



Stakeholders' Valuation of Davao City Parks: A Study on Determining Public Value

Angelo Felix N. Regalado

University of the Philippines Mindanao, PHILIPPINES

Abstract

Effective design of urban green spaces such as public parks can impact the communities' physical health and mental well-being. Identifying stakeholders' perceptions toward public parks is important to guide the development of existing and new parks, and increase the public's sense of ownership towards them. This study aims to understand how the public values three (3) urban parks in Davao City (People's Park, Magsaysay Park, and Osmeña Park) and document the perceived benefits and impacts that matter to the park users. Data gathered include activity maps made through direct observation and personal interviews of five (5) park users, three (3) administrators, and one (1) vendor from December 2019 to April 2020. An analysis of review entries (2018–2020) from two travel websites was also conducted to determine visitor experience. Thematic techniques were used to develop a grounded theory of the public value of parks as experienced by the stakeholders. Results showed that end-users value the freedom to access parks as an escape from the stress of the urban environment through nature and physical exercise. Emphasis on regulations and security inside the parks is also evident in the texts. Access-control infrastructure, activity-enabling modifications of the natural landscape, and overall park beautification through artworks result in a family-friendly environment, which promotes the city's culture and sensibilities.

Keywords: urban planning · urban parks · public value · thematic analysis · grounded theory · Davao City

Correspondence: AFN Regalado. Department of Architecture, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of the Philippines Mindanao, Mintal, Davao City, Philippines 8022. Telephone: +63 082 293 0863. Email: anregalado@up.edu.ph

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Introduction

Public parks and open spaces are necessary for urban areas as places for social and recreational activities. Green spaces are defined as any open area that is partly or completely covered with vegetation and is available for public recreational use (Robel 2016). Easy access to well-designed and diverse open green public spaces such as public parks mitigate the negative impacts of rapid urbanization and population growth. Open spaces also offer better physical health and mental well-being for the community and increased economic value of nearby properties (Alliance for Safe, Sustainable and Resilient Environments 2019; Woolley and Rose 2014; World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe 2016).

Urban green space interventions such as the establishment and maintenance of public parks are most effective if done with social engagement or participation element. The intervention designs must be in conjunction with the intended users to ensure the desired benefits for the community. This can have positive outcomes for all population groups, particularly those who lack access to high-quality open spaces (World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe 2017). Understanding public value, which is described as “the widely held perceptions of the public regarding the function and service contributions of any public entity” (Moore 1995 as cited by Wolf 2004, p. 31), is important to have some point of comparison or as a guide for decision-making in matters regarding spaces of public use.

Therefore, this study seeks to understand how the park users of established and well-visited parks in Davao City value these spaces

by understanding what aspects matter to them. It aims to explain the public value created by the parks through narratives and collected data.

Public Parks in Davao City

Davao City is a highly urbanized city located in Southern Mindanao region. With its 2,443.61 sq. km. land area, it is known as the largest city in the Philippines (Philippine Statistics Authority 2019). Davao City has become a melting pot of culture with the influx of people from around the Philippines. In comparison, the whole National Capital Region, with its 17 cities and municipalities, only has 619.54 sq. km.

The City Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) manages 22 public parks and playgrounds, with three (3) new recreational parks expected to open soon. The city plans to add more parks to make Davao a “more livable city” by providing residents equal access to child-friendly public recreational amenities (Cudis 2022). The maintenance of parks is guided by City Ordinance No. 0682-19—also known as the “Davao City Park Systems Management”—implemented by the Davao City Park Systems Management Board (also referred to as the Parks Board). The Board is composed of the city mayor and CENRO head as chairperson and vice-chairperson, respectively. City officials, representatives from various non-government organizations on conservation and protection groups, and built environment professionals serve as members of the Board. The Board’s functions include adopting guidelines for use and approving development plans. The City Ordinance also details standard rules and regulations, which include the schedule and prohibited/regulated acts within the public parks.

The parks included in the study are Magsaysay Park, People’s Park, and Osmeña Park (Figure 1). These parks were selected because they are located in the población area, have no admission fees, are gated and fenced, and are frequently visited. Each park has unique characteristics and amenities that attract local and foreign visitors (Table 1 and Figure 2). Magsaysay Park is in the coastal area, providing a scenic view of Davao Gulf and Samal Island. People’s Park is the city’s premier park—its oval provides a good running

track for fitness activities and its shady plaza for stationary exercises. The smaller Osmeña Park is located within one of the busiest parts of the city and has an open space for people to relax in-between transactions with the government offices around. Its area has substantial tree cover where people can cool off during a hot day or relax with a manicure-pedicure service.

Concept of Public Value

There are numerous related literature and studies concerning the definition and determination of public value such as the studies of Kincaid (1997) and Bryson et al. (2014), and some also focus on public spaces such as Wolf (2004), Walker (2004), and Worpole and Knox (2007). Timo Meynhardt’s (2009) psychological and philosophical definition of public value is used for this study: “a result of evaluations about how basic needs of individuals, groups and the society as a whole are influenced in relationships

involving the public.” It is drawn from the experience of the public. Any impact of shared experience on the relationship quality between the individual and society can be described as public value creation. He also stated that if a value is not in people's mind, it is not considered real. He proposed the following inductive evaluation perspectives on public value:

1. Utility/instrumental (Is it useful? Is it profitable?)
2. Moral/ethical (Is it decent?)
3. Political/social (Is it politically acceptable?)
4. Hedonistic/aesthetic (Is it a positive experience?)

Based on this approach, he developed the Public Value Scorecard (PVSC), a management tool to measure public value creation, in which he added a fifth dimension under utility/instrumental values (financial-economic) to address managerial needs for financial measure.

TABLE 1 Characteristics of public parks included in the study

Park	Address	Area	Year established	Features/amenities
Magsaysay Park	Ramon Magsaysay Avenue	3.80 ha.	1960	Coastal park with a view of Davao Gulf and Samal Island Monument to the late President Ramon Magsaysay Kadayawan Village (indigenous houses) Biking and skating rink Fruit stands outside the park Open-air amphitheater Government offices
People's Park	Palma Gil corner Pelayo Steet	4 ha.	2007 (converted Palaruang Panglunsod or the old PTA grounds)	Most famous and visited park in Davao City Open plaza Athletic oval Durian Dome (visitors' center) Various sculptures depicting indigenous people by Kublai Millan (famous local artist) Sunken garden Children's playground
Osmeña Park	San Pedro Street corner Claro M. Recto Steet	0.45 ha.	Formerly known as an open space called the Plaza, part of the Davao City Hall complex The monument was renovated in 1982 and the park was rehabilitated to its present fenced state in 2014	Proximity to the Davao City Hall Complex and San Pedro Church Tree shaded area with benches. Marker for an early Davao Settlement Monument dedicated to veterans adorned with Spanish cannons <i>Waling-waling</i> and animal sculptures Children's playground Chess and Dama gazebos (Davao Chess Club) Manicure and pedicure

