Participant Sports and Recreation Facilities

Participant sports and recreation facilities provide users with a range of participation levels. Users can engage in an activity (e.g., children playing) or merely be observers (e.g., parents watching them play). Frequently, areas for varying levels of participation are clearly defined (e.g., playing field and bleachers), though there are instances where the boundaries are not distinct (e.g., a public park). Examples of participant sports and recreation facilities include bicycle paths, fishing and boating piers, playing fields, tennis and basketball courts, amusement parks, skating rinks, recreation centers, and golf courses.

Site Design

Participant sports and recreation facilities can be either interior or exterior spaces or a combination of both. Such facilities often have large areas and may include several buildings that can be far apart.
Guidelines:

- It may be advantageous to have more than one main entrance to provide a more direct route for people arriving by differing means.
- If there is only one primary entrance, locate it as close as possible to the major points of public access. This could be a subway station, bus stop, a pedestrian pathway or a parking lot. The entrance should also be detectable from public access routes, especially when there is more than one facility in the complex.
- Provide a zone to unload and load vehicles without intruding on nearby pedestrian and vehicular traffic. This area should also offer protection from inclement weather.
- In a large outdoor setting, alternative locations for parking should be provided in proximity to the various destinations.
- Having paved pedestrian pathways around the perimeter of the property opens up the outdoor space, connects the areas and often gives pedestrians better access to the venues.
- Fences with a gate should surround play areas if they are located near vehicular traffic. Ground surfaces should be firm, stable, slip resistant and provide adequate shock absorbency to reduce the risk of injury.

Entrances

Some participant sports and recreational facilities have a security perimeter through which access is controlled. For those that do not, there may not be a single defined entry point.
Guidelines:

- For buildings, the main entrance should be usable by everyone and lead to a lobby that provides waiting areas close to but outside the path of travel. These waiting areas should provide accessible seating areas for those who may want to rest.
- Entrances that function as control points should be usable by everyone in the same or at least an equivalent manner.

Spatial Organization

In participant sports and recreational facilities, it is important to make the buildings or attractions easy to find.

Guidelines:

- Indoor amenities such as restrooms, drinking fountains, and telephones can be grouped together to function as landmarks inside the building.
- On large sites, strategically locate restrooms to be within about a two-minute travel distance from all locations for all participants.
- Locate locker rooms and showers where they can be easily identified and reached by all users of the facility.
- A clear path of travel usable by anyone should connect all public and common use areas such as locker rooms, playing fields, dugouts, swimming pools and warm-up areas.
- If a training room is provided, it should be usable by everyone. All participants should be able to easily reach it so that it can function as a first aid station for emergencies during events.
Signage Systems

If sports and recreation facilities are spread out in a campus-like setting, finding and reaching destinations can be challenging.

Guidelines:

- Develop a system of multi-sensory maps and directories to identify different buildings or locations so they are legible to everyone whether standing or seated.

- Provide outdoor identification systems to distinguish one area from another. In the event that there is more than one venue of the same type (e.g., more than one baseball field), they should each be marked so they are identifiable by everyone.

- If scoreboards are used, an alternative means of providing essential information should be used (e.g., a public address system).

Public Amenities

Sports and recreation facilities often support multiple simultaneous activities. Public amenities should be reachable and usable by all the activities’ participants.

Guidelines:

- Public restrooms should be near spectator, waiting and queuing areas and along a clear path of travel that is easily usable by everyone.

- Trash receptacles that can be used with one hand should be provided throughout the facility.

- Seating should be provided for spectators and pedestrians who want to rest. Areas usable without stairs should be dispersed throughout the facility so that there is a choice of
locations. People who are sitting in those areas should have comparable access to the activity even when others are standing.

- Adequate illumination should be provided for activities that occur after dark. Lighting should also be located along pedestrian pathways for security. Lighting on pathways should reflect downward onto the path and should not create hot spots or glare.

- A number of public restrooms, including portable units, appropriate to the size of the facility and usable by everyone should be available.

- Public telephones usable by everyone should be placed where crowd noise would least disturb someone placing a phone call.

- Drinking fountains should be located close to venues for participant events and should be usable by all participants whether they are standing or sitting.

Figure 4.2c.8. This outdoor drinking fountain is usable by people whether they are standing or sitting.