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FNRM 4501

April 1st, 2020

Risk in Urban Spaces

Greenspaces are meant to be enjoyed by its citizens. While there are economic and environmental benefits that they provide, it is hard for most people to notice these positives in their daily lives. Most people use greenspaces as recreational places, and this helps them connect with nature in their grey cities. It is important for these spaces to be welcoming and enjoyable for the people that pay for them. One crucial aspect to achieve this is by increasing safety. There are many factors that can impose a risk, such as the very nature of nature, and as urban foresters we have the skills and the duty to ensure that they are resolved. Managing for risk ranges from assessing trees, to safer recreational practices, to ideally achieve a more welcoming park to attract and retain visitors.

The first article is from the Little Rock Parks and Recreation department where they detail their Safety Management System. This is directed towards concerned residents, as it is written to directly address the reader in the first voice. They also tried to reassure them that their voice is heard and that they matter by listing their responsibilities they have for their residents, providing a reporting form, and through listing contact information. They do a great job at this by describing how the Little Rock Parks and Recreation's Safety Committee has over a combined 200 years of experience in the industry; the reader can trust that their concerns will be handled well. Another method that reassures readers is the transparency in the article. There are

links to the Safety Management Manual, in addition to the Risk Assessment Matrix, and the reporting form. Having an online reporting form can make it more accessible for people to voice concerns. It may have people feel more connected to their park if they can see their reported risks being managed in an appropriate manner, and thus retain visitors. The reader can review the manual to understand how the city manages for risk and feel more secure in that their parks are being managed well.

A link to a manual is one step the city of Little Rock has made to be more transparent. This manual has definitions towards the end, which can aid in understanding the details in the Safety Management Manual defines the process that occurs. There are two key concepts that they consider and define in the manual, which are hazard identification and risk assessment. The Risk Assessment Matrix is used to combine these two components, and it educates people on what factors would make any greenspace hazards critical to handle. They also wrote about the hazard avoidances that occur during the design process, the engineering solution, control solution, personnel solution, and the protective equipment solution. This educates readers about what solutions may be most appropriate for risks they report. Furthermore, a flowchart is in the manual, which provides a helpful visual aid that makes the decision process more comprehensible for readers. It further reassures readers that their concerns are managed well, since there is a page dedicated towards safety assurance. Overall, by including the Safety Management Systems Manual in the website, it helps increase transparency and improves trust between the city and its citizens.

Trees and other natural elements can pose as a risk to parks, but people can be a risk to themselves and for others as well. Thus, people need to practice habits to increase safety for

everyone at greenspaces. One popular activity that can be dangerous without safety precautions is slacklining. Balance Training Forum wrote an article to inform about the dangers, most common injuries, and preventative safety measures. The language throughout the article is informal, as evidenced with the “set it on fire and run like hell” tip they offer, which makes it an easy read. Despite that, it does hurt their credibility as well, and that is crucial for an article that aims to protect people from harm. The article also supports each subsection with a short video, ranging from informational videos to real-life examples of the dangers. These help visualize the dangers and can deter people from recreating them. Slacklining safety relates to nature because trees are the most optimal structure to support them. The author included what characteristics determine a good tree and multiple signs of a weaker one. It demonstrates the relationship between the natural world and human world, as human activities do depend on natural resources. As urban foresters, we need to ensure that trees are healthy to support such activities. It would promote people to venture outside and enjoy their urban forests more if they can interact with it.

Our goal is to create a welcoming environment for everyone, and in order to achieve that, we must discover what restricts visitors. The Lapham et al. (2016) article studied the perception of safety as a factor of deterring people. This article is targeted towards city managers who are obligated to park management, since the information would be useful for them in designing more accessible and welcoming greenspaces. There is also a lack of figures that easily display results, so it is harder to view relevant results. It gave anonymous surveys to residents within 0.5 miles of a park that was at least 20 acres in four cities, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Columbus, Ohio, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The results provided valuable information on how to attract different ages. Younger people are more attracted towards team

sports, and there should be increased walking paths, and lights to attract older residents. This can help design parks to reflect the neighborhoods that are near them. It also discovered that parks with more facilities have a more positive significant impact on increasing visitors than safety. This conclusion is important for city managers since they may be trying to promote recreational activity through a different lens; this would guide them to a better track to achieve the same goal. Safety should still be a major priority for cities, because people can enjoy themselves more if they feel safe. Facilities that are designed to be safe and interesting to people is a step forward in combining these goals to help promote nature in an urban landscape.

Parks should be welcoming for everyone, and there are different requirements that need to be met to create an environment, such as safety. The cities are responsible through safety management system protocols. Individuals are also responsible for their own safety, such as practicing safe slacklining habits. Though safety is a prime factor that should be considered, academic studies reveal that facilities are even more valuable in promoting park use. As urban foresters, we have a passion for nature because of their ecosystem services and intrinsic beauty, and aim to promote that same passion for other people. Therefore, increasing the safety of these forests is crucial for people to feel secure and to enjoy the greenspaces and themselves.

Works Cited

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