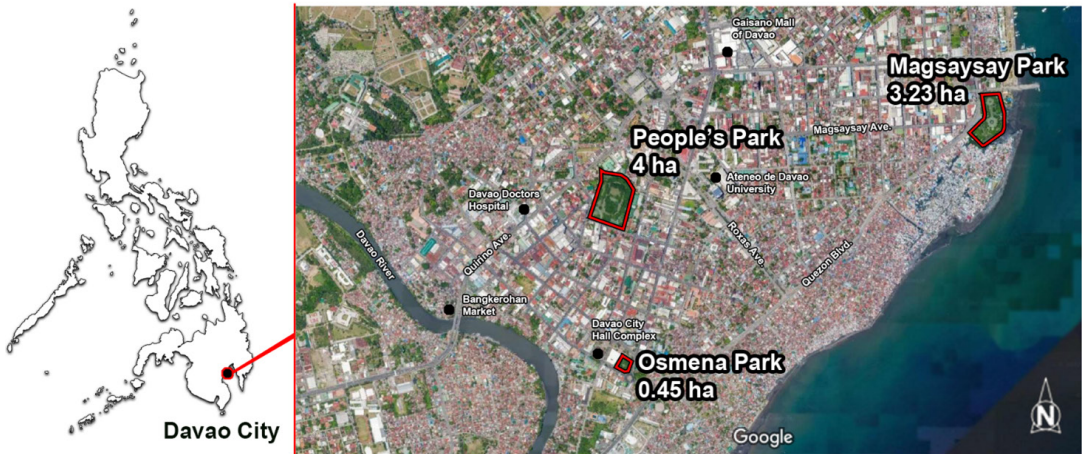


FIGURE 1 Map of Davao City Poblacion showing the location of the three parks included in the study

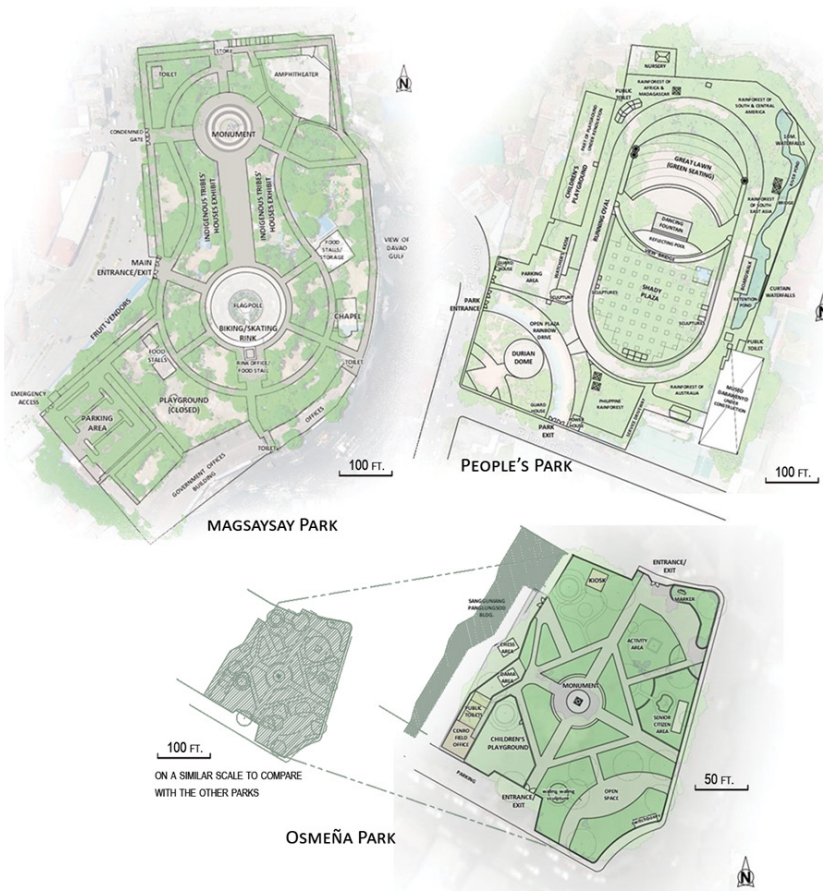


FIGURE 2 Maps of Magsaysay Park, People's Park, and Osmeña Park showing amenities and size comparison

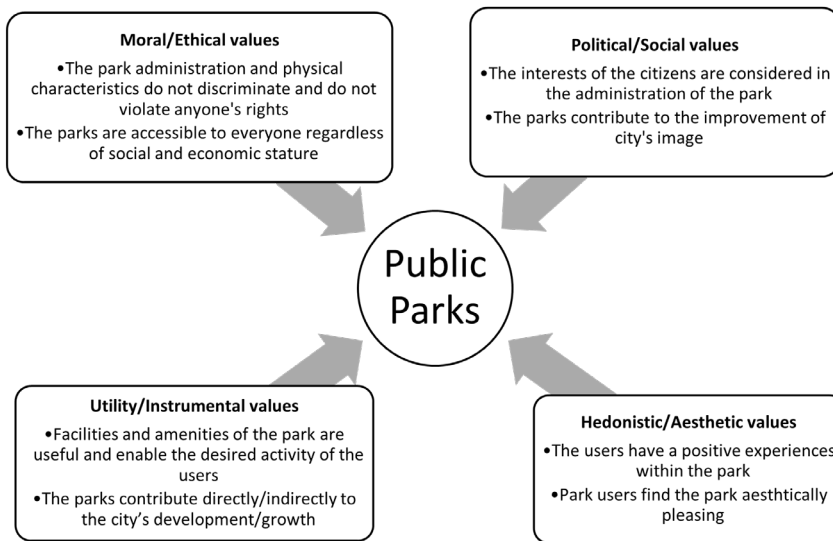


FIGURE 3 Conceptual framework showing the four inductive evaluation perspectives of public value adapted from Meynhardt (2009)

The four inductive evaluation perspectives informed the themes of this study. The codes were grouped to facilitate the analysis of the data obtained from various sources. The study adapts these values to be applicable in studying the public value of public parks. However, the study does not elaborate on the profitability/financial since it mainly focused on perception and did not obtain financial data on the park operations.

Meynhardt (2009, p. 203; 2015, p. 153) believes that public value is grounded in basic needs. The need to “gain control and understanding over one’s environment and achievement of certain outcomes” informs the utility/instrumental value dimension. This value motivates the need for controlling and designing the environment for the optimal use.

The study investigated which aspects of the parks end users find useful through the analysis of park reviews and activity mapping through direct observation. It also investigated how the park can contribute to the city’s development and growth through interviews and published reports.

The moral/ethical value relates to the need to have a positive feeling of self-worth and self-concept. Fairness and equality can be attributed to this value.

