



# OUTDOOR ADULT FITNESS PARKS™

## Best Practice Guidelines

Best Practices for Promoting Community Health by Increasing Physical Activity

The purpose of the *Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks* guidebook is to inspire communities to advocate for and utilize Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks as critical health solutions for increasing physical activity and social engagement. PlayCore, along with a variety of industry professionals, fitness experts, organizational advocates, and local champions across a variety of communities, offers an educational and design resource to help promote community health and capital through innovative fitness solutions.

### Partnership Advisory Network:



Michael Suk, M.D., J.D.  
Chairman of Orthopaedic Surgery, Geisinger Health System, Danville, PA



Gary Liguori, Ph.D.  
Department Head of Health and Human Performance, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga



Thom McKenzie, Ph.D.  
Emeritus Professor of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences, San Diego State University



### Comprehensive program includes:

- ▶ 62 page educational/design resource:
  - History and benefits of outdoor fitness parks
  - Aligning equipment to total body fitness
  - Planning context and locations
  - Targeting and marketing to user groups
  - Implementation and sustainability
  - Programming to expand utilization
  - Evaluating and reporting outcomes
  - Best practice case study examples
- ▶ Fitness.playcore.com, a dedicated website with benefits, exercises, a full database of Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks, and more
- ▶ Professional development training module
- ▶ The Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks National Demonstration Site program, national recognition and press exposure for sites that follow the best practice guidelines and establish outdoor adult fitness parks in their community

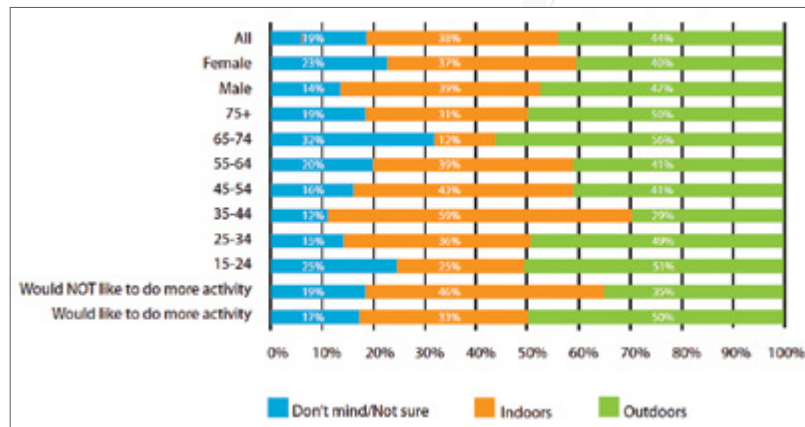
“Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks can play a vital role in motivating people of all ages and levels of fitness toward achieving a healthier, more active and more productive life.”

- Michael Suk  
Chairman of Orthopaedic Surgery,  
Geisinger Health System Danville, PA

