



# OUTDOOR ADULT FITNESS PARKS

## Best Practice Guidelines

Best Practices for Promoting Community Health by Increasing Physical Activity

The purpose of the *Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks* guidebook is to inspire communities to advocate for and utilize Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks as critical health solutions for increasing physical activity and social engagement. PlayCore, along with a variety of industry professionals, fitness experts, organizational advocates, and local champions across a variety of communities, offers an educational and design resource to help promote community health and capital through innovative outdoor fitness settings.

### Partnership Advisory Network:



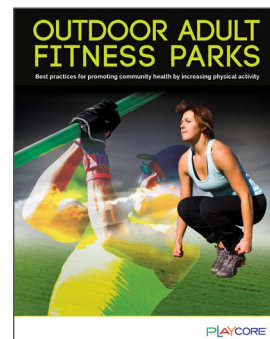
Michael Suk, M.D., J.D.  
Chairman of Orthopaedic Surgery, Geisinger Health System, Danville, PA



Gary Liguori, Ph.D.  
Dean of the College of Health and Sciences, University of Rhode Island



Thom McKenzie, Ph.D.  
Emeritus Professor of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences, San Diego State University



### Comprehensive program includes:

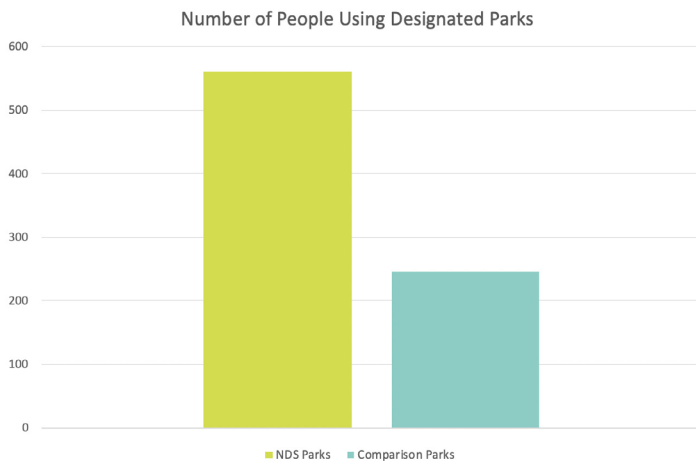
- ▶ 88 page educational/design resource, including:
  - History and benefits of outdoor fitness parks
  - Aligning equipment to total body fitness
  - Selecting an appropriate environment, design considerations, and standards
  - Marketing to user groups and diverse populations
  - Maintenance and sustainability
  - Programming to expand utilization
  - Evaluating and reporting outcomes
  - Ten best practice case study examples
- ▶ Professional development training module
- ▶ The Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks National Demonstration Site program, national recognition and data collection opportunities for sites that follow the best practice design guidelines and establish outdoor adult fitness parks in their community

“Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks can play a vital role in motivating people of all ages and levels of fitness toward achieving a healthier, more active and more productive life.”

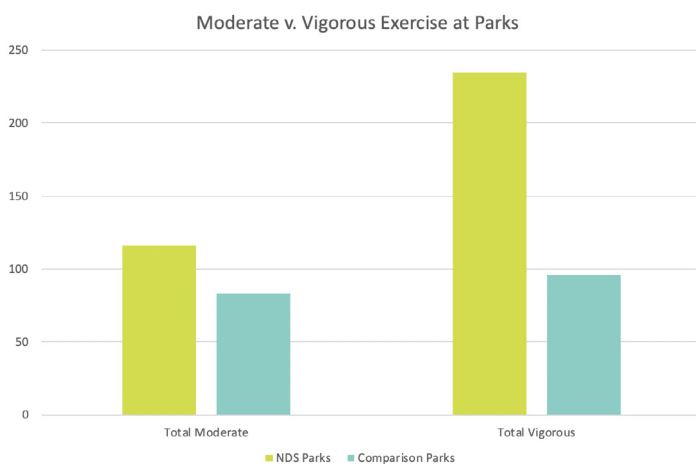
- Michael Suk  
Chairman of Orthopaedic Surgery, Geisinger Health System Danville, PA

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# RESEARCH



There were over twice as many park users at the NDS parks relative to the comparison parks.



The number of park users engaged in physical activities at each intensity level were observed through SOPARC scans. Within the NDS parks, 63% of park users were performing physical activities at a moderate or vigorous intensity during the SOPARC scans.

A study on six National Demonstration Sites conducted by the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga demonstrated additional benefits. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of outdoor adult fitness parks (OFPs) within local parks by:

- Comparing the number of people using OFP's to the number who used comparable local parks without OFPs
- Comparing the physical activity level of park users in OFP and comparison parks
- Examine overall usage of OFPs in the OFP parks
- Examine intensity levels of exercise and user feedback

As a result, the research team discovered that there were over twice as many park users at the OFP parks relative to the comparison parks, and that the number of park users engaged in moderate to vigorous level activities there was 63%. Most importantly, the results show that maximum intensity levels can be achieved using either standard equipment found in an indoor fitness facility or outdoor fitness equipment for a variety of exercises. User reported data included, all users felt safe at the OFPs, and the majority used the equipment 15 minutes to one hour, daily to biweekly, to reduce stress and/or lose weight.

