

# Some perceptions and preferences of residents' use of community neighbourhood parks in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town

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*Peer reviewed and revised*

## Abstract

Urban parks help enhance the value of urban settings and provide dynamic recreation facilities for citizens; however, environmental injustice is still noticeable throughout South Africa regarding the unequal distribution of urban parks. This article provides an overview of community neighbourhood park (CNP) conditions in five subsections of Mitchells Plain (Beacon Valley, Portlands, Rocklands, Tafelsig, and Woodlands). Results indicate that 18% of the respondents in Mitchells Plain have to walk further than the accepted norm of 15 minutes to reach CNPs. This negatively influences the CNP usage patterns, and the time spent in CNPs. The most important concerns influencing CNP non-use include safety and improper maintenance (mostly experienced in Portlands), and a lack of facilities and natural features (mostly experienced in Tafelsig). The ways in which CNPs can be improved echo the concerns for not visiting CNPs frequently. Significant policy implications for the City Parks Department are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Park use; community neighbourhood parks (CNPs); CNP satisfaction; reasons for not visiting CNPs; environmental justice; Mitchells Plain

## 'N PAAR PERSEPSIES EN VOORKEURE VAN INWONERS SE GEBRUIK VAN GEMEENSKAPSWOONBUURTPARKE IN MITCHELLS PLAIN, KAAPSTAD

Stedelike parke help om die waarde van die stedelike omgewing te verhoog en voorsien inwoners van dinamiese ontspanningsfasiliteite; nietemin is omgewingsongeregtheid nog steeds deur 'n ongelyke verspreiding van stedelike parke in Suid-Afrika sigbaar. Hierdie artikel verskaf 'n oorsig oor die kondisies in gemeenskapswoonbuurtparke (GWPe) in vyf onderafdelings van Mitchells Plain (Beacon Valley, Portlands, Rocklands, Tafelsig en Woodlands). Resultate toon dat 18% van respondente in Mitchells Plain verder as die aanvaarbare norm van 15 minute moet loop om GWPe te bereik. Dit het 'n negatiewe invloed op GWPe gebruikspatrone, en die tyd wat in GWPe bestee word. Die belangrikste bekommernisse wat die nie-gebruik van GWPe beïnvloed, sluit veiligheid, onbehoorlike instandhouding (word meestal in Portlands ervaar), en 'n gebrek aan fasiliteite en natuurlike eienskappe (word meestal in Tafelsig ervaar), in. Die maniere hoe GWPe verbeter kan word, weerklink die bekommernisse om GWPe nie gereeld te besoek nie. Beduidende beleidsimplikasies vir die stad se Parke Department word ook bespreek.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Park gebruik; gemeenskapswoonbuurtparke (GWPe); GWP tevredenheid; redes om nie GWPe te besoek nie; omgewingsgeregtigheid; Mitchells Plain

## MAIKUTLO LE LITAKATSO TSA SECHABA COMMUNITY NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK (CNP) MITCHELLS PLAIN, KAPA.

Lipaka tsa teropo li nyolla boemo ba teropo hape li fan aka lintho tseo batho b aka li etsang ho qhoba nako; le ha ho le joalo, bothata ba tikolloho bo ntse bo hlaella Afrika Boroa, ka ha lipaka ha lia beoa ka mokhoa o lekaneng hore bohle ba fihle ho tsona, naha ka bophara. Serapa sena se bontsha kakaretso ea maemo a licommunity neighbourhood park (CNP) bakeng tse hlano ka hara Mitchells Plain, e leng (Beacon Valley, Portlands, Rocklands, Tafelsig, le Woodlands). Sephetho se bontshitse hore 18% ea batho ba botsitsoeng Mitchells Plain ba hloka ho tsamaea sebaka se se telele ho feta metsotso e mashome a metso e mahlano ho fihla ho li CNP ho bakang hore batho ba bangata ba se ke ba ea ho li CNP haholo.khathatso

e ngoe e hlahelletseng, e etsang hore li CNP li se ke tsa sebelisoa haholo ke polokeho le tlhokomelo ( haholo-holo Portlands), le ho hloka hahala ha lisebelisoa le litshobotsi tsa paka tsa tlhaho ( haholo-holo Tafelsig). Mekhoa eo li CNP li ka ntlafatsoang, e hlaha ho mabaka eo batho ba faneng ka ona ho se ee li CNP khafetsa. Ha ho le the, tsamaiso ea City Parks Department e ea rarolloa serapeng sena le eona.

**Keywords:** Park use; community neighbourhood parks (CNPs); CNP satisfaction; reasons for not visiting CNPs; environmental justice; Mitchells Plain

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The built environment consists of both hard (roads, pavements, buildings and town squares) and soft (green spaces such as soil, grass, shrubs, trees, and all other open spaces) surfaces. Of particular interest is the fact that these publicly and privately owned green spaces offer citizens the opportunity to fulfil their outdoor recreational needs. Perhaps the most important green open space that the majority of citizens across the world would recognise is the urban park or local community neighbourhood park (CNP) (Swanwick, Dunnet & Woolley, 2003: 97-100). The literature places less emphasis on CNP usage than urban park usage. Therefore, for the purpose of the introduction and literature review, the two terms will refer to parks, unless otherwise stated.

Parks can be viewed as holistic entities, a balance between economic, environmental and social amenities. If this balance is well maintained, it would improve people's perceptions of the park and increase usage. This may, in turn, improve the quality of life, a key component of sustainable development and the

creation of a sustainable city and lifestyle. The value of parks can further be described by three main attributes: functional, aesthetic and ecological. The functional attribute affords people the knowledge that leisure spaces are available to fulfil their recreation needs; the aesthetic attribute creates settings where residents can relax and feel sufficiently comfortable to break away from hectic city living, and the ecological attribute ensures the sustainable use of our environmental resources (Shi, Zhao, Ge, Hakao & Wang, 2006: 1377).

This highlights the importance of parks as an essential service to be delivered to all citizens. However, in the case of South Africa, apartheid planning resulted in the unequal distribution of services across the different group areas specifically created by the government of the time. The apartheid government delivered a variety of services (including parks) mainly to areas inhabited by the more affluent White population. By contrast, in areas where the poorer race groups resided, the apartheid government focused on the delivery of the most essential higher order services including housing, electricity and water (Harrison, Todes & Watson, 2008: 9-11). Less attention was paid to the delivery of lower priority services such as parks, resulting in an 'inaccessible recreation delivery' during apartheid, which manifested in the unequal distribution in the locations, quantity, quality, accessibility, capacity, function and development of parks. This resulted in environmental injustice, because the environmental resources were distributed unequally in favour of White residents and unfavourably to subordinate Black and Coloured residents (Merrett, 2009; Ruiters, 2001: 98-99; Wilson & Hattingh, 1989; Wilson, 1992: 478). Mitchells Plain is one example of a suburb for Coloureds that was developed from the 1970s onwards; it lacked the higher order facilities during apartheid. Mitchells Plain was bordered by a largely undeveloped coastline or inland open space area. However, the continued urbanisation

process resulted in significant changes to the environment – the demand for formal housing exceeded the supply, resulting in the expansion of the suburb in the form of backyard dwellers and informal settlements. Likewise, the delivery of local facilities and amenities could not keep up with the rapid population growth (City of Cape Town, 2011: 32-33, 57-58; Putterill & Bloch, 1978: 19).

The post-apartheid government's Bill of Rights (section 24) proclaims that everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being. However, the post-apartheid government has, to a large extent, failed to achieve this goal; many traditionally poorer subordinate communities remain trapped in residential areas with relatively few parks – or, where parks are provided, the appalling conditions of these parks do not attract residents (Magi, 1999: 294, 308; McConnachie & Shackleton, 2010: 246-247; Ruiters, 2001: 95; Willemse & Donaldson, 2012: 223-224, 229-230; Willemse, 2010: 94, 96; Willemse, 2013: 161-162).

The literature published during the apartheid era focused on the lack of park delivery in Black townships (Wilson, 1989; Wilson & De Wet, 1992; Wilson & Hattingh, 1989; 1990; 1991; 1992). The government's failure to achieve the equitable delivery of environmental justice (*i.e.*, park delivery) is not well documented in the research since 1994, except in the case of Willemse and Donaldson (2012) and Willemse (2010, 2013). However, no research was found pertaining specifically to the delivery and usage of CNPs in Coloured areas, among people also considered part of the racially subordinate groups during apartheid. The deficiencies in the quantity and quality of leisure facilities in South African cities during the apartheid era are, however, highlighted in the work of Putterill and Bloch (1978: 19, 85). Their research emphasised the lack in the quantity and quality of playgrounds in Hanover Park, Mitchells Plain, where children only had access to five playgrounds with limited equipment, and older children did

not have access to similar outdoor recreational facilities.

The lack in the delivery of parks and open spaces in Mitchells Plain is currently still visible, with the City of Cape Town (2011: 32-33) underlining the lack of higher order health care and sports facilities and the general lack of metropolitan and district parks in Mitchells Plain. In addition, with the exception of the business and commercial district surrounding the Promenade shopping centre, Mitchells Plain's many subsections have a high level of social need (especially Tafelsig). The social issues include housing development that occurs on land threatened by hazards and flooding; a lack of accessible higher order facilities and amenities (especially health care and sports facilities as well as metropolitan and district parks); a lack of basic service delivery (including water, electricity, sanitation and refuse-removal services); the spread of diseases due to poor living environments as a result of crowded informal settlements; noise pollution from the nearby airport and infrastructure developments, and an increase in the occurrence of crime (City of Cape Town, 2011: 32-33, 57-58).