# An Innovative Way to “Provide Critical Health Solutions”

# RESEARCH

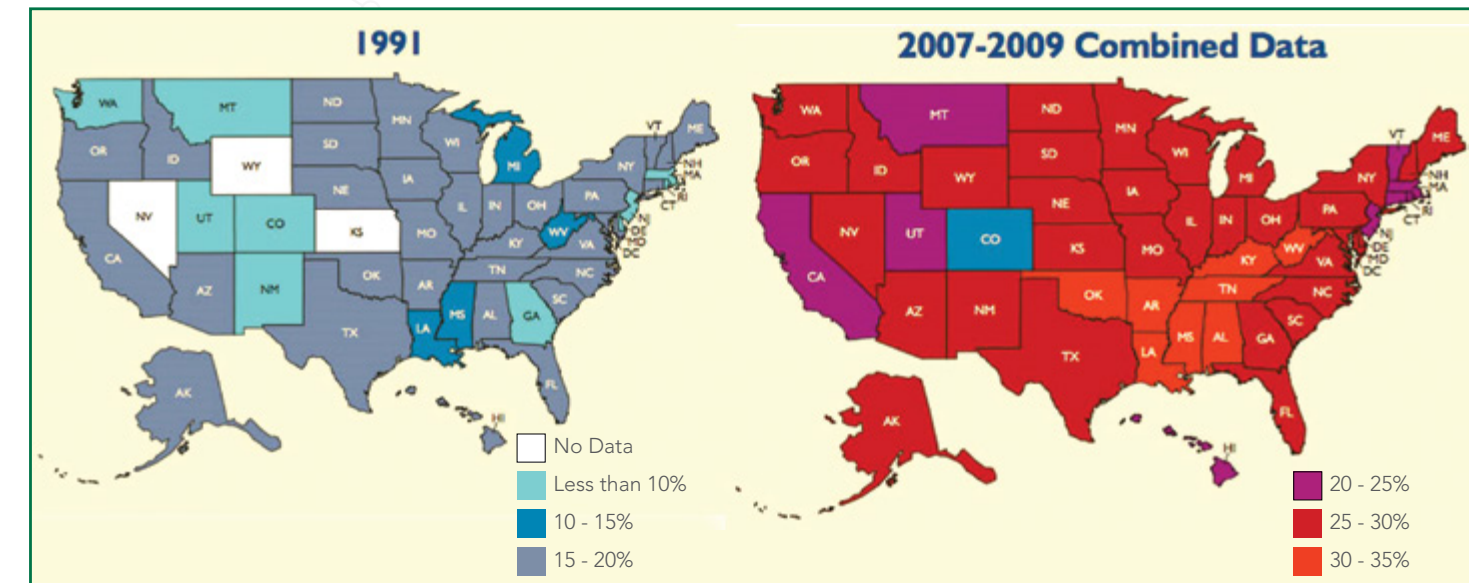
Research is proving that Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks are providing a variety of meaningful outcomes to communities including engaging participants in substantially more moderate to vigorous physical activity. Together we can effectively promote the benefits of parks and outdoor fitness spaces as critical health solutions, by reducing sedentary-related illnesses and removing the barriers to a life of fitness.



**If you had to choose, would you prefer to exercise indoors in a gym/health club, or outdoors in a park/open space?**

This graph from Leisure-Net Solutions' Outdoor Fitness Classes Report-Is It Better Outside? shows that, overall 44% of respondents stated that they would prefer to exercise outdoors compared to 38% opting for indoors. The groups showing the strongest preference for being outdoors were the older age groups and those who had stated in a previous question that they "would like to do more activity."

Source: Leisure-Net Solutions Ltd., Outdoor Fitness Classes Report, is it better outside?: The outdoor fitness group exercise market - A market intelligence report by Leisure-Net Solutions. 2012.



These two maps depict adult obesity trends in the U.S. from 1991 to the 2007-2009 period, as reported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

## Unique Benefits of Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks:

- Free to users, providing needed resources especially in underserved communities
- People who exercise outdoors are more likely to repeat the behavior
- People who exercise outdoors are more likely to engage in the activity longer than those who exercise indoors
- Provide a social outlet for exercise
- Can be enjoyed by people of all abilities and fitness levels
- Provide exposure to fresh air, nature, and sunlight, which increases important levels of vitamin D
- May encourage a greater number of people to exercise more regularly than indoor options
- Offer Outdoor Adult Fitness Park owners an outlet for revenue generation through program agreements with certified personal trainers
- Act as a catalyst to encourage the non-exercising population to engage
- Increase interest in related community services, such as nutrition, education, and health screenings
- Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks located within sight lines of a playground promote active behavior in adult family members, increase the time spent at the playground, and help promote the importance of lifelong fitness to children
- Promote pride of place among neighborhoods where Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks are located
- May qualify for increased grant funding related to obesity prevention/reduction
- Increase community capital

## Public Health Priority

With the steady and dramatic rise in adult obesity, promoting regular physical activity is a public health priority. It is time to think about new ways to make physical activity and exercise more available, more accessible, more affordable, more enjoyable, and ultimately, more beneficial to society.

## An Innovative Solution for Outdoor Adult Fitness

Multiple studies have shown a variety of increased benefits of outdoor exercise and new innovations are engaging adults of all abilities through creative Outdoor Adult Fitness Park initiatives across the U.S. This guidebook overviews some of the many compelling evidence based benefits of outdoor exercise. This includes improved psychological and physiological health, disease prevention, improved adherence to regular exercise, decreased tension and depression, increased energy, greater satisfaction levels, and access to green environments.