The study induced these values through the experiences of the users in accessing the public

parks and if any discrimination or violation of rights occurred from their point of view. Urban public parks should cater to the needs of the community regardless of ethnic origin, age, or gender (Woolley and Rose 2014). If utilized wisely and frequently by providing a venue for social events and promoting social inclusion, these spaces can reflect the area’s culture, which is in conjunction with the next value.

The political/social value dimension is related to the need for positive relationships. The concepts of belongingness, identity, and compromise can be associated with this. As public spaces managed by the local government, the urban parks can showcase the local culture. They can be utilized to share the values the local government would want to instill in local and foreign visitors alike.

The study investigated this value by assessing statements regarding the park’s contribution to the city’s pride and image.

Lastly, the need for a positive experience relates to the hedonistic/aesthetic value. People value an object if they find pleasure in it. Beauty and happiness are examples of these values. Statements regarding the overall feeling when inside the parks were considered.

While it is generally contended that urban public parks in Davao City are indeed beneficial to the community, there is no local literature that

dives into the impacts of public parks. According to the theory of public value presented above, it is the stakeholder's perception of the impacts of their values that can best describe a park's public value. Documenting the insights and perceptions of stakeholders on the public spaces can be beneficial in the improvement of these spaces and realigning them to the vision and goals of the local government, and the planning of future public open spaces.

Methodology

An inductive qualitative research approach was used in this study. This approach explored and understands the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell 2018). It seeks to understand settings and phenomena in a holistic and full-bodied way (Groat and Wang 2013). Multiple sources of data were used to satisfactorily explain emerging codes from the initial data gathered (Figure 4).

User activities were recorded through Activity Mapping done on-site from 17 January to 12 March 2020. Each park was directly observed during different times of the day to provide a holistic view of their use: early morning jogging time (6 AM to 11 AM), afternoon (1:30 PM to 5 PM), and evening (6 PM to 8 PM). The recording was made using field notes, photo documentation, and activity mapping (Figure 5). The method was based on the Stationary Activity Mapping Tool, which is used to map user activities in space at a given time, resulting in a "snapshot" of activity in the area (Gehl Institute 2016). This showed what parts of the parks are most often used. Each person was tallied with their posture represented by symbols. Their activities were also recorded.

Structured and semi-structured interviews were done with members of the park administration and the park users on-site, with a total of nine (9) individuals from 28 February to 12 March 2020. Aside from the benefits, they were also asked to voice their concerns regarding the park and solicited suggestions for improvements. The threat of COVID-19 surfaced in the Davao City on March 2020 and an enhanced community quarantine was conducted on 2 April 2022. Hence, the study resorted to electronic means of questioning (email and online questionnaire) but was not able to

reach the desired saturation compared to face-to-face interviews. Each interviewee below was informed of the research and gave their consent to be recorded with the condition of anonymity:

1. Three (3) members of the park administration: people on the field and overseeing the operation—they were interviewed in their offices in the parks
2. Five (5) park users: park goers, runners, and senior citizens
3. One (1) ambulant vendor/service providers: people whose livelihood depends greatly on the park such as the manicurists in Osmeña Park

Reviews for the parks from Tripadvisor (n=247) and Google Maps (n=685) were then gathered as secondary data to saturate the emerging codes and categories from the aforementioned data. The websites were selected because they have the most up-to-date reviews from users that can be easily accessed. The reviews were retrieved and compiled from 21–24 May 2020. The reviews gathered were made during 2017 to 2020. The study assumed that the reviews contain details about the people's experience in the park that are important enough to motivate them to write a review. This consumer-generated content is also believed to be more credible by users than marketer-generated information, comparable to traditional word-of-mouth communication with the added characteristic of anonymity (Yoo and Gretzel 2008; Gretzel et al. 2007).

For Google reviews, the most relevant reviews were retrieved for analysis. Google has not published how the most relevant reviews are selected or how their algorithm works. Several marketing- and search engine optimization (SEO)-related websites and forums have suggested the following criteria: (1) the length of the review, as Google assumes that more content is more useful; (2) use of several keywords relevant to the establishment; (3) reviews containing specific stories or feedback as opposed to generic content; (4) reviews written by "Local Guides"—people who have written several reviews within the location where the establishment is located; (5) reviews with images; and (6) recently made reviews, since older entries may be considered less relevant (Smith 2022; Coleman 2019).

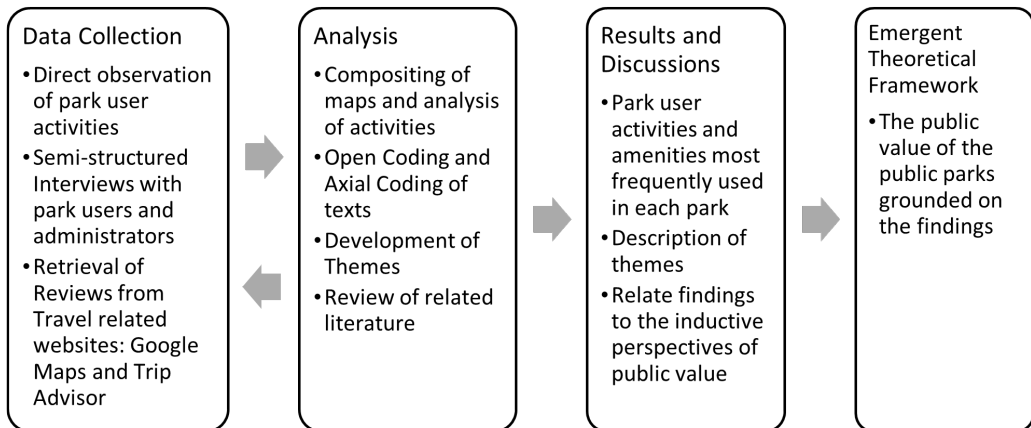
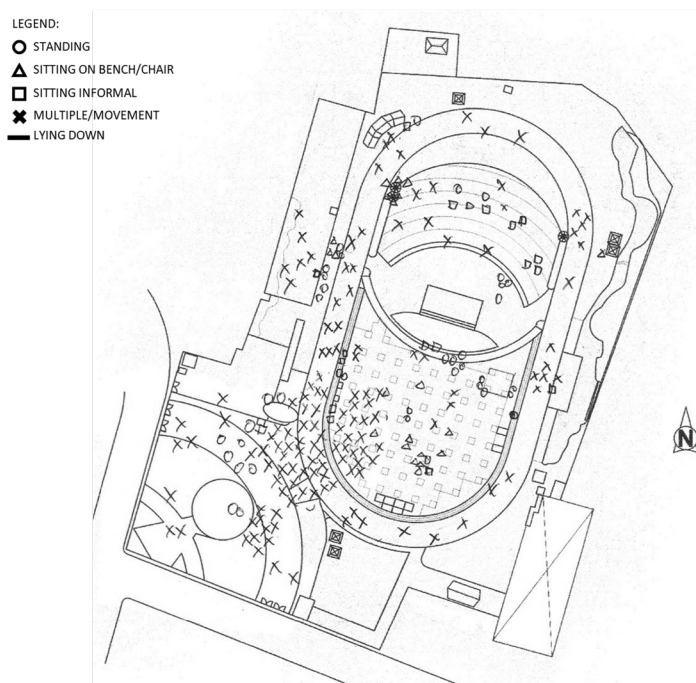