Consequently, this paper aims to provide an overview of the CNPs' conditions in five subsections of Mitchells Plain (Beacon Valley, Portlands, Rocklands, Tafelsig, and Woodlands). It is hoped that, through understanding some of the perceptions of, and preferences for CNPs by ordinary residents of Mitchells Plain, the City Parks Department will be able to implement, deliver and maintain effective CNPs in this area to ensure environmental justice for all the citizens of Mitchells Plain.

## 2. URBAN PARK USAGE IN CONTEXT: LESSONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

An increasing urban population results in the increased competition between demands for housing development and open space preservation. Some of the poor urban population may even build their

own inadequate housing structures (informal settlements) on the urban periphery without adequate open-space services, emphasising the importance of housing structures for these individuals (Hernandez-Bonilla, 2008: 389-390; Low, Taplin & Scheld, 2005; Wolch, Wilson & Fehrenbach, 2005: 4-5, 7-8). According to Wall (1992: 313), the housing development versus open-space preservation debate is highly contentious: a "newly urbanised person living in a shack in an informal settlement might perceive improvement of the environment as the provision of jobs, infrastructure and housing. Meanwhile, a more affluent person might feel that infrastructure and housing is causing a deterioration of the environment, as yet another open space is built upon".

Governments also make the mistake of not considering the benefits of environmental justice that parks can provide to communities where these services have historically been unequally distributed. Consequently, they provide more of what currently exists in parks and they continue to distribute parks unequally throughout areas (Ho, Sasidharan, Elemendorf, Willits, Graefe & Godbey, 2005: 282). Environmental justice is understood differently by different stakeholders, but there are two broad definitions. First, environmental justice refers to ensuring that all people, regardless of their socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics, are protected from the disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards and risks. Secondly, environmental justice is increasingly used to explore disparities in access to environmental amenities that are rooted in the historical discriminative service-delivery patterns of local governments (Heckert, 2013: 1; Holifield, 2001: 80; Magi, 1999: 294,308; McConnachie & Shackleton, 2010: 248; Ruiters, 2001: 98-99; Wall, 1992: 314). Parks are well suited as an example of environmental justice inquiry, because they represent nature that can promote a better society and an improved quality of life by reducing the problems associated with urban living (e.g., unequal property values,

air pollution, fluctuating temperatures due to the heat-island effect, poor physical and mental health, crime, and a lack of community cohesion and interaction) (Heckert, 2013: 2; Wolch *et al.*, 2005: 7-8). Environmental injustice is even more harshly apparent where some residents do not have private gardens for their own recreation and leisure activities. In such instances, even a strictly equal distribution of parks would not lead to equal recreational and leisure facilities (Wolch *et al.*, 2005: 4-5, 7-8).

There are two main reasons why groups may or may not engage in certain leisure activities (e.g., visiting parks): the marginality and ethnicity hypotheses. The marginality hypothesis states that there are fewer marginalised groups making use of leisure facilities (e.g., park usage) because of limited economic resources, due to historical patterns of discrimination. The social majority discriminates against marginalised groups, placing them at the margins of society where they have limited access to society's institutions, thus negatively influencing their life opportunities and lifestyles, and consequently reducing their participation in certain leisure activities. The ethnicity hypothesis postulates that different racial or ethnic groups have different value systems, norms and socialisation patterns, with different attitudes to leisure activity participation (Byrne & Wolch, 2009: 7-8; Floyd, Shiner, McGuire & Noe, 1994: 158-159; Ho *et al.*, 2005: 300-301; Zhang & Gobster, 1998: 339). People's perceptions of parks will ultimately determine whether the parks are used, and these perceptions are affected by different socio-demographic variables, including age, gender, race, ethnicity, household composition, socio-economic factors (such as education, income levels, disability, and home ownership), residential locations, physical mobility, time resources, attitudes towards nature, leisure preferences and the facilities available in parks (Byrne & Wolch, 2009: 2-3&9). Ho *et al.* (2005: 300- 301) view ethnicity as an important predictor of park

usage: similar ethnic groups will generally have the same perceptions of parks and exercise the same park usage patterns.

## 2.1 Park usage patterns of ethnically marginalised groups

This section describes a selection of literature pertaining to the park usage patterns of ethnically marginalised groups. Several sources in the literature indicate that ethnically marginalised groups (in this instance, Hispanics, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Latinos, African-Americans and Black South Africans) do not use parks as much as the ethnically privileged groups (Low *et al.*, 2005; Morris, 2003: 1-12; Ravenscroft & Markwell, 2000: 137, 139, 143-144; Rishbeth, 2001: 352, 355). In terms of gender, men from marginalised groups visit parks the most. When taking children to parks, women outnumber men, except in the case of Black townships in South Africa, where women's recreational time is associated with home chores and house-related activities. Age distinctions also indicate that children visit parks the most (Magi, 1999: 299; Payne, Mowen & Orsega-Smith, 2002: 195). Black children from Gugulethu in South Africa visit parks on a daily or weekly basis, but during apartheid adults were often not socialised to participate in outdoor recreation, and consequently did not visit parks as often as in the post-apartheid era (Nembudani, 1997). Companionship is a very important factor in determining park usage. According to the literature, members of marginalised groups are less likely to go to parks alone; they often go in larger groups. Some say that this is due to language barriers – if a problem should arise in a park pertaining to minority abuse or a misunderstanding, there is someone on hand who can speak their language to help them solve it (Gobster, 2002: 147; Ho *et al.*, 2005: 299).

The frequency of park usage and the time spent in parks can be described by the distances to parks

and the mode of transport used to get there. Normally, walking is the preferred way to get to parks. However, not every neighbourhood of marginalised groups has parks, resulting in them having to travel further, usually by car, bus or taxi, to get to parks. Distances to parks also severely affect park usage. There is a distance decay function where the appeal of parks dramatically declines with increasing distances from it, despite people's dissatisfaction with the parks nearer to them. Marginalised groups who live further from parks use those parks less frequently, but stay for longer periods. The frequency of park visits varies between a few times a week, or a month, to infrequent visits, and those who never visit parks at all. Children generally spend more time in parks than adults (Gobster, 2002: 146-147; Ho *et al.*, 2005: 295; Ravenscroft & Markwell, 2000: 144; Wolch *et al.*, 2005: 8; Zhang & Gobster, 1998: 347). An exception to this theory is observed among Black youths in Reading, London, who are willing to travel more than 30 minutes to reach a park, due to a lack of nearby alternatives and the fact that the park further away had a wider variety of facilities to choose from (Ravenscroft & Markwell, 2000: 145).

The activities in which people participate can be divided into two main categories: active and passive recreation. In active recreation, people are physically active, while passive activities are more sedentary and psychosocial in nature. Ethnically marginalised groups appear to favour passive and social, family-oriented activities, such as picnicking, talking, sightseeing, socialising, watching sports, engaging in festivals, and parties. Playing different types of sports and playing on the playground (if present) are popular forms of active recreation. Men and children are more likely to engage in more vigorous physical activities than women (Byrne & Wolch, 2009: 6; Floyd *et al.*, 1994: 165-166; Gobster, 2002: 147, 154, Payne *et al.*, 2002: 195; Zhang & Gobster, 1998: 348).

## 2.2 Reasons why marginalised groups do not visit parks

Various explanations have been offered as to why marginalised groups do not visit parks as often as they could. These can be grouped into four categories: safety problems, maintenance problems, a lack of facilities, and the governments' inability to allow community participation. The safety concerns are expressed as general feelings of being unsafe, caused especially by the presence of squatters, vagrants, strangers, drug users, alcoholics, gangs, crime and poorly lit areas in parks (Byrne & Wolch, 2009: 6, 9-10; Gobster, 2002: 150-151, 156; Hernandez-Bonilla, 2008: 394). Racially motivated violence, prejudice and general discrimination also create personal safety concerns for racially marginalised groups. This discrimination usually comes from other park users, the police, and park staff members and may include nonverbal messages (*e.g.*, offensive graffiti) causing feelings of discomfort, unequal treatment and an unequal distribution of facilities, verbal abuse, harassment, physical gestures or even assault (Byrne & Wolch, 2009: 4, 9-10; Gobster, 2002: 150-151, 156); Ravenscroft & Markwell, 2000: 146-147; Rishbeth, 2001: 359, 362; Zhang & Gobster 1998: 348-349).

Maintenance complaints include litter and vandalism, and a general neglect of grass, trees and plants in parks. Furthermore, if parks lack the facilities, they do not provide the ideal atmosphere for park users to gather in recreation; consequently, parks are used less often and, if they were to be used, people would complain that the government does not maintain them properly (Gobster, 2002: 150-151; Nembudani, 1997; Rishbeth, 2001: 362-363). Marginalised groups also feel powerless to influence service-delivery strategies, because the government does not consider their concerns in the park-planning process. Previous negative experiences in parks, a lack of appropriate interpretive information, and park signage also negatively

influence marginalised groups' usage of parks (Morris, 2003: 1-12).

