This study finds its ground from the fact that public urban open spaces are good for recreation and play, significant role in enhancement of people's well being and aesthetics of a place. Spatially, public open spaces are one of the land uses that are provided for in the planning of urban centres such as cities and towns. Expansion of urban centres, especially with regard to increase in population, leads to change in patterns of utilization of public open spaces. A number of Kenya's urban centres have notable public open spaces but this study focuses on City Park in Nairobi. It is designed to evaluate the recreational state of City Park; examine its nature of utilization; and assess the allocation of equipment, material, personnel and financial resources by Nairobi City Council for its Management.

The sampling frame for the area of study comprised a number of institutions, a voluntary organization, users of City Park and the business community around the park. Primary data was collected through survey of the study area. Direct observation guides, personal interview schedules and structured questionnaires were among the instruments used in the data collection exercise. The study established that both men and women of all age categories utilize City Park. Most of these are unemployed and those in employment fall within the low-income category. The Park is predominantly visited over the weekends and public holidays with the preferred time being during the day. Users of the park have varied preferences for activities and situations therein.

A close assessment of City Park revealed that it is in a dilapidated state. It is currently experiencing various environmental problems such as insecurity and poor maintenance. It was also established that a number of recreational activities, not initially planned for, have emerged in space over time and Nairobi City Council has not moved to plan for them. The existing situation has consequently seen portions of the park go into the hands of speculative developers.

The study established that the managerial staff at the Parks Section is not adequately equipped with the requisite technical skills necessary for effective planning and management of public open spaces. A number of equipment and materials are also either broken down, lacking or inadequate. Similarly, financial allocations towards management of parks fall far below budgetary proposals. This study underscores the need to evolve a plan that will provide a framework for effective planning and management of public urban open spaces in Nairobi City. It is strongly recommended that a comprehensive approach be employed in the planning and management of public urban open spaces. This approach wins support as it brings all stakeholders on board to plan and manage the spaces. In order to achieve this, it is of necessity to initiate, develop and sustain public-private partnerships, public urban open space enhancement programmes and institutional capacity building.