ALLOCATING SERVICES FOR PARKS AND RECREATION:  
A Model for Implementing Equity Concepts in Austin, Texas

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the equitability of park and recreation service allocation decisions. The importance of equity as a concern for planners is discussed, a sampling of related literature is reviewed, and a typology of eight equity models is proposed. Research data showing that equity preferences are measurable and that they differ by service and decisionmaking group are presented. A conceptual planning model including an equity assessment process is then described, as are current efforts by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department to include equity considerations in its planning process.

KEYWORDS: Equity, service allocation, parks and recreation, master planning.

This article describes a process for implementing service allocation or equity preferences to guide the delivery of recreation and parks services in a large U.S. city. The equity approach discussed here differs from most other studies of service allocation reported in the literature in that it describes the adoption of an a priori proactive approach to determining and implementing what decisionmakers recognize to be equitable service allocation. The objectives of the article are to: (1) review the reasons for the growing awareness of the equity issue in parks and recreation planning; (2) affirm the need for a more proactive assessment of service equity; (3) develop a model that incorporates equity into the planning process; and (4) to illustrate how the Austin Parks and Recreation Department implemented the model.

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THE EMERGENCE OF THE EQUITY ISSUE IN PARKS AND RECREATION

Five factors appear to have contributed to the growth in awareness among scholars and practitioners of equity’s central role in planning for parks and recreation. First, over the past decade many cities have experienced fiscal retrenchment. During such periods agency resources are subjected to increased scrutiny, and service allocation or “who gets what” decisions receive a more thorough review. Lucy and Mladenka (1980) comment: “Equity will be more salient in a period of scarcity, winners and losers will become more evident and more aware of what they are winning and losing” (1980 p. 1.1). Not only will residents be likely to seek to maintain their share of public resources in such an environment, but administrators will have to make difficult decisions on service reduction, and elected officials will have to consider tough political choices. Thurow (1981) adds:

In this situation the essence of problem solving is loss allocation. But this is precisely what our political process is least capable of doing. When there are economic gains to be allocated, our political process can allocate them. When there are large economic losses to be allocated, our political process is paralyzed (p.12).

A second factor heightening awareness of equitable service allocation is that in many cities a plethora of citizen action groups are now willing and mobilized to fight for maintenance of quality-of-life services such as recreation and parks. To many urban residents these services are no longer viewed as discretionary. Rather, they perceive the development and maintenance of urban open space, parks, and recreation facilities as important to sustaining property values and desired lifestyles.

Third, the means by which service benefits are measured have improved markedly in the past decade and such measures are now included in many planning processes. Hence, improved techniques are available for determining who receives what benefits from recreation and parks services. Without knowledge of “who gets what,” it is impossible to document or test whether any model of equitable service allocation has been achieved.

A fourth element that has contributed to greater discussion and debate about service allocation decisions for many services is an increase in the number of models of service delivery that are now widely accepted as appropriate. Each of these models has different equity implications. For example, in most cities since 1980 there has been increased acceptance of fees and charges, greater reliance upon joint ventures with other agencies and private sector organizations, heightened use of innovative capital financing mechanisms, and greater dependency on co-producing services. These techniques have supplemented the previous almost exclusive reliance on general-fund tax support for delivering publicly provided recreation and parks services.

A fifth factor contributing to the increased importance of equity to decisionmakers is the possibility of legal action being taken by disenfranchised clienteles to rectify what they believe to be inequitable service allocation patterns. Recreation and parks departments in the United States have been challenged in court on this point on several occasions, and there is no reason to believe that such challenges will not occur again (Wicks, 1987).

Since the 1970s, service allocation models have been used to measure equity within service areas; e.g., the number of neighborhoods examined that of equal distribution. These variations in the observed service neighborhood characteristics. The various models were racial composition, recognized that these models were “winners and losers” of urban service allocation in the cities and services studied, a.

The results of these studies, (1985) and Thomas (1986), tendencies to inequalities.” That is, although systematic pattern that explains Linenberg’s hypothesis, the research by Cingranelli, (1983).

Even where blatant discrimination are perceived to be procedurally important issue. Meeting a major test of Linenberg’s hypothesis has not been easy for administrators from the responsibility. Only by understanding, the constructs of equitable service will agencies be able to deal with clienteles.

