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Intergenerational Connection in Berkeley Public Space

Yorangga Citra Arundati

Capstone Chair:
Zachary Lamb
Assistant Professor of City & Regional Planning

Capstone Reader:
Daniel A. Rodríguez
Chancellor's Professor of City & Regional Planning
and Director of the Institute for Transportation Studies.

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Acknowledgement

About the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center

The Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center (UTC) is the Region 9 University Transportation

Center funded under the US Department of Transportation's University Transportation Centers Program. Established in 2016, the Pacific Southwest Region UTC (PSR) is led by the University of Southern California and includes the following partners: California State University, Long Beach, Northern Arizona University, Pima Community College, University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Davis, University of California, Irvine, University of California, Los Angeles, University of Hawaii, and University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

The Pacific Southwest Region UTC conducts an integrated, multidisciplinary program of research, education and technology transfer aimed at improving the mobility of people and goods throughout the region. The program is organized around four themes:

1. technology to address transportation problems and improve mobility;
2. improving mobility for vulnerable populations;
3. improving resilience and protecting the environment; and
4. managing mobility in high growth areas.

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Disclosure

This research took place at the University of California, Berkeley from October 2024 to May 2025 and was supported by a grant under the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center research program in the amount of $7,500.

Personal Motivations

This study was inspired by personal experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing people to avoid traveling and remain closer to home. The difficulty of accessing meaningful public spaces during that period underscored how urban environments often fail to accommodate vulnerable populations like older adults. My grandmother's relocation to Jakarta from Yogyakarta exemplified this issue, as her unfamiliarity with the new environment was compounded by the city's inherent "unfriendliness" to aging populations. This situation motivated me to investigate how the public space can be more supportive for elders.

Gratitude Notes

I am grateful to my advisor and reader, Zachary Lamb and Daniel A. Rodriguez, for their insightful feedback, thoughtful discussions, and encouragement throughout the research and writing process. Their guidance has been meaningful in shaping both the direction and quality of my work. Thank you to the Department of City and Regional Planning community at UC Berkeley for fostering a great learning environment.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan (LPDP) for their generous sponsorship of my studies in the United States, without which this journey would not have been possible. My sincere thanks also go to the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center for their additional support in conducting this research.

To my friends—thank you for the laughter, companionship, and for always brightening my days when I felt low. Your kindness and support have meant more to me than words can convey.

Finally for my family, mom, dad, my little brother - your support through every up and down has given me the strength and confidence to finish this study and pursue what i love. Thank you for the constant love and belief in me. This accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine.

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16. Abstract

As Berkeley's population ages—with those aged 60+ projected to comprise nearly 20% of residents by 2030—there is an opportunity to design public spaces that foster meaningful connections across generations. This study examines how parks and sidewalks can be an integrated public-space network that supports interactions between elders and other generations. Guided by the main research question: What features of public space support intergenerational interaction? And three guiding questions: How do elders currently use public space? What are the best practices of public space design for fostering intergenerational interactions? How can public space be enhanced to better support intergenerational interactions? The research employs a mixed-methods approach. Primary data includes systematic observations at three parks (Ohlone, Grove, Strawberry Creek) across varied times and days; intercept interviews with elders in the parks; and six walking interviews. These were complemented by precedent case studies of real projects and design toolkits. Findings reveal that elders use Berkeley's parks steadily throughout the day and week, while children and working-age adults appear in sharper peaks. Meaningful cross-age encounters are most likely when older adults linger—something encouraged by safe, well-paved approaches, places to sit, varied and sensory environments, dog-friendly areas, and play or fitness amenities that invite joint participation. Physical barriers on sidewalks, lack of pause points, and traffic noise suppress those encounters. Based on these insights, eight design elements are proposed—Rhythms, Safety, Pause Nodes, Age-Neutral Spaces, Sensory Experience, Shared Play, Health & Fitness, and Social Activation—each illustrated with targeted strategies and case studies. These recommendations aim to guide planners, designers, and community organization in creating built environments that invite intergenerational interaction for everyone.

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Project Overview

This guide synthesizes mixed-methods research to provide design strategies that give planners, designers, and community stakeholders insights to transform Berkeley's public space into built environments supporting active lifestyles for eldeand meaningful intergenerational interaction.

