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A CREATIVE REC CENTER RENOVATION

Faced with austerity measures, the village of Webster, N.Y., explored innovative cost-saving measures to develop a recreation center for the community.

KEEPING AN EYE ON THE WEATHER AT NISSAN STADIUM

When inclement weather struck the 2019 CMA Fest in Nashville, the safety and security team was ready to roll.

*TO READ THESE WEB-EXCLUSIVE STORIES, VISIT: RECMANAGEMENT.COM/WEB-EXCLUSIVES

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PHOTOS FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:
Ellis & Associates; American Ramp
Company; No Fault LLC; Moody
Nolan

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Question Marks



EMILY TIPPING
Editorial Director
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As I sit down to write these last couple of pages for the May 2020 issue of Recreation Management (it's April 29 today), there are a lot of question marks. Some of them will likely be answered before the next time I write an editor's letter, but I suspect the vast majority of them are longer-term.

At the moment, some states are just starting to open things back up again. Some are doing it very carefully; others less so. These first states to call off their sheltering-at-home measures will begin to answer some of our questions, the biggest one being, what will happen? Will more people get sick? What impact will their experiences have as other states start to loosen restrictions? And how will states adapt if that happens?

At the moment, the next year-plus is full of questions, and rather short on answers. But we know the value of recreation, sports and fitness to the community. We know how important these facilities are for engaging people with one another, for improving their wellness, for giving them healthy outlets to socialize and recreate.

The picture will look very different, depending on where you are. When will kids be back at school? For many of us, not for the rest of this school year. When will playgrounds be able to reopen? What about ball-fields and basketball courts? What will college campuses look like in the fall?

On a smaller scale, everyone who manages a recreation, sports or fitness facility is wrestling with similar questions. What will happen when you open your doors again? How will you encourage people to be active and engage in sports and recreation while maintaining the healthiest environment possible? Will people be safe?

What can we do to ensure that our patrons are as protected as possible from possible contagion?

And of course, a big question mark: What if we have to close again? Are we prepared for that? Can our facilities take that hit?

At the moment, the next year-plus is full of questions, and rather short on answers. But we know the value of recreation, sports and fitness to the community. We know how important these facilities are for engaging people with one another, for improving their wellness, for giving them healthy outlets to socialize and recreate.

We might be entering a whole new normal, but our questions, eventually, will have answers, and we'll move forward with all-new knowledge and best practices that promote everyone's health, happiness and success.

Be Well,

WE LOVE TO GET MAIL!

Please e-mail all comments, story ideas, questions, good jokes and ponderances to: editor@recmanagement.com OR send mail to:
Recreation Management, 50 N. Brockway St., Suite 4-11,
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Local U.S. Parks Generate More Than \$166 Billion in Economic Activity

How much economic activity does the United States see from local parks? More than \$166 billion, according to a new report issued by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

According to the report, our nation's local park and recreation professionals and the agencies they manage have a vast economic impact, generating more than \$166 billion in U.S. economic activity and supporting more than 1.1 million jobs in 2017 from their operations and capital spending alone.

Developed in partnership with the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University, the report also includes a state-level analysis that highlights the economic impact of local parks in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The top five states with the highest economic impact in 2017 were:

1. California (\$16 billion)
2. Florida (\$10.1 billion)

3. Illinois (\$10 billion)
4. New York (\$9.2 billion)
5. Texas (\$8.7 billion)

"Not only do park and recreation professionals work tirelessly to provide essential health and environmental benefits to their communities, but the agencies in which they serve are also powerful engines of economic activity," said Kristine Stratton, NRPA president and CEO. "This report demonstrates why policymakers and elected officials at all levels of government should prioritize park and recreation funding in communities everywhere now more than ever. The impact these investments provide are critical to communities nationwide."

Dr. Terry Clower, lead investigator for the study, added, "Local park and recreation agencies are growing in economic importance, not only as generators of jobs and local business opportunity, but as major contributors to local quality of life."

Clower further notes that quality of life and the availability of recreation amenities is increasingly important for attracting and retaining workers and employers, which extends the economic impacts of park and recreation spending beyond what is captured in the current study.

Public support for parks and recreation has never been stronger. A recent NRPA Park Pulse survey showed that five in six U.S. adults agree that visiting their local parks, trails and open spaces is essential for their mental and physical well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. And 59% of survey respondents said it is very or extremely essential to exercise in parks and green spaces to relieve stress and remain healthy during the crisis while maintaining physical distancing.

NRPA supports permanent funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) through passage of the Great American Outdoors Act to ensure \$900 million annu-

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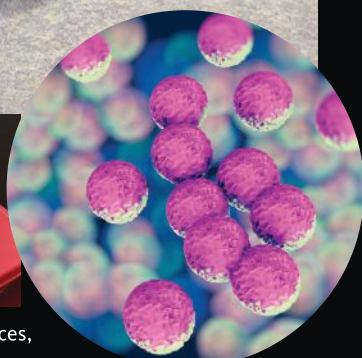
— Terry Tempest Williams, American Writer and Conservationist

ally, 40% of which would go to state and local assistance to help create new parks or redevelop existing parks and public outdoor recreation sites. The LWCF State Assistance Program has strict requirements to ensure projects funded through the program are used for outdoor recreation in perpetuity.

For more information, visit www.nrpa.org. RM



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Dog parks are one park amenity that shows no sign of slowing down. Dog parks are so much more than an area to let your four-legged friend stretch their paws. It's a place to laugh, a place to meet, a place that welcomes all and allows those with a common love to come together in a community.

Let's break down some of your Dog Park 101 questions, and talk new products and trends, and where dog parks are going in the future.

We can look at many contributing factors for the rise of the dog park. First, public demand. People who have lived in an area and utilized a dog park may be relocating to an area without one and raising the need. Second, an increasing number of millennials and generation Zs are waiting to start families, so their dogs are like children and they want the very best for them. They are seeking more activities to engage with their pet and others. Lastly, through simple trial and error, people are seeing the benefits and high use of dog parks with equipment. Dog parks have evolved from a fenced "relief area" to a real "playground for dogs"!

It should be noted that there is a difference between a relief area and a dog park. A relief area is normally a small space where dogs can enter and do their business, then leave. You see these often in airports or on high-rise apartment rooftops. A dog park, however, is a place where people with like interests gather while giving their dogs much-needed exercise.

One of the biggest questions we get is, "How big should a dog park be?" There is no such thing as too small. We have seen mini-parks that sit on only a quarter of an acre, or even space where a side alley in a metro area has

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Incorporating agility products into the dog park increases traffic as it gives people and pets an activity to look forward to and participate in together. It also allows them to “get their feet wet” by exploring agility in a fun environment, without the pressure of a professional agility or training club.

////////////////////////////////////

been transformed into a fantastic dog park.

When laying out equipment within the park, the more spread out, the better. There are no rules as to how to space items. Best practices include using the natural terrain of your park to help with your layout. Be sure to poll dog owners who will be using the space. What do they envision? What do they seek?

Also, don't forget to ask equipment providers. They are experts in this space and have seen it all. Let them help you lay out the ideal products for your park.

Don't forget about the comfort of dog owners themselves, consider shade and other site amenities like benches and bike racks. Just be sure the benches are not placed next to the fence where a dog can use them to jump out of the park. Utilizing trees in your park provides natural, beautiful shade, but they are not always readily available. Consider fabric or steel structures to add comfort to the area.

Incorporating agility products into the dog park increases traffic as it gives people and pets an activity to look forward to and participate in together. It also allows them to “get their feet wet” by exploring agility in a fun environment, without the pressure of a professional agility or training club. For professional owners, it can be a place to do extra training or work on a specific event.

It goes without saying that owners will enjoy meeting others who share their same passion for their furry friends. Some fun trends in park equipment include instagrammable photo booths where your sweet pup can pose behind a “Pug Shot” which looks like a mug shot picture frame. Many of these items can be customized to include #parkname, which people are going to immediately post to their social



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BARKPARK BY ULTRASITE



media pages and tag your park, bringing awareness and recognition.

Another trend? Tennis courts! Do you have an old, unused tennis court? Manufacturers today can mount equipment and special turf surfacing directly to the tennis court to instantly transform it into a useable space. Most tennis courts already have fencing, and the size is conducive to a perfect dog park that can be converted relatively inexpensively.

If nothing else, there are three items that should be in every dog park: pet waste stations, park rules, and separate areas for large and small dogs. Pet waste stations typically include a small graphic sign, and a roll or box of plastic waste bags. Owners are expected to pick up after their dog, and having bags readily available helps to encourage this responsibility. Park rules are essential to set the expectations of dogs and owners alike. Some general rules to consider include:

1. Fair assessment: Be honest about whether or not your dog is ready for a dog

park. If they lack sociability, it is best to work that out with a trainer before going to a park.