Planning for and understanding equity dictate that the origin and structure. The views of citizens, elected officials, and others—based on a priori standards can generate profit, the goals and objectives formulated by many decisionmakers by personal emotions and values are likely to vary widely among public officials likely to espouse a range of values in parks and recreation activities, and parks departments typically open space to social service programs associated with them.
RELEVANT LITERATURE

Since the 1970s, service allocation studies reported in the literature include those by: Levy, Meltzner and Wildavsky (1974); Antunes and Plumlee (1977); Mladenka and Hill (1977); Mladenka (1978); and most notably, Lineberry (1977) and Jones (1980). Each of these studies sought to investigate the possible existence of inequitable service allocation patterns. Of particular concern to the researchers was the issue of racial or economic discrimination; i.e., Lineberry's (1977) "underclass hypothesis." The technique most often used to measure equity was to inventory and compare physical service attributes within service areas; e.g., the number of acres of neighborhood parkland across the number of neighborhoods examined. The equity model that was being tested de facto was that of equal distribution. These studies often used regression models to "explain" variation in the observed service allocation patterns based on demographic and/or neighborhood characteristics. The variables most frequently used in building these predictive models were racial composition, per capita income, and housing density. The authors recognized that these models were of limited generalizable value in predicting the "winners and losers" of urban service allocation decisions because of the different characteristics of the cities and services studied, and the small number of completed studies.

The results of these studies, as well as more recent research reported by Mladenka (1985) and Thomas (1986), tend to support Lineberry's (1977) notion of "unpatterned inequalities." That is, although a certain neighborhood (or other unit of analysis) may receive disproportionately fewer services than its counterpart, there is no discernible systematic pattern that explains this occurrence. Although most available evidence supports Lineberry's hypothesis, there are some who remain unconvinced (cf. Bolotin & Cintranelli, 1983).

Even where blatant discriminatory actions are not felt to exist and agency policies are perceived to be procedurally fair, the equitable allocation of services remains an important issue. Meeting a minimum legal standard of equity, or demonstrating the validity of Lineberry's hypothesis (Mladenka, 1985), does not release public service administrators from the responsibility of considering equitable service allocation (Wicks, 1987). Only by understanding, reconciling, and managing the conflicting attitudinal constructs of equitable service allocation that different decisionmaking groups may hold will agencies be able to demonstrate an expected level of accountability to their clientele.

Planning for and understanding service allocation standards preferred by the community dictate that the origin and strengths of such attitudes be examined (Thomas, 1982). The views of citizens, elected officials, and administrators need to be known before a plan based on a priori standards can be proposed. Unlike the private sector's motivation to generate profit, the goals and objectives of public service provision are multifaceted and formulated by many decisionmakers. Often these objectives are based on principles guided by personal emotions and values. Notions of fairness or equitable service allocation are likely to vary widely among public sector decisionmakers because collectively they are likely to espouse a range of value systems (Wicks & Crompton, 1986). Because recreation and parks departments typically provide a wide array of services, from maintenance of open space to social service programs, there are likely to be a diversity of equity concepts associated with them.
Until recently, little evidence was available regarding equity preferences for parks and recreation services. However, Wicks and Crompton (1987) developed and evaluated support for a set of equity concepts that encompassed a wide range of leisure service allocation preferences. In the taxonomy shown in Figure 1, four generic equity concepts are suggested: (1) compensatory equity; (2) equity defined as equality; (3) equity defined as demand; and (4) the concept of market equity. To accommodate a complete range of choices when these concepts were operationalized, eight alternative equity models were suggested, as depicted in Figure 1, to provide public leisure services:

1. to those with the greatest need (based upon socioeconomic factors);
2. equally to each individual or unit of analysis;
3. where fewest examples of the service now exist;
4. where the service is most used;
5. where levels of citizen advocacy are greatest;
6. to those who pay the most taxes;
7. where fees cover costs; and
8. where the cost of service provision is lowest.

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF EQUITY IMPLEMENTATION

As public agencies increasingly adopt marketing or consumer-oriented approaches to providing services, it is reasonable to expect that part of this consumer orientation will require incorporating the public’s equity preferences into service allocation decisions. Typically, little is known about preferred service allocation patterns.