Research Design

Statement of Issue Addressed

As the global demographic shift towards an aging population continues, providing an inclusive environment for all ages—especially older adults—has become more critical than ever. Countries around the world are experiencing a rise in both the number and proportion of older people in their populations (WHO, 2024). Well-designed public spaces, such as streets and parks, that apply universal design principles and encourage active use can attract people of all ages and accommodate diverse needs (Boyce, 2010; Cushing & van Vliet, 2016). Intergenerational interaction in these spaces can benefit older adults by reducing ageism and social isolation, while also promoting physical activity and a healthier lifestyle. However, further research is still needed to better understand the specific social and environmental factors that support—or hinder—the development of meaningful intergenerational interaction (Zhong et al., 2020).

The City of Berkeley has been recognized as an Age-Friendly City by the World Health Organization and has been part of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities since 2016 (Age-Friendly Berkeley, n.d.). In 2018, the city developed an Age-Friendly action plan based on WHO guidelines. Berkeley's the 2018 Age-Friendly Action Plan includes outdoor spaces and buildings, such as parks and sidewalks, among several targeted areas intended to enhance age-friendly environments. Despite having these action lists, the plan could benefit from more recent data and specificity to target particular areas where elders can interact intergenerationally.

In this research, I initially focused on parks as potential sites where older adults can experience intergenerational connection. However, parks do not function on its own—they are part of a broader public space system, including sidewalks that support elders in maintaining an active lifestyle. Therefore, this study also considers how the public space system as a whole—including sidewalks leading to parks—can be designed and coordinated to better support intergenerational interaction during older adults' journeys to and from parks.

Research Questions

What features of public space support intergenerational interaction?

Guiding Questions

- How do elders currently use public space?
- What are the best practices of public space design for fostering intergenerational interactions?
- How can public space be enhanced to better support intergenerational interactions?

Berkeley as Study Area

Berkeley's aging demographics and youth and family presence offer a unique setting to study intergenerational interaction.

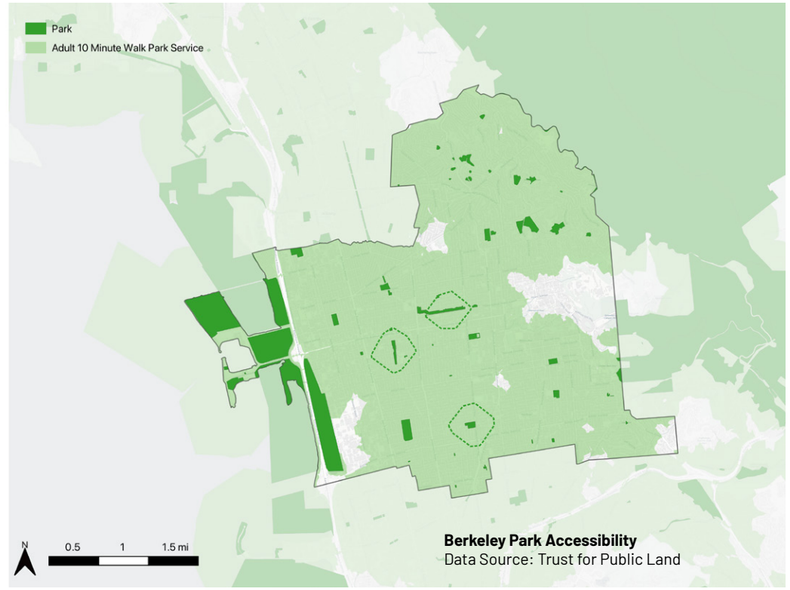
By 2030, one in six people worldwide will be aged 60 or older (WHO, 2024). In Alameda County, the older adult population is expected to grow by 51.5% between 2020 and 2060, with those aged 60 and above making up nearly 32% of the total population. By 2030, one in five Berkeley residents is expected to be over 65 (City of Berkeley, 2018). I chose Berkeley as the study area because it reflects these broader demographic trends that make it ideal for studying intergenerational interactions. Moreover, living in Berkeley also makes the city easily accessible for my research.

In this study, I define elders as individuals aged 60 and above, although senior services in Berkeley are available to those aged 55 and older. Despite its aging population, Berkeley remains a diverse community, home to the University of California, Berkeley, which brings a significant number of young adults into the city. Its residential setting, dominated by single-family zoning, supports a family-friendly environment. This blend of young and older populations creates a strong foundation for studying intergenerational interaction.

