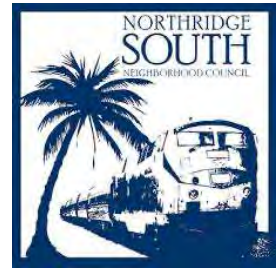


Northridge South Neighborhood Council

Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation Park Needs Assessment



Why is Access to Public Parks and Green Space Important for the Community?

Access to public parks and green space promotes physical health, reduces stress, and supports mental well-being. These areas also benefit the environment by improving air quality, cooling urban heat, and supporting biodiversity. Parks strengthen communities, boost local economies, and ensure equitable access to nature for everyone regardless of socioeconomic status. Investing in parks can also lead to increased property values and neighborhood pride and integrity.

Lack of Accessible Green Space and the Impact on our Community

Green Space deficiencies in Los Angeles disproportionately affect residents of Northridge South and the surrounding area, which was ranked as a **high park need area in LA County's 2016 Countywide Parks Assessment (Appendix #1)**. The Trust for Public Land, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting public outdoor accessibility, **rankes Los Angeles 90th out of the 100 largest U.S. cities in their latest ParkScore Index report (Appendix #2)**. Just 5 years ago we were ranked 40th. This massive drop, given our amazing weather most of the year, is embarrassing. As a city, only 63% of residents have a park within a 10-minute walk meaning 1.5M Angelenos don't have access to a park close to their home. Northridge South ranked even below that as evidenced by their mapping of our area **(Appendix #3)**. While some parts of our district benefit from Northridge East's adjacent Dearborn Park right at the Nordhoff boundary, **most of our district is outside the recommended distance for green space accessibility.**

In the attached report you will find Northridge Neighborhood Council's (NSNC) assessment and recommendations for Vanalden Park, the only official park in our boundaries, as well as a recommendation to adopt Aliso Canyon Pocket Park as an officially supported and sanctioned LA City Park.

Vanalden Park: A Critical Gap in accessible GreenSpace and Park Amenities for Northridge South

Vanalden Park (8956 Vanalden Ave.) serves as the only public park within the boundaries of Northridge South. The pocket park is situated at a railroad dead-end just south of Nordhoff, adjacent to the Northbrooke Condo complex and across the street from the Northridge Mobile Home Park. Park features include picnic tables, a jogging path, and horseshoe pits, however the park is notably deficient in other amenities, including public restrooms, children's play areas, and recreational facilities. These deficiencies are particularly concerning for residents of Northridge South where access to well-equipped parks is severely limited. We put together this report using feedback from our neighbors as well as our first-hand experience as community members. We also made multiple visits to the park for the purpose of writing this report, photos from our visits are included in the Appendix.

Identified Deficiencies of Vanalden Park

1. Insufficient Family Friendly Green Space and Play Areas

While the park offers some open grassy areas, there is a lack of designated play zones for children. **This absence limits the park's appeal to families with children who require safe and engaging spaces for play.** Additionally, the unkempt condition of the grass in certain areas can pose safety concerns for recreation. During our visits to the park we observed pronounced grass overgrowth and a large presence of foxtails which are problematic for dog owners.



The grass fields are in very poor condition

2. Limited Recreational Facilities

The park's amenities are minimal at best, with no sports courts, playgrounds, or fitness equipment available. **This limitation restricts the types of recreational activities available to residents affecting the park's ability to serve as a comprehensive community resource.** Communities that lack recreational amenities often experience disparities in health, education, and economic opportunities (NIH Study, Appendix #4).



The horseshoe pit is unkempt and not maintained consistently

3. No Access to Public Restrooms

A significant concern for park users is the absence of public restroom facilities. The nearest restrooms are located in the Wilkinson Multipurpose Senior Center which is not usually accessible to the public. We were able to confirm this concern by speaking to a few park-goers during one of our

visits whom told us that many people resort to using the bathroom outside and behind the dumpsters. Without restrooms, **people—especially families with young children, seniors, and those with medical conditions—may also cut their visit short or avoid the park altogether.**

4. Safety and Maintenance Concerns

The park has significant concerns about safety and maintenance within and in the immediate vicinity of the park. During our visit we **observed graffiti, excessive garbage, drug paraphernalia, and homeless encampments right outside the boundaries of the park with the chain-link fence cut open in many spots.** These are significant issues which deter community members from utilizing the park.