Comprehensive recreation and parks master plans, long-range capital improvement plans, and strategic plans are challenging for public agencies to negotiate and implement. The difficulty results from serving numerous publics, having multiple agency goals, and operating without agency objectives that include clear statements of equity priorities. To meet the public’s expectations an agency’s planning efforts should consider the needs and preferences of its various publics and clientele groups when allocating its resources among a variety of services. To help resolve these issues, an “Equity Implementation Model” is suggested. Figure 2 illustrates the components, their interrelationships, and the flow of this process. An overview of the components of the general model are described below.

Normative Distribution Phase

The Equity Implementation Model begins with the normative distribution phase. The research question addressed is: “Who ought to receive what?” (Campbell, 1976). The objective at this stage in the process is to define the prevailing equity preferences of the agency’s decisionmaking publics. In addition to conducting the needs assessment study suggested in most planning models, an “Equity Assessment” study will be individualistic and unique to the jurisdiction examined.

Particular care should be taken to ensure that the three primary actors in the public sector decisionmaking process (elected officials, administrators, and citizens) are included in the equity assessment. It is important that all levels of agency personnel be representatively included in the process because their preferences critically impact who receives
FIGURE 1
A Taxonomy Of Equity Models For Delivering Public Leisure Services
publicly provided services. For example, "street-level bureaucrats" may...

A.

While an assessment of the impact of citizen groups is being undertaken, the objective of this phase is to define, as far as possible, the level and type of service input and output per capita, playgrounds per neighborhood, frequency of routine maintenance, and methods for quantifying service quality. The services that local governments provide is to select the most appropriate method to ensure that the norms and represent a significant proportion of the population patterns.

The synthesis phase of the evaluation begins at this point, planners and policy analysts will review the data collected from the agency and its publics (patterns phase two). For example, the allocation of outreach Recreation garbage service is actually distributed according to equity preferences and actual distribution of demand and clientele-specific equity of service.

It is quite possible that decisions about service delivery patterns may be made by informed or ignorant of who actually receives the services or they may have a basic stage must include programs to target clientele (information campaign).

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publicly provided services. For example, Proratas (1979) contends that the values held by “street-level bureaucrats” may significantly differ from those of upper-level administrators.

**Actual Distribution Phase**

While an assessment of the equity preferences of elected officials, administrators, and citizen groups is being undertaken, existing service distribution patterns are documented. The objective of this phase is to answer the question, “Who gets what?” To the extent possible, the level and type of publicly provided services are attributed to their recipient groups. These service input measures may take such forms as: acres of parkland per capita, playgrounds per neighborhood, recreation program time per neighborhood, or the frequency of routine maintenance such as trash collection and lawn mowing. Many methods for quantifying service distribution have been developed for the array of urban services that local governments normally provide. In each case, the challenge to researchers is to select the most appropriate unit of analysis and service measures. Although this phase may appear on the surface to be routine and simplistic, such data collection efforts are not the norm and represent a significant commitment by an agency to tracking service distribution patterns.

**Synthesis**

The synthesis phase of the equity implementation model is the crux of the process. At this point, planners and policymakers evaluate the extent to which the equity preferences of the agency and its publics (phase one) coincide with the existing service distribution patterns (phase two). For example, if the equity assessment indicates that the most acceptable allocation of outreach recreation programs for special populations is to distribute them free of charge equally across the jurisdiction, planners must determine whether this service is actually distributed at no cost to all areas of the city. In those services where equity preferences and actual distribution patterns are found to be incongruent, a revision in agency policy to reduce differences is desirable. It is in this phase that service-specific and clientele-specific equity objectives are identified and prioritized.

It is quite possible that decisionmakers’ perceptions of service distribution patterns may not be accurate. When questioned, agency personnel may be unaware of or misinformed about service delivery patterns. Similarly, residents and officials frequently are not cognizant of who actually receives the benefits of the city’s various parks and recreation services or they may have a biased perspective. To avoid these problems the synthesis stage must include programs to educate/inform agency personnel (internal marketing) and clientele (information campaign) when it is suspected that an information gap is present.