To summarise, the literature indicates that marginalised groups are indeed under-represented among park users, and the way in which they use parks and the reasons for not visiting parks are based on their past experiences in parks. By informed understanding of marginalised groups' park usage or non-usage patterns, the government can re-orientate the management and maintenance of parks to suit the interests of these marginalised groups. Implementing goals to attain better management and maintenance by integrating the preferences of marginalised groups into current park programmes and budgets is, however, difficult in areas where park space is limited, usage is high, demand for activities varies, and the clientele is diverse – *i.e.*, they cannot be stereotyped into one large marginalised group with one common opinion (Gobster, 2002: 153, 157; Ho *et al.*, 2005: 301-302; Payne *et al.*, 2002: 195- 196). A few examples mentioned in the literature on how to improve park usage includes increasing the number of park events and fairs, creating multifunctional parks, improving landscaping and park furniture, but perhaps the most important is keeping parks clean and safe, and create collective action groups to allow for community participation (Byrne & Wolch, 2009: 6, 9-11; Hernandez-Bonilla, 2008: 396; Rishbeth, 2001: 356, 362-364; Zhang & Gobster, 1998: 349).

## 3. DEFINING THE TERM CNP IN RELATION TO DIFFERENT PARK STANDARDS

The City of Cape Town (2005: 3) defines local parks, which include community neighbourhood parks (CNP), as “developable land with recreation facilities, which serve the needs of the local community or neighbourhood and are usually accessed on foot. It includes informal recreation facilities of a small scale for children such as tot-lots and playgrounds, seating areas,

open grass lawns and gardens”. More recently, the City of Cape Town (2015: 3) defined community parks as “land zoned [as] public

open space [which is] of a smaller scale, which serves the informal recreational needs of the immediate local community or neighbourhood”.

The CSIR also attempts to define the different sizes of parks in the City of Cape Town (Figure 1) (Green & Argue, 2007: 24-25).

| Community park-multifunctional  | Community park - single function  | Play / pocket park (Also referred to as play spaces or play lots)   | Parkways  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Distance:<br>750-1500 metres maximum  | Distance:<br>300-750 metres   | Distance:<br>200-300 metres   | Distance:<br>Maximum distance 500 metres to walk to gain access (barriers need to be considered)  |
| Travel time:<br>30 minutes' walk  | Travel time:<br>15 minutes' walk  | Travel time:<br>7 minutes' walk   | Travel time:<br>10 minutes' walk  |
| Optimum size and dimensions:<br>1-2 hectares  | Optimum size and dimensions:<br>450-1200 square metres  | Optimum size and dimensions:<br>450 square metres (maximum width is 15 metres and length of 30 metres, which provides for better surveillance   | Optimum size and dimensions:<br>Not applicable  |
| Key issues:<br>Usually accessed on foot   | Key issues:<br>Usually accessed on foot   | Key issues:<br>Within easy walking distance of users.<br>Easy surveillance of entire area is critical   | Key issues:<br>Length depends on context. Widths for surveillance and safety should not exceed approximately 300 metres. A width of 25-50 metres makes it far easier for vulnerable users to spot dangers/<br>Location/quantity/connection/vegetation in terms of sustaining ecological processes and accommodating user needs. |
| Facility definition:<br>Landscaped open space with recreational facilities which serves the needs of the immediate local community or neighbourhood.<br>Can include passive and active recreation areas, small-scale informal sports facilities, kick-about areas, multipurpose hard courts and playgrounds (perhaps with play equipment).<br>Variety of uses depends on size of park but usually caters for two or more age groups | Facility definition:<br>Landscaped open space with recreational facilities which serves the needs of the immediate local community or neighbourhood.<br>Can include passive and active recreation areas, small-scale informal sports facilities, kick-about areas, multipurpose hard courts and playgrounds (perhaps with play equipment).<br>Variety of uses depends on size of park but usually caters for two or more age groups | Facility definition:<br>Small-scale maintained park dedicated for children's play or for workers in commercial/ industrial areas.<br>Located within walking distance of users and ideally overlooked by inhabitants.<br>Usually provided in high-density areas where there is limited space and thus few opportunities to develop community parks where there is no safe access for small children to a nearby community park.<br>Can stand-alone or form an area within a larger park. | Facility definition:<br>Open spaces - natural or landscaped that follow river courses, scenic routes and provide green linkages within the city.<br>Also, link open space system to surrounding rural or major natural elements such as the coast.  |
| Location criteria:<br>Within walking distance   | Location criteria:<br>Within walking distance   | Within easy walking distance of users.<br>Increase the number of play lots/ kick-about areas as densities increase and individual dwelling site sizes decreases.<br>People request the sites to be cleared, due to perceptions of lack of safety.<br>Smaller parks often not supported by municipality because of maintenance costs and rationalisation proposed.   | Location criteria:<br>Along rivers, metropolitan open space network etc.  |

Figure 1: Defining different sizes of parks in the City of Cape Town

Source: Green & Argue, 2007: 24-25

It is clear from the above that no proper definition exists for the term CNP in South Africa. Figure 2 does, however, indicate that the CNPs located in the five subsections of Mitchells Plain differ in terms of their park standards. Wilkinson (1985: 194-195) defines these park standards based on three criteria: location, use and size. "Locational standards are based primarily upon a service [radius] concept which delineates the maximum distances that people are expected to travel to a particular facility. Size standards are based upon the area of the

site or the number of facilities per population. Use standards are based upon the type of recreation to be provided to a given number of people". Figure 3 demonstrates the application of Wilkinson's (1985) three park standards in the five subsections in Mitchells Plain. It is clear that the CNPs located in the five subsections differ significantly in terms of their locations (how far they are located from the homes), sizes (larger and smaller CNPs) and use (larger CNPs tend to contain slightly more CNP facilities and sports facilities than smaller CNPs).

CNPs are only one form of public spaces, which consist of multiple other forms (e.g., sports fields, national parks, plazas and town squares, civic centres, etc.). Thus, including literature pertaining to the promotion, planning and development of public spaces in general falls beyond the scope of this article.

**4. METHODOLOGY**

**4.1 Study area**

This article forms part of a broader study conducted in 2009 to determine how class differentiation influences local residents' perceptions preferences, needs and use of CNPs in the City of Cape Town. This empirical study followed a positivistic methodological approach by employing a questionnaire to determine some perceptions and preferences of residents' CNP use in a case study of five subsections in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town.

**4.2 Data sampling**

The questionnaires were distributed to schools, because children are the main park users, according to international literature (Willemse, 2010: 109). Using schools to distribute questionnaires to the learners' parents creates a situation where the responses with regard to park usage are limited in scope. The opinions of the respondents about park usage were only tested for themselves and their children. For example, no examination was done of people who do not have any children, the elderly or homeless people who use parks for different reasons. Despite the aforementioned, schools were chosen as places to distribute and collect questionnaires, because, according to international literature, children are the main park users. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) shapefiles, Excel and SPSS were used in order to perform the sampling and data-analysis steps. Shapefiles is a standard non-topological data format used in GIS, which stores geometric and spatial index information of spatial features (Chang, 2006: 50). A