Cutdown fence at the southern boundary

5. Aesthetically Displeasing & Difficult to Access

The surrounding properties to the south and east are dilapidated and, as previously mentioned, covered in graffiti and trash. While the park has a decent amount of trash cans, there was a significant amount of litter observed within the park and excessive amounts of trash and dumping right outside the boundaries. The park has plenty of parking and is a 5-minute walk from the Metro 166 bus stop at Nordhoff. However, **accessibility is severely restricted by having one-way in/out on Vanalden which cuts-off most residents directly east and south of the park from having the park within walking distance.** The park is just 1000 feet from the Metrolink station but it takes a 35+ minute walk or 14 minute bus ride on LADOT's Dash bus which runs every 20 minutes from 6am-7pm. While the train represents a unique characteristic and potential hazard, there are examples of parks that are even closer to the same right-of-way that are safe and more aesthetically pleasing such as Citrus Grove Park in Simi Valley.



"Non-Accessible" bridge crossing the wash, could be used to increase accessibility to the park in the future but in the current state it represents a significant safety risk for children and other residents who frequent the park

Recommendations

To address these issues and enhance the park's utility for the community, the following improvements are recommended:

- **Installation of Public Restrooms:** Providing accessible restroom facilities would improve the park's functionality, cleanliness, and comfort for visitors.
- **Development of Play Areas:** Creating designated play zones with age-appropriate equipment would attract families and promote active play among children and encourage social interaction. This would also help make our district more desirable for families to raise their children.
- **Expansion of Recreational Facilities:** Adding amenities such as sports courts, fitness equipment, and shaded seating areas would diversify the recreational options available and enhance community engagement.
- **Enhanced Safety and Maintenance:** Implementing regular maintenance schedules and safety measures, including improved lighting, neighborhood policing, and surveillance, would address concerns related to park cleanliness, safety, and security.
- **Improve Accessibility:** Access would be most improved by constructing pedestrian and bike pathways linking the park to the southern portion of Vanalden, Ledan Street across the Aliso Canyon Wash, and to the Northridge Metrolink Station. This would provide neighborhood cohesiveness and mitigation against criminal behavior that operates within and around the park. While the topic of *desire paths* can be controversial, people are already using these connections unofficially and in the shadows (**Appendix #5**). This usually happens when designs fail to connect with human behavior.

Conclusion

Vanalden Park holds significant potential to serve as a central recreational hub for Northridge South. By addressing the identified deficiencies and implementing the recommended improvements, the park can better meet the needs of its residents and contribute to a healthier, more connected community. **These recommended upgrades and enhancements align with the goals of the Los Angeles Park Needs Assessment to provide equitable access to quality parks and recreation facilities for all residents.**

Aliso Canyon Pocket Park: A Ready Made Opportunity for the City to Increase and Improve Access to Green Space for an Underserved Community



Background

Aliso Creek Pocket Park is an existing park currently **not affiliated with Parks and Recreation**. It is located at 8458 Wystone Ave. in Northridge directly across the street from Napa Street Elementary School. On a daily basis hundreds of people walk through the park because of the footbridge across Aliso Creek that connects the dead ends of Chase Street on both sides. The park was built without help from the parks department about 15 years ago on unclaimed city property.

Before then, the land was used to dump appliances, used oil, and other trash – it was an eyesore and health hazard to the community. A combination of neighbors, the nursery next door, and volunteers helped construct the park to its current state. Grieg Smith, the city councilman from CD12 at the time, and NSNC members contributed funds for the materials and helped with the labor. Since then, local neighbors have maintained the park by picking up trash, weeding, and trimming bushes as necessary. **NSNC has previously covered the cost of materials for gravel and mulch as well as for a picnic table, all for less than \$250/year.**

The park gets steady use by people in the neighborhood. The Park Parthenia Apartment complex is right down the street with 10,000 residents most of whom are low income. **Aliso Pocket Park gives them a communal space, a “third place” to socialize with their family, friends, and neighbors.** Whether it’s families eating dinner at the table, couples talking, children doing homework, or teenagers hanging out, on a normal day upwards of 100 people use the park daily.