FIGURE 4 Data collection and analysis iteratively done to saturate the codes



Date and Time		Saturday, February 8, 2020					
Time		6:00-7:57 AM					
Posture	Tally (per person)	Activities (all that apply per person)					
		exercise	recreational play	engaged in conversation/group work	consuming food/beverage	reading book/mobile device	enjoying scenery/quiet activity/waiting
standing	34			20	5		18
sitting on bench/chair	20			16		6	4
sitting informal	22			2			4
multiple/movement	158	138	13				4
lying down							
Totals	234	138	13	38	5	6	30

FIGURE 5 Example of activity map made on a Saturday morning in People's Park

For data analysis, thematic analysis techniques were adapted to develop a grounded theory (Akinyode and Khan 2018; Charmaz 2006). A free qualitative data analysis software package computer program called QDA Miner Lite was used in coding textual and graphical data. It was also used in annotating, retrieving, and reviewing coded data, documents, and images.

Descriptive open coding was done on the park reviews, interviews, and observation field notes. The codes were grouped into more abstract axial codes/categories. These categories are then explained based on the discussions in the interview, firsthand observation, and details on the review entries and the frequency of mentions and comparison with existing literature (Table 2).

Results and Discussion

Relaxation through nature and a place for physical fitness is the common benefits attributed to the use of the parks, which is consistent with other studies (BOP Consulting 2013; Woolley and Rose 2003; Woolley and Rose 2014). An emphasis on order and public safety inside the parks was observed in the field and the data. Public places in the city such as the parks have security checkpoints manned by the Task Force Davao (an anti- and counter-terrorism unit of

the Philippine Army in Davao City), which urges the public to voluntarily submit themselves to inspection upon entry. Users mentioned the presence of security personnel checking the bags of visitors upon entry in their reviews. This adds a strong sense of security inside the premises. The parks were considered family-friendly due to child-friendly amenities, and the artworks and exhibits that showcase Davao culture.

Observations and Activity Map Composites

The activity maps for each park were composited to show the variety of use of each amenity at different times. The facilities used the whole day are highlighted in the composites map of each park.

Magsaysay Park

The areas that are most used by park visitors are the concreted open area in-between the monument, flagpole, the Kadayawan village, the viewing deck by the seawall, the government offices' waiting area, and the biking and skating rink area around the flagpole. Open areas in the park are used for group activities, such as students' practices or physical training of recruits of the nearby Bureau of Fire Protection.

TABLE 2 Example of coding from interview transcripts

Original transcript (from interviews)	Translated transcript	Open codes	Axial codes
Fresh air <i>galing sa dagat. Sa iba, sa People's Park, may polusyon, maraming sasakyan. Masarap yung init ng araw, maraming negative ions galing sa puno at dagat.</i>	Fresh air from the sea. In other parks, like People's Park, there is pollution, too many vehicles. The heat of the sun is refreshing and lots of negative ions from the trees and the sea.	urban refuge close to nature	
<i>Tapos ito lang kasi yung unique na park na may dagat. Yung fresh air, every morning, sabi ng mga guard ko. Yung mga may kaya naman, mga matatanda na may mga sakit, and every ano sila nandyan.</i>	"And this {park} is also unique because it is the only park {in Davao} located by the sea. The air is fresh every morning, our guards say. Meanwhile, those who are well-off and those elderly who are sick are usually there every {sunrise}."	view of Samal Island sea breeze relaxing refuge for senior citizens	Place for relaxation Experience nature
<i>Sa tingin niyo 'te, may tabang sya sa Davao City, itong park na ito? Ah oo. Malamig pag hapon. Dito nakaistambay yung mga senior, estudyante, kasi malamig.</i>	Ate, do you think this park has benefited Davao City? Ah yes. It's cool here in the afternoon. Students and seniors hang out here because it's cool here.	cool climate relaxing	

The biking and skating rink are used differently throughout the day. Its well-paved surface makes it popular among early-morning joggers. In the afternoon, rental bicycles and skates are provided by the rink's operator for users who are mostly children as it is the only place where biking is allowed. The park administrator mentioned that it is one of the park's most used and unique amenities.

People's Park

Most visitors hold this park in high regard for its conduciveness to physical fitness activities. The most-used areas are the running oval, benches, and tables beside the playground, benches near the entrance around the Durian Dome, the shady plaza, and the open field.

The running track is used throughout the day, especially in the morning and evening. The plaza has benches and is sheltered by trees. It is where most visitors stay as it is comfortable even in

the afternoon due to the shade. Pigeons usually stay there, which makes the place interesting to visitors, especially children. The same could be said with the benches beside the Durian Dome. The benches near the playground are mostly used for family picnics. The open field is a venue for a variety of activities such as family picnics, badminton, and students practicing for a school performance. This wide and open area is also frequently mentioned in user reviews.

Osmeña Park

People usually stay in Osmeña Park to relax under the trees as they provide an escape from the urban heat. There are benches where visitors can sit or have a manicure to pass the time. In the afternoon, schoolchildren use the playground. The seating around the monument at the center is also a favorite place to hang out throughout the day and at night since it is well-lit.

