

Active living: The impact of renovating urban open spaces on increasing the level of physical activity among social groups

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Introduction

The provision of active parks/public open space is the key factor in promoting active living, because people and specially low-income and elderlies are being more interested in doing non-organized/informal, and no-cost sports/physical activities in outdoor spaces in recent decades (Borgers et al, 2013; Thiesen-Raaphorst, 2015; Sallis, Owen & Fisher, 2008; Humpel, Owen & Leslie, 2002). Giving the concern about low rate of physical activities among low-income minority, elderlies and over weighted people, the municipality of Groningen invested in renovation of parks/ open spaces, in order to encourage all people to become more physically active. To what degree park renovations accomplish this goal is unknown.

Method

We used the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC), to measure open space/park users and their physical activity levels after the renovation. We also surveyed parks users before and after renovation and local residents about their use of the parks.

Results

All respondents were happy with the renovation that is increasing the social cohesion of the neighborhood. The users are mainly active young athletes and children, and the renovation significantly increased their park use. However, the improved parks/spaces do not attract inactive people. Weather condition and the different time of the day were not associated with using the park.

Conclusion

Park's improvements can have a significant impact on increasing the frequency of park use, however, it is not enough to encourage inactive people to be physically active.

Key words

Physical activity, active living, open spaces, Groningen

Reverences

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