2. Don't force: You may need to introduce your dog to the park in phases. Be patient, remember you want your dog to associate the park with fun and a positive experience.

3. Watch your dog at all times.

4. Pick up after your dog.

5. Let dogs be dogs! Dogs often play hard. Let them be a dog and get it out for the day. They will be a calmer, happier dog when it's time to go home.

Incorporating a small and large dog area keeps dogs safer and owners less anxious. Separating these areas is relatively easy with fencing and gates. Additionally, you may want to consider a bi-level water fountain at heights so both people and dogs can hydrate and be able to enjoy the dog park longer.

Dog parks, just like the growth of green space and spending time outdoors, are not going anywhere. They are evolving into social hot spots where you can meet new friends, enjoy the fresh air and get your dog moving, resulting in a happier, healthier and rewarding lifestyle for all. **RM**

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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INJURY PREVENTION: Amusement Course Safety

BY LAURA MIELE, PH.D.

An indoor trampoline park contains wall-to-wall trampolines, bordered either by angled trampoline walls or padding. Recently, these parks have added features such as ninja courses, hanging nets, trapeze, wipe out, spider walls, foam obstacles and towers, to name a few. All of these features require risk analysis to assist in keeping the public safe. There are so many crossover parks now that even the parks that are all-inclusive and are not titled “trampoline park” must adhere to all of the safety parameters set forth in the industry.

With the growth in amusement challenge courses (i.e., ninja/obstacle courses), the need for safety parameters in terms of design and operational practices has increased. The American Standards for Testing and Materials International (ASTM) is working on standards to assist in governing minimal safe practices for these types of amusement challenge courses. With injuries on the rise in trampoline parks, the ASTM F-2970-17 has to expand and evolve. This new set of standards is currently being worked on by consumer safety-risk management consultants, engineers and manufacturers in the industry.

However, to be clear, since the inception of the ASTM F-2970-13,15,17 the standard has stated that a “device analysis or risk assessment shall specifically include an assessment of the suitability of the design of the device for the intended patrons including anthropomorphic factors that relate to actual age and physical size.” These standards are there to guide manufacturers and trampoline park owners alike.

Features and Landing Zones

Is the landing material (padding) or equipment proper for the fea-

ture’s height? Does the landing device match the activity? A risk analysis must be performed to determine the safest landing device to be used in the event there is an equipment failure and to ensure that the device used meets or exceeds the proper attenuating properties that disperse energy to absorb the landing. Although this may not prevent all injuries, it could reduce the number of serious impact injuries throughout the industry.

Foam pits are often incorporated under the features in these challenge courses and have their own safety risks, depending on whether they are of adequate depth and use the appropriate amount and type of foam material. The layout and design of each feature’s landing surfaces need to be explored.

With different features, landings are variable. The majority of patrons are untrained and do not understand how to move in space (kinesthetically). What this means is that not everyone can have control of their body while they are bouncing and jumping from area to area on a course. This makes the proper landing device even more significant. Owners and operators should make certain that the landing device under the feature includes the proper surface. Differences in height and weight should be taken into consideration as patrons can come in all ages, shapes and sizes. The way a person’s energy is distributed on the landing device would determine the proper landing device to be used. This can only be done with proper testing from a variety of engineering specialists.

In order to do this, manufacturers need to run tests and analyze the data in order to understand how the body will move in space when jumping or falling from a variety of heights. With this data,



PHOTO COURTESY OF STOCKADOBEE.COM

safer practices can be incorporated to help determine the proper attenuating landing surface that should be placed around and underneath the feature.

Even though standards have not yet been created, there are manufacturer’s guidelines and other recreational standards in place. The ASTM standards mandate for the manufacturers to run device risk analysis, and other standards and guidelines within the gymnastic and sport industry assist as well. Owners and operators must do their homework to determine the best landing device surface for each area feature.

It is imperative that owners understand the need for proper attenuating surfaces; it is equally important that manufacturers address the uses of such devices. Manufacturers should provide information to owners and operators so they understand the intended use of the specific features. It is their responsibility to test the equipment so they can recommend what should be used to enhance safety.

Standards for these new features in parks need to be properly analyzed to determine the proper attenuating properties that should be placed under them in the event a patron falls. Padding around and on the side of some climbing areas should

also be placed around the perimeter. A needs analysis can assist with determining the proper spacing of the surrounding areas in order to mitigate any risks.

Climbing Walls

Climbing walls and bouldering attractions should be operated and supervised per manufacturers’ recommendations, as well as safe practices promulgated within the climbing associations (i.e., buddy checks, supervisor checks). Never allow a self-belaying policy without proper supervision or use of a second carabiner. Owners and operators should be cognizant of redundant systems, such as the use and placement of proper padding beneath the feature to safeguard any hard surfaces and absorb a fall.

It is best practice to have an operational and supervision plan in place. Supervision and safety should be a top priority. Patrons should never be left unattended to attach themselves to the belay system. Perform regular equipment checks, and have an emergency action plan in case of malfunction while a patron is climbing. It is up to owners and operators to provide the proper training to their employees.

It is foreseeable that patrons could misuse a piece of equipment or that owners or employees could improperly fasten

or use damaged equipment. Nonetheless, no one wants to see a fall in their parks. To minimize these incidences, all parks should have a trained attendant setting up and supervising people on the belay system, with the proper padding or a crash pad that meets the wall's height requirements, if necessary. It should never be taken for granted that safety systems are failproof; a redundant system should always be in place in the event there is a failure.

Inspection and Maintenance

The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends closely inspecting climbing walls and all equipment in accordance with manufacturers' instructions and guidelines for operation, repair, maintenance and setup. Documentation and proper recordkeeping allow owners and staff to know what maintenance has been done. Inspections should be performed daily before the park opens, and at least once a week beneath the trampoline beds, depending on manufacturer recommendations. Further, specific inspections should be implemented at varying times as specified by the manufacturers.

Padding should be checked as patrons tend to walk on it, compromising its attenuating properties. Over time, the padding is less aerated, causing the padding to no longer work as needed to absorb an impact. Underneath these pads are spring and metal surfaces that can be dangerous if someone were to land on them.

Park owners and operators are responsible for maintaining and regularly inspecting these areas to check for any compromised components. The ASTM F-2970-17 standard should be reviewed to ensure that nettings, padding, redundant beds and barriers are installed and utilized properly.

Overall, owners and manufacturers should have inspectors come in and perform a safety audit of the facility to assist with safety parameters as well as safe practices. This entails reviewing training and supervision documentation. Audits should be conducted yearly to review how these facilities are preparing their employees and how inspections and maintenance records are kept. Any new feature must have a risk device analysis conducted

to comply with the ASTM 2970 standard and other regulatory bodies.


Personally, as a sport and recreation consultant, I have seen cases where patrons on ninja (amusement challenge) courses and various climbing features in trampoline parks land on a hard surface without the proper attenuating properties, redundant systems and suffer

impact fractures, which are most often very serious.

It is up to owners and operators to be proactive in order to mitigate these injuries. Understanding what the manufacturers state regarding the operation of, as well as having proper training in place for operating a safe park should be their main priority. **RM**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laura Miele, Ph.D., has more than 25 years of experience in the sport, fitness, recreation and education industry. She is the owner of Miele Forensic Consulting, where she provides expert consulting, inspections, technical analysis and testimony in commercial and personal litigation.



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Playgrounds Build Community Through Cooperation

BY DAVID DIONNE

Few dispute child development experts' opinion on the necessity of play. It is vital to a child's self-image, growth, and personal and social development. A public or private investment in a playground should get the best product at the most cost-effective price. As a result, communities across the nation invest millions of dollars in playgrounds every year, from design and installation to maintenance. Despite this care and investment, many playgrounds fall short of children's needs and end up under-used, misused or ignored.

How can we recapture playgrounds' appeal and invest in equipment that meets children's needs, and ultimately those of the greater community?

Understand Play's Impact

Play, to a child, is the equivalent of work to an adult. When children arrive on the playground, their work begins. Countless studies show play helps children of all ages develop social and language skills, fosters mental and physical improvement, and enhances emotional health and well-being.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEANSTALK BUILDERS



They learn to communicate and cooperate, negotiate, manage risk, and adapt and adjust to changing situations. They learn to accept others with different skills and abilities.

Children who play become well-rounded people, who will ultimately build well-balanced communities. When a town invests in an effective playground, it invests in the future.

Reclaiming Playgrounds From the Risk-Averse

Led by the fear of risk and the threat of litigation, we have segregated age groups and equipment that tends to isolate children instead of encouraging them to play socially. The result: The key benefits of play are eliminated or suppressed.