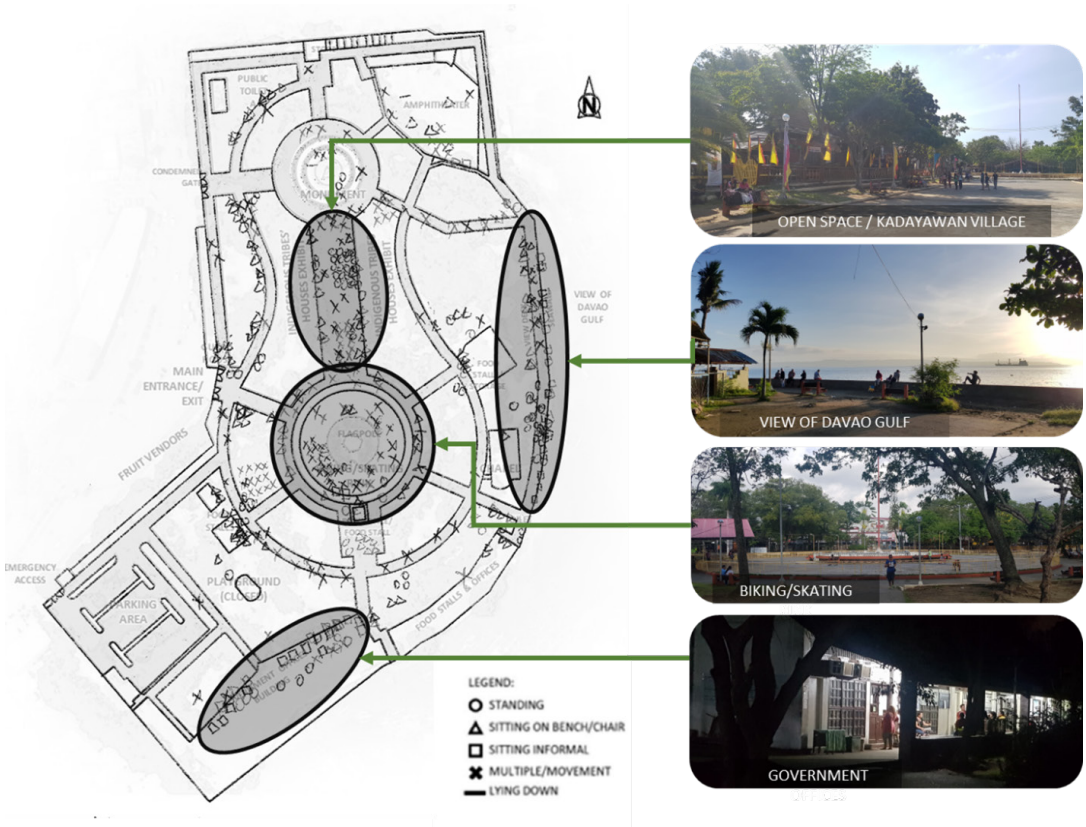


FIGURE 6 Magsaysay Park's composite activity map

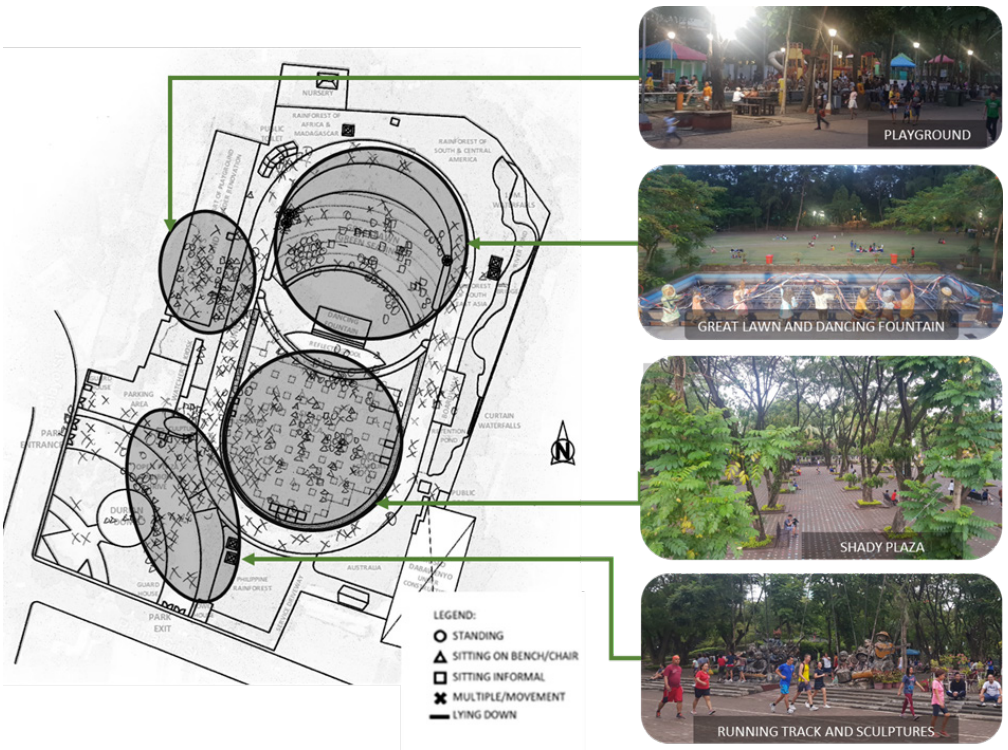


FIGURE 7 People's Park's composite activity map

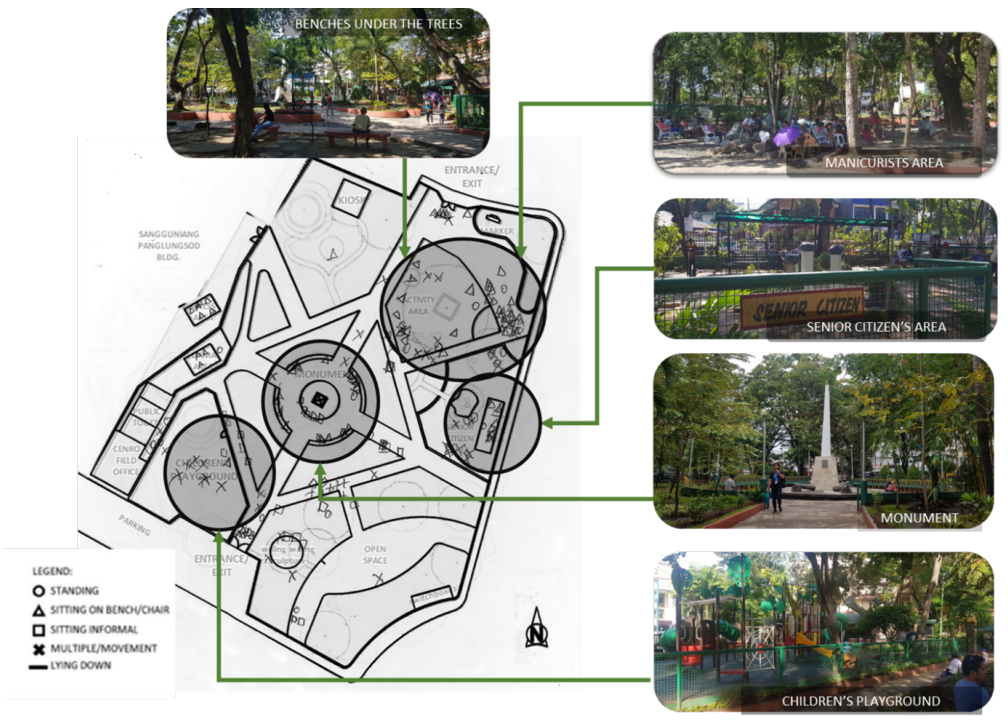


FIGURE 8 Osmeña Park's composite activity map

Analysis of the Interviews and User Reviews

Table 3 shows the resulting categories and their descriptions based on the codes and memos, and through comparison with the collected field notes. The number of code occurrences is also indicated to show which aspects of the parks are frequently mentioned.

The parks' unique features dictate their perceived benefits. Magsaysay park's top category is Experience culture (n=86, 26.71%). Magsaysay Park's most notable features are those that showcase local culture. Kadayawan Village, the exhibit of houses of indigenous tribes in Davao, is written mostly about in the reviews. It is also an integral part of the Kadayawan festivities where tribespeople showcase their crafts and food. The fruit stands outside are also popular among tourists and locals as they can purchase durian, a Davao City staple. The sea view gives a unique nature experience (n=50, 15.53%). Senior citizens relax by the sea wall in the mornings. The maintenance of the park facilities is the subject of negative comments (n=39, 12.11%).

