

USER ACTIVITIES AND REQUIREMENTS IN URBAN COMMUNAL PARKS: A CASE STUDY OF PUBLIC PARK DESIGN CRITERIA IN BANGKOK METROPOLIS

Abstract

Public parks play an important role in providing urban dwellers a place of refuge from their daily chores, a place for physical exercise and a communal meeting place for collective activities. It has been a crucial source of knowledge and a center for diffusion of local cultural artifacts and practices when public library is established therein. Public library

also perform the function of a civic center where the public meets, exchanging ideas, and conduct academic activities crucial to the cognitive needs of the local residence. Sources of information not only derive in the printed forms, but also arrive from the global sources of media and electronic files via the internet access. Public parks would be a potential locality to accommodate public libraries in terms of accessibility and a gathering places for leisure activities.

Under presumptions as such, this research attempts to investigate the spatial and functional needs of public parks in proximity to the residential areas of Bangkok. Comparing the physical local of public parks in different urban settings of Bangkok, the research endeavors to study the demographic attributes such as socioeconomic and daily activities of potential users in the surrounded areas vis-à-vis the spatial and functional demands of public parks. The research aims to finally derive a set of principles for public parks design solutions to meet the needs of different types of park users in Bangkok for its prospect future utilization.

A quantitative-qualitative integration method has been used to investigate the research schedule in order to explicate the process by which needs and behavior of users are bound to occur in the prospect parks. A stratified sample of one thousand subjects from eighteen communities, covering three distinctive areas in Bangkok—inner city, middle city, and suburban Bangkok—is used to represent the opinion of the entire Bangkok population. Resultant from questionnaire survey is used to establish the

baseline information—population attribute, family structure, and lifestyle—to be cross-tabulated with the spatial and functional needs variables. Data are then processed utilizing a statistical package by means of descriptive and inferential statistics to derive a pattern of user needs and potential design scheme. A qualitative in-depth interview technique is used to explicate the associative result to verify the causality of the variables in the final stage.

The study found that residents in all the three urban settings of residential areas—inner Bangkok, middle city, and suburban Bangkok—stated their needs for public parks in viewing that they could help enhance and beautify the city's physical environment, creating a good and shaded living environment, and providing a playing place for children. In addition, respondents also stated their preference that public parks should be a source of learning for local communities. Demographic attributes—such as educational level, occupations, marital status, and type of dwellings—have been found crucial factors dictating the needs for daily activities within public parks, and therefore the desired environmental attributes. The study finally suggested ramifications for public park shortage in Bangkok in accordance with the taxonomies of the physical settings and dwellers' usage as follow.

In densely populated areas such as those in inner Bangkok where open spaces are rare, public park should be shared by 2-3 communities, and utilizing it as a civic center. A public library, an area for outdoor exercises, and a domain for artwork exhibition and creation should be provided within the park vicinity.

Within the areas of medium density, open spaces are more affordable yet are still broken down in small pockets. Public park settings should be similar to those of the inner Bangkok, in which a public library, an outdoor exercise areas, and a place for art working are crucial.

Settings in suburban Bangkok is found different from the former two types of urban settings. Open spaces in such low density residential areas are easy to be found, and therefore, spaces for other activities such as playground, swimming pools, and entertainment areas could be provided besides the public library, art center, and outdoor exercise areas.

In conclusion, the study found that population attributes are the most important factors determining Bangkok residents' needs for outdoor activities within the public park areas. Successful public parks should be able to functionally serve the purposes of being a civic center for the surrounded residential areas, a place for relaxation, a resource area for lifelong learning for Bangkok's dwellers in all settings.