



Parks and Recreation Offers Substantial Economic Benefits

New Research Study Finds

For Immediate Release

Topeka, KS – Funds spent in Kansas recreation and parks programs or facilities, activities and employees return \$1.70 for every \$1 invested, according to an economic impact study conducted by Jayhawk Consulting, University of Kansas School of Business.

“This means that spending for Kansas parks and recreational activities are additive, not detrimental, to the overall Kansas economy,” said Wallace W. Meyer, Director of Entrepreneurship Programs, University of Kansas School of Business.

“It’s a statement that funds invested into Kansas recreation and parks produce a positive economic value and may be better investments than other alternatives which produce lower returns as evaluated using the same model,” added Meyer.

The economic impact study was commissioned by the Kansas Recreation and Park Association to examine the economic benefits provided in local communities and on a state-wide basis. The study was conducted by a six-person team representing Jayhawk Consulting, an outreach program primarily made up of MBA students and coordinated through the KU School of Business.

In addition, the study also revealed that real estate values in Kansas communities are consistently higher when located next to or near local parks.

“We knew that our agencies provide essential services in local communities and now it is clear from this study that parks and recreation brings meaningful economic value in our local communities,” said KRPA Executive Director Doug Vance. “We believe this is powerful information that illustrates we are an industry that offers a meaningful return on investment.”

Among the findings of the report was that parks and recreation offers healthy lifestyle benefits to its users at a “significantly reduced cost” and as a result has a “substantial impact” in reducing the overall cost of health care for citizens and state agencies.

Vance said this is the first statewide economic impact study that focused exclusively on the park and recreation industry. “In addition to the positive impact on the economy, the study also provided insights into usage and perceptions of park and recreation.”

The survey team also found that 73% of the population uses recreation and park services at least once per week and that 60% of users factored in lower cost when considering public recreation and parks as a choice.

“I think the survey gives us data which supports the long-standing belief that Kansans see parks and recreation as an industry that makes their communities better places to live,” added Vance.

The results of the economic impact report showed that citizens rank the importance of parks and recreation in the top five of city services.

An executive summary of the report is below. The study is available online at www.krpa.org or by contacting the Kansas Recreation and Park Association.

2010 Economic Impact Report

Parks and Recreation in Kansas

Commissioned by the Kansas Recreation and Park Association (KRPA)

A summary of findings from a 2010 economic impact report by Jayhawk Consulting, University of Kansas School of Business

- Recreation and parks provide substantial economic benefits to all citizens in Kansas.
- Over 73% of the population used recreation and park services at least once per week.
- Funds spent in Kansas recreation and parks programs, activities and employees return \$1.70 for every \$1 invested, according to a well accepted economic analysis model used by Jayhawk Consulting. This means that funds spent on Kansas recreation and parks produce a positive economic value and maybe better investments than other alternatives which produce lower returns as evaluated using the same model.
- Studies of real estate values in Kansas communities selected for their geographic distribution demonstrate that values are consistently higher when located close to Kansas parks.
- Parks and recreation offers healthy lifestyle benefits to its users at a significantly reduced cost and, as a result, offers citizens of all ages opportunities for exercise.
- It can be inferred that the healthy lifestyle benefits created in communities by parks and recreation has a substantial impact in reducing the overall cost of health care for citizens and state agencies.

Other Findings

- A survey of recreation and users shows the three most important benefits were exercise, general health upkeep and fun.

- Over 60% of recreation and park users factored in lower cost when considering public recreation and parks as a choice.
- Almost 30% of current users said they would do nothing if recreation and parks did not exist. Potential ramifications for those non users can be measured in the negative impact on health due to the loss of physical activity and the increase in healthcare spending by individuals and government.
- Recreation and park services are saving users significant amounts of money when compared to similar private facility usage costs and serve as a key benefit in a recession economy.
- Kansas residents value the availability of recreation and parks.

Where Kansas citizens rank the importance of city services:

- Education
- Hospitals
- Fire Protection
- Street Maintenance
- Parks and Recreation

Services ranked as less important than Recreation and Parks:

- Corrections (police)
- Housing/Community Development
- Libraries
- Transportation
- Waste Removal
- Community Celebrations

Primary Reasons for Recreation and Parks Use

- Parks and Trails (25%)
- Pools/Aquatics (18%)
- Youth Sports (16%)
- Classes and Events (14%)
- Adult Sports (12%)
- Golf Courses (8%)
- Nature Centers (7%)

Reasons for Recreation and Parks Use

- Exercise

- General Health
- Fun
- Stress Relief
- Reduced Cost
- Free Time
- Social/Networking
- Learning New Skills
- Community Involvement

Note: Quantitative and qualitative methodology used to conduct this report included research of other state association economic impact reports, articles by Dr. John Crompton (Texas A&M University), and survey's of park and recreation users in Kansas. In addition, research data was compiled through the use of an economic impact software system – IMPLAN - which is commonly used to make detailed Social Accounting Matrices and Multiplier Models of local economies and in-depth examinations of state, county and metropolitan regional economies.