**Policy Review**

Once differences between the normative phase and the actual distribution phases have been recognized, policy objectives must be developed to guide implementation and reconcile inconsistencies. The first step is to examine current policy and agency decision rules to evaluate their impact on service allocation. Concurrent with this exercise, there is a need to adjust policy to meet newly articulated agency equity objectives. What actions
will best achieve the desired results? It is at this phase of the process that the distributional decisions are made. That is, the “what, where, when and how” questions are answered. For example: What hours should a recreation center be open? Where is the most appropriate site to hold a special event? How will the level of maintenance at individual parks be determined? Which recreation center will receive additional staffing? or Where will new park acreage be added?

Evaluation

Following implementation, the actual effects of the policy revision on service allocation patterns need to be evaluated. For short-term evaluations and policy adjustments, the feedback loop may be abbreviated so it relates the policies to be implemented and policy evaluation stages. (See Figure 1.) However, for relatively long-term planning efforts of five years or more, when environmental conditions or equity preferences may have changed, the entire cycle should be repeated.

The following section summarizes the findings from ongoing research concerning the equitable service allocation in Austin, Texas, and is intended to provide an empirical application of the suggested equity implementation model.

IMPLEMENTING THE MODEL IN AUSTIN, TEXAS

The city of Austin, Texas, with a population rapidly approaching one-half million, is endowed with an outstanding natural resource base of parks and greenbelts as well as many recreational opportunities. The city’s Parks and Recreation Department has demonstrated a strong commitment to comprehensive planning for many years. Through this process its personnel have become increasingly aware of the centrality of the equity issue in planning parks and recreation services. Austin’s Parks and Recreation Department has begun to use the model described above to integrate concepts of equity into its planning and policymaking.

Data Collection for the Normative Distribution Phase

To ascertain the effectsize of support for the eight equity models across parks and recreation services in Austin, a questionnaire was administered to three groups of public decision-makers: present and past city council members, all parks and recreation department (PARD) employees, and a random sample of citizens who were members of neighborhood organizations in two planning zones in the city. The reliability of the average resident’s views concerning complex issues such as equity has been questioned by public opinion researchers (Weissberg, 1976). Hence, community group members rather than citizens at large were selected because of their presumed increased awareness of service allocation patterns. The sample size and percentage response rate for each group surveyed were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARD Employees</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To operationalize the eight models, a series of the equity definitions. This series of services, the seven services examined. The seven services included neighborhood parks, community education programs, organized athletic programs, and some typical of those provided by most cities. The facilities that may evolve different criteria for provision by the city and it was likely that some might be provided by them even if they did not use them. Issues like neighborhood parks, and organized athletics may have differences and similarities in decision making.

As an illustration, Figure 3 shows a series of samples of decisionmakers for public parks reported in Figure 3 indicate the three main equity model in response to the statement: “The city’s response (X1–X7) where equity model is reported.” The three sub-populations showed an interest in service allocation. In general across all sub-populations, the strongest support for the “most favored” criterion, for example, is provided by the “most favored” criterion. For metropolitan parks (Figure 1) the criterion was supported by the equity model. Although each survey group comprised of members’ second-most favored criterion, for example, is provided by the “most favored” criterion.

Figure 4 shows that allocating resources can be better than the role of equity. The role of equity is to allocate the least cost of providing the service was greatest for the group that ranked the market.

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The higher level of agency support by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department requires services to be provided on the basis of the judgment of agency personnel. A strong service sector has also forced the adoption of fee revenues. Greater agency support for the environment. The level of department support is relatively high when compared to other.
To operationalize the eight models, Lickert-type scale questions were devised for each of the equity definitions. This series of questions was repeated for each of the seven services examined. The seven services selected for study were: swimming pools, neighborhood parks, community education programs, metropolitan parks, park maintenance, organized athletic programs, and senior citizen programs. These service offerings are typical of those provided by most cities, yet represent a wide range of programs and facilities that may evoke different equity preferences. Each service had a long history of provision by the city and it was felt most residents should have been aware of them even if they did not use them. For the purposes of this article metropolitan parks, neighborhood parks, and organized athletic programs are used as examples to illustrate differences and similarities in decisionmakers’ equity preferences.