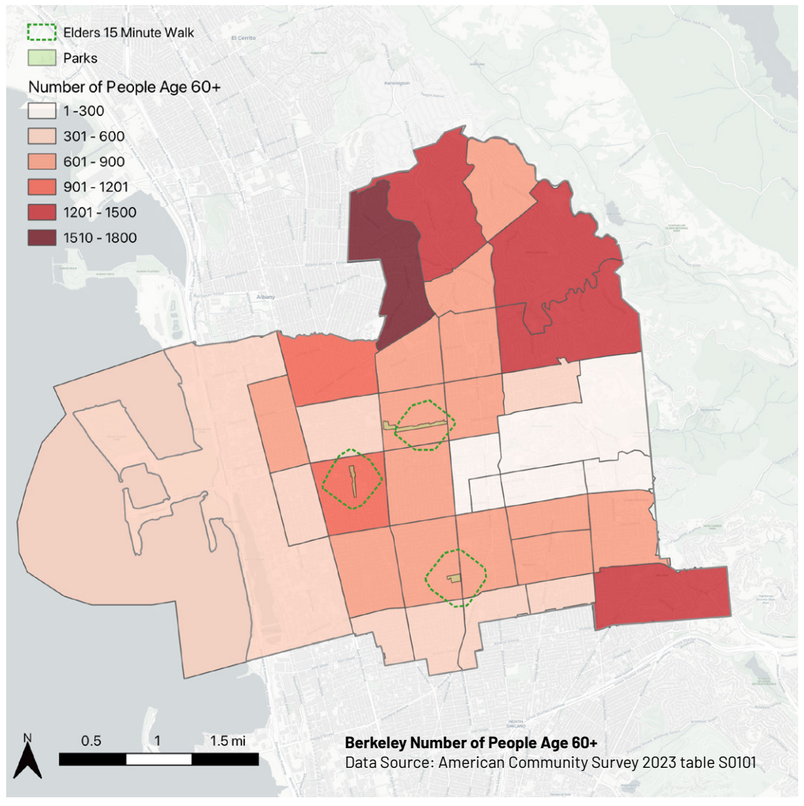
ACS data shows many older persons live in the Berkeley Hills and North Berkeley area. However, when examining the actual numbers, it becomes clear that many older adults also live in other parts of the city, particularly in areas with a high density of senior housing. While Berkeley presents a diverse population, it remains unclear whether its public spaces are currently designed—or function—in ways that effectively support intergenerational interaction.

Berkeley's parks are accessible within 10-minute walk for 96% of elders

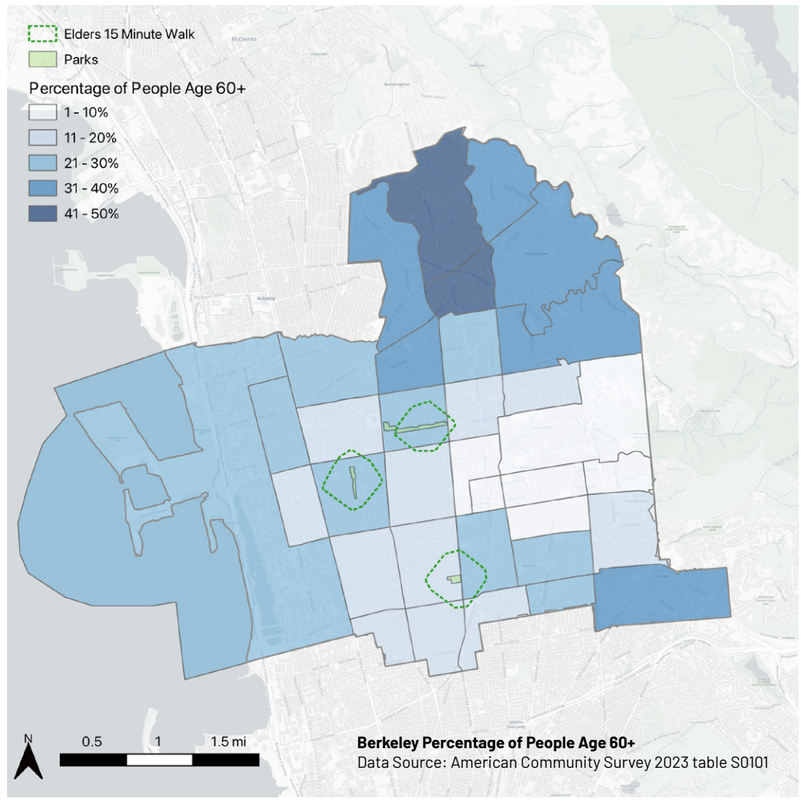
According to a study by the Trust for Public Land, 90% of Berkeley residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park, a rate higher than the national average of 74%.This suggests that parks are a vital community asset and present a great opportunity for community gatherings. In the same study examining demographics, nearly all seniors aged 65 and over can reach a park within 10 minutes, at a rate of 96%. However, not all parks offer the same amenities, which means there may not be equal opportunities for intergenerational interactions.