Two important considerations about risk come to mind:

» **A Lawson Foundation report says children need risk for healthy growth.** This is how they figure out the world: the laws of physics, how to gain confidence, and how to develop resilience and executive functioning skills.

» **While experimenting with risk, children also learn risk management skills.** Research by Mariana Brussoni, a professor at the University of British Columbia and BC Children's Hospital, shows that risky play opportunities reduce the risk of injury because kids learn from their own and others' experience.

Therefore, while they do need limited adult supervision for safety reasons, children need free play. On an individual level, a child can measure their progress, develop muscles, improve their balance and learn to manage risk. On a group level, free play provides children with the opportunity to act as their own guide and referee, learning to negotiate, to be honest, to collaborate with others and to play by the rules.

Child Development & Inclusiveness

Overall, playgrounds foster cooperation not only among peers, but also among different age and ability groups. Rather than being segregated by ages and skills, playgrounds can be designed for real play where older children help younger children, abled children help those with disabilities (different abilities), and everyone learns to set boundaries.

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While they do need limited adult supervision for safety reasons, children need free play. On an individual level, a child can measure their progress, develop muscles, improve their balance and learn to manage risk. On a group level, free play provides children with the opportunity to act as their own guide and referee, learning to negotiate, to be honest, to collaborate with others and to play by the rules.

To that end, playgrounds can be designed not only for fun, but also to help in the development of physical, social and emotional skills.

A well-designed playground offers several benefits for the children and families in the community by:

- » Stimulating a child's imagination and fostering cooperation, social skills, acceptance and communication.

- » Allowing children to experience and manage risk as part of the design.

- » Allowing children of all ages and abilities to intermingle and play on the same structures.

- » Stimulating children to build confidence, and physical, emotional and social skills.

- » Fostering a team environment in which everyone is welcome

- » Encouraging play, fun and community among all individuals—children, parents, families and friends.

Playground Solutions

The essential components of any playground will spark every child's imagination. A bridge could lead them to a castle across a moat over a lava field, or to safety away from a spewing volcano. The frame of a slide could be a castle tower, the mast of a pirate ship or a treehouse on a deserted island.

Negotiating these imaginary variations leads to problem-solving skills, which helps children's brains to develop, while putting their motor skills and spatial skills to use likewise develops bodies. They learn to cooperate as they play together, creating rules and roles to follow.

An ADA-compliant playground

is fun for all and includes a variety of play components—climbing, sliding, spinning, swinging and role playing—as well as accessibility via ramps and appropriate surfaces. Playgrounds like these cultivate inclusiveness and offer opportunities for children to play freely together, inventing games inspired by their collective imaginations, creativity and inventiveness.

There are lots of great examples of ADA-compliant playgrounds that can spark the imagination and provide new ideas for building community. An ADA-compliant treehouse playground, for example, features a series of houses, each with unique entryways. The "houses" are safe, but their unique quirky nature adds to the excitement as children gather, explore and play. Another ADA-compliant playground features a special wheelchair swing that allows children to swing together with friends in wheelchairs. In both of these instances, children quickly learn a playground built with everyone in mind means everyone can play and no one is left out of the fun.

We need to invest in playgrounds like we invest in schools. Playgrounds are vital for the healthy development of our future adults, and imaginative, cooperative adults know how to solve the community's problems. RM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Dionne is national account executive with Beanstalk Builders, an award-winning adventure playground contractor that builds custom, budget-friendly play structures. For more information, visit www.beanstalkjourneys.com.

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BY DAVE RAMONT

ON a ROLL

CREATING BIKE-FRIENDLY PARKS & COMMUNITIES

As the weather turns nice, many of us are thinking about climbing on bicycles that have been in hibernation. But more people are also using two-wheeled conveyances as a year-round mode of transportation, even in harsher winter climates. Bicycling has a lot to offer when it comes to health and exercise, recreation and sport, environmental gains and cost savings. And many communities recognize the benefits of promoting so-called soft mobility or active transportation, and are exploring ways to become more bike-friendly.

Keeping Track

Matt Ainsley is a market strategist for a technology company headquartered in France with subsidiaries in Canada and Germany, specializing in counting cyclists and pedestrians in both urban and natural environments. To date, they've installed 22,000 systems in 55 countries, and Ainsley said that these counts are an important tool to enable data-driven management of public spaces.

"Understanding how and when parks are used is essential for parks departments to capture a baseline understanding of how many people use a park or trail," he said. "Automated counters allow you to understand daily, weekly and seasonal trends, including peak hours and how different entrances to parks are used differently. The data allows park managers to justify park development and expansion, optimize maintenance operations, inform security operations, quan-

tify the impact of changes to the park, seek funding grants and more."

Aside from parks and other public spaces, Ainsley said that many communities—from large cities to small suburbs—are looking for ways to safely increase rates of cycling. "Having the right data on how the bike paths, trails and dedicated cycle tracks are used is essential to planning and maintaining cycling infrastructure."

Using temporary counters, a city with no infrastructure can count for two weeks at a time on different streets to understand how cyclists are currently using the streets, therefore informing where infrastructure should be. Permanent bicycle counters allow planners to capture how the infrastructure is used 24/7. "From justifying the existence of that first controversial bike lane to adding the 150th mile of bike lane because of overcrowding issues, count data is a cornerstone tool for informing bike planning," said Ainsley.

The counters can differentiate between motorized vehicles, pedestrians or bikes, and can distinguish the number of cyclists in a group. Ainsley explained that a particular site will dictate which type of counter is optimal. Permanent counters capture data 24/7—providing long-term trends—and they tend to be discreetly installed under asphalt or soil on a trail. Temporary counters—which are useful for quickly understanding how many cyclists are using one street, trail or park—can be attached to existing park infrastructure, "such as a light post, fence post, tree—you name it and we've seen it," said

PHOTO COURTESY OF DERO

Ainsley.

Ainsley said they'll assist clients with selecting sites and developing a count program, and they also offer starter kits and best-practice guides. "You don't need to be a data nerd to use the software, it's really intuitive and set up to quickly get the trends from your data." The counters can be connected to existing databases, or there are public web pages where the data can be hosted publicly for free, if a client chooses to share it. "Count data is really great for engaging the local community in cycling. We see bike count data communicated with elected officials, nonprofits, local media and researchers, to name a few."

As an example, Ainsley points to California, where the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) monitors bike volumes and commuter trends using different methods, including 74 automated counters located citywide. The data is collected and analyzed to help inform policy and planning decisions regarding street design. Residents can go to the SFMTA site and look at graphs displaying things like hourly bike counts or average weekday bike volumes for counters by location. Or they could view a 2017/2018 monthly bike comparison.

Many bike advocacy groups at both the local and national levels are working to promote better bicycle infrastructure, bike safety initiatives, trail campaigns, biking equity and inclusion and more. The International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) works to create, enhance and protect great places to ride mountain bikes, believing that everyone should have access to great trails. And Ainsley's firm is excited about their new partnership with IMBA, focusing on success metrics for communities with mountain bike trails. "Together we'll develop and share resources—including best-practice guides—on how to collect, manage and apply mountain bike count data." Those resources will be shared through free online guides, workshops and webinars.

"The cornerstone of the partnership is the new Trails Count Grant Program, which provides assistance grants to jump-start

efforts for communities that have the interest and political support to develop trail-use measurement systems but need assistance to get their studies started," said Ainsley. Following a competitive grant process, awardees will receive two pedestrian counters, including the data analysis software, professional assistance and consultation services to set up and manage count programs.

Bike Parks

Bicycle playgrounds, or bike parks, are just what they sound like—places to ride and safely build cycling confidence, typically featuring a variety of fun obstacles including ladder bridges, rollers, tunnels and teeter-totters. Like traditional playgrounds, they create places for neighborhoods to gather, and they can provide great opportunities for parents to teach kids to ride, especially in neighborhoods that don't offer kids a safe place to learn.

Pump tracks are structures—typically in a loop—where riders use an up and down pumping motion to propel their bike forward, instead of pedaling. They're suitable for bikes of all sizes, and can accommodate all ages and skill levels. Originally, the berms and other obstacles

were often made of dirt, but there are also hard-surface pump tracks, which might be modular, precast concrete or asphalt. Smaller pump tracks are often central features in bicycle playgrounds.

John Hunter is vice president of a Missouri-based designer and builder of skateparks

and bike parks. He said that hard-surface pump tracks are becoming extremely popular, since they require less maintenance and can be utilized by a broader user group, including bikes, skateboards, scooters and roller blades.