As an illustration, Figure 3 shows the ranking of equity preferences among the three samples of decisionmakers for publicly provided metropolitan parks. The mean scores reported in Figure 3 indicate the three sets of respondents’ levels of support for each equity model in response to the statement: “Priority should be given to providing service response (X1-X7) where equity model (Y1-Y8) is implemented.” Higher mean scores reported in Figures 3, 4, and 5, indicate increased support for a given equity model.

The three sub-populations showed considerable differences in their preferred criteria for service allocation. In general, across all seven services, the “equality” option received the strongest support, whereas the “most-taxes-paid” option received widespread and strong rejection. For metropolitan parks (Figure 3), the data indicated that city council members tended to have equity model preferences that differed from those of employees and residents. Although each survey group showed support for the equality model, council members’ second-most favored criterion for allocation was “where the cost for such large parks is the lowest.” This support for cost-consciousness by council members is not shown to be present in allocation decisions for the other services studied. It may be suggested that the council members adopted this pragmatic view in contexts where the cost of providing the service was greatest. Council members also differed from the other groups in that they ranked the market equity (fees) model much lower.

Figure 4 shows that allocating resources for neighborhood parks to areas of the city that now have the fewest was the most favored equity model for this service, closely followed by the equality equity model. The criteria, level of use and low income, received moderate support whereas the market equity options of fees and taxes paid were not favored. The lowest cost option, which received greater support relative to the other options for the larger metro parks, was not as strongly favored for the less capital intensive neighborhood parks. In addition, council members maintained their stronger-than-average dis-enchantment with fees, advocacy, and rewarding upper-income families, whereas the department employees were significantly more supportive of these options.

The higher level of agency support for advocacy may be explained by an increased reliance by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department upon the marketing process that requires services to be provided on the basis of citizen desires rather than on the exclusive judgment of agency personnel. A strong move toward fiscal conservatism in the public sector has also forced the adoption of fee policies that generate heightened levels of revenues. Greater agency support for fees might therefore be expected in the present environment. The level of department personnel supporting the lowest cost option is relatively high when compared to council members. This may be attributable to two
FIGURE 3
The Ranking of Eight Equity Preferences and the Presence of Statistically Significant Differences Among Public Decisionmakers for Metro Parks in Austin, Texas
FIGURE 4
The Ranking of Eight Equity Preferences and the Presence of Statistically Significant Differences Among Public Decisionmakers for Neighborhood Parks in Austin, Texas
factors. First, council members are very cautious about publicly supporting a special interest, especially when it appears to disproportionately benefit affluent residents. This cautious attitude may also help to explain their generally strong support for equity based on equal service allocation. This option is neutral, appeals in some degree to everyone, yet offends no one. The second factor explaining agency support for providing more parks to upper-income neighborhoods is that the agency employees are aware that these residents currently receive the fewest services from the department. Thus, it may be assumed that some staff feel these more affluent residents do not presently receive their fair share of services.

Recreation programs are a fundamentally different service than is the provision of open spaces or parks. The equity preferences shown in Figure 5 for publicly provided, organized athletic programs show equity preference patterns that are significantly different from those for the two resource-based services described above. Of the greatest significance is the strong support among all public decisionmakers for distributing organized athletic programs where they are fee supported. This position is buoyed by administrators who reported significantly less support for providing the service to residents on an equal basis and significantly more support for providing it where the cost to the agency would be less.

In summary, ANOVA procedures showed that for each service, equity preferences among the groups varied. This finding was supported by Duncan's Multiple Range Mean Separation Tests. An ANOVA test was also conducted across samples for each service and equity model. Significant differences from least squares mean tests are shown in Figures 3, 4, and 5.

Although the data may not be generalizable to other cities, the implications of this study may have wide applicability to all local governments. They include that: (1) different models of equity are measurable; (2) equity preferences are likely to differ by service type; (3) equity preferences are likely to differ between decisionmaking groups; and (4) equity preferences may differ within decisionmaking groups.

**Actual Distribution Phase**

Data relating to the actual distribution phase of the equity implementation model initially were collected as part of the data for a parks and recreation master plan completed in 1983 (City of Austin, 1983) and have been periodically updated. A methodology was developed that included the measurement of leisure facility opportunities, leisure service provision, and per capita capital expenditures in each of the city's planning areas. In addition, computer mapping programs were introduced to record service distribution patterns. To track the cost of service provisions, improved and revised internal cost accounting procedures were also implemented.