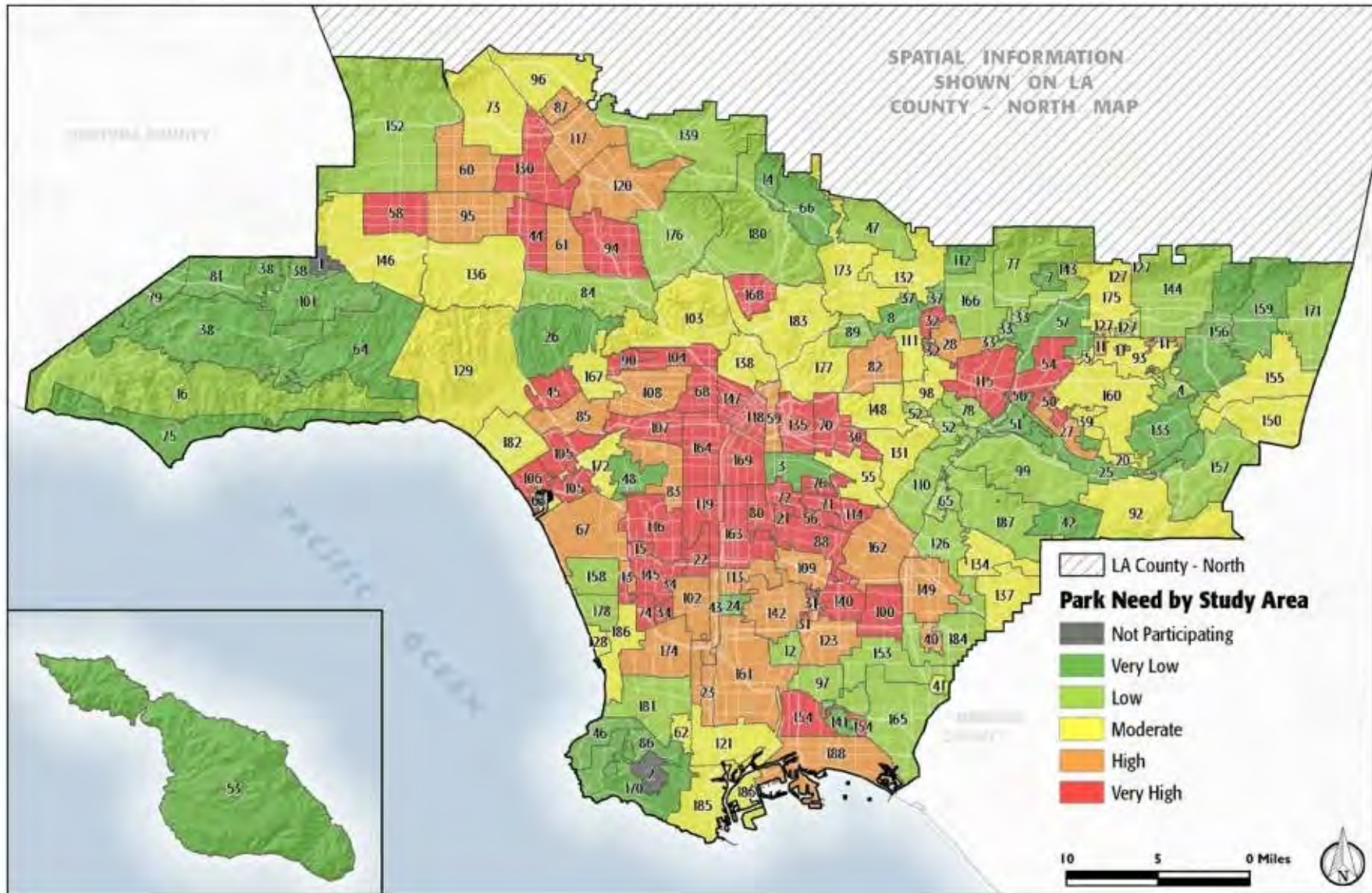
Recommendations

The original neighbors who built and now maintain the park are getting older. **We think it is only fair that Parks and Recreation adopt the park and take over maintenance responsibilities.** The park is ready to go, the city wouldn’t incur any construction costs and four hours per month should be enough time to maintain it. Plus, it is 100% drought tolerant, winter rains provide enough water for all the bushes and trees. The city and the local community would get a huge return on a minimal investment that would improve the lives of people who don’t have access to green space of their own.

In summary, it is a “Win-Win” for both Parks and Recreation and the neighborhood. **Please, adopt Aliso Creek Pocket Park as an official LA City Park.**

APPENDIX 1 - LA COUNTY PARK SURVEY

Figure 58. Park Need by Study Area Los Angeles County, South



APPENDIX 2 - ParkScore Ranking