"Like most park developments, the project variables and goals



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dictate which type of track is most appropriate,” said Hunter. “A composite modular track best serves projects that might want to be able to relocate or reconfigure the layout of the track. Precast concrete tracks are usually a component of a bicycle playground or skatepark design, ideal for smaller developments where the customer is looking for a permanent installation. (An asphalt track) is a permanent installation that can be designed and constructed on a small site

to serve a neighborhood or a large development as a regional attraction.”

Hunter said they’ll work with communities in the planning process to determine which type of facility is most appropriate for their particular project.

A pump track can be a great facility to develop as a repurposing of existing park areas, such as old tennis courts or playgrounds, according to Hunter, potentially saving money on the overall project. “The key is to identify the opportunities and challenges on the front end and work to maximize the site conditions and project budget. Pump track layouts don’t have to conform to specific dimensions like a basketball or tennis court, so an asymmetrical site can still be ideal for an organic pump track layout to be created.”

Site visits are important in the planning phase to understand how to work with existing conditions and identify challenges and opportunities, explained Hunter. They also like to involve the community and potential user-groups to discuss things like desired features or obstacles, and the spirit or theme of the project. “When possible we try to include unique features that tie the facility to the area or general feel of the community. For example, we’ve modified a decommissioned helicopter to be a ride-through feature of a bike park in Arkansas that’s adjacent to the airport runway in town. A bicycle playground in Kansas that we’re currently building has a yellow brick road section and sunflower-inspired bike sculpture, both paying homage to the state of Kansas. The more unique and engaging we can make a facility, the more likely people are going to get out and enjoy it as either participants or spectators.”

Features like ramps and tunnels can also be added to existing trail systems, and Hunter said they often get requests for this. “Adding new features keeps the trail interesting and allows users to try something new and develop skills. We even see a demand to add features along paved greenway trails as quick offshoots to spice up the experience.”

Site amenities—which might include lights, seating, receptacles or restrooms—are also considerations in the planning stage, and Hunter points out that bike parks can be places for the whole community, not just the users. “For example, a well-designed bicycle playground would have comfortable seating for parents to watch their kids ride while they relax or read a book. Including picnic tables along a trail creates the opportunity to have a picnic along your ride. There are endless opportunities to leverage bike infrastructure, so understanding the project goals on the front end is key to steer the design development.”

In the summer of 2016, Ruby Hill Bike Park opened in Denver, featuring a slope-style course, dirt jumps, a skills course and small and large dirt pump tracks. “The park

spans 7.5 acres with 12 different lines, from beginner to advanced,” said Deak Brown, Bike Park operations supervisor with City of Denver Parks and Rec. “Everything we build is progressive and meant to improve and test every rider’s skill level. Being a dirt park, we were able to change and adjust lines from year to year, always trying to keep it fresh and fun.”

The park has features for beginner, intermediate and advanced riders, and Brown explained that since the park is built on a slope, one challenge was keeping lines slow enough for beginners. “We have an extra small and small line in our slopestyle section that cater well to beginners and young riders. The pump tracks offer great challenges to all riders. Our large dirt jump and slope-style lines are advanced; they challenge a lot of riders and can be enjoyed by the best riders.”

There’s also a multipurpose natural trail around the perimeter of the park that sees all kinds of users, according to Brown. “It has switchbacks and a lot of different terrain packed into the 1.7 miles.” No new amenities were added to the bike park, because Brown said the park already featured softball fields, a concert venue, restrooms, pavilions, playgrounds and “a ton of open space that brings a lot of exposure to the bike park.”

Brown said Denver has a large bike community, adding that most summer evenings, 60 to 100 riders visit Ruby Hill. “We get families and people of all kinds coming to the park. We’ve had some great events. We hosted the Colorado Slopestyle Championships. We have a lot of small events such as Ladies Night, Earn a Bike for Kids, Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day, and we do projects with volunteer groups.”

Denver has plans to build some asphalt pump tracks around the city, and there are a few other bike parks as well, according to Brown. “Barnum is a dirt jump park that’s mainly maintained by volunteers. It has a variety of lines and jumps but is mostly built for advanced riders. At Garfield Lake Park we have a quarter-mile beginner loop with wooden features and a lake crossing that circles the playground. Denver is growing fast, and we’ll be adding more bicycle infrastructure.”

The Right Stuff

For communities, parks and businesses that desire better bike infrastructure, bike parking and storage is a big part of the equation. According to conservative studies, a bike is stolen in the United States every 60 seconds. Bike commuters are more likely to utilize protected bike lanes and trails if there’s dependable, secure bike parking at their destination.

“To encourage more cyclists to use their own bikes for transportation, end-of-trip dry, convenient and secure bike parking is the best solution,” said Richard Cohen, president of a New Jersey-based designer



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and manufacturer of bike storage solutions. “The challenges are finding locations to install them and the funding to pay for them. In addition to applying for grants, getting more sponsors is an option. Incorporating revenue-generating advertising panels (like bus stop shelters) is another way to generate revenue to cover the cost, and potentially generate additional revenue for cities.”

There are many types of bike shelters, cages and lockers these days in countless styles and configurations, for indoor and outdoor applications, with some capable of storing hundreds of bikes. Locking bike shelters limit entry to designated users and will accommodate most locks including keypad, swipe card and touchless fobs. Some units store bikes vertically on hangers, and some are modular and can be expanded or reconfigured. Some shelters feature options like solar lighting, custom signage, benches and repair stations. Bike racks come in a myriad of sizes and styles and some are two-tier, with lift-assist ramps for easy loading. Temporary, stackable event racks are ideal for festivals or sporting events.

“Bike shelters are popular with cities/municipalities, college campuses and occasionally business parks,” said Ben Hovland, marketing specialist with a Minnesota-based designer and manufacturer of bike storage solutions. “For cities, bike shelters are common at transit hubs, because they offer secure, long-term bike storage for commuters who often rely on bicycling for first- and last-mile connections.” Hovland mentions multi-housing complexes and large tech companies with corporate campuses as other entities utilizing shelters.

And who might be utilizing the indoor bike storage rooms? “These are required in a growing number of cities by code and demand,” said Hovland. “Certain cities are reviewing code to allow certain multi-family housing units to allow construction without car parking and only bicycle parking. We’re seeing a resurgence in older facilities looking to offer these amenities by repurposing basements or tennis courts. High-density loca-

tions and around colleges/universities tend to have the densest capacity for bike rooms.”

Expanding Bike Infrastructure

So, in general, are cities becoming more accommodating when it comes to bike lanes, trails and parking?

“No question that bike lanes and street markings are increasing all the time,” said Cohen.

“Larger cities with more progressive and better-funded transportation departments are more likely to invest in bike infrastructure. However, street/sidewalk bike parking is limited by space.”

“On-street bike parking, often referred to as Bike Corrals, are definitely becoming more popular,” said Hovland. “In the space it takes to park a car, you can fit up to a dozen bicycles. That’s potentially 12 users replacing a single-occupancy vehicle. This offers substantial benefits for businesses to increase visits in high-density areas.”

Brown is pleased to see that Denver is actively progressing their bicycle infrastructure. “We support the bicycle community, and the trail system is expanding as well as the bike lanes. We have bicycle education courses for kids and have a lot of bicycle advocacies in the city that are

promoting bikes. Part of our game plan is connectivity, and connecting the city through bicycles is on the list.”

“We’ve definitely seen an increase in demand for all types of bike parks over the last several years, and demand does not seem to be slowing,” said Hunter. He points out that there are many studies touting the benefits of cycling, from the positive effect that biking to

school has on test scores to how bike-friendly communities help companies attract new talent.

“There’s no doubt that communities who invest in biking infrastructure reap a compounded return on investment. If you search ‘Best places to live’...you’ll notice mentions of cycling and trails that exist in the communities that rank at the top.” **RM**



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UNDERSTAND YOUR OPTIONS ON PLAYGROUND SAFETY SURFACING

If you're old enough, you can likely remember a lot of playgrounds that wouldn't pass the safety test today. Since the Consumer Product Safety Commission first introduced standards to govern playground safety in 1981, playground equipment and the surfaces we install beneath it have evolved to provide ever greater protection for children to engage in the kinds of exploration, risk-taking and active play that playgrounds encourage.

Many of us can remember play equipment installed above asphalt (like the playground at my elementary school) or grass (like that at my local park)—both considered big no-no's nowadays.

The fact is, the majority of injuries that occur on the playgrounds—more than 70%—involve falls, and most of those fall injuries occur when children fall onto unsafe surfaces. Providing adequate surfacing, and maintaining it over time to ensure it

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is continuing to provide the protection you expect, is crucial to prevent unnecessary injuries.