**Synthesis**

With data from the first two phases of the model at hand, the synthesis phase was undertaken. In conjunction with an agency-wide strategic planning exercise, two position papers were produced dealing directly with the staff's views regarding equity and the related area of service pricing (Austin Parks and Recreation Department, 1987). These
FIGURE 5
The Ranking of Eight Equity Preferences and the Presence of Statistically Significant Differences Among Public Decisionmakers for Organized Athletic Programs in Austin, Texas

* Significant at the .05 level
** Significant at the .01 level
papers were guided by data from the first two phases of the equity assessment. This process revealed that there were substantial differences in the service equity preferences of managers responsible for different recreation and park services. The development of these papers proved to be an effective method of involving the agency’s mid- and upper-level managers in this synthesis phase.

The equity preference data provided information that allowed recreation and park policymakers in Austin to move into the synthesis portion of the model. Through an understanding of preferred allocation norms, policies could be developed that would help match service distribution standards with resource allocation preferences. For example, the strong and widespread support for fee-supported athletic programs gave additional justification for revising user fee policies to reflect this preference. The introduction of these data, which reflected the community’s preferences, allowed administrators to counteract the self-serving position of special interests opposed to fee increases; i.e., the heavy users of those programs. Similarly, the unanimous rejection of fee-supported neighborhood parks and the overwhelming support for providing this service equally across the city had policy implications. Combined with a new and more aggressive mandatory dedication ordinance, the Department upgraded its standards and methods for measuring the distribution of neighborhood park services, and planning policies were implemented to redress discrepancies in the goal of city-wide distributional equality for neighborhood park provision.

Knowledgeable and interested groups outside the agency were also invited to contribute to the synthesis process. A blue-ribbon parks and recreation citizen advisory group was briefed on results of the first two phases of the equity research to aid in developing their recommendations for the long-term growth of the agency and the city. In addition, equitable service allocation was discussed at preliminary public hearings for proposed capital improvements. At these meetings agency personnel informed their advisory board members and interested residents of present service allocation patterns and the equity implications of the proposed capital expenditures on existing allocation patterns.

Other advances have also been made by the Department in the synthesis and implementation stages of the model. A two-dimensional matrix for evaluating capital improvements and policy changes was developed. The importance of this process is that it facilitates the blending of equity models and service classification to provide an operational planning tool. The three-stage process is described below.

Stage 1. Conceptually Develop Equitable Service Categories

The first step is to conceptually develop service allocation categories. Austin’s development of these service categories was based upon a review of the service delivery literature, survey data pertaining to residents’ equity preferences, and the professional judgments of agency personnel. The underlying importance of this step is to apply preferred equity models to specific service characteristics. These classifications provided the basis from which all subsequent allocation decisions were made.

In Austin three categories were employed to classify recreation and parks services. The first level was described as a generic service. This category included those services that were considered basic to the parks and recreation needs of the community and, as such, were not expected to recover any of their costs. The allocation goal for services that fall into this class was to distribute them uniformly across the city and to follow the equality model, although some flexibility and preferences could be reflected.

The second service category was comprised of programs or facilities that exceeded the minimum standard and were defined as those that far exceeds the segments of the leisure services. The goal was to simultaneously provide a minimum level of service as the minimum standard and to provide as much as possible from users. This is reflected in resource allocations in this stage.

Stage 2. Determine Cost of Service

An element that is central to understanding the degree to which services were to be charged. The size of the allocation, cannot be adequately determined, for example, if it is decided that an enhanced service should make up the costs must be undertaken.

Figure 6 shows the relationship described above and the sources of cost categories. The equity models specified the equality of inputs and equality of outputs to provide a minimum level or standard of production is the general foundation for equity options.

Those services described as enhanced would be charged economic demand (use), and political support of the compensatory or need models through general tax revenues. All other models of equity, the objective of the service, but rather to provide an economically disadvantaged. Sources of the traditional public decisionmaking development of a favored service program of that program. Although some form of raying upon public debate to be repeated for each service and by other public decisionmaking process is shown in Figure 6.
equity model, although some flexibility was permitted so local residents’ unique wants and preferences could be reflected.

