

# Park and Facility Design - Designing the Experience

by

Robert B. Kauffman, Ph.D.

## Introduction

On a conceptual level, the purpose of this book is to provide students with the principles, concepts, and techniques to design recreational spaces to create an experience. This purpose is reflected in the working title of the book: *Park and Facility Design – Designing the Experience*. Within the typical recreation and parks curriculum, this book provides the *one book* for the *one course* in the core curriculum that addresses park and facility design. It can also serve as the introductory survey textbook in a park curriculum.

### Markets Addressed

This book addresses two potential markets. First, it is written for the future recreation and parks programmer who most likely won't become a park planner and who won't become an architect. These students have a need to understand how the design of space impacts their programs and their experience. As future professionals, they will be dealing with the designers of space. This book addresses the one course in most recreation and parks curriculums that focuses on the design of recreation spaces (e.g. park planning and design, facilities design). Second the textbook will find a market as the entry level textbook in a park planning curriculum. This will be because the textbook's breadth makes it a good introduction book, and because its message of designing space to create an experience is fundamental and not addressed in other textbooks. In these programs the textbook will most likely be a 200/300 level book.

The third need for this textbook is that other textbooks don't really address the theme of designing space to create the desired experience. Pick up any program planning textbook and the message of the textbook is quite clear. They have a purpose of designing programs that create an experience for the participants.

An important sidebar to this point is the *Designing the Experience Model* (figure 1). Traditionally, the parks component of the recreation and parks field has focused on designing the resource (park resource and facilities) to create an experience. This part of the field has been termed "passive recreation" and it has been the province of park planning. Its focus has been on designing parks to create an experience. In contrast, "active recreation" has been the province of the program planners. Although the primary focus of this book is on the passive recreation aspects of park and facility design, it utilizes Disney's Magic Kingdom and other examples to show the convergence of all three elements to create the desired experience. Making this connection is a strength of this textbook. In terms of the original proposition, most programs focus on preparing recreation programmers. This textbook and the course associated with it will address the importance of understanding the role of the park and facility resource in delivering the experience. Furthermore, most of the programmers will not be the designers of space. That is the role of

the architect and technician. However, they will be working with and communicating with those designers and planners who do. For this reason, it is important that they have the “vision” and understand the synergistic relationship depicted in figure 1 when they work with the architects and technicians.

## Scope of the Book

The scope of this book is to address the park and facility design needs of recreational professionals. The table of contents presented later reveals the breadth of topics covered in the textbook. The textbook discusses both park and facility design, not just park design. It integrates a discussion of amusement, theme and zoological parks into the discussion. It provides a history of the landscape design movement that doesn't begin on the shores of this country. The discussion integrates the Forest Service ROS and Visual Management Systems into the content mix. In addition, there is depth to these topics. The text presents how to use these tools. It covers how to use the ROS or VMS models. It covers how to create an outdoor recreation plan or site plan.

## Organization of Book

The textbook is divided into five sections. There is a progression of learning where the sections progressively build upon the previous sections. The five sections are underlying principles and concepts, history and philosophy of park design, principles of visual management, managing the experience, and designing the experience. They are highlighted in the following sections.

There are three chapters in the first section, *underlying principles and concepts*. These three chapters lay the foundation for designing space to create the desired experience. The first chapter is barrier-breaking in that it uses several case studies to demonstrate the conceptual relationship presented in figure 1. Chapter 2 discusses the spatial determinants of behavior. They are primarily sensory related and this chapter explains this relationship. The third chapter explains basic systems analysis. The systems approach is used throughout the textbook and most notably in chapter 16, Outdoor Recreation Plans.

The second section focuses on the *history and philosophy of park design*. The focus is on the evolution of park design as it relates to the design of space to create the desired experience. Chapter 4 is potpourri of background concepts. Conceptually, the chapter defines a park and links it with Huizinga's principles of play. Then it explains why parks are important. It presents the Man and the Environment Model and then complements the model with a discussion of Nash's long standing relationship of Wilderness and the American Mind, the title of his book. This chapter explains why outdoor spaces are needed. Chapter 5 explains the history of the park movement with a focus on the English landscape movement. It traces the movement from Repton, to Paxton and to this country with Olmsted. Building on chapter 4, it discusses the Victorian approach of bringing outdoor spaces into urban environments. While chapter 5 focuses on more traditional parks, chapter 6 brings amusement, theme, and zoological parks into the discussion and suggests that they have much in common with what may be termed traditional parks.

The third section focuses on the *principles of visual management*. With this section, the book moves into the techniques used to manipulate elements in the environment to design the experience. Building on chapter 2, most of the sensory input is visual and this section addresses managing the visual landscape. This section is a three chapter progression. Chapter 7 focuses on form and shape and how people view the viewscape. Chapter 8 focuses on organizing space. It discusses the outdoor room and on organizing elements to create a visual scene. Chapter 9 presents two management techniques that have effectively

been used to manage the viewscape.