Know What's What

The National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS) at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls suggests four steps to ensure kids are protected from falls by the surfacing you provide:

1. CHOOSE THE RIGHT

MATERIALS. The wrong materials are many of those we remember from our own youth: asphalt, cement, dirt or concrete. Appropriate materials include both loose-fill materials like engineered wood fiber or rubber mulch, as well as unitary surfaces like rubber tiles or poured-in-place surfacing.

2. UNDERSTAND HOW EQUIPMENT

HEIGHT AFFECTS SAFETY: According to the NPPS website, equipment that's higher than 5 feet more than doubles the probability of injury. But that doesn't mean you can't install soaring slides and towers. Just be sure to work with established playground manufacturers who understand how to engineer safety into such equipment. Also, understand that how tall the equipment is may have an impact on the surfacing you choose. Discuss your surfacing choice with your playground manufacturer to be sure you're on the right track.

3. MAINTAIN THE RIGHT DEPTH FOR LOOSE FILL: There is no hard and fast rule here, as different types of loose-fill materials will require different depths, and the height of the equipment will have an impact as well. The CPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety can provide some guidance based on material and fall height. Talk with the provider of your surfacing as well, to be sure you understand its requirements.

4. UNDERSTAND USE ZONES

Before you get started on making your surfacing selection, you should understand your options. While budget will largely drive your decision, your choice of surfacing type should take into account a number of factors that can have an impact on the safety of that sur-



face over time, including your maintenance capabilities and the impact of local weather patterns. Other factors to consider while making your decision include accessibility requirements and aesthetics.

Broadly speaking, playground safety surfacing is divided into two groups: loose-fill and unitary surfacing.

Loose-fill material includes such options as rubber mulch, engineered wood fiber (EWF), playground sand, pea gravel and other bulk materials. These types of materials cost less up front, but require more regular maintenance in order to ensure the surface continues to adhere to safety and ADA guidelines. Unitary surfaces include poured-in-

place rubber (PIP), bond-in-place rubber, interlocking resilient tiles and synthetic turf with a protective pad installed beneath. Unitary

surfacing is well known to cost more up front, but over the long term, its low maintenance costs and durability extend that budget. Other benefits of unitary surfacing include its accessibility, as well as the broad range of aesthetic choices that can be made when you have the ability to add shapes and designs while choosing from a rainbow of colors.

Loose-Fill Surfacing

Loose-fill surfacing is probably the most common choice for playground safety surfacing, and with good reason. "Loose-fill safety surfaces such as engineered wood fiber continue to be the most cost-effective, all-natural and most readily available surfacing, while also maintaining some of the best fall protection available," said Scott Merchlinski, CPSI, sales and marketing manager for a Middletown, Pa.-based supplier of surfacing for playgrounds, trails and more.

What's more, he said, you don't need experts on hand to install loose-fill surfacing, and these types of surface "... can easily maintain their fall attenuation properties over a longer period of time by periodic topping off."

According to the NPPS website, loose fill is more likely to erode or become displaced, which makes it important to stay on top of



maintenance, maintaining the proper depth of the surfacing to ensure it continues to cushion falls and prevent injuries. The required depth will vary depending on the type of surfacing material used, as well as the fall height of the equipment.

The organization states that it has conducted field testing on wooden loose-fill surfacing, including engineered wood fiber, wood chips and wood mulch, as well as sand and pea gravel, and made the following determinations:

>> “Wood products are the most widely used type of loose-fill material, and require the most shallow depth of material to protect against injuries from a given fall height, including the best performance at fall heights above 9 feet.” In addition, wood is less affected by erosion than sand and pea gravel.

>> “Sand was found to require the most surface depth to cushion falls, while pea gravel displayed the greatest tendency to disperse and yield inconsistent surface depths.” In addition, performance decreased once falls were 9 feet or more.

When is loose-fill not ideal?

“Loose-fill surfaces, like engineered wood fiber, are not usually suggested for play areas for those under 2 years of age, due to the possibility of placing it in their mouths,” Merchlinski said. “Outside of the age restriction, almost all other factors, environmental or equipment, can be designed for loose-fill surfacing. Additional products such as wear mats and ADA ramps can be added to improve accessibility where needed.”

“In order to maintain the best performance out of any surface, maintenance is always a factor,” Merchlinski said. “Surfaces like engineered wood fiber or loose-fill materials are no different. Kids at play are very aggressive of the surfaces they play on. They drag their feet under slides. They come out of slides and push loose fill away. They kick their feet while standing at ground-level play panels. All of these high-wear areas create additional areas of maintenance. These areas will need to be raked back in or leveled off. Keeping these area filled in maintains fall safety and keeps puddles from forming.”

Wear mats help address the problem of high-traffic areas, where loose-fill material gets dispersed and displaced more quickly than the rest of the playground. Areas like slide runouts, the ground around spinners and the surface beneath swings tend to see more displacement than others. You should stay on top of such problems by regularly raking the surfacing material back into place, but adding a wear mat is another solution to provide additional protection for these spots.

When Rapho Township, Manheim, Pa., wanted to add a zip line to its playground, they wanted to be sure they provided a surface beneath with good impact attenuation, so their first choice was engineered



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“The problem,” Merchlinski said, “was a lean staff that was already stretched thin, so maintaining the area directly below the zip line was going to be a problem if they were to use loose-fill surfacing.”

Wear mats weren’t a solution, he added, because “normal topical mats were either not long enough or would displace and end up causing more problems than a solution.”

Instead, he said, his company suggested a new product that’s been in development. “It’s unique in that it is built to the same thickness as the surrounding loose-fill surface so it never sinks, never displaces and always maintains a safe surface to fall onto. The system is easy to install and requires no special tools or equipment.”

Unitary Surfaces

Unitary surfacing like poured-in-place or interlocking rubber tiles may have a higher cost at the beginning, but it also brings many unique benefits to the mix.

“A unitary surface,” said Carmen Soileau, marketing and sales support for a manufacturer of playground and sport surfaces based in Baton Rouge, La., “will provide excellent fall height protection and safety, as well as the capability of adding in-laid designs to enhance any theme our customer might want.”

“The surface is also seamless, porous and slip-resistant,” she added. “We use it for both playgrounds and splash pads and water play areas.”

The higher up-front cost of unitary surfacing is somewhat balanced by the much lower maintenance cost over the life of the playground.

If you’re on a tight budget, bonded rubber mulch is the least expensive unitary option. It is a one-layered system made from shredded recycled rubber bonded together with

a polyurethane binder. "The common belief is that bonded rubber is a lot less expensive than poured-in-place rubber," said Darren Toomey, founder of a safety surfacing company based in Driftwood, Texas. "But when you run the numbers, this is only true for 3-inch thicknesses and less. When you compare the two systems at 3.5 inches thick, the cost is the same. I would rather give my customers a poured-in-place system because it is more durable than bonded rubber mulch, so they save money in the long run with a longer-lasting system."

Rubber tiles are another option. "One of the benefits to rubber tiles is that each tile is made in a factory by machines, so human error and environmental challenges are eliminated for the tiles themselves," said Misty Toomey, with the same Driftwood, Texas, company. "However, because they are manufactured in a plant, they come in pieces that have a predetermined thickness, making it difficult to change the surface thickness throughout a playground under equipment requiring different fall heights. This can cause playground owners to overspend on thicker tiles than they need in some areas, unnecessarily increasing cost due to the additional materials." Design capacity is also more limited, as with poured-in-place you are not limited to squares and right angles.

Poured-in-place is a two-layer system that is mixed and installed on site over a stable surface such as concrete, asphalt or highly compacted stone. The first layer is made from recycled rubber mesh, or crumb rubber in some cases. The top layer is made of manmade colored granules that can be combined to make designs or provide a speckled effect. Both layers are mixed with moisture-curing polyurethane binder at different content percentages. The thickness of the base layer can be varied to correspond to requirements for the different fall heights of the equipment.

The surface is hand-troweled, which means a margin of human error, and weather can have an impact over time, as well. "To get a good-quality PIP surface that lasts, using an experienced install crew is just as import-

ant as using quality materials," Toomey said. "The crew must be able to handle different atmospheric conditions, as well as other job-site challenges. We are often the last contractor on the job, so our crews must be knowledgeable about ASTM standards and all aspects of playground construction."

"It's a technical and time-sensitive install process using expensive raw materials, so it must be done right the first time," Toomey added. "If it isn't installed correctly, there can be a multitude of problems. For instance, even though a job can look great when it's done, without an adequate amount of binder in the mix, the surface can deteriorate more quickly. This is another reason why it is important to use a reputable company that has been in business for a while and offers a warranty."

Soileau said that while all of the surfacing materials her company provides are great for fall height protection and keeping children safe, their poured-in-place rubber surface is the top of the line. "Even though it can be more expensive than the rest of our surfaces, it's made to last from five to 10 years, and besides being safe, I love the fact that we can add in-laid designs and bright, beautiful colors to match anyone's theme or to add some flair to the playground. It makes the playground bright, cheery and more fun for children." The company's in-house designers can work with customers to create a custom design that lives up to their dreams.