## Collaborative Education and Advocacy

This collaborative initiative, championed by a variety of university scholars, health experts, and community champions, is a testament to the need and passion for educating and empowering communities to effectively plan, implement, and sustain Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks as a health solution. Through thoughtful planning, design, and execution, Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks can provide communities with resources needed to improve health and overall wellness through a well-rounded workout, and to help reverse the dangerous and growing trend of adult overweight and obesity.

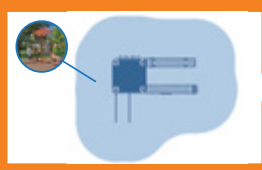
*“As an orthopaedic surgeon, I have seen the benefits of physical exercise. The patients I see who exercise regularly are generally more happy and able to enjoy a more active lifestyle.”*

- Adam S. Bright, M.D.  
Board Certified, Orthopaedic Surgery


# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## Design Considerations


### Outdoor Fitness Park Typologies




**Composite Fitness Station**



**Fitness Trail**



**Fitness Cluster**



**Joint Use Fitness Zone**

- Single piece of equipment
  - Great for locations with limited space
  - Compact series of exercises within a single structure
- Along a pathway network
  - Incorporates additional cardiovascular exercise
  - Measured loop offers easy tracking for the user
  - Focus: single or multiple exercises
- Arranged in circular or collaborative pattern
  - Designed within a "use zone"
  - Designed to avoid pass through traffic
  - Encourages communication among users
- Designed in a semicircular pattern
  - Provides sight line to play area for parent/guardian supervision
  - Active alternative to sitting while observing children at play
  - Greater family participation in physical activity

### Promoting Usage Through Site Specific Applications





- User Groups
- Location & Context
- Universal Design
- Typology
- Programming
- Safety & Management
- Evaluation
- Alignment to Health Benefits & Total Body Fitness



## Total Body Fitness

### Aligning Equipment and Exercises to Health Benefits and Total Body Fitness

In order to reap maximum health benefits, a fitness routine must contain a variety of elements, each offering specific results for overall health. By including equipment that offers a variety of aerobic, muscle/strength, core, and balance elements, you can ensure your Outdoor Adult Fitness park provides a well-rounded fitness routine that promotes health improvement and wellness.

-  Aerobic fitness via cardio endurance activities
-  Muscle fitness via strength, resistance, and endurance training
-  Core fitness via abdomen, lower back, and pelvic exercises
-  Balance and flexibility training to promote stability, coordination, range of motion, posture, and more

### Equipment Configuration

**Spacing** Within the overall typology, configuring the individual pieces of equipment is an important consideration in promoting participation, and will also depend on the ways you wish to engage the community for maximum usage.



































**Placement** Users may bring friends to the Outdoor Adult Fitness Park, so configuring equipment to promote communication between them is an important consideration for use.

**Sight Lines** For Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks placed within sight of a playground, communication and sight lines are crucial.

**Equipment and Signage** Consider what fitness elements to include in order to support a well-rounded workout for the diverse users.























Communities can also gain greater benefit when they thoughtfully engage a variety of stakeholders to consider site-specific needs, interests, and goals.

\*Primary health benefit circled.