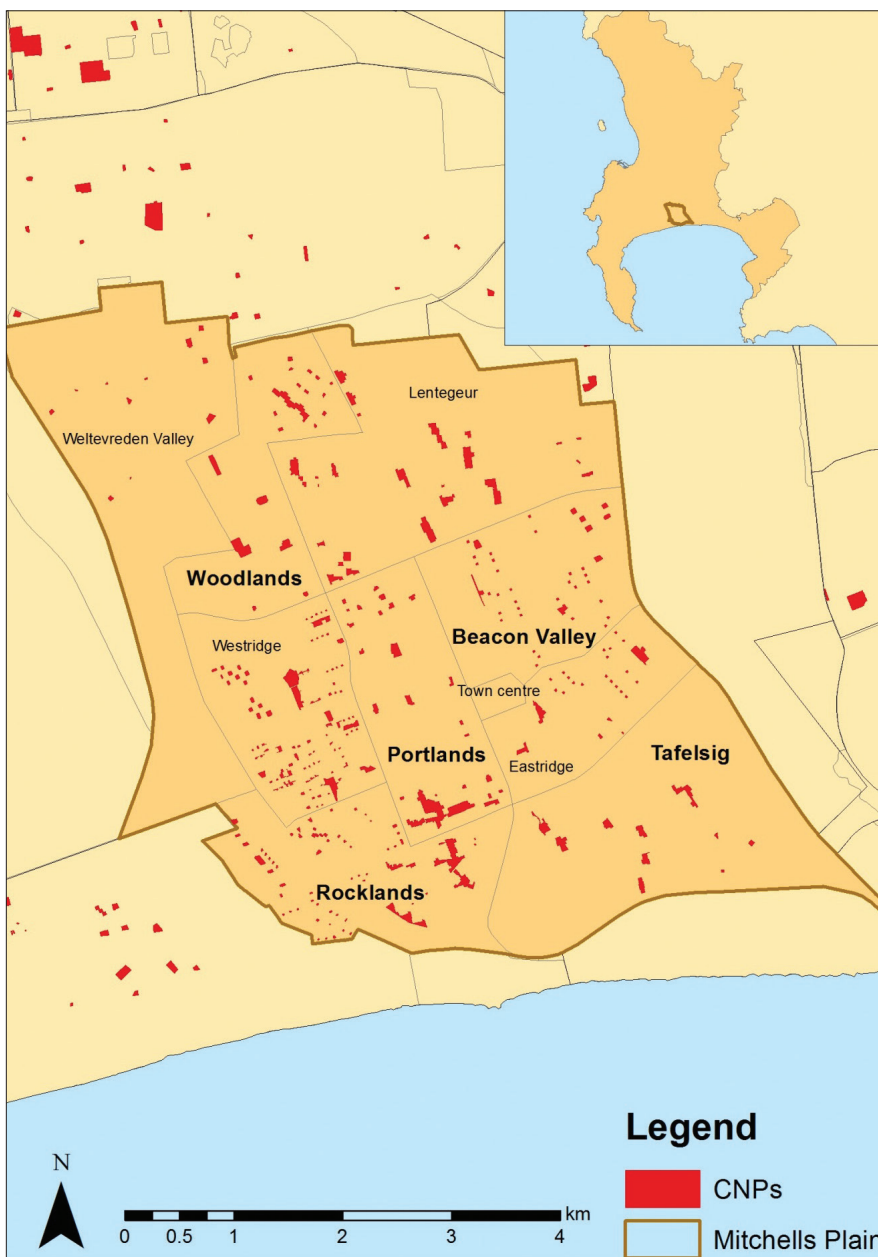


Figure 2: The study area (five sub-sections in Mitchells Plain) in the City of Cape Town

Source: Own compilation



Figure 3: Applying Wilkinson's (1985) three park standards (location, size and use) to the CNPs located in the five subsections of Mitchells Plain

Source: Google Maps, 2015

shapefile containing the schools in the City of Cape Town was joined to a shapefile containing a calculation of suburbs divided into three household income groups (high, middle and low income). A minimum of 385 questionnaires had to be returned per income group (a total of 1 155 questionnaires) in order to obtain a 95% representative sample accuracy rate. The first 20 schools, consisting of primary and secondary schools, were randomly selected from each income category (giving

60 schools in total). In order to counteract the low response rate associated with questionnaires, 25 questionnaires were distributed per school, amounting to 500 questionnaires per income group and 1 500 in total. Overall, 1 288 questionnaires were returned, giving a 86% return rate.

For the purpose of this paper, five subsections of Mitchells Plain (Beacon Valley, Portlands, Rocklands, Tafelsig, and Woodlands) were selected

(Figure 2). One school per subsection was selected, giving five schools in total. Twenty-five questionnaires were distributed to each of the five schools (thus, 125 in total). A total of 114 questionnaires were returned, giving a 91% return rate. The implication of the aforementioned sampling technique used for this article implies that the study results relating to the perceptions and preferences of respondents are not representative of the perceptions and preferences of all the residents in Mitchells Plain with regard to CNP usage (Stoker, 1984: 1-2). This study can, however, provide some indication of the perceptions and preferences of some of the citizens residing in Mitchells Plain with regard to their CNP usage, which may be of value for planners.

**4.3 The data-collection process**

Principals and teachers facilitated the distribution of the questionnaires to the parents for self-completion in Afrikaans or English, after which the completed questionnaires were collected from the schools. Distributing and collecting questionnaires from a few central places, such as schools, that have a slight advantage in authority over children, was deemed to be a more viable option in terms of administration, finances and the time it would take to administer such a process.

**4.4 The questionnaire structure and data-analysis techniques used to process the data**

Questionnaires consisted of four sections. The household demographic section consisted of open-ended questions pertaining to the household composition and a closed-ended question about which outdoor recreational areas the children and adults in the household use. The section about how frequently children and adults use CNPs consisted of closed-ended questions pertaining to the distances travelled to CNPs, the frequency of use, time spent in CNPs, the modes of transport used to reach CNPs, and the reasons for

not visiting CNPs. The third section contained closed-ended questions about the activities in which children and adults participate in CNPs. Respondents were also given the opportunity to indicate 'other' options for the reasons for not visiting CNPs and the activities in which children and adults participate in CNPs, in case the existing possibilities did not match their opinions.

In the final section, a CNP satisfaction index of mean scores on CNP facility management and maintenance was calculated from the Likert-scale satisfaction rating to indicate whether CNP management and facilities are 'excellent' (81%- 100%), 'good' (61%-80%), 'average' (41%-60%), 'poor' (21%- 40%) or 'very bad' (0%-20%). Respondents also had to provide open-ended motivations for these ratings. A nuisance index of mean scores was also calculated from the Likert-scale ratings to indicate whether four main issues are 'always' (0%-33.33%), 'seldom' (33.34%- 66.66%), or 'never' (66.67- 99.99%) a problem in CNPs. Again, respondents had to motivate their ratings in an open-ended question. A Likert-scale was

considered the ideal rating scale, because it provides respondents with a series of attitude dimensions to choose from; it is easy to incorporate into self-completion questionnaires; scores can be calculated for each statement and comparisons can be made between areas, and the scores can be summed to obtain an overall attitudinal score (Brace, 2008: 73-74).

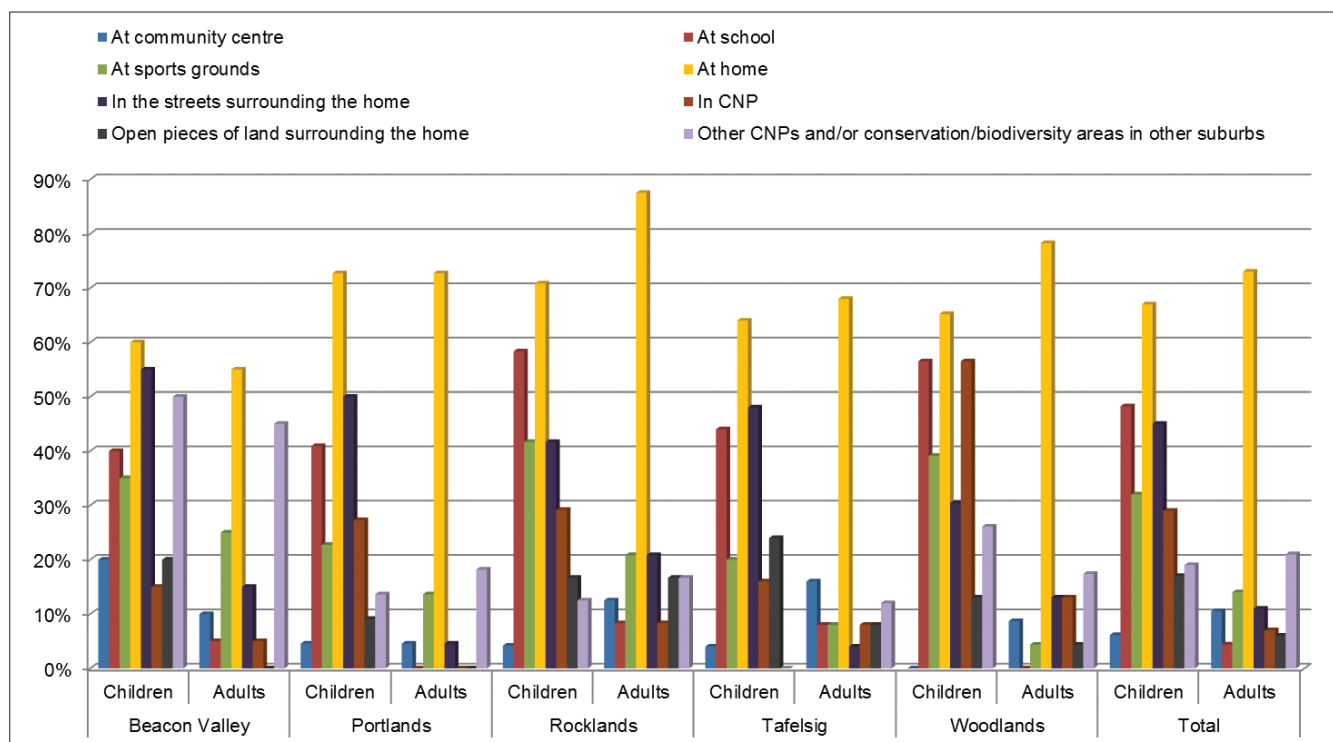
Lastly, the questionnaire contained three open-ended questions pertaining to suggestions on how to improve the CNPs so that they can become the ideal locations for outdoor recreational use.

### 5. CNP USAGE IN MITCHELLS PLAIN

A very brief demographic profile of the respondents is followed by an indication of the relative importance of CNPs in relation to other outdoor recreational places, and by an exposition of CNP usage in Mitchells Plain. Respondents have resided in Mitchells Plain for an average of 16 years. Respondents in Portlands have resided there the longest (an average of 20 years), while respondents in Rocklands have resided in their neighbourhood for an

average of 13 years. The average household in Mitchells Plain consists of six people, while this number increases to seven in Rocklands, and it is slightly lower in Beacon Valley (five household members). Overall, 73% of the respondents do not have a private garden. This percentage varies between 74% and 75% for the respondents residing in Beacon Valley, Portlands and Tafelsig. Of the respondents in Rocklands, 87% do not have a private garden; with a corresponding 52% in Woodlands. Overall, 42% of the respondents do not own a car. Car ownership is the biggest problem in Tafelsig (60% do not own a car). It is generally expected that middle- and low-income households compensate for this lack of private garden space by going to their local CNPs; however, not owning a car significantly hampers a respondent's ability to visit a CNP not located within walking distance of the home.