Section four continues with presenting techniques used in *managing the experience*. Chapter 10 introduces the concept of carrying capacity and links it with the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum management tool. In designing space, it is important to understand how people move through the experience. Chapter 11 introduces the concept of transitioning. Conceptually, it builds on chapter 4 and Huizinga's principles of play and on creating that separate place called the playground. In addition, chapter 11 discusses aids that facilitate circulation and barriers which retard movement. Chapter 12 builds upon chapter 11 and discusses trails. The last three chapters in this section focus on specialized techniques used to managing the experience. Chapter 13 focuses on historic preservation. Chapter 14 focuses on vandalism and depreciative behaviors. All the previous chapter discuss creating positive experiences. This chapter discusses how the experience can be degraded. Chapter 15 discusses the concept of sustainability and links it with McHarg and others design with nature.

The focus of section five focuses on *designing the experience* or on the application of the techniques learned in previous sections and chapters. Chapter 16 introduces how to prepare an outdoor recreation plan. Chapter 17 introduces how to prepare a site plan. Chapter 18 introduces how to design facilities to create an experience. Coming full circle, Chapter 19 focuses on the design urban environments as parks. It ties back to the history and philosophy of the park movement discussed in previous chapters and to the concept of designing space to create the desired experience, the topic of this book.

## Benefits of the Book

The first benefit of the book to the reader returns to a premise of the textbook. Recreation professionals will need to work with other professionals who actually do the design work. They don't need the technical skills as much as they need the "vision" involved with creating the desired experience. This textbook helps future recreation professionals in this area.

Figure 1 graphically illustrates a fundamental relationship that is often overlooked by others in the field. This is the *synergistic relationship* of the activities and programs, resources, and program in delivering the experience for participants. It is important for recreation professionals to understand the relationship of the resource and facilities in helping to create the experience for participants. The model shows the integration. Conversely, understanding the role of the resource and facilities in delivering the experience strengthens the programmer's programming skills. Consider the campfire in chapter 1. This is traditionally within the province of the recreational programmer. Moreover, the textbook constantly relates to the integration of these three elements in presenting its content.



**Figure 1: Designing the Experience Model** – The model involves the convergence or synergism of park resources, facilities, and activities and programs. This book focuses on two of those elements, park resources and facilities.

A third benefit of the book to the reader is the *breadth* of the topics discussed. This complements the textbook's overriding theme. Typifying its breadth, the book integrates the ROS management and Visual System Management systems. It presents a history of the park movement with connectivity to the English landscape movement. (Note: Several books imply that the genesis of landscape design began with Olmsted.) It integrates theme parks and zoological parks into the park movement. It discusses how to manage the visual landscape and provides several methods to do so. It discusses both site and facility design.

A fourth benefit of the book to the reader is the *depth* of the topics discussed. Students are provided a prescriptive plan to conduct an outdoor recreation plan, and for conducting a site plan. They are introduced to a management system to manage the visual landscape and the outdoor recreational opportunities provided by the resource. There is even depth in the history section. For example, the photographic plates of Repton's Red Book demonstrates the massive extent of their modification of the landscape. There are overhead views of Birkenhead Park showing its Victorian approach of bringing the "greensward" (green space) into the industrial Liverpool. The park is juxtaposed with the tenement houses surrounding the park. In discussing the concept of "sequencing" in chapter 8, Birkenhead Park is used to provide a tour of scenic vistas. In the chapters on visual management, the text starts with the basic concepts of shape and form and builds upon these concepts with the next chapter that focuses on organizing space. Adding even more depth, two approaches are discussed in the following chapter which formally use these principles in the management of open space resources.

## Unique Features of the Book

The textbook is *thematic*. The basic theme of this textbook is *how to design space to create the desired experience*. This theme permeates the entire textbook. It is evident in Table 1 and in Figure 1 also. It provides continuity throughout the textbook. It has been previously discussed in detail.

This book is *comprehensive*. It covers both park and facility design. It integrates topics that previously have not been integrated into the basic text. It is the "*one book*" for the "*one course*" that most programs have in their core curriculum. It is not a book that addresses just outdoor recreation planning which is a small subset of the discipline, nor is it an endless listing of recreation facility specification found in textbooks that are really resource or reference books.

The focus of the book is on the *concepts and principles used to design space to produce a recreational experience*. This may seem obvious but other books tend to forget to address the "why" for designing space and tend to focus on the nuts and bolts involved. Second, several of the texts have a focus that makes them a good reference text. These books focus on providing the dimensions of soccer fields, swimming pools, and parking lots. However, the internet can easily provide this information. Third, some books tend to become endless tables of meaningless standards. Both of these approaches tend to create books that are reference oriented books that makes them good resources rather than textbooks. Fourth, many books tend to focus on a small subset of the total recreation and parks market (e.g. outdoor recreation, site planning, park planning, maintenance, etc.) which tends to limit the market of the textbook.

This textbook is a *graphics rich book*. Over 400 graphics are provided (see Table 1). Over 300 of these are photographs. In addition, the photographs are not filler photos that look nice but have little substance. Most of the photos are substantive. They discuss real problems and real solutions.

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