

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF OUTDOOR RECREATION DESIRES FOR URBAN REDEVELOPMENT¹

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Abstract. The significance of four attributes of outdoor recreation relative to a consideration of urban redevelopment forms the focus of this paper. Data on the public's desires for specific recreational facility qualities and activities and the socio-economic characteristics of households are used to develop implications for urban redevelopment policy. Some effects of household income level, car availability, and place of residence are examined as examples. Conclusions are based on a possible set of public responses and emphasize the need for a fuller appreciation of the role of outdoor recreation in policy determination.

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Outdoor recreation has four compelling attributes in any consideration of the contemporary urban community. These factors are: (1) its role in a balanced life style for many individuals, families, and groups; (2) the fact that the physical facilities and access to these facilities are major components of the land use system of an area; (3) that directly and indirectly recreation is a significant element in the economic base; and (4) in an increasingly competitive era, recreational opportunity may enhance the economic viability and residential desirability of a place. A recognition of these four attributes is of particular importance in the redevelopment of urban areas, for one cannot logically do a comprehensive plan for any community without taking these factors into consideration. There are numerous examples of new residential developments, particularly large apartment complexes, condominiums, and new towns where outdoor recreation is an integral part of community development. One cannot travel far in the new town of Reston, Virginia, without seeing community swimming pools, tennis courts, golf courses, horseback riding trails, and hiking trails.

The inclusion of outdoor recreation facilities in plans for urban redevelopment are less numerous and generally

less detailed as to the type of activities to be provided. This lack of specificity is, in part, related to the fact that little is known about the outdoor recreational desires of the present and future population of the older parts of urban areas. The four attributes identified above are related to the public's desires for outdoor recreation facilities. It is the purpose of this paper to illustrate some of the potential relationships between the outdoor recreation desires of the public and urban redevelopment (See Bannon 1976).

The considerations of these relationships will have increasing importance in the years ahead as metropolitan area population redistribution continues. Disenchantment with central city living and increased mobility have been prime features of recent trends toward suburbanization. During the decade from 1960-70 a notable population growth of 43.1% occurred in the urban fringe area while central city numbers declined by 0.9%.

Attempts to reverse this trend are related to the 4 factors previously identified. To date, planning emphasis has been placed on attraction of higher income groups back into the city by providing an appropriate life style (factors 1 and 4), facilities (factors 2 and 4) that the families need and desire, and enhancing the economic base of the older central city areas (factors 3 and 4). Thus the public's desires for outdoor recreation will become increasingly important in the future.

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Original data generated for this study is located in the Department of Geography, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

OUTDOOR RECREATION DESIRES

Out of 21 major outdoor recreation activities the sample population most frequently identified picnicking, swimming, and hiking, followed by bicycling and fishing as the outdoor recreation activities for which facilities should be improved. All of these activities can be provided in metropolitan environments. An example at the present time is the real opportunity in many urban areas to purchase the right-of-ways of rail lines not included in the Conrail System for use as linear parks which could include hiking and bike trails. If older cities were able to develop a system of walkways (hiking trails) and bike trails they could partially match the non-motorized pedestrian and cycling systems of the new towns, and thus strengthen their attractiveness in comparison to many suburban communities.

The needs of the population, however, go beyond the examination of specific recreational activities and their related facility implications. For example, primary factors limiting household visits to outdoor recreation areas were a lack of time to make the number of desired visits and complaints about the crowded conditions at the recreational sites. A third factor was that the facilities were too far away. A majority of respondents stated that they had both the transportation

and the money to do whatever attracted their interest.

Ohioans had clear notions of what made their outdoor recreational experiences enjoyable. Most wanted facilities to be uncrowded, clean, orderly, and possessing adequate convenience facilities. Two-thirds wanted the parks to be within a half-hour travel time of their residence and preferred a variety of recreational options to be available in the facility. The results to the conditions indicated in table I have interesting implications. Planners can have little impact in alleviating problems such as a lack of time; however, they can increase the number and size of facilities to simultaneously reduce overcrowding and increase accessibility as desired by the population. It has been found, however, that for some activities increases in supply and accessibility will lead to higher levels of participation and more overcrowded facilities (Ohio Department of Natural Resources 1975). Thus, it is likely that by increasing the supply of facilities the amount of overcrowding will not be reduced. Even if there is not a reduction in overcrowding, an increase in recreational facility supply and accessibility still would make a redevelopment area more attractive. There is a need for research to determine which facilities would produce the greatest increase in an area's attractiveness for various socio-economic groups of the population.

Cross tabulation of desires questions with socio-economic characteristics of the

TABLE I
*The importance of various conditions on the enjoyability of outdoor recreational experience.**

	Important	Slightly Important	No Opinion	Slightly Unimportant	Unimportant
Uncrowded Parks	63.9**	24.8	5.3	3.1	2.9
Close to Residence (30 Minutes)	32.3	34.0	7.3	12.6	13.8
Availability of Convenience Facilities	67.0	21.3	4.5	3.6	3.6
Variety of Recreational Experience	30.5	33.3	15.4	10.5	10.4
Orderly Clean Areas	82.6	11.0	3.3	1.2	1.8
Park Sponsored Activities	22.9	29.8	14.2	13.5	19.6

*Source: 5,542 mail survey responses, September-October, 1973.