The second service category was described as an enhanced service and included those programs or facilities that exceeded the generic level in quality or quantity. It is important to understand that deviation above the generic standard was the important criteria for enhanced service. For example, additional amounts of a basic service were considered enhanced as were any special amenities. These services were selectively allocated only when a special need was shown to be present. The equity models of demand, need, or use may apply to this category. With the passage of time and an infusion of additional resources across the city, what was once classed as an enhanced service may be reduced to a generic service as the minimum standard of service delivery rises.

Enterprise services comprised the third category. These programs and facilities were defined as those that far exceeded the minimum standard and that may be provided by other segments of the leisure service delivery system. The objective of enterprise services was to simultaneously provide a recreation service and to recover as much of the cost of delivery as possible from users. The market equity model (fees) is the dominant guideline for resource allocations in this category.

Stage 2. Determine Cost of Service

An element that is central to understanding the three service categories described above is the degree to which services were to be subsidized, or conversely, the amount of fees that were to be charged. The subsidy/fee issue, and ultimately the equity of service allocation, cannot be adequately addressed without a knowledge of service costs. For example, if it is decided that an enterprise service should generate 110% of total costs or that an enhanced service should not receive a subsidy greater than 50%, an accounting of service costs must be undertaken.

Figure 6 shows the relationship between the eight equity models in the taxonomy described above and the sources of service production implicit in the service classification categories. The equity models suggested for those services described as generic are equality of inputs and equality of outputs. Because the objective of these equity models is to provide a minimum level or standard of service for all city residents, the primary source of production is the general fund with only a token reliance upon fees or other market equity options.

Those services described as enhanced have three applicable equity options: compensation, economic demand (use), and political demand (advocacy). The highly redistributive nature of the compensatory or need model of equity requires that it be funded almost exclusively through general tax revenues. Although the source of production is the same as the two models of equality, the objective of the need model is not to maintain equal standards of service, but rather to provide an extra measure of those services to those who are economically disadvantaged. Sources of production for the demand models are established through the traditional public decisionmaking process. For example, those strongly advocating development of a favored service may be expected to lobby for the greatest public subsidy of that program. Although some form of fee structure is likely to be imposed, the scenario of relying upon public debate to determine the acceptable price/subsidy ratio may be repeated for each service and by each interest group. The uncertainty associated with the public decisionmaking process is reflected in the “negotiable” portion of these equity models shown in Figure 6.
Political intervention is easy and balances system for local elected officials. Courts, or other government units, may be requested by the same, or other, equity preferences in the desired equity preferences may lessen a public's share of the required policy changes can be done. Agency personnel will assume their positions regarding equity. The implementation of the equity plan will support these changes. Accounting data will support the process of determining the allocation of funds. A detailed plan of how to proceed is outlined. Figure 6 shows how four recreation centers from the enterprise service model are allocated. The critical step in the implementation of the system is to balance resources and expenditures. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, calling for allocation cost, relies upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the third-party cost model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model. Rather than allocating service resources to recreation centers from the enterprise service model, the service does not rely upon the third-party cost model.
Enterprise services may be distinguished from generic or enhanced services in that the sources of production are proportionately linked with levels of consumption. The equity model, calling for allocation based strictly upon the cost-benefit option (market/lowest cost), relies upon third-party inputs to assist in the production of government services. Rather than allocating services to those paying the most fees (market/pricing) or the greatest taxes (market/taxes), the lowest cost option requires that in those areas where joint ventures are possible, or where residents are willing to co-produce the service through voluntary help or compliance, the greatest level of services should be allocated. The distinctive criterion of this service classification is the direct linkage between the means of providing inputs to government (co-production, fees, taxes) and the market-oriented consumption of service benefits.

Stage 3. Categorize Service Offerings

Assigning services to the three categories—generic, enhanced, or enterprise—is a critical step in the implementation process. For the purpose of illustration, assume that recreation centers were classified as enterprise services embracing the market equity model of fee support. This would require that program offerings would have to cover expenses, thus leaving only two options to resolve a discrepancy between revenue and expenditures—raising prices and/or reducing services. However, political pressures could force a different equity model to be used to direct allocation of that service and thus move recreation centers from the enterprise to the enhanced or even the generic category.