“As an orthopaedic surgeon, I have seen the benefits of physical exercise. The patients I see who exercise regularly are generally more happy and able to enjoy a more active lifestyle.”

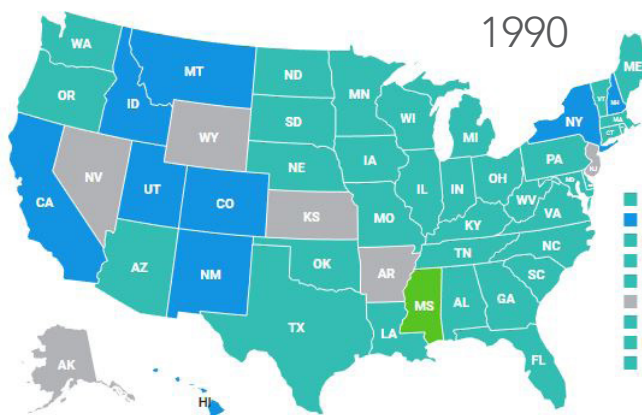
- Adam S. Bright, M.D.  
Board Certified, Orthopaedic Surgery

# An Innovative Way to “Provide Critical Health Solutions”

Research is proving that Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks are providing a variety of meaningful outcomes to communities including engaging participants in substantially more moderate to vigorous physical activity. Together we can effectively promote the benefits of parks and outdoor fitness spaces as critical health solutions, by reducing sedentary-related illnesses and removing the barriers to a life of fitness.

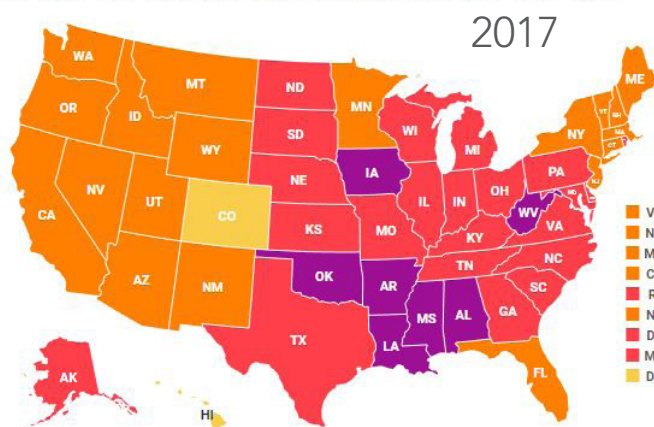
Percent of obese adults (Body Mass Index of 30+)

0 - 9.9% 10 - 14.9% 15 - 19.9% 20 - 24.9% 25 - 29.9% 30 - 34.9% 35%+



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0 - 9.9% 10 - 14.9% 15 - 19.9% 20 - 24.9% 25 - 29.9% 30 - 34.9% 35%+



These two maps depict adult obesity trends in the U.S. from 1990 (left) to the 2017 (right) period, as reported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

## Unique Benefits of Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks:

- Free to users, providing needed resources especially in underserved communities
- People who exercise outdoors are more likely to repeat the behavior
- People who exercise outdoors are more likely to engage in the activity longer than those who exercise indoors
- Provides a social outlet for exercise
- Can be enjoyed by people of all abilities and fitness levels
- Provides exposure to fresh air, nature, and sunlight, which increases important levels of vitamin D
- May encourage a greater number of people to exercise regularly than indoor options
- Offers Outdoor Adult Fitness Park owners an outlet for revenue generation through program agreements with certified personal trainers
- Acts as a catalyst to encourage the non-exercising population to engage
- Increases interest in related community services, such as nutrition education and health screenings
- Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks located within sight lines of a playground promote active behavior in adult family members, increase the time spent at the playground, and help promote the importance of lifelong fitness on children
- Promotes pride of place among neighborhoods where Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks are located
- May qualify for increased grant funding related to obesity prevention/reduction
- Increases community capital
- Promotes healthy behavior for families in age-appropriate settings

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## Design Considerations

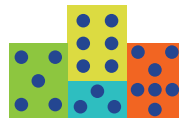
### Outdoor Fitness Park Typologies

#### Fitness Cluster

- Arranged in circular or collaborative pattern
- Designed within a "use zone"
- Designed to avoid pass through traffic
- Encourages communication among users
- Accommodates exercise classes led by certified trainers



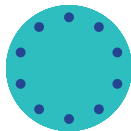
Semi Circle



Training Zones



Collaborative Cluster



Social Circles



Trail Cluster

#### Fitness Trails

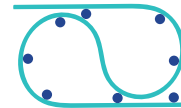
- Along a pathway network
- Incorporates additional cardiovascular exercise
- Measured space between equipment offers easy distance tracking for the user
- Focus: single or multiple exercises



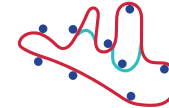
Challenge Course



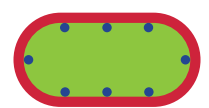
Straight Path



Double Loop



Freeform Trail



Running Track

### Equipment Configuration

**Spacing** Within the overall typology, configuring the individual pieces of equipment is an important consideration in promoting participation, and will also depend on the ways you wish to engage the community for maximum usage.