Fitness Equipment	Exercise Features & Benefits	Health Benefits
Elliptical	Strengthens upper body & lower body muscles while promoting muscular endurance and cardiorespiratory endurance • Biceps • Triceps • Quadriceps • Abdominals • Hamstrings • Gluteus Maximus	   
Recumbent Cycle	Strengthens lower body muscles while promoting muscular endurance and cardiorespiratory endurance • Abdominals • Quadriceps • Hamstrings • Gluteus Maximus • Calves	 
Upright Cycle	Strengthens lower body muscles while promoting muscular endurance and cardiorespiratory endurance • Abdominals • Quadriceps • Gluteus Maximus • Hamstrings • Calves	   
Hand Cycle	Strengthens upper body muscles. • Biceps • Brachioradialis • Anterior Deltoid • Trapezius ★ Universally accessible option available	   
Cardio Walker	Strengthens lower body muscles while promoting muscular endurance and cardiorespiratory endurance • Abdominals • Quadriceps • Gluteus Maximus • Hamstrings • Calves	   
Plyo Boxes	Strengthens lower body & core muscles while promoting muscular endurance and cardiorespiratory endurance • Abdominals • Quadriceps • Hamstrings • Erector Spinae • Calves	   
Leg Extension	Strengthens lower body muscles and muscular endurance • Quadriceps • Adductors • Calves • Hamstrings	  
Chin-Up	Strengthens upper body & core muscles • Abdominals • Anterior Deltoid • Erector Spinae • Biceps	  
Push-Up	Strengthens upper body & core muscles • Deltoid • Abdominals • Biceps • Erector Spinae	  
Balance Board	Strengthens lower body & core muscles while promoting balance development • Abdominals • Erector Spinae • Gluteus Maximus • Obliques • Soleus	  

This guide provides exercise features and benefits of each fitness equipment piece.

\*Primary health benefit circled.

Fitness Equipment	Exercise Features & Benefits	Health Benefits
Sit up/ Back Extension	Strengthens core and back muscles • Abdominals • Obliques • Gluteus Maximus • Erector Spinae	  
Captains Chair	Strengthens core muscles • Abdominals • Obliques • Hip Flexors	  
Chest Press	Strengthens upper body & core muscles while promoting muscular endurance • Anterior Deltoid • Pectoralis Major • Triceps • Abdominals ★ Universally accessible option available	  
Lat Pull Down	Strengthens upper body & core muscles while promoting muscular endurance • Trapezius • Rhomboids • Anterior Deltoid • Erector Spinae ★ Universally accessible option available	  
Vertical Press	Strengthens upper body & core muscles while promoting muscular endurance • Trapezius • Rhomboids • Anterior Deltoid • Erector Spinae ★ Universally accessible	  
Leg Press	Strengthens lower body muscles and promotes muscular endurance • Quadriceps • Adductors • Gluteus Maximus • Hamstrings	
Balance Beam	Strengthens lower body & core muscles while promoting balance development • Abdominals • Quadriceps • Calves • Hamstrings	  
Shoulder Rotator	Strengthens upper body muscles. • Biceps • Brachioradialis • Anterior Deltoid • Trapezius ★ Universally accessible	  

There are a variety of fitness equipment options for adults, seniors, and people with disabilities. Understanding the unique features and benefits will help you effectively select the appropriate equipment variety to ensure a well-rounded workout.

Additional Considerations	Features & Benefits
<b>Socialization</b>	Selecting equipment that offers side-by-side experiences increases opportunities for socialization. Effective spacing and positioning of the equipment can also facilitate interactions and engagement amongst users.
<b>Universal Design</b>	Consider equipment especially designed to promote accessibility and inclusion. Accessible routes of travel and signage will also require consideration for maximum usage.
<b>Senior Supports</b>	Some equipment offers tailored enhancements, like hand holds and back supports, to provide additional support and stability for older users.
<b>Quality</b>	It is important to understand product specifications, manufacturer's warranty, and maintenance recommendations in order to ensure the product lifecycle.



# Join the Movement!

## Become a National Demonstration Site

- **Promote your leadership** through best practice principles that integrate outdoor adult fitness and healthy choices into your community
- **Collaborate with program partners** and document the process for others to replicate
- Create **positive attention** and attract partners/funds that support healthy lifestyle initiatives
- Gain **national awareness** through various media outlets, press releases, collateral materials, and nationwide presentations
- Receive **letter of recognition and signage** for serving as a model demonstration site

To learn more about creating Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks in your community, request a full copy of the *Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks* guidebook, or become a National Demonstration Site, please visit:

[www.playcore.com/fitness](http://www.playcore.com/fitness)

"Everyone who has had the opportunity to use the fitness stations has remarked that they utilize the park more because of the opportunity to exercise more parts of their body".

- Sandy Jenkins  
Project Manager  
City of San Antonio Parks