The children residing in Mitchells Plain, and in all the five subsections, spend most of their outdoor recreational time at home, school, or in the streets around their home (Figure 4). Of the children in Woodlands, 57% also visit



Note: Do not add to 100 due to multiple responses.

Figure 4: Outdoor recreation of children and adults in Mitchells Plain



local CNPs, despite the fact that Woodlands has the lowest percentage of respondents who do not have a private garden. Adults show a similar outdoor recreational pattern, with the exception of time spent at school. Adults also frequent other CNPs and/or conservation/biodiversity areas located in other suburbs. Fifty per cent of children and 45% of adults residing in Beacon Valley prefer to visit CNPs and/or conservation/biodiversity areas located in other suburbs rather than their local CNPs. When totalling the scores for CNP usage and the usage of open pieces of land around the home, the results indicate that children and adults spend significantly more time in CNPs or open pieces of land in Mitchells Plain. This is due to the

fact that some respondents (especially children) may classify existing registered CNPs as vacant pieces of unattended land near the home, due to the lack of (or limited) facilities provided in these CNPs.

### 5.1 Patterns of CNP usage in Mitchells Plain

Just over 75% of the respondents in Mitchells Plain can reach CNPs within a 0-10 minutes' walk from their home (Figure 5). Respondents residing in Woodlands (91%) and Portlands (81%) have the best access to CNPs within a 0-10 minutes' walk from the home. A significant group of respondents in Mitchells Plain (18%), Rocklands

(30%), and Beacon Valley and Tafelsig (both 24%) take more than 15 minutes to reach a CNP, which is not considered satisfactory according to the literature. Walking is by far the most popular form of access to CNPs for children and adults in Mitchells Plain and in all five subsections. Driving a car to CNPs is the second most preferred mode of transportation, especially in the case of Beacon Valley, and to some extent in Rocklands and to a lesser extent in Tafelsig. Taxis are the most popular form of public transportation, especially for children residing in Tafelsig.

The vast majority of children and adults in Mitchells Plain, and in all five subsections, never visit CNPs, or only visit them very infrequently throughout the year (Figure 6). Those who do visit CNPs in Mitchells Plain, and in most of the subsections, do so for at most 1-3 days in a week. By contrast, children (32%) and adults (29%) in Rocklands, and 32% of children in Woodlands visit CNPs 4-7 days in a week. Children and adults in Mitchells Plain, and in all five subsections, spend either shorter periods of time (0-15 minutes) or longer periods of time (more than one hour) in a CNP, with adults most likely visiting CNPs for shorter periods of time than children (Figure 7). The respondents who spend mostly 0-15 minutes in a CNP include the children and adults in Portlands and Woodlands and the adults in Rocklands and Tafelsig. Thus, despite the fact that children in Woodlands visit CNPs often throughout the week, the visits are of short duration. By contrast, the children and adults in Beacon Valley and Rocklands and the children in Tafelsig mostly visit CNPs more than one hour. Thus, not only do the respondents in Rocklands visit CNPs very frequently throughout the week (4-7 days), they also spend longer periods of time in the CNPs. This indicates that CNPs fulfil an important need for outdoor recreation, especially in the case of Rocklands, where 87% of the respondents do not have a private garden.

Respondents were given a list of CNP activities and asked to choose

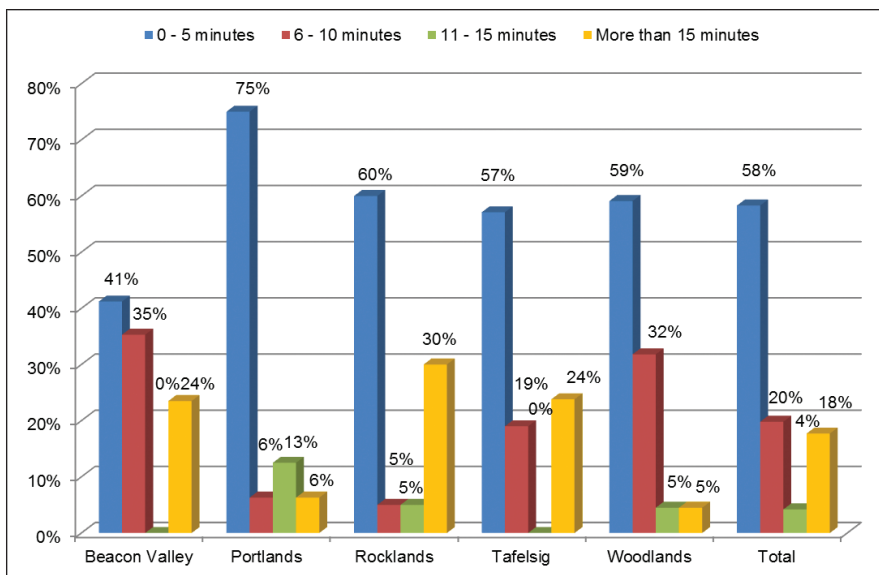


Figure 5: Distances to CNPs in minutes

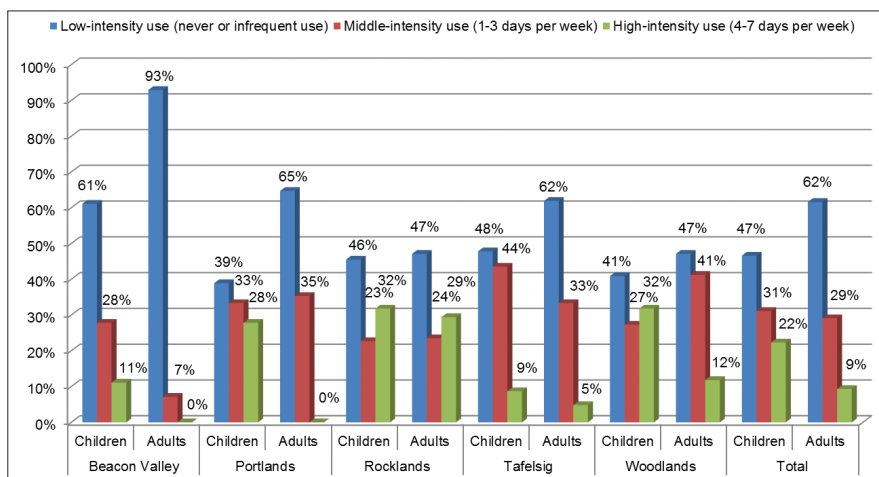


Figure 6: Frequency of CNP use

which ones they pursued in their local CNPs. Respondents could also provide alternative activities pursued in their local CNPs.<sup>1</sup> These activities were then split according to the two main groups in the literature: active and passive recreational activities. It is not surprising that 50% of children in Mitchells Plain prefer to participate in more active recreational activities such as playing sports in CNPs. A similar pattern is observed in the five subsections, where between 40% and 59% of children play sports. Children in Mitchells Plain, and in all five subsections, also play on the play equipment provided or play games or play with other toys in CNPs. Of the children in Portlands, 64% indicated that playing on the play equipment provided is their preferred form of active recreation. Children may choose to play games or to play with other toys, due to the overall lack of facilities in CNPs in Mitchells Plain. This is reflected in quotes by respondents: “[the CNP] facilities are non-existent and I would not [allow] my children to use the equipment due to concerns for their safety”, and “some of the equipment has graffiti on

it and in other cases the equipment is rusted”.

With regard to passive activities, slightly more than a third of children in Mitchells Plain, and in all five subsections, visit CNPs to accompany their friends, while an approximately similar percentage visit CNPs to relax. By contrast, more than a third of adults in Mitchells Plain, and in all five subsections, predominantly partake in passive recreation. Of the adults in Portlands and Tafelsig, 36% mostly accompany children to CNPs, while the preferred form of passive recreation for adults in Rocklands (42%), Tafelsig (36%) and Woodlands (35%) is to relax in CNPs. Having a braai and picnicking is also popular in Mitchells Plain, especially in Beacon Valley, and to a lesser extent in Tafelsig. Roughly a third of adults run/walk to stay active, while 30% of adults in Woodlands also walk their dogs in CNPs.

**5.2 Reasons for CNP non-use**

The conditions in these CNPs (summarised in the main reasons for CNP non-usage) influence the irregularity of CNP use. A list of reasons for not visiting the CNPs

was provided to respondents from which they could choose multiple options. They could also indicate other reasons that were not on the list. With a few exceptions, nearly all of the reasons provided for respondents received very high scores, indicating that there are many negative elements associated with CNPs in Mitchells Plain, and in the five subsections (Figure 8). These negative elements can be grouped into four main interrelated categories. First, Mitchells Plain is a notorious gangland hub in the City of Cape Town, which is closely associated with drug and alcohol abuse (City of Cape Town, 2011: 28, 56-57). This well-known pattern is the main reason why 55% of the respondents in Mitchells Plain do not visit their CNPs. A similar pattern is observed in the five subsections, where between 46% and 60% of the respondents do not visit CNPs for this reason. This suggests that criminals loiter in the local CNPs. This is also reflected in quotes by the respondents: “There are a lot of youngsters that are using [a drug locally referred to as] tik”, and “drugs are freely available at [CNPs]”.

