

Case Study : Urban Park Systems

Singapore

Context

Singapore is promoted around the world as a garden city, with parks of varying scales, programs, and themes. While many were created to serve mainly local residents, some parks, such as the Botanical Gardens and the Mandai Orchid Garden, are of such renown that they serve as key tourist attractions for the 7.5 million tourists who visit Singapore every year. There are around 2300 hectares of parks in Singapore.

Key Features

Singapore's emergence as a Garden City was the result of the government's long-term, consistent dedication over a 40-year period. Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was a key driver of the initiative, having identified a green Singapore as a key competitive factor in attracting foreign investments to the country. He began by establishing a comprehensive greening program, starting with a Tree Planting Campaign in 1963. Despite competing land needs, the Government has set aside space for parks, trees and greenery, planning to provide 0.8 hectare of parkland per 1000 residents.

The character of Singapore's 2300 hectares of parks varies from areas that reflect the country's historical and cultural heritage to areas that are built for active recreation and entertainment.

Process/Implementation

The Parks and Recreation Department first focused on improving Singapore's streetscape, much of which was devoid of greenery.

Singapore pursued several important strategies and policies:

- Transplant and plant "instant trees" (fast-growing indigenous trees that are shady, easily available and require little maintenance) to achieve results in a short time-frame
- Design roads to include adequate planting areas
- Require paved areas such as car parks to be planted with trees to attenuate the heat of the large asphalt surfaces
- Cover concrete structures such as flyovers, overhead bridges and retaining walls with creepers and climbers, and screen them with shrubs and transplanted trees to provide visual relief from the built environment
- Encourage provision of shade along walkways and roadsides through planting policies, particularly in civic and governmental areas
- Encourage property owners and residents to focus on the greening of rooftops and sides of high-rise buildings – maximizes land use while improving the environment.
- Require developers of residential areas to plant roadside trees and set aside land for open space
- Cater to and reflect the diverse recreational needs of the population
- Capitalize upon and enhance existing natural assets
- Create an identity where natural assets were lacking, including the installation of sculptures, challenging playgrounds and creating habitats to attract wildlife such as birds

- Maintenance: The Heritage Trees Scheme is aimed at conserving the trees that have been maturing gracefully while the Heritage Roads Scheme seeks to preserve roadside landscapes with beautiful mature trees and greenery.
- Ensuring access: a comprehensive network linking major parks and nature areas is currently being developed. When completed, the system of parks and park connectors will span some 360 km and enable the population to explore the island through one continuous green network.
- Educating the population: the website of the National Parks Network offers a rich amount of information about the park system, the history of the greening initiative, and resources for citizens and corporations interested in participating in greening activities (such as a resource book for creating rooftop gardens and green buildings).