Los Angeles, CA



How we calculate the Los Angeles ParkScore® Ranking

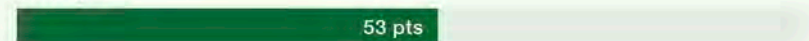
The ranking for Los Angeles is based on how it compares nationally on five characteristics of an excellent park system: acreage, access, investment, amenities, and equity.

[Download Los Angeles's ParkScore Report](#)

[See Methodology](#)

[See the Map](#)

Acreage i



Access i



Investment i



Amenities i



Equity i



Key Challenges

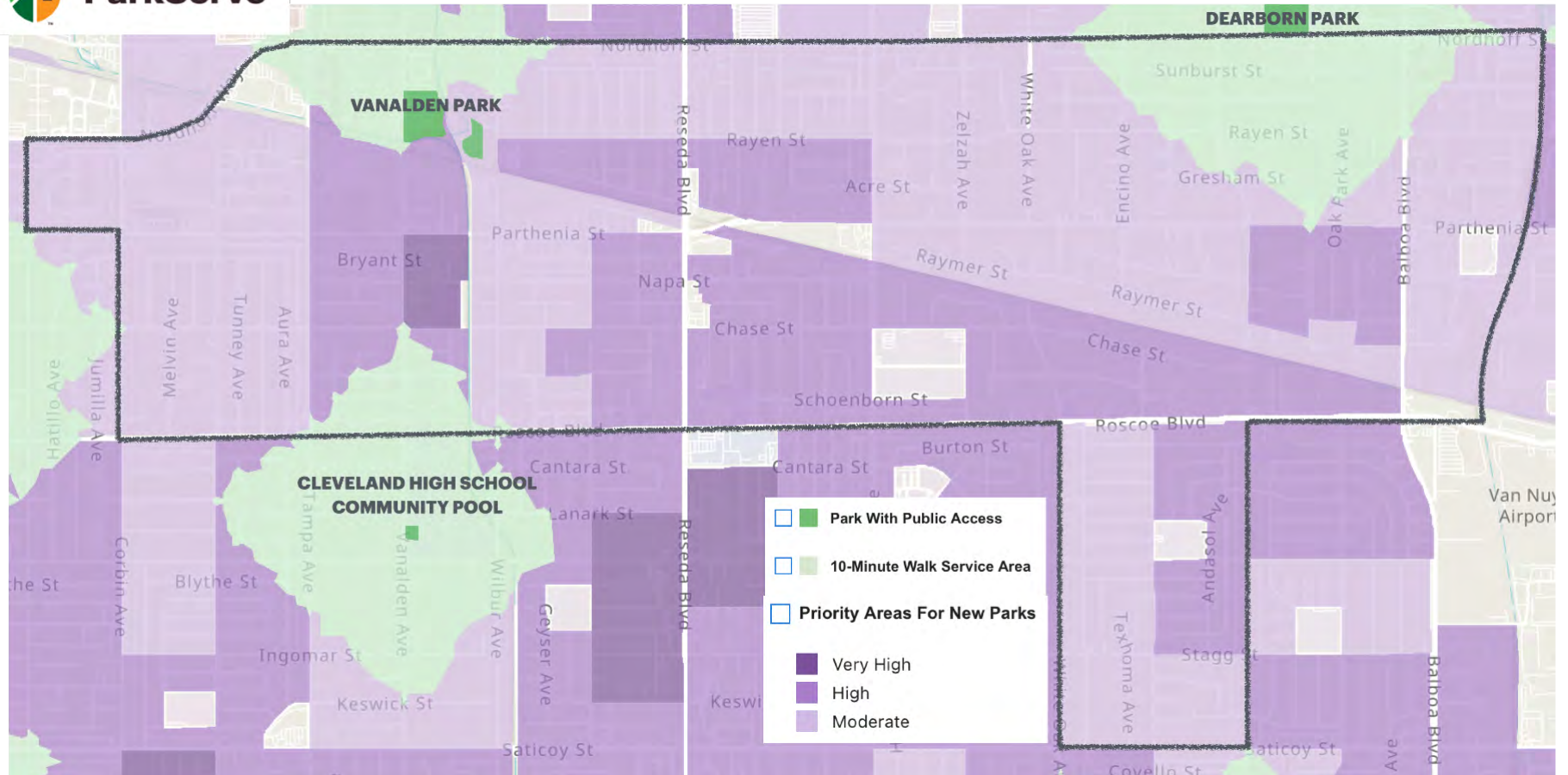
- **Access Gap: Over 1.5 million Angelenos lack a close-to-home green space.** Los Angeles ranks near the bottom of big-city park systems in California when it comes to access. For a hundred years, the city has viewed and treated its parks as nice-to-have amenities rather than must-have infrastructure. It's one of only five of the country's 100 biggest cities that haven't updated their park system master plan this century.