Figure 7 shows how four tennis offerings could be classified by the three service allocation characteristics described above.

Policy Review Process

Political intervention is expected and may be viewed as an important part of the checks and balances system for local governments. "Adjustments" made to agency policies by elected officials, courts, or other sources of intervention may be viewed as temporal shifts in the desired equity preference. Significant political wrangling over these issues is likely to occur until the "ground-rules" are established. Special interests will vigorously defend their positions regarding favorite service offerings.

The process of determining prevailing equity models and assigning services to the three allocation categories presumably will generate controversy, at least the first time it is done. Agency personnel will be dealing with irate residents and elected officials who feel threatened by a public that is aroused by the prospect of changes in service allocation that may lessen their share of public services. Only sound and persuasive justification for the requested policy changes can alter the value systems of opponents and only accurate cost accounting data will support these positions and negate false assumptions.

The implementation of equity is a long-term process. However, it is having an immediate impact on parks and recreation planning in Austin. Acquisitions and developments that were proposed for inclusion in the capital budget have been classified by planning personnel as generic, enhanced, or enterprise, based upon the criteria discussed above.

For example, the category of basic services included: allocation of money to develop parkland received from the mandatory dedication ordinance; infilling community parks in areas deficient in parkland; development of parkland previously purchased; and comple-
**FIGURE 7**

The Relationship Between Levels of Service and Equity Characteristics for Tennis Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equity Characteristics</th>
<th>Level of Service</th>
<th>Generic: Based on equality</th>
<th>Enhanced: Based on use/need</th>
<th>Enhanced: Based on willingness to pay</th>
<th>Enterprise: Based on willingness to pay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neighborhood tennis court</td>
<td>Neighborhood tennis court with free tennis lessons</td>
<td>Neighborhood tennis court with paid tennis lessons</td>
<td>Tennis complex with equipment sales and professional lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examining decisionmakers' equity or allocation goals, the Equity Assessment Process can help them at the forefront of planning fits between the traditional public planning process and the desires of the general public. Developing meaningful programs and improving the ability to evaluate their effectiveness are key factors in achieving these goals.
tion of a number of larger-scale maintenance/restoration programs. Those items in the Capital Improvement Program classified as enhanced might include:

1. community swimming pools
2. a senior citizen’s center
3. a cultural center.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Examining decisionmakers’ equity preferences for urban service allocation and placing them at the forefront of planning and policymaking assists in demonstrating an agency’s accountability in public service delivery. This “missing link” in parks and recreation planning fits between the traditional planning objectives of establishing broad agency mission statements, and the development of specific service distribution objectives. The Equity Assessment Process can assist planners and policymakers by clarifying an agency’s equity or allocation goals prior to making service distribution decisions. The question of “who gets what” (allocation) is resolved before the determination of “when, where, and how” (distribution) is made (Crompton & Lamb, 1986).

Stating agency goals in terms that reflect equitable service allocation is central to developing meaningful program evaluations. Equity policy goals that are most likely to improve the ability to evaluate services include measurable outputs, a strategy for implementation, and identification of clienteles to be served. The requirement to systematically assess equity preferences using statistically representative samples of relevant publics will tend to move the service allocation decision process away from the “neutrally competent” bureaucrat and further in the direction of meeting the desires of the general public. For agencies such as parks and recreation departments, which have a tradition of responding to their diverse clientele, this shift is not likely to be traumatic. However, for other types of public services it may be more difficult to overcome the institutional bias that strongly reinforces inward-focused professional norms of service allocation.

Although the goal of adopting the equity implementation model is to increase accountability and the equitable use of tax revenues, it should be expected that a public discussion of “who should get what” will generate controversy. Wildavsky (1979) insightfully comments:

> If problem finding is part of problem solution as I have argued, analysts, at least part of the time are in the business of creating the problems to which they then will propose solutions. Criteria can create problems. Applying yardsticks such as equity or efficiency or equality of opportunity to government programs may point out disparities between the actual and the desirable, for which remedies may then be proposed. Whether or not citizens or officials recognize these disparities, the gaps between actual and possible may then become problems for which solutions are sought (p. 353).

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