

baseball and basketball games in neighborhood parks may be surrounded by clusters of spectators. Designs for active recreation areas sometimes overlook this, failing to account for people who enjoy watching games in progress. Researchers at Riis Park in New York City (Madden & Bussard, 1977) found a lack of seating for spectators of handball and other games and noted that fences and bushes frequently blocked the view of such activities from adjacent areas.

People also are attracted to public spaces by various physical features. Fountains often function as a particular focus of interest. Rutledge (1976) observed that many people will walk down a flight of stairs to the sunken plaza, at Chicago's First National Bank, just to look at the large fountain there. Similarly, our research at Greenacre Park in New York indicates that viewing the dramatic waterfall was a major reason for coming to the park. This is also true for both Lovejoy and Forecourt Fountains in Portland, Oregon. In a study of the qualities people prefer in outdoor spaces, Buker and Montarzino (1983) found that water was the single most desired feature, mentioned by 98 percent of their interviewees.

Another type of passive engagement that concerns the physical and aesthetic qualities of a site involves viewing public art or a compelling landscape. It would be unfortunate to ignore this function, because it is an important aspect of the enjoyment of the public scene. The scenery and the panoramic views are features that draw people to national parks, but even users of vest-pocket parks speak of the pleasure of watching cascades of water.

Natural features, particularly vegetation, seem to attract people to urban places. In a linear park in downtown Yokohama, Japan, which offers three distinct types of settings, a "forest plaza" is "greatly enjoyed by the city dwellers" (Iwasaki & Tyrwhitt, 1978, p. 439). In our own study of Greenacre Park, the greenery and water were mentioned frequently by users as enjoyable qualities of the site. The opportunity to be close to plants, trees, flowers, and water is strongly desired by people and there is some evidence that these elements may have relaxing and "restorative" qualities (Hartig, Mang, & Evans, 1991; Kaplan, 1983, 1985; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1990).

Some urban spaces attract users because they offer splendid views. Francis and his associates (1984) report that many people came to Brooklyn's "drive-in" Grand Street Waterfront Park primarily to enjoy the panorama of the East River and Manhattan across the river.

Similarly, in their study of downtown Vancouver, Joardar and Neill (1978) found that waterfront places

have a strong drawing power because of the vistas they offer. Unfortunately, until very recently, waterfronts in many cities have been largely ignored as public, open space resources. Mooney (1979) summarizes some of the problems in an article about the Mississippi River: "All too frequently locations for simple visual linkage with river activities have been usurped by marinas, parking lots, industrial blight and warehouses. With few exceptions, the urban edge of the Mississippi is uninviting to pedestrians" (p. 49).

With the development of waterfront parks such as the esplanade stretching along Battery Park City in Lower Manhattan, there is some hope that these policies are changing. New York City is planning the creation of an esplanade park from the Battery to Fifty-ninth Street, and other cities are building waterfront parks. However, one could complain that what is being done is too little and too late.

## Active engagement

Active engagement represents a more direct experience with a place and the people within it. This function has a number of components. First, although some people find satisfaction in people-watching, others desire more direct contact with people – whether they are strangers in a site or members of their own group. Based on considerable research, primarily in New York City, William Whyte concluded that plazas in downtown areas "are not ideal places for striking up acquaintances, and even on the most sociable of them, there is not much mingling" (Whyte, 1980, p. 19). Yet Whyte notes that unusual features or occurrences in a plaza, such as an entertainer or a fine sculpture, will often result in what he calls "triangulation" whereby that special feature "provides a linkage between people and prompts strangers to talk to each other" (p. 94). In places other than the plazas of large, urban downtown areas, some degree of interaction between strangers may be more common. Christopher Alexander has pointed out the importance of the promenades, often centrally located shopping streets, common in older neighborhoods and small cities in Europe and Latin America where "people with a shared way of life gather together to rub shoulders and confirm their community" (Alexander et al., 1977, p. 169). Although Alexander suggests that promenades are used mainly by people who live within ten minutes' walking distance, some readers may be familiar with a variation of the promenade where teenagers and young adults with similar interests converge on