Los Angeles, one of the world's great cities and host of the upcoming 2028 Olympics, has one of the most challenged big-city park systems in America. Over the past five years, the City of Los Angeles has plummeted from 49th to 90th in Trust for Public Land's annual ParkScore ranking of the 100 largest cities in the country.

APPENDIX 3 - Northridge South ParkServe Map



ParkServe®



APPENDIX 4 - NIH Report



NIH Public Access Author Manuscript

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Neighborhood Income Matters: Disparities in Community Recreation Facilities, Amenities, and Programs

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Abstract

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—Physical activity is important for children's development and their current and future health; national recommendations are for them to engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily. Most of children's physical activity occurs outside of school hours; thus, access to and the quality of community recreation facilities and programming are particularly relevant. Researchers have identified strong links among socioeconomic disparities, physical inactivity, and poor health, but a limited number of studies have examined how access to community recreation facilities and physical activity programming are affected by local socioeconomic conditions. In many low-income communities, park and recreation facilities may be the only place for children to be physically active outside of school; thus, it is important to understand the connection between community environmental characteristics and child use of facilities. We were interested in determining whether the characteristics of community recreation center environments would be associated with neighborhood income and children's use of the centers. To do this we designed a study to identify whether neighborhood income disparities were associated with recreation center environmental characteristics and whether those characteristics were associated with young children's use of the center. We believed that findings to these questions could inform policy decisions within recreation centers and recreation departments to improve equity, facility use, and levels of physical activity. Thirty community recreation centers and 541 nearby families with children aged 5–8 years in five cities in Southern California participated in the study. To generate data we used

APPENDIX 4 - NIH Report

multiple research instrumentation including (a) a structured physical activity survey of program offerings and barriers to children's participation in physical activity at the center [completed by recreation center supervisors], (b) direct observation of the presence and condition of recreation center facilities and amenities by trained assessors, and (c) a parent questionnaire on child use of the center. Results indicated that the condition of the community center facilities and amenities, but not their number, was positively related to neighborhood income ($p < .05$). As well, the number of cost-free, but not total, youth physical activity programs was inversely associated with neighborhood income ($p < .05$). Parent's report of their children using centers was positively associated with the number of amenities observed there ($p < .05$). The results suggest that policy makers and community recreation center staff should consider both neighborhood economic issues and environmental characteristics in their efforts to promote children's physical activity at recreation centers.