In People's Park, running/jogging and free public aerobic dance classes (colloquially called "Zumba") are the most mentioned activities, which makes Physical activity the top category (n=117, 14.55%). The running track, shady plaza, great lawn, sculptures, and playground are the most mentioned amenities in interviews. At night, the park has adequate and colorful lighting, which according to users, makes the park safe and attractive for a night time stroll and relaxation. The users also describe the park as Family-friendly (n=103, 12.81%) and a good place for relaxation (n=96, 11.94%). The park's lush flora and open green area are also frequently mentioned, which contributes to the whole nature experience in the urban setting (n=88, 10.95%).

Osmeña Park can be described as a peaceful and relaxing urban refuge in the middle of the city (n=49, 37.12%). The overall calm and cool ambiance of the park, the benches under the trees, and the manicurists contribute to this. It is also family-friendly (n=21, 15.91%), with facilities such as a fenced playground and the animal sculptures.

Value of public parks

With the collected data, the public value of the parks can be discussed according to the four (4) inductive perspectives of public value (Figure 9).

Utility/Instrumental Perspective

The data suggests stakeholders value the three urban public parks as places for relaxation. End-users value the escape from the stress of the urban environment through the calm of nature, with the freedom to experience it alone or with company. The park administration, through the numerous rules and developments, balances this to produce a controlled environment that is acceptable for all. The amenities most used in the parks are shown in the activity maps. The wide-open areas are beneficial for diverse group activities and events. This can range from students who need an accessible venue for group practices to big government-sponsored festival events. The parks are also valued as places for physical fitness. Running and Zumba dance workouts are the most mentioned fitness activities. The gated playgrounds enable kids to safely enjoy the facilities. The parks, directly and indirectly, contribute to the plans and programs of Davao City on tourism, peace and order, poverty alleviation, education, and health (City Government of Davao n.d.).

Moral/Ethical Perspective

The public parks in Davao City champion human dignity by providing a neutral open space accessible to all regardless of identity, class, age, and nationality. The study observed the diversity of visitors, which is also noted in the comments of reviewers and interviews. This is because of free access to wide-open spaces, park facilities, and an escape into nature. Various age groups ranging from small children to senior citizens are observed inside the parks. Families also visit after school hours and on the weekends.

TABLE 3 Axial code categories and their description derived from the open coding of online reviews. The frequency of category code instances is also shown (n).

Park	Category	Description
Magsaysay Park (n=322)	Experience culture (n=86, 26.71%)	Many reviewers commented on the Kadayawan Village inside the park as one of the distinct features of the park. It showcases of indigenous culture. The park is also a venue for numerous activities during the public holidays such as Kadayawan Festival (August). The fruit stalls outside are also a famous tourist destination where visitors can eat local fruits such as durian and mangosteen.
	Experience nature (n=50, 15.53%)	The sea view is unique natural park feature in the reviews. The park has seating provisions in the seawall area for people who want to experience the fresh sea breeze while relaxing. Users also appreciate the trees within the park.
	Maintenance concerns (n=39, 12.11%)	Users express concerns on the dilapidated state of some park facilities and amenities such as the playground, park benches, and toilets. There is a planned rehabilitation of the park soon according to park administrators.
	Place of relaxation (n=33, 10.25%)	Users found the park very relaxing, especially with the sea view and the tree shade. The wide-open area of the park and the quietness of the place, in contrast to the more visited parks located along busy streets, provide opportunities for private quiet moments.
	Open to everyone (n=31, 9.63%)	Free entrance, free use of facilities such as the amphitheater, and the wide-open areas of the park give a feeling of freedom and welcome.
	Physical activity (n=28, 8.70%)	The park administrator described the park as a “wellness center” of sorts, which is also echoed by the user interview and reviews. There are organized activities such as aerobic dance, which is free to the public. The paved biking/skating rink is a favorite. People jog in the morning. In the afternoon, bikes and skates are available for rent. This is the only area where biking is allowed a within the park.
	Order and safety (n=27, 8.39%)	Many users express concern about the safety and security of the park. However, most users find the park safe, save for several reports of theft. The park also has numerous rules, which users found to improve the place.
	Nostalgia (n=14, 4.35%)	Users express nostalgia when they visit as it is one of the oldest parks in the city. Some people have fond childhood memories playing in the park.
People's Park (n=804)	Place to socialize (n=14, 4.35%)	Groups of people frequent the park, either to do group activities or participate in local events in its open spaces.
	Physical activity (n=117, 14.55%)	The running oval makes it a place for fitness any time of the day. Jogging is the most mentioned activity. There are also organized aerobic dance workouts users refer to as Zumba, a popular dance routine workout, in the morning.
	Family-friendly (n=103, 12.81%)	A large playground, wide area, whimsical sculptures, and tight security makes this park a family favorite. Numerous family activities can also be done here such as picnics, exercise, and play.
	Place of relaxation (n=96, 11.94%)	People go to the park to relax, especially with company. It is suitable for those who do not mind many visitors in the park.
	Maintenance and upkeep (n=94, 11.69%)	Many users commented that the park is well maintained and clean (n=62). However, some have mentioned that there is a need to update and improve the facilities as they lack maintenance (n=28). Some users also mentioned the daily closures of the park from 10 AM to 2 PM every day for cleaning and upkeep.
Beautification (n=92, 11.44%)	Users have commented on the sculptures, the colorful pavements, and the lights. This adds value to the free entrance to the park. The park is a nice place for photographs for its distinct image. The large playground also contributes to the family friendliness of the park.	

