

## **PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION SPACE PLANNING AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF LANDSCAPE MASTERPLANS FOR URBAN AREAS IN SRI LANKA**

Public Outdoor Recreation Space (PORS) standards based on population have been used, the standards have been low, averaging at around 0.75 ha. of public outdoor recreation space per 1000 persons (city-dwellers), in spite of the fact that the UDA Workshop on “Spatial and Design Standards for Urban Development” held in April 1983, recommended a minimum standard of 1.4 ha. (3.5 acres) land per 1000 persons to be allocated for public outdoor recreation.

PORS Planning methodology for Sri Lanka was formulated at the UDA: since then this has been refined and also adapted for incorporation in urban development plans.

Landscape Masterplans should ideally accompany or be integrated with Urban Development Plans. Planning of Public Outdoor Recreation Space (PORS) is a vital part of this process.

### **Principles, Policies, Concepts and Standards for PORS Planning in Urban Areas in Sri Lanka**

PORS systems based predominantly on accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport. Indeed, walking and cycling are preferred modes in the context of human health and it is an universally accepted fact that children’s play should be in “close proximity to places of residence”.

Outdoor recreation facilities should include both active and passive outdoor recreation and where possible, outdoor facilities should be associated with indoor recreation facilities e.g. indoor sports centres, centres for leisure art, music, drama and hobbies, community centres, libraries and other buildings providing such facilities.

PORS standards per 1000 population must be determined for each urban area based on a national guideline, but allowing flexibility for modification according to locational differences in natural and social environment and for future growth of the town.

These standards have to be adapted for each urban area according to the prevailing conditions, the potential and the real needs. In the UK 7 acres per 1000 population has been a norm. In parts of the USA the overall standard is as much as 10-15 acres per 1000 persons. In most urban areas in Sri Lanka a much lower standard than even 5 acres per 1000 persons might have to be adopted, out of which some parts would be localized and some parts centralized. The absolute minimum worked out at the UDA workshop mentioned above, was 3.5 acres, i.e. 1.4 ha. per 1000 persons.

### **A Hierarchy of Parks for Urban Areas in Sri Lanka**

Based on our knowledge of human society and the human body as well as space requirements for organized sports/games and informal recreation, certain logical decisions can be made as to contents, sizes and shapes of various orders/levels of parks and also as to maximum service areas of such parks.

The average healthy adult and the older child can walk briskly at roughly 8 km per hour, relaxedly at 6km per hour and slowly at 4 km per hour. Considering older (healthy) adults and younger children we could adopt 5km per hour as an average walking speed, which means that it takes 5 minutes to walk 0.4km or ¼ mile – this can be used as a basic criterion for determining service radii of different orders/levels of parks. It is also logical to assume that while the vast majority of Sri Lanka's city –dwellers need to have certain types of outdoor recreational facilities within walking distance, they are prepared to travel by public, and in some cases, private transport, to reach certain other types.

The two basic categories of public outdoor recreation facilities for an urban area could then be defined in accordance with location:

- (i) **Localized Facilities** i.e. public parks and playgrounds of various sizes and categories (orders/levels) distributed throughout the urban area in question according to population distribution and type as well as maximum walking distance criteria.
- (ii) **Centralized Facilities** covering the full range of active and passive recreation, including those more specialized (e.g. beaches, zoos, nature parks) and sophisticated (e.g. international/national standard stadia). There could be one large unit or a group of smaller units according to the shape, extent, character and context (e.g. boundaries, adjoining areas) of the particular urban area.

The different levels or orders of parks can be defined in detail as follows (subject to modification according to the urban area under consideration).

#### **Localized facilities:**

**Level (1)** Pocket Parks – less than 0.2 ha. (0.5 acre)  
Scattered play spaces/rest areas/garden patches, in very high density residential areas without proper private gardens and also in certain crowded commercial and industrial areas.

**Level (2)** Mini Parks – 0.2 to 1.0 ha. (0.5 to 2.5 acres)  
With limited facilities, serving a few hundred population; e.g. a children's play area/small grassed playground/linear woodland park/rest garden/limited combination of such areas, depending on the needs of the local population.

Service Area Radius: Upto 2 ½ minutes walking distance, i.e. 0.2 km (1/8 mile).

**Level (3)** Local Parks – 1.0 to 3.0 ha (2.5 to 7.5 acres)

With a wider range of facilities; e.g. a junior or senior football pitch combined with some facilities for children's play and some informal relaxation space; or a large informal grassed area where football and cricket could be played combined with a children's play area, a small woodland park and an informal running practice area.

Service Area Radius: Upto 5 minutes walking distance, i.e. 0.4 km (1/4 mile).

**Level (4)** Community Parks – 3 to 6 ha (7.5 to 15 acres)

With a wide range of active and passive recreation facilities; for example a park with combined pitches and other facilities:

- 2 ha. Football (cum hockey) plus practice Running Track and athletics.
- 1.0 to 1.5 ha Small Cricket Pitch
- 0.25 to 0.5 ha. Netball and/or Basketball and/or Volley ball, etc,
- 0.25 ha. Children's special play area.
- 0.25 ha. Ornamental Garden
- 0.5 ha. Naturalistic area for relaxation and study.

Service area Radius: upto 10 minutes walking distance, i.e. 0.8 km (1/2 mile).

28 PORS Plans had integrated in to the Development Plans in UDA since 1995 to 2011.

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