Keywords

Built environment; physical activity; children; health; recreation centers; facilities; socioeconomic status

Physical activity is important for current and future health, and the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, the first-ever national guidelines for the U.S. population, recommend that children and adolescents engage in 60 minutes or more of physical activity daily, mostly at the moderate- or vigorous-intensity levels (USDHHS, 2009). Only 42% of 6- to 11-year-olds and 8% of 12- to 19-year-olds are meeting these guidelines, and children of color and those from poor families are less likely than others to meet the standards (Troiano, Berrigan, Dodd, Masse, Tilert, & McDowell, 2008). School programs, especially with recent cutbacks to physical education and recess, are unable to provide sufficient opportunities for children to be physically active (IOM, 2013). Thus, the out-of-school hours (Jago, Anderson, Baranowski, & Watson, 2005) and access to local quality community recreation facilities and programming are of particular importance to their activity accrual (Corder, Sallis, Crespo, & Elder, 2011; Grow, Saelens, Kerr, Durant, Norman, & Sallis, 2008). In lower SES communities, having convenient and safe access to inexpensive programs in nearby parks and recreation centers may be the only opportunity outside of schools that many children have for physical activity.

Studies have shown that participation in physical activity in parks can be influenced by numerous factors, including their proximity to where people live, the number and condition of facilities and amenities, park safety and aesthetics, and program offerings, fees, and levels of supervision (Cohen, Han, Derosé, Williamson, Marsh, Rudick, & McKenzie, 2012; Cohen, McKenzie, Sehgal, Lurie, Golinelli, & Williamson, 2007; Cohen et al., 2013; McCormack, Rock, Toohey, & Hignell, 2010). Additionally, how facilities in parks are used depends upon how their attributes are perceived. For example, adults perceiving signs of neighborhood incivilities, such as graffiti, litter and overgrown vegetation were less likely to encourage their children to use local playgrounds (Miles, 2008) and perceptions of park availability, quality, and use by friends have been found to be associated with increased physical activity and park use by adolescents (Ries, Voorhees, Roche, Gittelsohn, Yan, & Astone, 2009.)

APPENDIX 5 - Desire Path

Desire path

🌐 18 languages

Article Talk

Read Edit View history Tools

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

"Desire lines" redirects here. For other uses, see [Desire lines \(disambiguation\)](#).

A **desire path**, also known as **desire line** in transportation planning and many other names,^[a] is an unplanned small trail formed by erosion caused by human or animal traffic. The path usually represents the shortest or the most easily navigated route between an origin and destination, and the width and severity of its surface erosion are often indicators of the traffic level it receives.

An early documented example is [Broadway](#) in New York City, which follows the [Wecquaesgeek trail](#) which predates American colonization.^[1]

Desire paths typically emerge as convenient shortcuts where more deliberately constructed paths take a longer or more circuitous route, have gaps, or are non-existent. Once a path has been trodden out through the natural [vegetation](#), subsequent traffic tends to follow that visibly existing route (as it is more convenient than carving out a new path by oneself), and the repeated [trampling](#) will further erode away both the remaining [groundcover](#) and the [soil quality](#) that allows easy [revegetation](#). Eventually, a clearly visible and easily passable path emerges that humans and animals alike tend to prefer.



A desire path between concrete sidewalks at the [Ohio State University](#)

APPENDIX 5 - Ledan St. Desire Path



APPENDIX 6 - ZIMAS Zoning Map



APPENDIX 7 - Vanalden Park



APPENDIX 8 - Vanalden Park



APPENDIX 9 - Vanalden Park



APPENDIX 10 - Vanalden Park



APPENDIX 11 - Vanalden Park



APPENDIX 12 - Vanalden Park



APPENDIX 13 - Vanalden Park



APPENDIX 14 - Vanalden Park



APPENDIX 15 - Vanalden Park



APPENDIX 16 - Aliso Creek Pocket Park



APPENDIX 17 - Aliso Creek Pocket Park



APPENDIX 18 - Aliso Creek Pocket Park



APPENDIX 19 - Aliso Creek Pocket Park