1 Note that the responses do not add to 100, due to multiple responses.

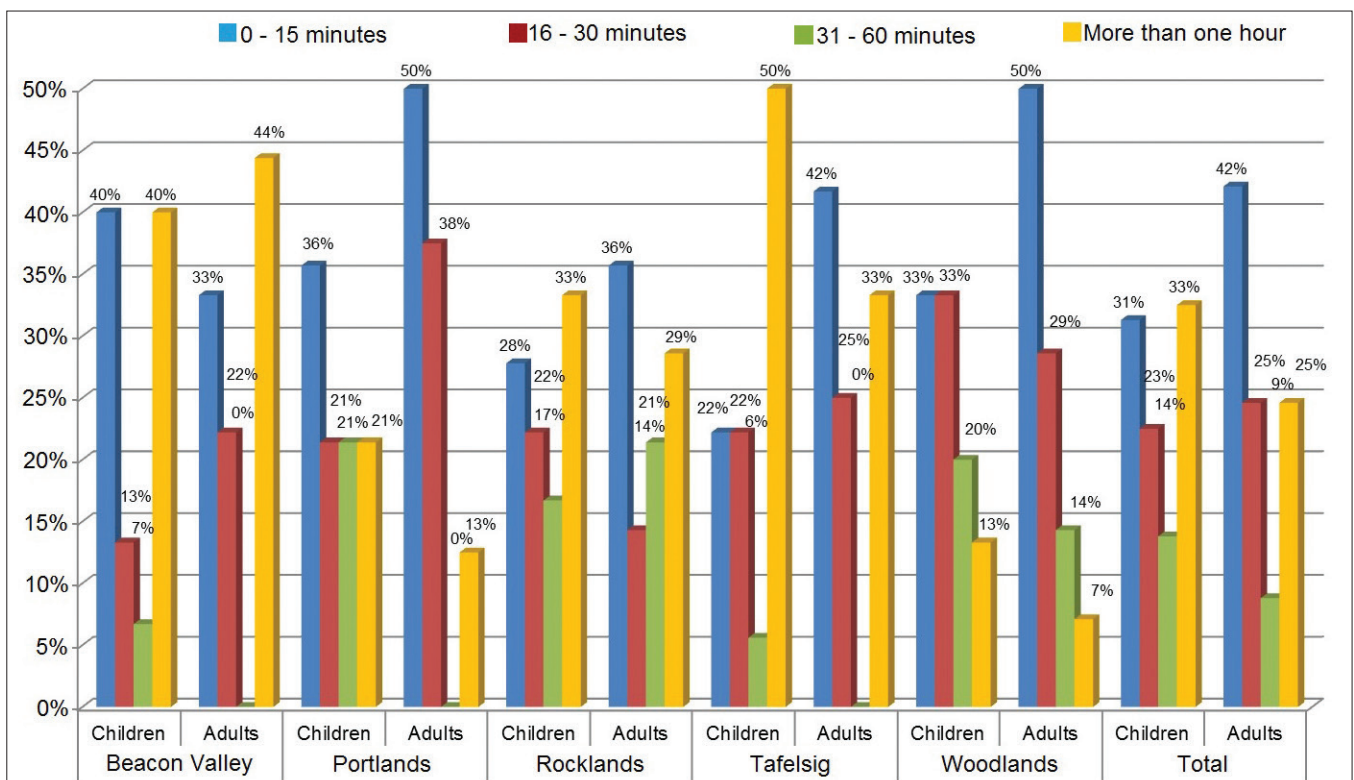


Figure 7: Time spent in CNPs

The second most popular reason why 40% of the respondents in Mitchells Plain, and between 32% and 50% of the respondents in the five subsections, do not visit CNPs or only visit them infrequently throughout the year is an intense fear for their safety and security due to criminal activities. Respondents' fears for their safety and security is aggravated by the presence of vagrants in CNPs<sup>2</sup> and a fear of sexual assault which appears to be more problematic to 45% of the respondents in Portlands.

Poor maintenance and contaminated CNPs caused by litter and vandalism is the third reason why respondents in Mitchells Plain, and in the five subsections, do not visit CNPs. Of the respondents in Mitchells Plain, 22% complained of poor CNP maintenance, while 33% indicated that CNPs are filled with litter and vandalism. When adding these two scores, it is obvious that CNP maintenance is as important as the issues associated with gangsterism and drug and alcohol abuse. This is also reflected in the quotes by respondents: “[the grass is] overgrown, [the CNP is] poorly maintained, and it is used by vagrants

2 Thirty-six per cent of the respondents in Portlands and 26% of the respondents in Woodlands find the vagrants especially problematic.

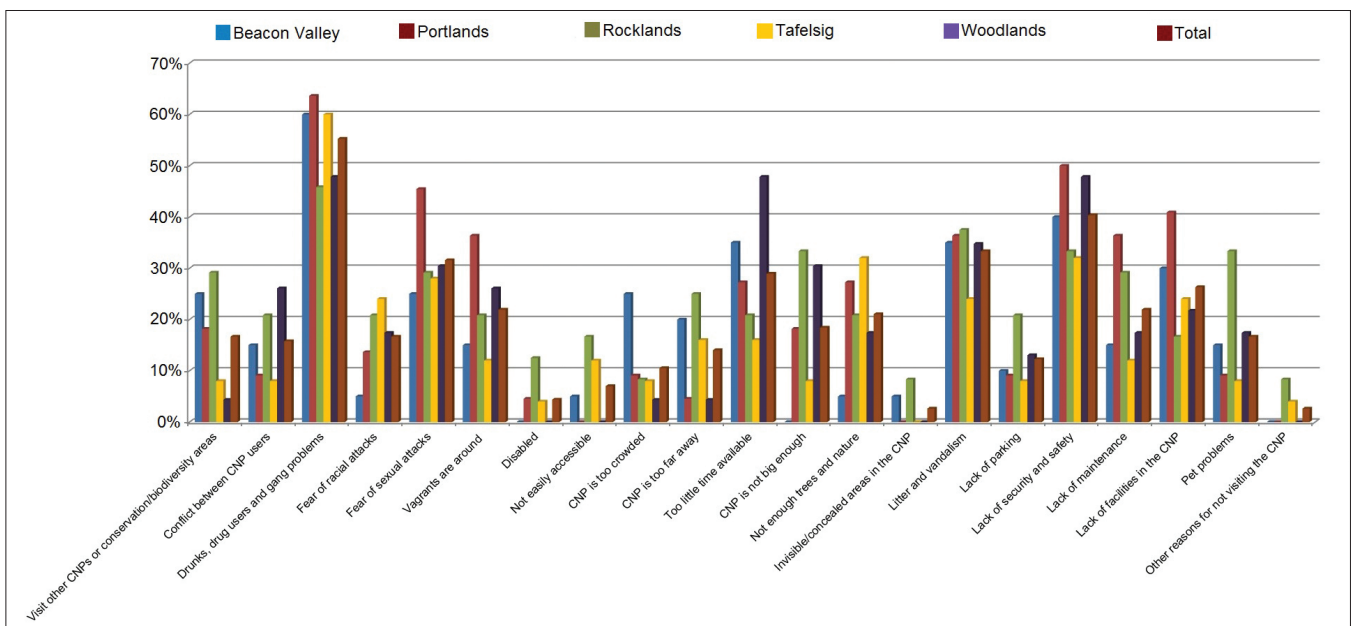
and drug users”; “some people leave beer bottles and used condoms in the [CNP]”, and “residents use the [CNPs] as one big refuse bin”. In terms of the five subsections, poor maintenance is the most problematic to 36% of the respondents in Portlands, while slightly more than a third of the respondents in Beacon Valley, Portlands, Rocklands and Woodlands experience problems associated with litter and vandalism in CNPs.

The fourth reason why respondents in Mitchells Plain, and in the five subsections, do not visit CNPs relates to the lack of sufficient CNP facilities and natural features (i.e., grass and trees) in CNPs. The provision of natural features is an important component of delivering adequate CNP facilities. Tafelsig appears to be struggling significantly in this regard, due to 32% of the respondents indicating that there are not enough trees and nature in the CNPs, and a further 24% of the respondents complaining of the lack of CNP facilities.

### 5.3 CNP satisfaction and nuisance index

Respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with CNPs based on a predetermined list of CNP elements. A satisfaction index on CNP facility management and

maintenance was then calculated to indicate mean scores. A score closer to 100% indicates ‘excellent’ CNP management and maintenance; closer to 60% shows ‘average’, and below 20% indicates that CNP management and maintenance requires major improvement. The general trend for Mitchells Plain indicates that respondents are not very satisfied with the management and maintenance of their CNPs, with the majority of scores falling far below 60% and some nearing 20% (Figure 9). The location of CNPs received the best score (68%). Maintenance, cleanliness and the condition of the grass all scored approximately 50%. The overall lack of facilities (including seats, toilets, play equipment and natural vegetation) and the general feeling of being unsafe in CNPs are clearly reflected in the satisfaction index, with the majority of the respondents rating these elements as relatively poor. In a comparison between the five subsections of Mitchells Plain, the location of CNPs received the highest satisfaction rating (Figure 9). It is interesting to note that most of the scores for Woodlands and Beacon Valley are around the average mark (60%), with some of the CNP management and maintenance issues even reaching a 73% satisfaction level. However, most of the scores for Rocklands, and especially for Tafelsig



Note: Do not add to 100, due to multiple responses.

