

*Promoting
Parks and Recreation's
Role in
Economic Development*

Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University

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Parks & Recreation Spur Economic Activity

- Economic impacts
 - Park systems can be significant employers
 - Spending generates positive indirect and induced impacts
- Local parks shape perceptions of quality of life and build a sense of place.
- Investments in improving a community's quality of life can support a virtuous cycle of growth.

Quality-of-Life Supporting Role in Site Location Decisions

- QoL most important to firms that prioritize talent attraction and retention
 - *Short-term*: relocation of key staff
 - *Long-term*: ability to attract/retain highly educated, skilled workers
- Companies that want places that reflect their corporate culture or values.
 - Small- and medium-sized, entrepreneurial or family-owned
 - Emphasis on outdoor recreation and lifestyle

Where Does QoL Fit in the Site Location Process?

1. Identify candidate cities

- Basic quality of life measures
 - Cost of living
 - School quality
 - Housing costs
 - Crime rates

2. Reputation and marketing

- Outdoor & rec. assets
- Experience of other similar companies
- Availability of specific sites & facilities

Does your local EDO use parks-related images or data in their marketing materials?

3. Site visits and finding the right fit

- First impressions and 'Curb Appeal'
- Cultural fit with company needs
- Validating marketing messages

How Can You Contribute?

- Business attraction
 - Place making
 - Product development
- Business retention and expansion
 - Engaging existing companies and workers
- Talent attraction
 - Positive experiences can influence recruitment
 - First introductions to a place often occurs as visitors

Falls Park, Greenville, SC



Engage Key Stakeholders!

- Economic development organizations
- Civic boosters (e.g., chambers, CVBs)
- Other municipal departments
- Shapers of the built environment (e.g., developers)
- Other P&R organizations
- Importantly, Park and Rec departments need an *engaged citizenry*.

Provide Evidence of Your Value

- Track and measure impacts
- Identify key metrics
 - # of bike commuters,
 - # of park workers being hired for their first job, and/or
 - # of companies and company employees that use parks and recreation facilities.
- Collect compelling anecdotes

Thank you

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