**Placement** Users may bring friends to the Outdoor Adult Fitness Park, so configuring equipment to promote communication between them is an important consideration for use.

**Sight Lines** For Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks placed within sight of a playground, communication and sight lines are crucial.

**Equipment and Signage** Consider what fitness elements to include in order to support a well-rounded workout for the diverse users.

**Standards to Help Ensure Safety and Usability** There are standards in place that should be followed regarding safety, surfacing, and inclusion.

### Designing for Diverse User Groups

In order to ensure your outdoor adult fitness park is useable by the greatest number of participants, it is important to consider the many user groups who may use the space.

Meeting with potential users in the community prior to design will help ensure the space is designed to promote highest use.

User Groups may include:

- Beginners
- Fitness enthusiasts
- Seniors
- Teens
- Users with disabilities
- Multilinguals
- Class groups
- Solo users

# Total Body Fitness

## Aligning Equipment and Exercises to Health Benefits and Total Body Fitness

In order to reap maximum health benefits, a fitness routine must contain a variety of elements, each offering specific results for overall health. By including equipment that offers a variety of aerobic, muscle/strength, core, balance, and flexibility elements, you can ensure your Outdoor Adult Fitness park provides a well-rounded fitness routine that promotes health improvement and wellness.



**AEROBIC FITNESS**  
via cardio endurance activities



**MUSCLE FITNESS**  
via strength, resistance, and endurance training



**CORE FITNESS**  
via abdomen, lower back, and pelvic exercises



**BALANCE TRAINING**  
to promote kinesthetic awareness



**FLEXIBILITY TRAINING**  
to promote stability, coordination, range of motion

EQUIPMENT MATRIX			Aerobic	Muscle	Core	Balance	Flexibility
<b>Cardio Walker/Elliptical</b>  Strengthens lower body muscles while promoting muscular endurance & cardiorespiratory endurance • Abdominals • Hamstrings • Quadriceps • Abdominals • Gluteus Maximus	<b>Cycle</b>  Strengthens lower body muscles while promoting muscular endurance & cardiorespiratory endurance • Abdominals • Calves • Quadriceps • Gluteus Maximus • Hamstrings	<b>Hand Cycle</b>  Strengthens upper body muscles • Anterior Deltoid • Brachioradialis • Triceps					
<b>High Jump</b>  Strengthens lower body muscles, promotes muscular endurance & explosive power • Quadriceps • Gluteus Maximus • Adductors • Hamstrings	<b>Hurdles</b>  Strengthens lower body muscles, promotes muscular endurance & explosive power • Quadriceps • Adductors • Gluteus Maximus • Hamstrings	<b>Log Jump</b>  Strengthens lower body & core muscles while promoting muscular endurance & cardiorespiratory endurance • Abdominals • Quadriceps • Calves • Erector Spinae • Hamstrings • Gluteus Maximus					
<b>Step Up</b>  Strengthens lower body muscles and core, while promoting muscular endurance, cardiorespiratory endurance, and balance • Abdominals • Quadriceps • Hamstrings • Gluteus Maximus • Calves • Erector Spinae	<b>Bench Dips</b>  Strengthens upper body & core muscles while promoting muscular endurance • Anterior Deltoid • Pectoralis Major • Triceps • Abdominals	<b>Leg Extension</b>  Strengthens lower body muscles & muscular endurance • Quadriceps • Adductors • Calves • Hamstrings					

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# Join the Movement!

## Become a National Demonstration Site

- **Promote your leadership** through best practice principles that integrate outdoor adult fitness and healthy choices into your community
- Utilize available tools to **document and demonstrate outcomes** and community vitality
- Create **positive attention** and attract partners/funds that support healthy lifestyle initiatives
- Gain **national awareness** through various media outlets, press releases, collateral materials, and nationwide presentations
- Receive **award and signage** for serving as a model demonstration site

To learn more about creating Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks in your community, request a full copy of the *Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks* guidebook, or become a National Demonstration Site, please visit:

[playcore.com/solutions/outdoor-adult-fitness](https://playcore.com/solutions/outdoor-adult-fitness)

"Everyone who has had the opportunity to use the fitness stations has remarked that they utilize the park more because of the opportunity to exercise more parts of their body".

- Sandy Jenkins  
Project Manager  
City of San Antonio Parks