Figure 8: Reasons for CNP non-use in Mitchells Plain

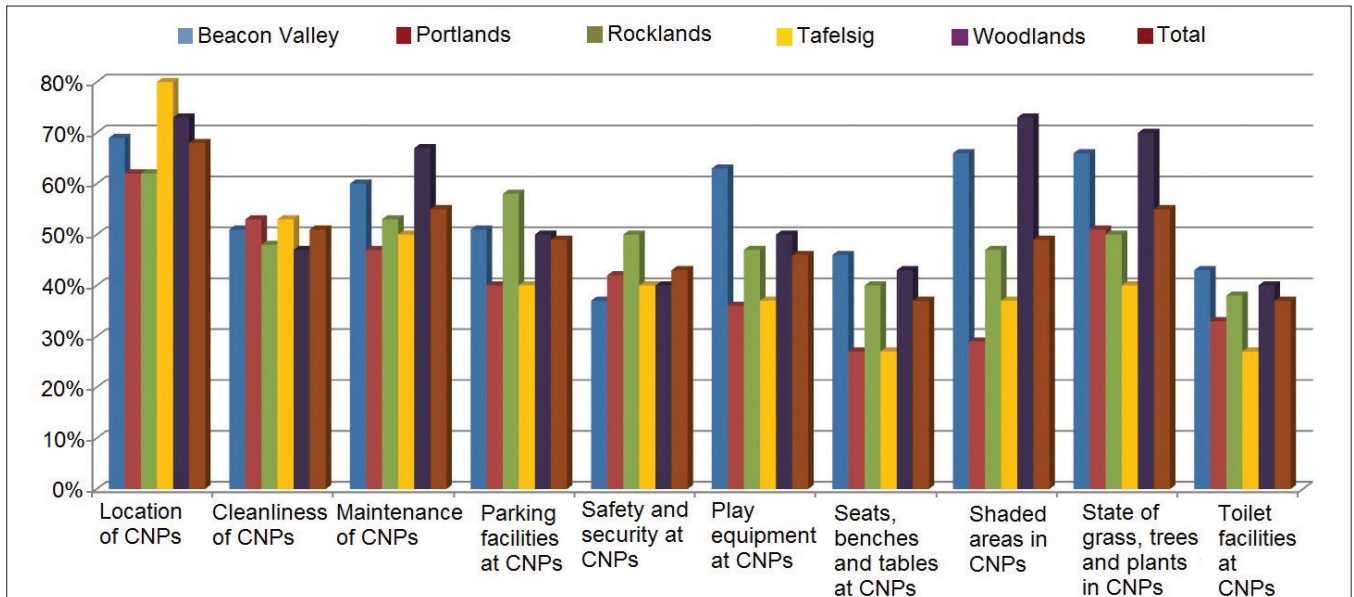
and Portlands, vary between 27% and 40%, which constitutes a 'poor' rating, while only a few scores manage to make an average rating between 40% and 53%. This clearly indicates that respondents in Rocklands, and especially in Tafelsig and Portlands, are more dissatisfied with the management and maintenance of their CNPs. A possible explanation for these findings could be the fact that Woodlands and Beacon Valley are considered the wealthier regions of Mitchells Plain, while the other three sections are notorious for their economic stagnation, ganglands

and related social problems (City of Cape Town, 2011: 28, 56-57).

Based on international literature (Hansen, 2006; Payne *et al.*, 2002; Swanwick *et al.*, 2003)<sup>3</sup>, respondents were also asked to indicate whether the four main issues created a nuisance or irritated them when they visited CNPs (Figure 10). A nuisance index

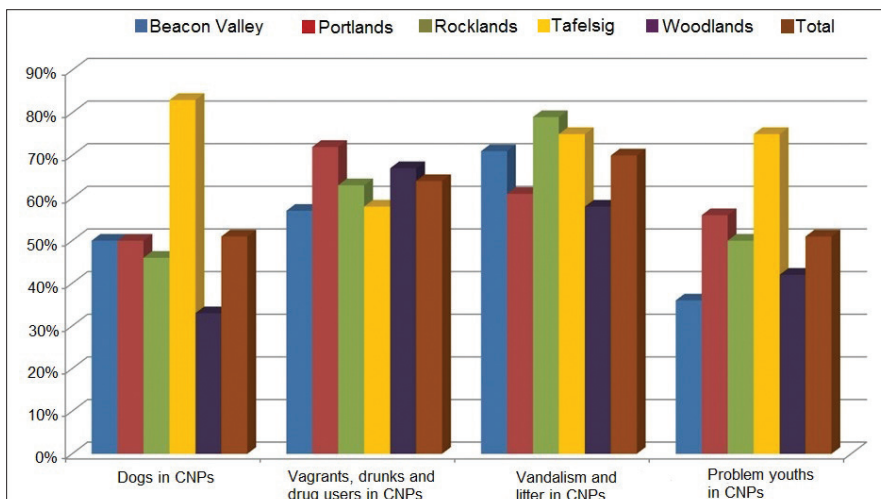
of mean scores was calculated, with a score closer to 100% indicating that there is 'always' a nuisance, closer to 50% indicating that there is 'seldom' a nuisance, and closer to 0% indicating that there is 'never' a nuisance. Vandalism and vagrancy are almost always a nuisance in CNPs, whereas dogs and problem youths are seldom a problem. A similar pattern can be observed between the five different subsections of Mitchells Plain. Interesting observations do, however, stand out. Problem youths are less of a problem in Woodlands and Beacon Valley than in the other

<sup>3</sup> The author used the international literature in order to identify four main issues that create a nuisance/irritation to people when visiting CNPs. These four issues include dogs, vagrants and drunks and drug users, vandalism and problematic youth (Hansen, 2006; Payne *et al.*, 2002; Swanwick *et al.*, 2003).



Note: Do not add to 100, due to multiple responses

Figure 9: Satisfaction index about CNP facility management and maintenance in Mitchells Plain



Note: Do not add to 100, due to multiple responses

Figure 10: Nuisance index of CNPs in Mitchells Plain

three subsections, most probably because these areas are more developed and affluent. Vandalism is less of a nuisance in Woodlands, whereas vagrancy is not such a frequent problem in Beacon Valley. By contrast, dogs seem to be a nuisance, especially in the Tafelsig area.

**5.4 What does it take to create ideal CNPs?**

Respondents were asked to answer three open-ended questions, namely the facilities to be developed in CNPs;

what is their ideal CNP, and general suggestions or comments they have for the local government that may increase their usage of CNPs (Figure 11). Improving the CNPs' play equipment and furniture (39% and 16%, respectively) and safety and security by adding security guards and safety cameras (27%) are the main facilities that require development in CNPs in Mitchells Plain. In terms of the five subsections, respondents in Portlands appear to require the most facilities to be developed in their

CNPs, because 59% require safer and more play equipment; a further 36% feel that CNP furniture should be improved, and 41% require safety and security upgrades in CNPs. One respondent indicated that "safety in off-peak periods should be provided to mothers with young children so that you do not constantly have to look over your shoulder", while another respondent indicated that "better [CNP] security is required to prevent the violence associated with vagrants and drug users".

| Facilities to be developed in CNPs                   | Beacon Valley | Portlands | Rocklands | Tafelsig | Woodlands | Total |
|--|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------|
| • Safer and more play equipment                      | 45%           | 59%       | 17%       | 40%      | 39%       | 39%   |
| • Security guards and safety cameras                 | 30%           | 41%       | 13%       | 24%      | 30%       | 27%   |
| • More CNP furniture                                 | 5%            | 36%       | 13%       | 8%       | 17%       | 16%   |
| • Plant grass and trees                              | 0%            | 14%       | 13%       | 12%      | 0%        | 8%    |
| • Restrooms with cleaning staff everyday             | 15%           | 0%        | 0%        | 8%       | 17%       | 8%    |
| • Rubbish bins                                       | 5%            | 0%        | 0%        | 0%       | 17%       | 4%    |
| • Sufficient lighting to use CNPs in day an at night | 0%            | 9%        | 0%        | 4%       | 0%        | 3%    |
| • Secure/safe parking facilities                     | 5%            | 0%        | 0%        | 0%       | 4%        | 2%    |
| • Drinking water                                     | 0%            | 0%        | 0%        | 0%       | 9%        | 2%    |

| What are the respondents' ideal CNPs?            | Beacon Valley | Portlands | Rocklands | Tafelsig | Woodlands | Total |
|--|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------|
| • Sports facilities                              | 40%           | 14%       | 8%        | 12%      | 35%       | 21%   |
| • Clean, spacious, green and flat                | 20%           | 27%       | 4%        | 8%       | 13%       | 14%   |
| • Pretty gardens/pleasant scenery/shade          | 15%           | 14%       | 4%        | 8%       | 4%        | 9%    |
| • Safe, fenced CNPs with controlled free access  | 10%           | 5%        | 4%        | 8%       | 9%        | 7%    |
| • Sections in the CNPs                           | 5%            | 14%       | 0%        | 4%       | 13%       | 7%    |
| • Wildlife and river/dam/pond/lake/swimming pool | 10%           | 5%        | 0%        | 0%       | 0%        | 3%    |
| • Paved walkways                                 | 0%            | 5%        | 0%        | 0%       | 0%        | 1%    |

| Comments and suggestions about CNP use  | Beacon Valley | Portlands | Rocklands | Tafelsig | Woodlands | Total |
|---|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------|
| • Maintain CNPs regularly   | 15%           | 23%       | 13%       | 8%       | 26%       | 17%   |
| • Remove vagrants, drunks, drug users, gangs, alcoholics and thieves from CNP daily | 10%           | 18%       | 8%        | 16%      | 9%        | 12%   |
| • Clean CNP areas daily   | 5%            | 5%        | 0%        | 8%       | 22%       | 8%    |
| • Want larger CNP areas for more communal use                                       | 0%            | 0%        | 0%        | 8%       | 4%        | 3%    |
| • Community education on CNP maintenace   | 0%            | 0%        | 4%        | 0%       | 0%        | 1%    |
| • Multipurpose use of CNPs  | 0%            | 0%        | 0%        | 4%       | 0%        | 1%    |
| • Grass must be planted in the vicinity of the CNP equipment                        | 0%            | 5%        | 0%        | 0%       | 0%        | 1%    |

Note: Do not add to 100, due to multiple responses.