Berkeley Park Accessibility
Data Source: Trust for Public Land



Berkeley Number of People Age 60+
Data Source: American Community Survey 2023 table S0101



Berkeley Percentage of People Age 60+
Data Source: American Community Survey 2023 table S0101

Site Selection

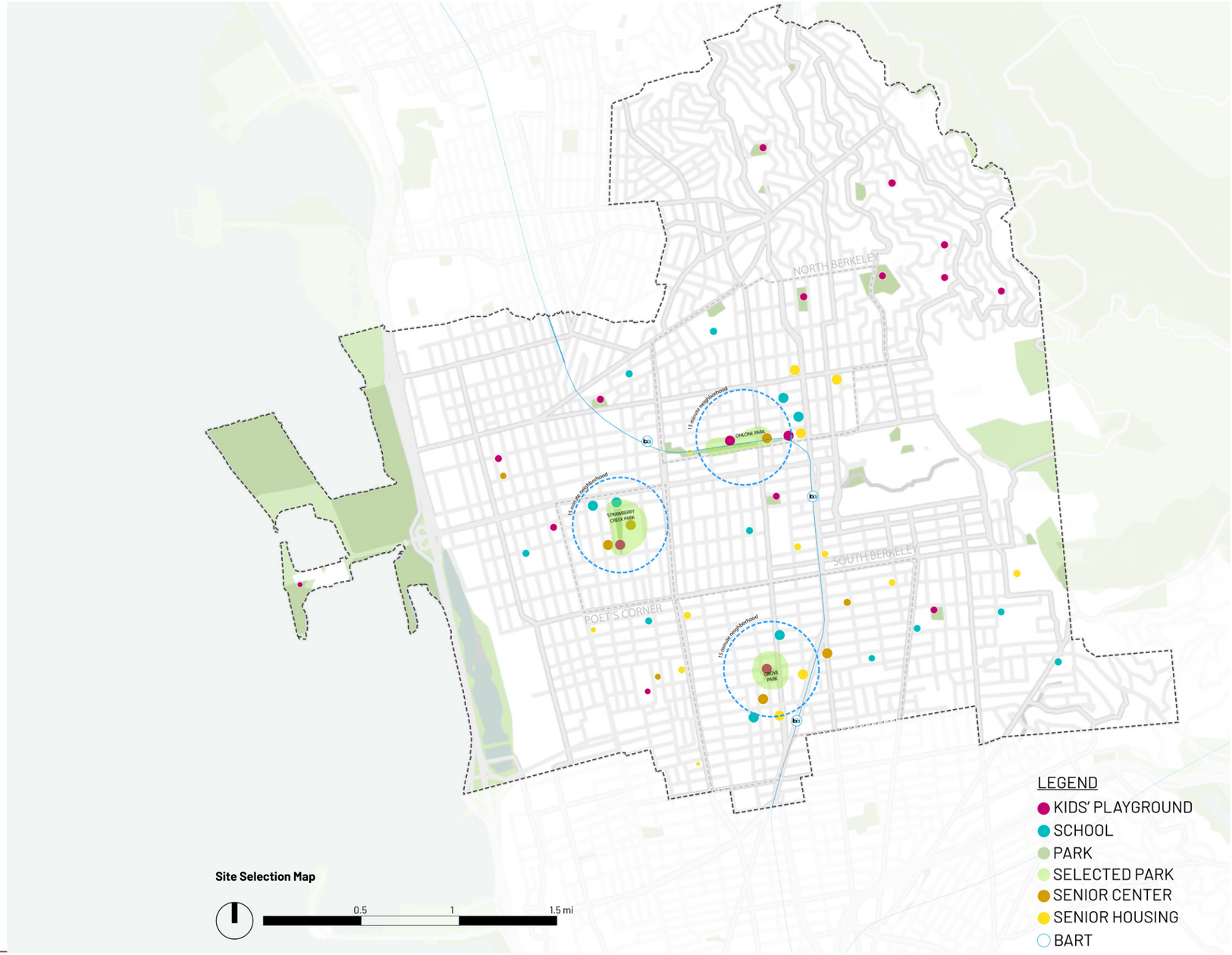
In Berkeley, three parks show potential for concentrated intergenerational interaction based on their proximity to faciities that serve multiple age groups.