Though far less common, artificial turf with a pad for resiliency beneath, is another unitary surface option. It's natural looking and considered environmentally friendly since it doesn't need to be watered or fertilized. The downside is that it can get very hot, and requires some maintenance to keep it looking good.

Whether tile, poured-in-place or synthetic turf, all unitary surfaces require little maintenance while offering ADA compliance and consistent fall protection. They also require a greater initial investment and need to be professionally installed.

Maple Park in Barco, N.C., got a playground makeover, thanks to Soileau's company and a partner

playground equipment manufacturer. Jack Huffman of Site Concepts worked with Currituck County's Park & Recreation Director, Jason Weeks, to design the park playground more than a year before the project became a reality.

As they were reaching the final design phases of the playground, Weeks expressed a preference for poured-in-place rubber surfacing if it could fit his budget. After tweaking the design a bit, they included a PIP surface for slightly less than the allocated budget.

Huffman was pleased with the crew who installed the surfacing on-site, describing them as "very well prepared for a professional installation with flawless execution."

"I personally met the crew the morning the materials were

delivered," he added. "I personally watched an impressive display of an efficient crew in operation, and within two hours, these guys were making final site evaluations and laying the resilient layer on the playground."

Final Thoughts

Whichever surface you choose, be sure to talk to the manufacturer about how the surface has performed against ASTM standard test methods.

"Ask to see actual test results, not just certificates," Merchlinski said. "We encourage playground owners to obtain independent testing of their playground safety surfacing after installation, in order to verify that the surface is performing as expected. And lastly, we would always recommend working with a reputable playground equipment dealer." RM

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BY RICK DANDES

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When the American economy kicks back into gear and universities safely welcome back students, many of the cost-saving concepts and forward-thinking industry trends that have guided the design of on-campus recreation centers will be more important than ever, according to architectural design experts.

"People who have been self-quarantined, students who attended class remotely, I believe will want to reconnect with others after coronavirus, and there is probably no better place to do that than in a relaxed community-type atmosphere," said James Braam, director of recreation and wellness, HOK, a global design, architecture, engineering and planning firm. "We were trending in that direction before the pandemic. I think that trend will be even stronger whenever the economy starts picking up again."

The facility of the future, suggested Troy Sherrard, partner, practice leader, sports and recreation design, Moody Nolan, an architectural firm, headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, will strive to be a part of a hybrid approach incorporating nutrition, wellness, medita-

tion, counseling and physical therapy.

Tom Ohle, project manager for RDG Planning and Design, added, "What was once a peripheral or support building—the recreation center—has become a core element of a campus' culture."

Across the timeline of campus planning, where once designers focused on an administration or religious building, which was replaced by the library or academic core, and then by a student union, is now where the recreation center exists, Ohle said. "The recreation center is now rebranding by an institution to include a vision of wellness. Recreation centers now are an assembly of parts, a cross-pollination of activities with other campus constituents."

Literally and figuratively, he continued, recreation centers can be a melting pot of diverse university programs, a synergy of recreational, health and academic activities. For example, where a student might feel uncomfortable about the stigma of seeing a counselor regarding their mental health, they could be comfortable going to the recreation center to work off some stress. Or, someone might have body image challenges and might not feel comfortable working out.

Within a shared-use wellness center they could find themselves in a less threatening group setting, or walking by the counseling suite in the recreation center they might see and want to participate in a yoga class where the barrier is removed and is therefore more welcoming.

Activity begets activity, Ohle believes. "We have users who would not typically be in the recreation, academic, or health space now perhaps watching someone else perform an activity, and that could remove a belief that the activity is inaccessible or unattainable to them. A public space that looks onto a recreation control desk that rents shoes to climbers can give a student access to a tool that could otherwise be a limiting reason to not participate. Seeing a wellness seminar about nutrition in the lobby could help someone who is in training support their body better. Folks can move from climbing to a study space to a dental cleaning to a swim more efficiently and effectively."

Another advantage of having a hybrid wellness-recreation facility is that it can be activated 24/7 to meet a campus' vibrancy.

The hours of a recreation center typically run focus on early and late high-demand

peak-activity periods, while a health center or academic function can bring students into a facility throughout the day.

“The public space could be open throughout the entire day and give the students a space to socialize and study outside of their planned activities, keeping the program elements secure,” Ohle said.

Moreover, Ohle said, this design trend offers a sticky space to promote serendipitous intellectual and social engagement. “Throw in a food—even coffee—and everyone will want to visit the space.”

The term “sticky space” requires some explanation. Colleges around the country have bought into the benefits of peer-based learning, and so have devoted spaces for students on campus to study in groups. Designing these spaces so they actually attract students—making them “sticky”—requires providing the right mix for solo students and small and large groups; the furniture to accommodate them; amenities like ample white boards and well-placed coffee bars; floods of natural light; and ubiquitous access to power for recharging smartphones and laptops.

A sticky space, Ohle said, fosters flexible retention of students in nooks and crannies for individuals and groups both large and small. Wellness centers have an enviable mixture of space, user types and scales performing a multitude of activities that can be combined into a public realm with the rough edges of private space, drop-in furniture, Wi-Fi, caffeine... Do all that, and you’ve got sustaining peer-generated engagement.

At Wake Forest University, he said, “we had the opportunity to give them a well-being space through a series of facilities, old and new, for their program called Thrive—their motto was, “... to give you the skills, knowledge, and perspective to maintain a healthy, balanced life—wherever life may take you.

“It was a three-phase project for the Sutton Center, turning Reynolds Gym into a hub for campus-wide well-being, with 46,000 square feet of space for fitness programming and campus activities connected to Reynolds Gym by a floor-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MOODY NOLAN

to-ceiling glass atrium, state-of-the-art fitness equipment, a 3,000-square-foot open living room, and a bouldering and climbing wall,” Ohle added. “There was a fitness space for weight training and other activities, and an eight-lane indoor pool, which replaces the original 1956 pool. In addition, it included more than 50,000 square feet of enhanced fitness, recreation and social spaces, including group fitness studios for students, faculty and staff; multipurpose

rooms for intramural and club sports; and a varsity court for the volleyball team.”

A recent project at Troy University’s Trojan Fitness Center was the result of a student-led initiative. RDG’s design for the new center offered a state-of-the-art space where students can exercise, socialize and recharge. The Trojan Fitness Center is one of the first buildings visitors encounter as they enter the campus. Designed to accommodate the fitness and

recreational needs of both the students and the larger campus community, the multi-story facility offers vibrant and engaging spaces with strong indoor/outdoor connections. An open rotunda on the northwest side offers visibility into all three levels of the facility, while a grand staircase serves as a striking visual element within the facility’s highly efficient design.

“The Trojan Fitness Center creates a home for the university’s Student Wellness Program

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and serves as a place where students can come together in wellness,” said RDG Principal and Architect Jack Patton “The building was designed to blend into Troy’s architectural fabric. The graphic design incorporates banners, dimensional art, window graphics, wall graphics and signage to create an experience that embraces the entire student body and highlights the nationalities of students who attend the university.”

The 78,000-square-foot center, which offi-

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cially opened its doors in January, includes a multi-activity court, a basketball court, free and circuit weight training areas, aerobic exercise rooms, an outdoor swimming pool, a multi-level walking track and four offices. In other words, a one-stop shop for student needs.

What are some of the ways to use these facilities to create community for existing students, and attract potential students? “Every square foot of a fitness facility should be intentionally and purposefully designed,” Sherrard said. “The connective tissue between active and passive program spaces should be looked at as critical opportunities to create spaces for social engagement and community, and rest, pause and mindfulness.

“We challenge ourselves on every project to create inclusive experiences that focus on being healthy, positive and engaging,” Sherrard said. “University-focused branded environments, combining various hybrid programming options and integrating highly sustainable design features go a long way toward creating a unique ‘sense of place’ for students.”

Braam described a most unusual site off the campus of the University of Mississippi in Oxford. “Universities have always been looking to create better value—more for less—and we’ve seen that trend for some time now,” he said. “For that reason, I think there is a huge trend toward adaptation, rehabilitation of buildings. There is also an emphasis on sustainability. Reusing the building you already have is part of that trend. If possible, you want to modify, adapt and infuse an old facility with new life, and that’s what we did at the University of Mississippi.

“The university president bought an old, abandoned industrial warehouse without windows,” Braam said. “It was across a highway away from the campus, and they didn’t know what they were going to do with it. And someone said why don’t we make it into a satellite recreation and wellness center?”

