Appendix E: Park Quality Analysis

Pittsburgh's park and recreation system is made of many types of parks, with different settings and characteristics. One of the best ways of evaluating the existing park and recreation system is an analysis of park quality. When coupled with the suitability analysis, the review of park system quality establishes the groundwork for basing capital investment decisions. During the as part of the Needs Assessment and Suitability Analysis, March 2011 *[link],* the City's park inventory was evaluated using criterion developed to determine the quality of parks within the City. The following is park quality analysis tool used to evaluate park quality. The results of the analysis are included in the March 2011 report.

Defining Quality for the Purpose of Analysis

There are many ways that quality is discussed in terms of parks: design, materials used, condition, level of maintenance, among others. For the purpose of evaluating quality at the citywide scale as a factor in a multi-layered planning assessment, we use Joseph Juran's definition of quality as "fitness for use."

Criteria

The following criteria represent those that address "fitness for use" and can be objectively evaluated. At each park, a score of 0, 1, or 2 will be given for each criterion, with 2 representing highest ranking. When tree canopy prevents evaluation, a 99 will be placed in the criterion's scoring column.

A. Surrounding Environment

The surrounding environment impacts the quality of the user experience at a park. It has an impact on perceptions of safety as well actual use of a site, and is an indicator of whether the park is woven into its local context. For this criterion, existing land use[1] and transportation can be scored as follows.

0 – Poor quality surrounding environment: Industrial or auto-oriented retail uses, adjacent highways or wide streets with poor crossings.

1 – Mixed or neutral quality surrounding environment.

2 – Good quality surrounding environment. Residential, mixed use, or downtown/neighborhood commercial district land uses and streets with good crossings.

B. Visibility

Visibility into activity areas from adjacent streets is an indicator of the quality of the site design. Theory about people's perceptions of space indicates that "prospect" – the opportunity to see – is a key factor in whether people like a place. From a safety standpoint, visibility into a site is a critical component of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design or CPTED. Visibility allows "eyes

[1] Land use is defined as a zoning category. The quality of construction and the condition of the structures is not evaluated for this criteria.

on the park" and surveillance from surrounding neighbors and businesses as well as police. The intent of this criterion is to provide coarse screening, as visibility and views can be difficult to determine using aerial photography only. Note: not all elements of a park need to be visible for this criterion to be met, but at least one key activity area should be visible.

0 – View of key activity area(s) from surrounding streets are impeded.

1 – Neutral: air photo does not allow a determination.

2 – Views of key activity area(s) from surrounding streets appear to be unobstructed.

C. Variety of Experience

Parks that offer a variety of recreation opportunities provide a better user experience. Through the public involvement activities of the OpenSpacePGH process, input on preferences for the basic features parks in Pittsburgh should include, and have incorporated these preferences into the scoring.

0 – Missing one or more of:

- a picnic area (picnic table or shelter structure),
- children's play area
- level grass area at least 100' by 100' (can be a ball field), or
- ball field or sports court.

1 – Includes a picnic area (picnic table or shelter structure), playground, a level grass area at least 100' by 100', and at least one ball field (diamond or rectangular) or sports court.

2 – Includes one or more additional activity areas and features than those include in score 1.

D. Site Layout

The layout of a site affects the quality of the park user's experience. A site should have a rational circulation system that connects activity areas. Within the activity areas, compatible features and amenities should be grouped to create nodes of activity.

0 – No circulation system, no nodes of activity.

1 – Partial auto or pedestrian circulation system, partially developed nodes of activity.

2 – Circulation system, nodes of activity. Some additional activity areas may be dispersed throughout the park.

E. Additional Consideration: Parking

The availability of parking is a factor in the ability of a particular site to accommodate amenities, park features and activities that draw people in. This criterion addresses site capacity as well as the presence of a user amenity. Only two ratings are available for this criterion. The evaluator will determine the presence or absence of on-street parking by street frontage and road width.

Scoring for all parks *EXCEPT* neighborhood parks[2]:

0 – No off-street parking at the park and on-street parking is not available adjacent to the park.

1 – On-street parking appears to be available adjacent to the park, or the park contains off-street parking.

Scoring for neighborhood parks:

0 – On-street parking appears to be available adjacent to the park, or the park contains off-street parking.

1 – No off-street parking at the park and on-street parking is not available adjacent to the park.

Methodology

1. The evaluator will use columns on the inventory spreadsheet to record evaluation scores.
2. The evaluator will use Google Earth and a file based on the current GIS inventory to view the GIS data overlaid on air photos.
3. The evaluator will work park by park through the entire city park inventory, using the following process:
    A. The evaluator will check that the GIS file depicts the park in the right location. If incorrect, the evaluator will flag the park in the inventory spreadsheet for incorrect location.
    B. If correct, the evaluator will compare the inventory with the air photo. If the inventory and photo are not consistent, the evaluator will flag that park in the inventory spreadsheet.
    C. The evaluator will evaluate the site for each of the five criteria, placing a score in the appropriate column on the inventory spreadsheet. If tree canopy prevents evaluation for a particular criterion, the evaluator will place a "99" in that column. The spreadsheet will calculate a total score per park.

[2] Neighborhood parks are designed to serve local residents with a ¼ and ½ mile walking service area. Destination facilities that attract people from farther distances and require the use of a car and the need for vehicle parking are undesirable for this park classification (see Park Design Guidelines). Therefore, the presence of a parking lot in a neighborhood park requires different scoring.

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