

Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA): The questions below are designed to ensure that policies enacted by LDCHD promote health equity. The questions below may not be able to be answered for every policy but serve as a platform for further discussion prior to the adoption of any new policies.

Date: 6/18/19	Individual/Team Name Completing HEIA: Sarah Hartsig, shartsig@ldchealth.org
Policy Name: Parks and Recreation User Fees	
<p>What is the question to be answered by this HEIA?</p> <p>How does the implementation of user fees for Parks and Recreation facilities impact health equity? Specifically, what are the anticipated impacts on low-income and minority residents?</p>	

Section 1: Screen
<p>1a. Does the policy have the potential to impact the agreed-upon definition of equity (everyone deserves a fair and just opportunity to be healthy)?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, continue with HEIA</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No, consider discontinuing HEIA</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Unsure (<i>If you are unsure, contact a member of the health equity team</i>)</p>

Section 2: Scope
<p>2a. Please provide a background and rationale for this policy:</p> <p>The Lawrence Parks and Rec Department is facing a \$675,000 gap in its recreation fund. It has explored several options for cost recovery. One of these is the implementation of user fees, which is estimated to generate approximately \$175,000 towards this budget shortfall, though the exact amount of revenue that will be generated is unknown.</p> <p>A one-time fee of \$5 would be charged to cover the cost of an electronic security card (the cost would be \$10 for non-residents of Douglas County). The fee structure is as follows:</p> <p>Douglas County Residents</p>

	Annual Pass	Daily	20-Day	Monthly	3-month	6-month
Youth ages 18 and younger	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Young adult 19-24	\$24	\$2	\$30	\$8	\$10	\$12
Adults	\$48	\$3	\$40	\$10	\$12	\$24
62 and over or with disabilities	\$24	\$2	\$30	\$8	\$10	\$12

Non-Residents of Douglas County

	Annual Pass	Daily	20-Day	Monthly	3-month	6-month
Youth ages 18 and younger	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Young adult 19-24	\$30	\$3	\$36	\$10	\$12	\$15
Adults	\$60	\$4	\$48	\$12	\$15	\$30
62 and over or with disabilities	\$30	\$3	\$36	\$10	\$12	\$15

The parks and recreation department notes that it is exploring partnerships with local non-profits for low-income adults and others in need, but there is no concrete plan currently in place to provide options for these individuals.

Table 2-2: Health Equity Impact Analysis <i>(Contact Health Equity Policy Subcommittee for an example)</i>					
Policy	Direct impacts (What will happen as a result of the policy?)	Intermediate impacts (Which social determinants of health/causes of health inequity are impacted?)	Geographic impact (Will one of the below be primarily impacted?)	Impacted population groups	Projected impact on health equity
Parks and recreation user fees	<p>Potential positive impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional revenue for parks and rec to cover budget shortfall or potentially expand services - Data collection with card - Additional security with card <p>Potential negative impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception of excluding certain populations - Actual exclusion of certain populations - Decreased quality of life - Worsened disparities in health outcomes related to physical inactivity, such as heart disease, diabetes and obesity. - Community's historical standard of free facilities- perception of going back on word - Lower use of facilities, facilities could close with lower use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic stability (income inequality) <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social and community context (discrimination) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health and health care (access to services) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood and built environment <p>Please describe your answer: Policy could exacerbate current advantages for those with more disposable resources and could discriminate against those without. Fee implementation could reduce access to health-supporting services (recreation) and fewer available facilities could impact the neighborhood environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Zip Code: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Census Tract: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Municipality: _____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood: _East Lawrence, Southwest Lawrence <input type="checkbox"/> No specific geographic areas identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Racial/ethnic minority <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Age group <input type="checkbox"/> Gender group <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low income <input type="checkbox"/> Low education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Immigrants/ refugees <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Incarcerated/ formerly incarcerated <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual minority <input type="checkbox"/> Limited English proficiency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Person with a Disability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Homeless <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Use Disorder <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Larger families or families with multigenerational housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Improve <input type="checkbox"/> Harm <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <p>Please describe your answer:</p> <p>It is unclear which residents will be disproportionately affected by the fee structure because of the lack of user data available. However, it appears that the fees could negatively impact low-income and minority populations.</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment

3a. To what extent does evidence (data, literature, subject matter expertise) from other communities or organizations support the connections between similar policies and the health equity impacts identified above?