The designers at HOK worked with univer-

sity officials and “transformed this concrete bunker of a warehouse into this absolutely celebratory building,” Braam said.

The Department of Campus Recreation opened the South Campus Recreation Center in August 2019. The facility provides opportunities for the university community to pursue lifelong well-being and, Braam noted, serves as a transformational space in providing University of Mississippi students a premier collegiate experience.

The South Campus Recreation Center is located at the former Whirlpool property. “When they bought it,” Braam said, “I don’t think they realized the possibilities of what they had.”

A 98,000-square-foot facility, it includes several innovative elements, including a 6,000-square-foot functional training zone (4,000 square feet inside, 2,000 outside). The centerpiece of the facility is north Mississippi’s only indoor climbing wall. There is abundant fitness space (25,000 square feet), three fitness studios, two basketball courts, a multi-activity court, walking/jogging track, a classroom demonstration kitchen and a convenience store.

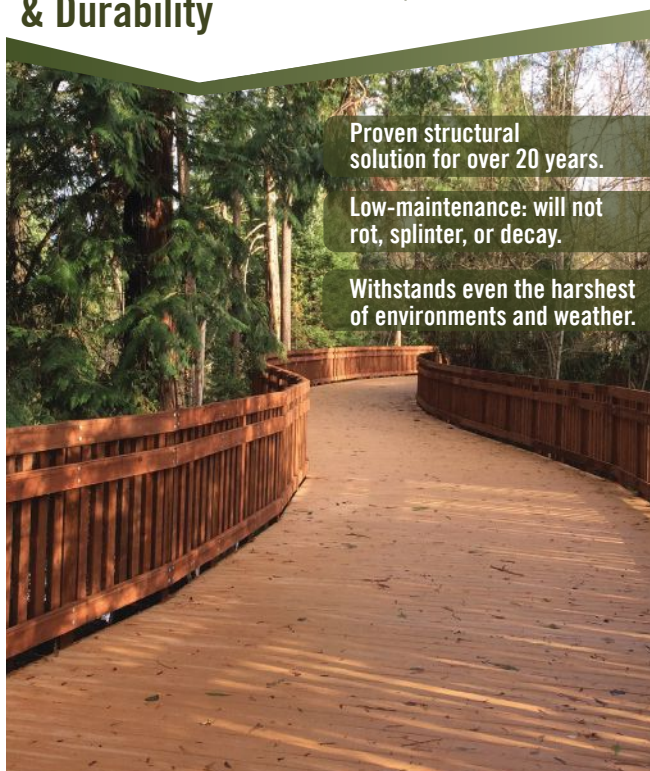
Services for wellness education, outdoor programming and personal training also have dedicated spaces at the SCRC: Two fields for intramural sports, sport clubs and informal recreation are located adjacent to the facility, and the original plan to come online was spring 2020. A sidewalk links the building to the South Campus Rail Trail, providing indoor and outdoor recreational options for the community.

Administrative offices for both the Department of Campus Recreation and the Department of Parking and Transportation Services are housed at the facility. The facility serves as a campus transportation hub, with more than 700 parking spaces, service on the O.U.T. bus lines and shuttles to main campus.

There is ample parking space at the center, so students can stay away from the central campus and catch a bus or even stay a while

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at the recreation center before attending class. The facility brings in revenue by offering membership opportunities for faculty, staff, alumni and community members.

Think outside the box—think partnerships, Ohle suggested. What are some private institutions that would like to join the campus community? What groups can be incorporated into a facility as an outside operator? Think healthcare systems such as hospitals, rehabilitation centers and commercial fitness organizations.

Other trends in on-campus design, said Sherrard, include integrated information technology, interactive video screens and upgraded Wi-Fi. “Access to technology is only going to increase in demand.”

While recreation centers widen the scope of their offerings, never forget the basics, Sherrard said. “When it comes to equipment and activities, you want to have flexible fitness zones for individual training to various-sized group training spaces. This is critical to providing options and flexibility for all students with varying degrees of body consciousness and abilities.”

And, “the customization aspect of functional training fitness has opened the door for some pretty amazing, dynamic and engaging fitness opportunities.”

But fitness spaces are just one aspect of ‘whole’ student wellness focus, he explained. Bouldering walls that engage one’s whole body for balance, strength and focus are growing in future fitness and recreation spaces, as they offer a less intimidating, more social, yet chal-

lenging climbing experience.

The flexibility of functional cross-training equipment has opened the door for some incredible, dynamic and engaging fitness opportunities, Sherrard said. Moveable fitness gear that facilitates climbing, jumping, flipping, slamming, balancing, etc., add endless variety to one’s fitness experience.

Some other unique offerings Sherrard suggests are ninja courses suspended over aquatic areas, as well as integrating kinetic climbing structures. These add interest and energy to existing program amenities, he said.

Ohle explained that you should offer a mind-body suite of yoga, light therapy, massage and personal trainer space. He also suggests a diversity of indoor synthetic court types for club-sports needs: basketball, volleyball, tennis, badminton, and pickleball.

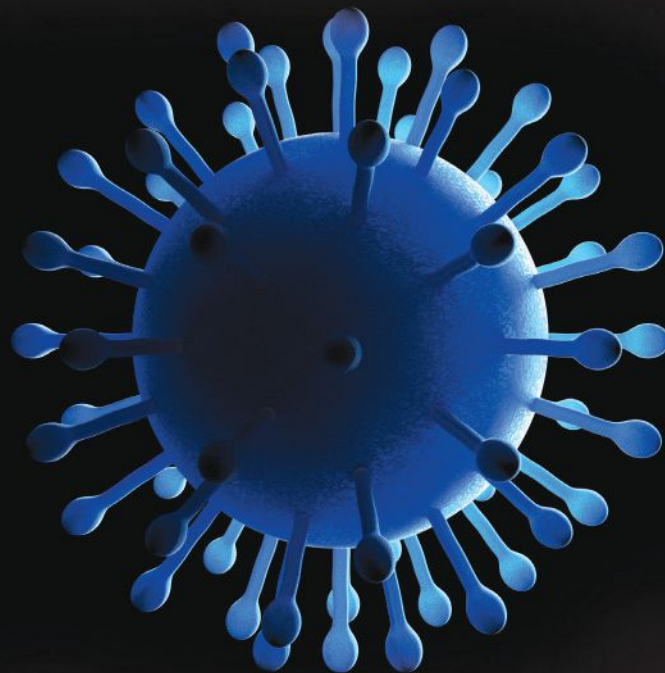
“We are designing a 20,000-square-foot indoor turf venue for Forest County Potawatomi Tribe in Crandon, Wis.,” he said. “The functionality of indoor turf for club sports is invaluable. Some of our clients are using the space for soccer, ultimate, lacrosse and functional fitness.”

Post-pandemic, said Braam, we’ll likely see more and more repurposed recreation facilities designed to foster a culture of sustainability, healthy lifestyles and disease prevention. The new recreation centers will combine the best aspects of a fitness center, health clinic and research lab, have a green roof with vegetable and herb gardens, a healthy bistro, a research and educational grocery lab, and meeting and classroom space.

You have to plan for the unexpected, Ohle said. Spaces must be multipurpose. Everyone seems to need to attract partners in wellness. “I see few dedicated to one-event kinds of spaces, which means ... more convertible rooms. What began with operable walls and push-button drop-down curtains and basketball goals has grown to push-button drop-down volleyball nets and sky-fold walls. I am using drop-down curtains in group exercise rooms to cover up mirrors for multipurpose function use.” **RM**

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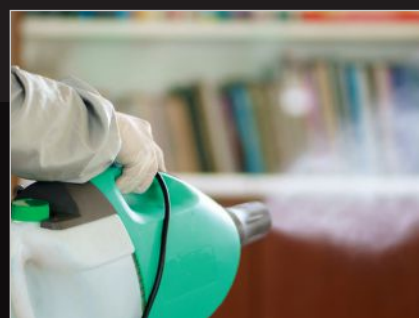
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BY DEBORAH VENCE

Sports Force Parks on the Mississippi, a multi-use sports facility in Vicksburg, Miss., has everything you can think of in one location.

“Sports Force Parks was started with the goal of creating sports parks of distinction and delivering on our core principles of Sports. Family. Fun. In our mind, a sports park of distinction provides professional-level playing fields, on-site entertainment and recreational amenities, and works hand-in-hand with community partners to provide a great family vacation experience,” said Patrick Farno, corporate development manager, Sports Force Parks on the Mississippi.

“Creating a multi-use sports park specifically is important in order to maximize the flexibility and programming possible at the complex. One weekend we are capable of hosting a baseball tournament, followed by a week of youth soccer practices and games, leading right back into a softball tournament the next weekend,” he said.

