parks Design

- The importance of environmental protection is increasingly recognized by society.
- As such, municipalities are placing a greater emphasis on the “development” of passive park space (e.g., woodlots, prairie grasslands, flower gardens, civic gathering spaces, etc.)
- The health of trees is an issue; drought and disease in many older areas and in newly developed areas it takes years for the trees to mature to provide adequate shade coverage.



Facility and Parks Provision



Environmental Stewardship in Parks Design

Opportunities to promote environment stewardship include:

- Providing naturalized park spaces (“maintaining” a site in its natural state or “returning” a site to its natural site) are becoming more popular and are consistent with many of the principles related to environmental stewardship.
- Naturalization typically involves reduced grass cutting and pesticide use, as well as the planting of native species.
- These sites can also include features such as constructed wetlands, bio-swales, edge management plantings, the application of integrated pest management approaches, etc.

Facility and Parks Provision



Village Squares and Parkettes

- New trend for the provision of smaller parks; or parkettes.
- These types of public spaces, whether grassed or paved, are predominately seen in New Urbanist communities and urban areas.
- Parkettes offer residents an open space area within their neighbourhood to socialize with neighbours and the opportunity for passive recreation (i.e., swing set).



Facility and Parks Provision

Village Squares and Parkettes



- Although an important part of the walkable city and look great on paper they cannot replace the need for active parkland
- Parkettes vary in size and use. They are also most suitable for more dense neighbourhoods created through intensification where there is little land available for a full-size park.
- The main issue confronting the provision of parkettes is the issue of maintenance and their inability to provide active recreational opportunities without irritating abutting land uses.



Facility and Parks Provision

Village Squares and Parkettes

- When developing village squares or parkettes, the following items should be considered:
 - Are flexible in design for multiple users;
 - Are accessible by foot;
 - Include walkways, benches, shade trees, and ponds;
 - Focus on rest and relaxation;
 - Manage the users of the square to promote positive interaction; and
 - Have a unique image or identity.

(Project for Public Spaces, 2006).



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SUMMARY

- LACK OF TIME
- HEALTH ISSUES
- REDUCTIONS IN ORGANIZED SPORTS
- INCREASED DESIRE FOR UNSTRUCTURED OPPORTUNITIES
- MORE OLDER ADULTS