A brief literature search was conducted to identify the extent to which user fees have impacted low-income people and other population groups. The research identified was conclusive: low-income residents are more reactive to fees than high-income residents, and even small user fees may substantially reduce participation in recreation among low-income individuals.ⁱ That could exacerbate current inequities, in which usage and participation of recreational facilities are already greater among individuals from privileged racial/ethnic and sociodemographic groups.ⁱⁱ Literature also suggests that recreational facilities and the resources they offer are not equitably distributed, and that improving the types and quality of resources in poor and minority areas could be an important strategy to increase physical activity among these populations and reduce racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in health outcomes.ⁱⁱⁱ Furthermore, the Lawrence Parks and Recreation Master Plan states that, “the community input shows support for equitable user fees as long as there is provision for low-income residents to participate.”^{iv}

Who is considered low-income in our community, and who could this fee structure impact? Currently, the average median income for Douglas County is \$52,698. For an African American family, median income is \$31,042 and for an Asian family it is \$28,313. African-American, Asian, and Hispanics all have higher rate of poverty than both whites and the county average. In Douglas County, 50% of renters are paying >30% of their income towards rent, and there are 7 census tracts where more than 57% of the renters are paying >30% of their income towards rent.

To illustrate an example of how the annual fee would be unaffordable for some residents, we will use the example of a median-income African American family. Median income of an African American family in Douglas County is \$31,042. Monthly take-home pay would be \$2,586 (approximately \$2,208 after taxes). We'll assume the family is paying the average price of a two-bedroom apartment in Lawrence, which is \$918. (The family would be in the 50% of those paying more than 30% of income towards rent.) At that cost, expendable monthly funds would drop to \$1,290. Average childcare expense in DG county for one child ranges from \$411 to \$1,122.33, depending on age and childcare setting. If they are paying for childcare around the median, which is about \$750 per month, that reduces available cash to \$540. Estimating that the family spends \$125 per week on food, or \$500 for the month, means that only \$40 would be leftover after all of the essentials are paid for. Healthcare, student loan payments, entertainment and transportation are not even factored in. There is little room left in the budget for extras. While charging \$48 for two adults doesn't seem like much, there are many families for whom \$96 (or even \$48) would be difficult to afford.

Which neighborhoods in Lawrence would be affected? The East Lawrence Recreation Center in particular is located in a census tract that is lower median income (\$40,000), higher poverty (32.1%), and lower life expectancy (75.4 years). It also has a higher proportion of households without cars (12.2%). For comparison, the census tract where Rock Chalk Park is located has a higher median income (\$83,000), lower poverty (6.7%), and higher life expectancy (82 years). The proportion of households without cars is 0.83%. So, those who live near the East Lawrence Recreation Center would have less than half of the

median income, and more than 1 in 10 would not be able to easily drive to the newer facility that their fees are funding. Implementing the fees could potentially impact usage of the East Lawrence Recreation Center, which could ultimately affect the level of programming and service there, thus exacerbating inequities.

Several resources were also found in the literature that detail the strategies of cities who aim to lead on the topic of equity in recreation. For example, the Minnesota Parks and Recreation Foundation recently implemented two programs to advance equity in their city. The first is an equity criteria matrix, which prioritizes funding for facilities based on an internally developed equity tool. The second is RecQuest, a comprehensive plan for assessing park and recreation facilities and programming to meet community needs. RecQuest includes a robust community engagement plan and a new data collection process which will improve the current available data (gender, age) to include neighborhood, race, and income elements that will guide investments in facilities.^v Other cities leading on this issue include San Francisco, which also implemented a robust equity matrix identifying “Equity Zones” to be prioritized for investment based on a mix of demographic and health criteria.^{vi}

3b. What are the projected positive or negative impacts of the policy?

Positive:

- The policy is strong in that it allows youth 18 and younger to access the facilities for free. This would provide youth, especially those with parents who work after school hours, a safe and accessible place to play.
- The electronic security cards will be an asset in collecting data on usage of facilities by different demographics. These data could be used for planning purposes, including to inform programming, facility improvements, and the fee structure.