**Percent distribution. (Row totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding.)

population yields, at a general level, little that is startling or unexpected. Four general conditions appear to have meaningful consequences in influencing recreational practices, desires and attitudes: community type, family income, family size, and race. The sum consequences of these conditions are for poor and large families to reduce participation to less costly activities, create demand for facilities nearer to population centers, and suggest that the correlation amongst these variables impose real and demanding needs on the central cities of the SMSA's which already are burdened with many familiar problems.

At a greater level of detail, additional relationships can be developed. For example, by examining the relationship between participation in selected outdoor recreation activities and household characteristics, it is possible to make inferences about the behavior of different types of households (Jubenville 1976). In particular, it is possible to differentiate between the behavior of those households that are likely to dwell in potential urban redevelopment areas (households with low incomes and limited access to automobiles) and those likely to live outside the redevelopment areas (households with higher incomes and access to automobiles).

Participation and income (table 2). In general, outdoor recreation participation rates (the number of times members of a household participate in an activity during a year) are lowest for low income groups; for the five selected activities the only exception is picnicking, where participation rates decline in higher income categories. For golf, sailing and, to a lesser extent, tennis, the barriers appear to be the relatively high cost of the equipment and/or user fees for the recreation facilities. For picnicking and swimming the lack of a consistent change in participation rates indicates that some other factor is of significance in explaining the variation in participation.

Participation and the number of cars available to the household (table 3). This table demonstrates that the participation rates are very strongly related to the number of cars available to the household. With one exception, the participation rates are lowest for the household with access to 0 or 1 automobile and highest for those households with 3 or more cars. The one exception is the picnicking participation rate for households with 3 or more cars; the moderately strong relationships between income and cars available to the households helps to explain this anomaly. The households with in-

TABLE 2
*Participation rates and income.**

	Golf	Picnicking	Tennis	Sailing	Swimming
\$0-9,000	.817	2.784	.768	.097	3.669
\$9-12,000	1.480	3.787	1.025	.234	5.728
\$12-15,000	2.279	3.612	1.073	.313	5.149
\$15-25,000	3.185	3.133	1.675	.536	6.452
\$25,000+	5.880	1.922	3.676	1.401	5.853

*Source: 1973 survey data. Dept. of Geography, Miami Univ.

TABLE 3
*Participation and availability of cars.**

Cars	Golf	Picnicking	Tennis	Sailing	Swimming
0-1	1.464	2.862	.999	.146	4.126
2	2.738	3.461	1.403	.440	5.581
3+	3.201	2.604	2.054	.771	6.502

*Source: 1973 survey data. Dept. of Geography, Miami Univ.

comes of over \$25,000 are likely to be the households with 3 or more cars; furthermore, one would expect that such households will have few young children and thus be less likely to go picnicking. The number of cars available to the household is directly related to swimming participation, an activity to which income was weakly related.

Participation and place of residence (table 4). The number of cars available to the households is related to the income of the households, as well as being a

TABLE 4
*Participation and place of residence.**

	Golf	Tennis
Central City	2.683	2.049
Urban	2.928	1.667
Rural	2.070	.914

*Source: 1973 survey data. Dept. of Geography, Miami Univ.

measure of accessibility. It appears that the households with the lowest levels of accessibility (i.e., the smallest number of cars) participate in outdoor recreation activities the least. This contention is supported in examining the participation rates for tennis and golf for households in different locations. Tennis courts are normally more readily available in the central city and the participation rates for tennis are higher in the central city. Golf courses are more likely to be found in the suburbs and small cities rather than in the central city or rural areas, and the participation rates are highest for households located in suburban areas and smaller cities. Furthermore, it was found that in assessing recreation needs for the counties of Ohio the participation rates for most activities increased as accessibility to facilities increased.

As was observed earlier, in planning recreational developments in urban redevelopment areas consideration should be given to improving access to the facilities (Bannon 1976). Access is the one factor within the direct control of urban policy makers that can influence

participation in outdoor recreation. Location of the facilities in close proximity to the concentrations of population having limited access to the automobile would be most beneficial. Improvements in mass transportation are not likely to be beneficial because residents possess a limited amount of information about the urban environment beyond their own neighborhood. Furthermore, present patterns of behavior indicate a very limited use of mass transit for travel to outdoor recreation facilities.

CONCLUSIONS

Outdoor recreation facilities should be included in plans for urban redevelopment in order to make the redevelopment area more attractive to a wider range of residents. Outdoor recreation resources are increasingly important considerations for many households in making location decisions. Planners should be cognizant of limitations in user mobility and should focus on the desired activities (e.g., picnicking, hiking, swimming, and bicycling) that can be provided in compact urban environments. Further research is needed in order to determine where limited funds should be placed to maximize the benefits for the population of the redevelopment area. Planners must be able to answer such questions as "would it be better to purchase an old railroad right-of-way and construct hiking and bike trails" or "would it be preferable to construct new swimming pools?" The data base now being used allows only for very general statements of desires and needs of residents of urban communities. Better information and greater attention to the four-fold impact of outdoor recreation facilities in strengthening a community should be central concerns in redevelopment programs (Ohio Department of Natural Resources 1975).

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