When it comes to some of the main features, Sports Force Parks on the Mississippi features eight multipurpose fields that can support up to 10 baseball/softball diamonds



PHOTO COURTESY OF EPHEBUS LIGHTING

or seven full-size soccer fields (or 20-plus youth fields). The park features LED sports lighting, electronic scoreboards, dugouts and covered spectator seating.

“Beyond the fields,” Farno said, “Sports Force Parks on the Mississippi offers the Fly Wire Zip Line, Bridge City Mini-Golf, Steamboat Playground and Sports Force Express—a full train that runs throughout the park for kids and adults! All of these entertainment attractions are included in the admission price for tournaments, creating a fun and affordable weekend for the whole family, not just the players.”

The LED lights that illuminate the sports park are manufactured by Ephesus, a manufacturing company whose plant is located in Vicksburg.

“This was the first park in which Ephesus product was used in a Sports Force park. It was very important to Eaton/Ephesus employees of Vicksburg that Ephesus product was used in this new park due to it being so close to the Vicksburg plant and which many of our employees will visit,” said Jeff Ward, director of operations, outdoor and sports lighting, Eaton.

Though Ward didn’t know the exact amount of money saved with the LED lights, he said that “typically, converting over to LED lights generally saves about 40% in cost. The other more noticeable benefit to LED is the smart controls, and quality of light (less flicker) needed for high-definition video production at fast-paced sporting events.

“Our All Field product (more than 700 fixtures) [was] used [on] all the fields. Our Arbors were used to light the walkways and Navion/Archeon’s were used to light the parking lot,”

Ward added.

The project, which cost approximately \$24.5 million to build, is “a game changer for the local community in a variety of respects,” Farno said.

“Most obviously, there is a tremendous economic impact associated with sports tourism that will have a tremendous effect on local business and new development,” he added. “During our first tournament as part of the soft opening, local restaurants indicated they saw a 30% year-over-year increase in sales from the same weekend in 2018. Thousands of new visitors are coming to Vicksburg each week, eating in local restaurants, staying in hotels and shopping in area stores.

“Beyond the economic impact, however, the park is already having a huge impact on local youth sports leagues, travel teams, high schools and colleges,” he said.

“The local soccer and baseball organizations have moved their practices and leagues to the park, using the fields Monday through Thursday and eliminating the weather concerns in the spring. Area high schools have regularly used the park when their home fields have been rained out,” he added. “Colleges from the region have also used the complex as a central location for traveling games and to support weather cancellations. In just the first two months, it has already become a critical part of the Vicksburg community.” **RM**

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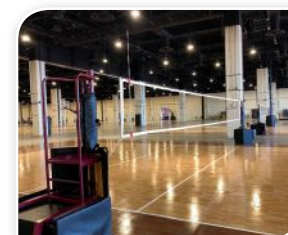
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GREENSGROOMER: 888-298-8852 //
WWW.GREENSGROOMER.COM

KEEP DOGS COOL

The COOL DOG™ Splash Pool is the perfect solution to keep dogs cool and having fun this summer. It's designed to provide a larger capacity of cooling experience with the pool being a generous 8 feet long, 5 feet wide and 1 foot deep. The pool has built-in steps so you do not need to build a deck around the pool. It has a soft brown natural-looking exterior with a cool teal inner pool area. The COOL DOG™ Splash Pool is made with a marine-grade fiberglass shell and a textured gel-coat finish to prevent slipping.



GYMS FOR DOGS: 800-931-1562 //
WWW.COOLDOGSPLASHPOL.COM

GO COMPACT

Bobcat Company invented the compact equipment industry more than 60 years ago with the world's first compact loader. Now the company is widening its product offering, enhancing its industry-leading equipment and providing innovative new designs and intelligent technologies to meet its customers changing needs. The new R-Series machines have been completely redesigned, inside and outside, to be the most powerful, durable loaders built by Bobcat.



BOBCAT COMPANY: 866-823-7898 // **WWW.BOBCAT.COM**

LIGHT IT UP

AEON LED RGBA/RGBW Luminaire delivers simple and easy-to-use full-spectrum color flood lighting solutions. Create dynamic scenes and bring excitement to your sports venue or facility. Designed for both indoor and outdoor use, the AEON LED RGBA/RGBW Luminaire is suitable for architectural, façade, wall washing, spotlighting and grazing. Build a state-of-the-art lighting system from the ground up or bring your current lighting system into the new decade.



AEON SPORTS LIGHTING: 803-336-2230 //
WWW.AEONLEDLIGHTING.COM/RGB

THE RIGHT PUMP

Pentair's new Max-E-ProXF® VS Commercial Pump features variable speed capability, along with digital controls and proprietary software that allow custom programming of optimum pump speeds for specific tasks—filtering, heating, cleaning, spa jets, etc. The Max-E-ProXF VS has four programmable settings to any speed ranging from 300 to 3450 RPMs so users can program the exact flow they need, ensuring the lowest energy use possible. Plus, it further reduces energy costs by reducing flow rates during non-pool use hours while maintaining 24-hour-a-day filtration. Designed to run on either single or three-phase power and has a built-in drive eliminating the need for external drive.



PENTAIR: 800-831-7133 // **WWW.PENTAIR.COM**

FOR HIGH-RISK APPLICATIONS

DEL Ozone Pro G-Class is the ideal choice for high-risk pool, spa and splash pad applications. G-Class Systems are NSF-50 certified for secondary disinfection and are the only ozone sanitizers with third-party validation per NSF requirements. The all-in-one design provides enhanced microbial performance, EPA-recognized as both an oxidizer and sanitizer. Unlike medium-pressure UV systems, there is no lag time between operational cycles.



CMP COMMERCIAL: 800-733-9060 //
WWW.CMPCOMMERCIAL.COM

TRAINING TOOL

The BigEasy® Trainer (170-TR) is an industry first by Water Safety.com. It is designed to help make peer-to-peer training for CPR and rescue breathing more realistic than ever. The BigEasy® Trainer allows a rescuer in training, working with a live simulated victim, to use a CPR mask to deliver real breaths to the victim safely during CPR/AR training, with mutual comfort. This gives the training rescuer the ability to practice exhaling into the mask without the "live" victim having to inhale the rescuer's breaths.



WATER SAFETY PRODUCTS INC.: 800-987-7238 //
WWW.WATERSAFETY.COM

THE PERFECT SEAT

Interkal has launched the AURA stadium chair, offering a variety of sports and entertainment venues a unique combination of comfort and durability. The AURA stadium chair utilizes the proven design of a stanchion-to-stanchion cross shaft through the seat pan to provide strength and durability that can be counted on for many years to come. Powder-coated cast aluminum stanchions will not rust, ensuring that AURA stadium chairs will maintain their new look and feel.



INTERKAL LLC: 269-349-1521 // **WWW.INTERKAL.COM**

Sherman Library & Gardens in Corona Del Mar, Calif.

BY EMILY TIPPING



Sometimes what you need is an oasis. A place to breathe. To pause. A couple of summers ago, I was attending a conference and found myself with an extra half-day in Newport Beach, Calif. My life had been in a state of upheaval, and it was tempting to just sit by the hotel pool. But instead, I decided I would walk the two or three miles to Corona Del Mar State Beach. It seemed a crime to be so near the ocean and not see it. I planned my route and set out, pocketing my phone in case I got lost along the way. Around halfway there, I walked past an entrance to what looked like a beautiful garden and did a U-turn.

The Sherman Library and Gardens in Corona Del Mar is a 2.2-acre horticultural retreat, with gardens, patios and conservatories linked by brick walkways, and a library that is a research center for the history of the Pacific Southwest. The garden is home to more than 100 species of palms, 130 varieties of begonias and an artistic succulent garden. There's a tea garden with hanging baskets of seasonal flowers, a rose garden and a tropical conservatory with a koi pond and an extensive collection of orchids and carnivorous plants.

Is there a park, recreation, sports, fitness or aquatic facility that has had an impact on your life? Tell us all about it! Send an e-mail to emily@recmanagement.com to find out how you can express your gratitude here.

Finding such a place along a meandering walk to the ocean is exactly the reason one is tempted to take such walks in the first place. I paid my admission and went in. I spent a little more than an hour wandering through the gardens, full of novel and familiar plants. I sat on a sunny bench by a fountain, then strolled some more and found a shady nook to sit and read. I caught my breath. And then I wandered back out to find the ocean, refreshed, renewed and ready for more. RM

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SHADE

**For everywhere the
Sun adds sizzle,
There is shade.**

For sky blue days,
Play days and school days,
The too-hot-to-handle
Are suddenly cool days.

Just step underneath.
Be refreshed.
Feel the Ahhhhhh.

Wherever there is sun,
We have you covered.



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