

SPORTS TURF MANAGER

... for better, safe Sports Turf

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Demographics and Sports Turf Planning

MORE OTS HIGHLIGHTS FROM JEAN MONTEITH OF MONTEITH, ZELINKA, PRIAMO LTD.



Demographics can have a wide use in sports turf planning. If you understand demographics you then know how many people will live in your community, how old they are, how many children they have, their income, their education level and ethnic characteristics. You will not only know who is there today but through proper projections, you can predict how that community will change over the next five, ten or even twenty years. Will it have more children or will it be an aging neighbourhood?

Putting Demographics to Use

Once you know this information you are in a better position to pinpoint where demands for any given sport will be in the future. You can identify where surplus fields will be located (e.g. demand for sports fields will decline in aging neighbourhoods) and most importantly you can plan for the future by ensuring sufficient land has been acquired in the right locations for those land extensive playing fields. It will also help financially by giving you the information you need so you do not over build as a reaction to what may be a short lived peaking of a particular age group's demand for a particular sport.

Planners must consider demographic trends. For example, seniors, on average, do not like the noise or the activity asso-



Examine who the main users of the sports fields will be and determine what they like in a sports facility and what they don't like.

ciated with nearby sports fields. Thus, before upgrading older sports fields in aging neighbourhoods, planners should look at land acquisition and costs in other locations that may be more demographically suitable. Examine who the main users of the sports fields will be and determine what they like or want in a sports facility and what they don't like. How well will it need to be maintained? Be aware that there are huge differences in sports field user demographics.

Current demographics indicate trends toward better turf maintenance and a desire for higher quality facilities. Convenience and accessibility are a few of the points that should be taken into consideration. Today, bigger is better – you can achieve multiple users in a single location with a stronger emphasis on scheduling and permitting uses of the same fields. More than one field for the same sport in the same area means more attention must be paid to seven day scheduling. Fields must be maintained for more play and longer playing times. Much more attention will need to be paid to turf management in order to maintain these fields to a high standard due to excessive wear. Rain date strategies will need to be discussed with staff as well as participants.

Capture Rates

Predicting demand is always difficult for planners. One technique is to identify the "capture rate" for each sport. The capture rate is the number of people who play a given sport by age group. For example, you can determine the number of persons who will play youth soccer by matching the capture rate of youth soccer (say 12% of all youth are enrolled in a soccer program) to the number of youth who will live in the community five years from now or ten years from now. By multiplying the 12% by the number of ... *con't on page 2*

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Demographics for Sports Fields

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projected youth you then know whether or not there will be more youth playing or fewer youth playing soccer in that community.

By knowing the capture rates for various sports and plotting them over time one can also gain further insight into whether or not there will be an increase in the number of adults or females playing any particular sport in the future. For example, the trend over the past ten years of having more and more youth involved in soccer is having an influence on not only a shortage of fields for youth but also on the size and quality of the fields because more young adults having been introduced to the sport and now want to be able to continue to play. If the capture rate for adults playing soccer increases from a current 2.2% to 5%, the impact is enormous as the number of adult quality pitches then also needs to double. When one considers the fact that females are also now playing the game, you automatically double the population base to draw potential players from and therefore again know that there will be an increased demand for the number of playing fields required.

Techniques being applied to help cope with increased demands for playing fields include monitoring fields to ensure they

are actually being used when they are booked, increasing the use of school facilities and trying to increase the quality of school fields, rotating fields to ensure proper rest periods, designating some fields for just casual play, increasing the soccer schedule from a historic four day to a seven day schedule, establishing "adopt-a-field" or home field approach, moving away from allocation based on past allocation to allocation based on actual needs, and last but not most important – greater attention to turf management in order to protect this limited resource.

Examples were given of case studies in Waterloo and Mississauga of how demographics were applied community by community to predict soccer field requirements, quality of fields required and location of areas where opportunities existed to redevelop existing fields to other uses such as ball diamonds to soccer pitches or playing fields to shuffleboard/bocci courts or sprypad facilities to reflect the needs of specific areas.

From this brief summary, it is apparent that there is a need not only to concentrate on present demographics but also on future predicted trends. Hiring the proper expertise will help to anticipate and plan for the best possible use of sports fields. ♦

Industry News

CGSA Executive Director to Retire

Vince Gillis, National Executive Director for the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association (CGSA) since November 1989, announced recently that he plans to retire in early 2002.

Mr. Gillis said that as of November 1, 2001, he will have completed 12 years as the Association's Executive Director. He felt that it was time to give up full-time employment and pursue his personal interests.

Mr. Gillis expressed his satisfaction with things that have been accomplished over the years he has served CGSA and said that he considered it a privilege for

him to serve the members of such a dedicated and professional group of people including superintendents, industry affiliates, educators, students, etc.



Surfing for Turf

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