	Experience nature (n=88, 10.95%)	The rainforest tree plantings, shaded trees, and fresh air in the park are appreciated by the users. The birds that flock in the Shady Plaza and the sound of water flowing contribute to the natural ambiance of the place.
	Accessible (n=86, 10.70%)	A number of reviews were delighted that there is no entrance fee despite the park offering many interesting amenities (n=37). Park visitors are also of different social status. They only have to submit to inspection upon entry and follow rules. The park's location is accessible by public transportation and a walking distance of numerous important establishments in the city. People can take a break or pass time in the shade of trees without much obligatory spending.
	Order and safety (n=81, 10.07%)	The imposing security checkpoint at the entrance is well mentioned in the reviews and interviews. Most reviewers find the park safe. Some users noted the numerous rules and regulations posted in front of the park.
	Place to socialize (n=24, 2.99%)	Groups of people frequent the park to do group activities or participate in local events. The open green field is a favorite, along with the picnic tables for watchers by the playground. The shady plaza has benches where people can stay for conversations.
	Experience Culture (n=23, 2.86%)	Reviews mentioned that the park showcases Davao city culture. The sculptures depicting Lumad life, the Durian Dome, and the great Philippine Eagle statue are symbols of the culture of Davao City. Local food and souvenirs sold by vendors outside the park were also mentioned by reviewers.
Osmeña Park (n=132)	Place of relaxation (n=49, 37.12%)	The simple, calming green park in the middle of the city is the ideal refuge for visitors who want to relax in between transactions in the nearby government institutions or for workers on a break. One can have a relaxing massage, a manicure/pedicure, or have a game of chess inside the park.
	Family Friendly (n=21, 15.91%)	Users commented that the park is good for children because of its gated playground and whimsical sculptures. There is also an exercise area specifically labeled for senior citizens' use.
	Experience Nature (n=19, 14.39%)	Users appreciate the abundance of tree shade and fresh air inside the park.
	Well-maintained (n=16, 12.12%)	Many reviewers noted that the park is well maintained due to its newly renovated playground and sweepers frequently cleaning the park. The paths are marked by ledges of the plantings, which double as seating.
	Accessible (n=14, 10.61%)	Areas were marked and developed specifically for senior citizens and children. Others just pass by the park to get to the parallel street on their way to the different government buildings. The park's location is accessible by public transportation and a walking distance from numerous important establishments in the city.
	Peaceful and orderly (n=7, 5.30%)	Reviews found the park peaceful and calm. Guards inspect bags upon entry. At night, the barangay police are replaced by members of Task Force Davao, a local division of the Philippine Army.
	Place for socialization (n=6, 4.55%)	The manicurists who stay in the park are friendly to their customers and always up for a chat. Groups of people also stay in the park to hang out, especially in the senior citizen area. After school and working hours, people relax in the park using the benches and playground. Some people play chess in the designated gazebos.



FIGURE 9 Public value of Davao City parks from the 4 inductive perspectives modified from Meynhardt (2009)

The reviewers mentioned the numerous and detailed rules and regulations. Most find the rules fair as they aid in the maintenance of order. An interviewee also stated that the rules and the construction of more structures improved the parks' reputation, making them more family-friendly. The less privileged benefit most from this safe and accessible place for their physical and mental well-being as access to the parks is free.

Political/Social Perspective

The rules and regulations, according to the administrator, aim to instill discipline in the park goes to aid in the maintenance and mutual enjoyment of the parks (Canedo 2018). However, compromise regarding the prohibitions can still be achieved through acquiring proper permits and dialogue. An example is the manicurists inside Osmeña Park. They have organized

themselves into an association that engages in constant dialogue with the park administration. They are permitted to conduct their livelihood inside the park, with an emphasis on avoiding litter. They have also become part of the park's identity and a visitor attraction. This mirrors the formalization of vendors operating in Rizal Park in Manila, which benefited the vendors' welfare and tourism development (Yotsumoto 2012).

The parks are also favorite venues for events during the Kadayawan Festival in August. Kadayawan is the city's premiere festival and celebration of thanksgiving for bountiful harvests. Lumad culture is primarily showcased in these events, and is embodied in the permanent Kadayawan Village exhibit in Magsaysay Park and the sculptures in People's Park. City symbols Philippine Eagle (*Pithecopbaga jefferyi*), durian (*Durio zibethinus murr.*), and the *Waling-waling* (*Vanda sanderiana*) are also featured in park artworks and structures.

Hedonistic/Aesthetic

The facilities, beautification elements, and the escape to nature make the parks places for relaxation. Magsaysay Park as the oldest brings the most nostalgia in comments and interviews, especially for the older citizens. Its coastal location and Kadayawan Village exhibit makes it popular for tourists as it showcases both the natural and constructed beauty of Davao City. The main draw of People’s Park is its running oval for physical exercise. The park is also mentioned as photogenic due to the sculptures and shady plaza. Both parks also feature wide-open spaces that people can use for a variety of activities. Osmeña Park is calmer. Its smaller, tree-shaded area is more suitable for rest and refuge.

Most negative comments centered on the upkeep of toilet facilities, which is common in all the parks. In Magsaysay Park, which is comparably the worst of the three in terms of maintenance and upkeep, users expressed concern about the neglected amenities such as seating, toilet facilities, and the playground. The park administrator mentioned that there are

plans to repair the park soon. There were also mentions of incidences of theft and perceived harassment from beggars inside the park.

Therefore, the study posits this theoretical model (Figure 10) on the current public value of the parks. Meynhardt (2009) anchored public value to the basic needs of the public. Public parks address the need for free access to a place for a quick escape from the urban environment, space for physical exercise, and socialization. The park’s natural green features enable this with administrative interventions. The city controls the environmental conditions through the creation and maintenance of constructed features such as facilities, hardscapes, and beautification.

As a free alternative for relaxation in commercial establishments such as malls, parks enable users freedom to experience nature. The maintenance of peace and order by the park administration through laws, access-control infrastructure, activity-enabling modifications of the natural landscape, and overall park beautification result in a family-friendly environment and a showcase of Davao City culture.

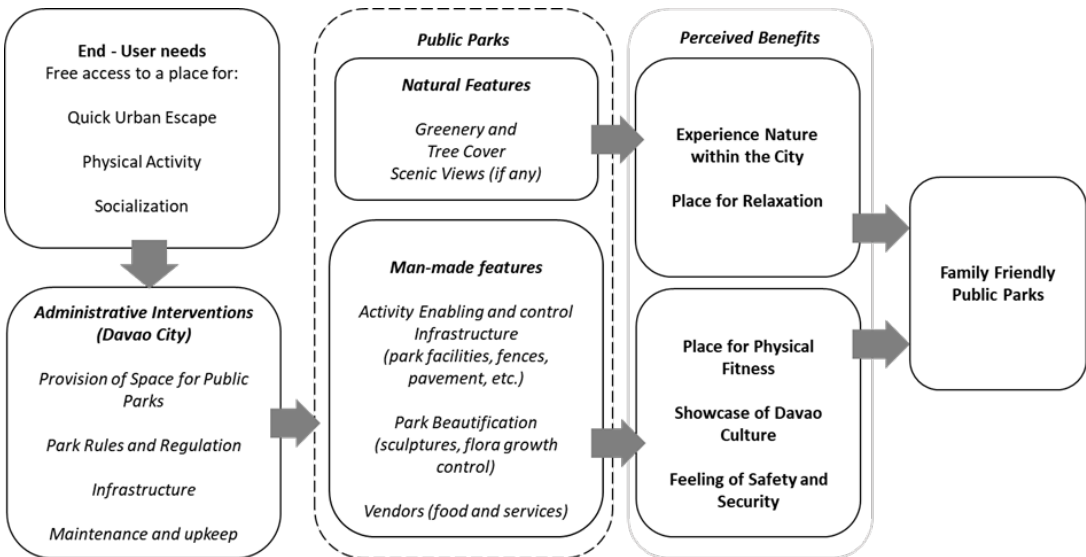


FIGURE 10 Proposed theoretical model of the public value creation of urban public parks in Davao City according to stakeholders

Conclusion and Recommendations

The benefits of the Davao City public parks as places for physical activity and urban escape are consistent with the current literature (Alliance for Safe, Sustainable and Resilient Environments 2019; Walker 2004; World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe 2016), but there is an emphasis on safety and order observed in the data. The parks are consistent with Davao City's motto: "Life is here." The combination of accessibility to all classes, safety, and culture is what first-time and regular park users admire about the public parks in Davao City as stated in the interviews and reviews. The parks can be viewed as a reflection of the city's values and priorities: peace and order, cultural diversity, and preservation of nature.