Negative:

- By structuring fees in a way that give a substantial discount to those who are able to pay the cost up front compared to those who are not, the fee structure unintentionally entrenches systems of advantage for individuals with financial means.
- User fees are more likely to decrease use among poor and minority populations, so these populations may experience decreases in physical activity.
- By implementing the policy without a solid base of client data to draw from, the policy increases the likelihood that there will be unintended effects because of the lack of information from which to draw upon when making decisions about the fee structure.
- The Lawrence Parks and Recreation Master Plan states that, “the community input shows support for equitable user fees as long as there is provision for low-income residents to participate.” To-date, this has not occurred, and the Parks and Recreation department risks losing trust and buy-in from the community if it moves forward without a plan for low-income individuals in place.

- Additionally, though it is not part of the fee structure, the phasing out of the community building could have equity impacts, as it would reduce the number of recreational facilities available in or near neighborhoods with lower average incomes.

Section 4: Develop a Strategy

4a. How could we maximize opportunities and minimize harm to the affected populations?

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board recommends:

- That the fee structure be postponed until one year after implementation of the electronic security cards, and that a robust community engagement process be conducted on the issue. This would allow the fee structure to be informed by demographic data and community input, which would increase the chances of an equitable fee structure.
- Implementing the electronic security cards to collect sufficient data on demographics (e.g. address, zip code, age, race, and income level) of the users of the various facilities for equity planning purposes.
- Maintaining free access for youth ages 18 and younger.
- Exploring the possibility of a payment plan for low-income individuals to pay for the annual fee, so that they are not ultimately paying more for use than those with means to pay the entire cost up front.

Section 5: Monitor and Evaluate

5a. How will data be used to monitor the impact on health equity resulting from this policy?

Data from the electronic security cards could be used to collect demographic information from users of parks and recreation facilities.

5b. How will results and outcomes of the policy be shared and communicated with affected groups?

We will follow standard Lawrence Parks and Recreation Department and City requirements for communicating with affected groups.

Section 6: Summary

6a. Please provide a short summary to be provided to the Board of Health and/or policymakers, if applicable.

Parks and recreation user fees have been found to be disadvantageous to low-income and minority populations. In Douglas County, the median household income is \$52,698, with even lower median incomes for African American and Asian families. The current fee structure provides a cost advantage to individuals who can purchase an annual pass in one up-front payment. However, some families may not have the financial resources to budget for or prioritize such an expenditure over other household needs, and would end up paying more in total by purchasing multiple daily use passes. By implementing the current fee structure, some members of the Douglas County community may be disproportionately financially impacted, and potentially excluded from access to recreational facilities.

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board recommends maintaining the current free access for youth ages 18 and under and supports the implementation of electronic security cards to collect demographic user data. It also recommends delaying the implementation of the proposed fee structure until after robust public engagement and data collection can be conducted to inform the equity of the proposed policy.

ⁱ More, T. (2000). Do user fees exclude low-income people from resource-based recreation? *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32 (3), pp. 341-357.

ⁱⁱ Mowen, A., Barrett, A., Pitas, N., Graefe, A., Taff, D., Godbey, G. (2018). Americans' use and perceptions of local park and recreation services: Results from an updated study. *Journal of Park & Recreation Administration*. 26(4), p. 128-148.

ⁱⁱⁱ Moore, L.V., Diez Roux, A.V., Evenson, K.R., McGinn, A.P., and Brines, S.J. (2008). Availability of recreational resources in minority and low socioeconomic status areas. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 34(1) (2008), pp. 16-22.

^{iv} Lawrence Parks and Recreation (2017). Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

<https://assets.lawrenceks.org/assets/lprd/masterplan16/approvedmasterplan16-17.pdf>

^v Hiller, H. (2017). Partnering for Park Equity. Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Foundation.

<https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/190212/KNCBR%201431.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

^{vi} Ginsburg, P. (2016). Equity Metrics. Internal memo. <https://sfrecpark.org/wp-content/uploads/PROSAC-memo-Equity-Aug-2016-1.pdf>