Figure 11: Ways to improve CNPs in Mitchells Plain

To 40% and 35% of the respondents in Beacon Valley and Woodlands, respectively, and to 21% of the Mitchells Plain respondents, creating CNPs that allow for an integration of regular outdoor recreational activities and sports facilities is necessary and important. One respondent noted that “CNP equipment should be provided to “encourage exercise and stimulation for young and old”. A further 14% of the Mitchells Plain respondents require clean, spacious, green and flat CNPs. CNPs in Portlands appear to be barren, dull and unattractive, because 41% of the respondents indicated that having CNPs that are clean, spacious, green and flat and contains pretty gardens and trees for shade would create the perfect ambience. One respondent indicated that “[CNPs] should be neat, safe, well-maintained, [with] an entertainment area that is maintained regularly”. An additional 14% and 13% of the respondents in Portlands and Woodlands, respectively,

want CNPs to contain sections that will allow different people to participate in different CNP activities simultaneously.

Comments and suggestions to ensure increased CNP usage in Mitchells Plain mostly relate to regular maintenance. Cleaning the CNPs on a daily basis is also important to 22% of the respondents in Woodlands, while expelling vagrants, gangsters, drug users, alcoholics and thieves from CNPs is important to 18% and 16% of the respondents in Portlands and Tafelsig, respectively. One respondent suggested that the local government should make [CNP] maintenance a “community project, which passes the responsibility to maintain [the CNP] from one resident to the next”.

CNPs in five subsections of Mitchells Plain (Beacon Valley, Portlands, Rocklands, Tafelsig and Woodlands). Results indicate that respondents do not spend most of their outdoor recreational time in the CNPs, but that the children in Woodlands are more likely to visit the CNPs of all the five subsections. Children and adults in Beacon Valley are the most likely to visit CNPs and/or conservation/ biodiversity areas located in other suburbs, despite the fact that they appear to have CNPs of varying sizes and in different locations in their own neighbourhood (see Figure 2). Confusion between CNPs and mere open pieces of land near homes is evident, as some respondents may have thought that empty, scrubby and vacant lots were CNPs when in fact they were not, or vice versa.

Various factors influence the frequency of CNP use and the time spent in CNPs. First, the overall lack of private garden space may increase

### 6. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The aim of this paper was to provide an overview of some of the perceptions and preferences of residents’ use of

| <b>Inputs<br/>(What government should do before CNP planning commences):</b>   | <b>Actions<br/>(What government should do with the inputs):</b>  | <b>Outputs<br/>(What is produced after considering the inputs and the actions):</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify the resources (labour, money, materials) needed to provide CNP facilities in Mitchells Plain</li> <li>2. Identify the locations where the CNPs should be located in Mitchells Plain.</li> <li>3. Identify citizens’ perceptions and preferences with regards to CNPs in Mitchells Plain to ensure that their needs and aspirations are met in the design and development of CNPs.</li> <li>4. Identify and promulgate the laws and regulations required to implement and manage CNPs effectively in Mitchells Plain by involving multiple spheres of government.</li> <li>5. Identify the constraints associated with the aforementioned process to ensure that CNP planning can adapt to changing community needs in Mitchells Plain.</li> </ol> | <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Construct CNPs in locations so that the maximum number of citizens in Mitchells Plain would be able to access it in the shortest possible time.</li> <li>2. Provide CNP facilities and furniture that will suite the preferences of citizens with varying socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics in Mitchells Plain.</li> </ol> | <p style="text-align: center;">=</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CNPs in all five sub-sections of Mitchells Plain are accessible within at most a 15 minutes’ walk from the home.</li> <li>2. CNPs in Mitchells Plain are safe (improvements to safety could include employing security guards, installing CCTV cameras, regular patrols by the police, community patrols of the CNPs, removing the unwanted elements and people from the CNPs on a regular basis including gangsters, drug users, alcoholics, vagrants and vandals, placing a fence around the CNP which will control the access).</li> <li>3. CNPs in Mitchells Plain are properly maintained and cleaned daily (by retaining the otherwise unemployed youths of Mitchells Plain for this task, the local government would not only ensure that CNPs are maintained and cleaned on a regular basis to attract more users, but also alleviate the unemployment situation faced by many youths in this area).</li> <li>4. CNPs in Mitchells Plain contain a variety of facilities and furniture, including play equipment, picnic tables, seats/ benches, dustbins and sports facilities, which can be used by citizens with varying socio-demographic characteristics.</li> <li>5. CNPs in Mitchells Plain contain natural features to create a pleasant scenery (improvements to natural features could include planting grass, trees for shade, planting gardens, adding wildlife and water facilities).</li> </ol> |
| <p><b>Outcomes<br/>(The benefits expected after the inputs, actions and outputs have been considered):</b></p> <p>Improved perceptions of CNPs, which will increase CNP usage.</p>   |  |  |

Figure 12: A benefits-based management strategy for the government to manage CNPs more effectively in Mitchells Plain

Adapted from: Hansen, 2006: 12

the frequency of CNP usage and the time spent in CNPs. This is observed especially in Rocklands, where 87% of the respondents do not have private gardens and nearly a third of children and adults visit CNPs 4-7 days in a week for more than one hour at a time. Secondly, CNPs that are located closer to the home are visited more frequently by more respondents than those located further than a 15 minutes' walk away, which is considered as the accepted norm in terms of the time that it should take to reach a CNP. Woodlands is one example where the distance decay function mentioned in the literature is observed – CNPs are mostly located within a 0-10 minutes' walk away, which increases the number of days that children spend in CNPs. Thirdly, the mode of transport also influences CNP usage patterns. Respondents mostly prefer to walk to CNPs that are located within an acceptable distance from their homes (within a 15 minutes' walk). Car ownership can also significantly impact the ability of respondents to reach CNPs that are located further than a 15 minutes' walk away. Of the respondents in Tafelsig, 60% do not own a car; this forces them to use public transport in the form of taxis in order to reach CNPs that are located further away. The importance of CNP facilities to the respondents in the five subsections in Mitchells Plain is highlighted by the fact that some respondents spend longer periods of time in CNPs, while others visit CNPs more often, but for shorter periods of time, despite the poor conditions in these CNPs. The children mostly participate in active recreational activities, while the adults prefer more passive recreational activities in CNPs.

CNP non-usage or infrequent visits throughout the year can be explained by general feelings of being unsafe, a lack of maintenance, and a failure of the government to provide appropriate CNP facilities and furniture. Respondents in Portlands experience more safety concerns and a lack of overall maintenance of CNPs, whereas those in Tafelsig struggle more disproportionately with a lack of appropriate CNP facilities, furniture and natural features. The reasons why

CNPs are never visited or are only visited very infrequently throughout the year are echoed in the CNP satisfaction index. There are notable differences in CNPs between areas such as Rocklands, and especially Tafelsig and Portlands, which are far less affluent than Woodlands and Beacon Valley. Those facilities which respondents want to develop in CNPs to help create their ideal CNPs mostly correspond to the reasons why CNPs are not visited frequently.

The policy implications of this article can be summarised using Hansen's (2006: 12) benefits-based management strategy to manage CNPs effectively. This strategy is a bottom-up approach to ensure adequate CNP delivery and management (Figure 12). CNP planning should work backwards by first identifying and prioritising the community's desired CNP outcomes and then the outputs, actions and inputs required from the government to achieve the outcomes.

The importance of this paper lies in the fact that it is giving ordinary residents of Mitchells Plain the opportunity to voice their concerns about CNP facilities, to ensure that environmental justice prevails in their community. Ruiters (2001: 102) summarises the need for community participation to ensure environmental justice for all community members:

environmental justice would not mean equal exposure but better relative locations and conditions for vulnerable and historically disadvantaged groups. Equal protection for unequal populations implies radical redistribution. Justice is thus not merely about the equitable and class-neutral implementation of laws. Justice requires the fusion of existing local knowledge, future goals and imaginaries. Justice must be able to raise the self-confidence of the people and their collective power so that people can learn to map their own environments from their own experiences.

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