Encouraging Citizen Cooperation in Order and Security

The city places checkpoints at entrances to public spaces as part of its public safety programs. This foremost security concern can be traced back to the City's history of terrorism, such as the bombings of the old Davao International Airport and Sasa Wharf in 2003—which led to the creation of Task Force Davao, a group of army personnel tasked to patrol the city's borders to ensure the public safety—the Ecoland Bus Terminal bombing in 2005, and the Roxas night market bombing in 2016 (Velez 2020). Davao City also established the Public Safety and Security Command Center (PSSCC) in 2012 to coordinate different agencies in responding to public safety and security concerns (Ming 2019).

Park visitors also noted the detailed enumerations of prohibited activities in the park. Most users appreciate this as it adds a sense of security within the premises, noting that the friendliness of the personnel helps alleviate such measures' stress. The parks may become a means of raising awareness on public safety and security, in line with the Davao City's campaign of mainstreaming a culture of security for its citizens by staying vigilant and cooperating with safety and security efforts. It particularly urges the public to volunteer themselves for

inspections, report suspicious persons, remind one another of the anti-terrorism policies of the city, and participate in the community defense systems (Badilla 2019; Cortez 2020). The feeling of security and safety in the parks is also essential to entice upper class to use the public parks as well (Saloma and Akpedonu 2021).

The park rules and regulations posted at the entrance of the parks are prescribed in the Davao City Park Systems Management Code and are similar across all parks, plainly written and easy to understand (Figure 11). The rules may be a bit in contrast to the supposed benefits of public parks in most of the world. An example is the prohibition of bicycles inside the parks and the lack of provisions for bicycle racks, as stated in the assessment of green spaces in Davao City (Interface Development Interventions Inc. 2017). Several review entries, as well as an editorial from a local newspaper, spoke against this (Edge Davao 2018). The biking/skating rink in Magsaysay Park is the only area where bicycle riding is allowed inside a park. Another is the prohibition of pets inside the park. This may be understandable with the limited size of certain parks, but there may be a need to update the rules with the sensibilities of the current times and make them specifically for each type of park, with consultation with the public as stakeholders.

Green vs. Gray

A study on visual analysis of public spaces found that "polyfunctional dynamic, associative, homogeneous, inclusive, accessible, authentic spaces with an emphasis on natural elements, achieve desired visual effect on users" (Perovic and Folic 2012, p. 932). Green spaces are important elements aesthetically and for overall wellness for public spaces, but constructed activity-enabling structures are also important for utility. The numerous artworks, sculptures, and exhibits also add value to the parks. Most popular are the Kadayawan Village in Magsaysay Park, Durian Dome, the sculptures by the famous Mindanao artist Kublai Millan in People's Park, and the *waling-waling* and various animal playground sculptures in Osmeña Park. The artworks attract visitors to take photographs

for social media, which counts as a promotion for the park, and in turn, the city. These amenities become a source of pride to the locals, hence enhancing the motivation for stewardship of the place.

The parks can also improve their image as safe and family-friendly by building more control infrastructure such as fences and paved pathways. Osmeña Park, once an open park, was rehabilitated and fenced by the city government in 2014 because of reports of illegal and lewd acts occurring on its grounds (Apit 2014). Users appreciate the park's fenced boundaries, especially for their children's safety. However, there is a downside to too much manicuring of the landscape as some park users noted that the parks have too many concrete surfaces and that they perhaps convey communist imagery as one reviewer noted. A balance between green and grey spaces may be reached subject to satisfaction, preference studies, and consultation with stakeholders and experts.

There may be a need to further update the facilities, especially with advancements in technology. There were requests for free internet access according to the administrators. This can be advantageous to the parks for social media presence, especially with the prevalence of live stream features and “at the moment” posts. Some artworks in Magsaysay Park also lack maintenance as some sculptures are missing plates and labels. The administration should conduct an inventory as well as consider featuring new artworks from young Davao talents. The provision of heavy-duty bike racks may also be considered, especially now that the local government is putting efforts into biking mobility and safety around the city.

Recommendation for Further Studies

The study explores and defines the value of public spaces through inductive inquiry. Future studies can benefit from more interviews with critical stakeholders that emerged from the results of the analysis such as the vendors within the parks' vicinity. Focus group discussions with specific stakeholders can also clear up vague details. Understanding the intangible benefits

of the parks can help in justifying the cost of upkeep of a free-to-use facility and may also aid in more detailed studies such as a search for a more sustainable financing mechanism. The method of inquiry done in this study may be further developed for actual planning practice. Providing a holistic view of perceived benefits from the stakeholders' perspective can be useful for implementing future park improvement programs.

The data collection for this study was done just before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also the study's concern that the current pandemic resulted in a drastic change in the status quo, and that some of the data may be deemed outdated. The study may be used to further indicate the core value of public parks and can help in the foreseeable redesign in the future because of the “new normal”. Future research may focus on the assessment of the current physical design and administration of the parks post-pandemic.

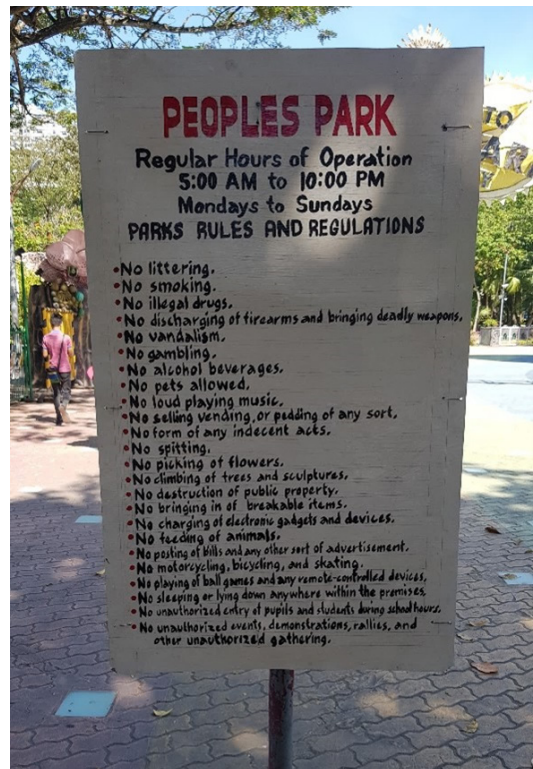


FIGURE 11 Signage showing rules and regulations common to all parks

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