According to an ongoing study by Zhong and Lee (2024), an expert survey was conducted to identify essential destinations for intergenerational interactions. The most critical location for recreational activities is the Intergenerational parks with facilities for people of all ages, with 92% of experts deeming it important, followed by parks or open spaces at 88%. In terms of institutional destinations, child-friendly clusters are regarded as the most significant at 76%, with community centers and libraries nearing 70%. From this study, I mapped facilities most likely to facilitate intergenerational interactions. Additionally, I mapped other locations with clusters of parents and young people, such as schools, and playgrounds. As well as facilities for seniors such as senior housing and care centers. After identifying these places, I identified three areas of study with parks as the center of observation:

1. North Berkeley Area – **Ohlone Park**:
   This neighborhood has a high concentration of older adults with three senior facilities and a senior center.

2. Poet's Corner – **Strawberry Creek Park**:
   At the heart of this area is Strawberry Creek Park, which includes a mix of amenities for different generations, including care homes, elders housing, playgrounds, and a youth center.

3. South Berkeley Area – **Grove Park**:
   Like North Berkeley, South Berkeley has a senior center near a school and a BART station, providing a different context area from the two above



Site Selection Map

Site Selection

Site selection considered publicly available data to ensure neighborhood diversity

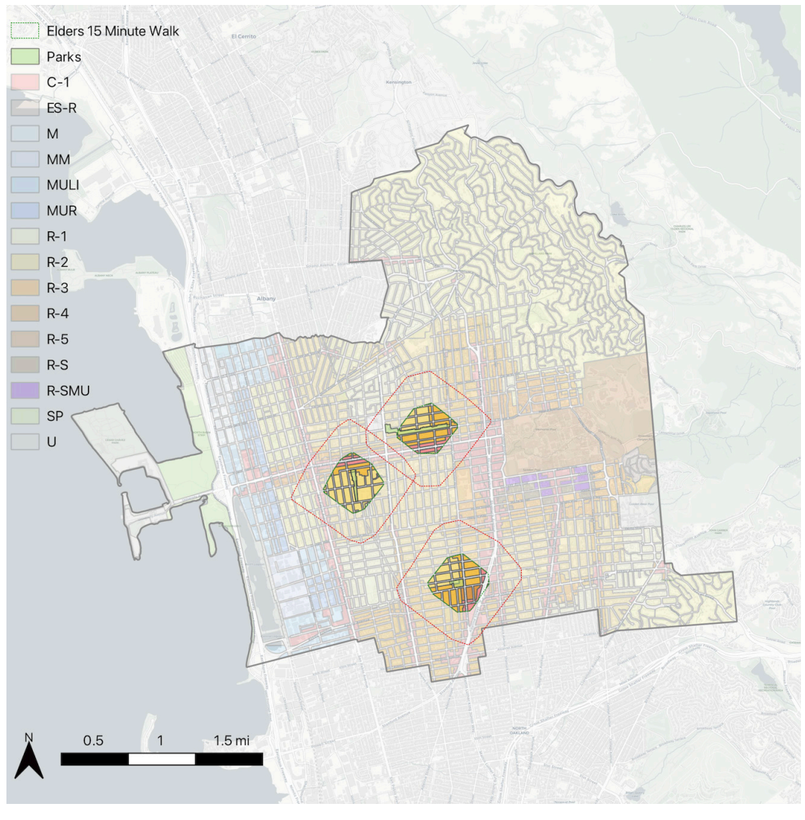
Other consideration for the selected site also was chosen based on characteristics from publicly available data, including race, median household income, and land use. This helps ensure that the selected neighborhood represents a more equal and diverse area. While these criteria were not used to select the sites, they highlight that the areas are broadly comparable in terms of demographic and physical context. However, it is important to note that while the site selection considered diversity, the observations did not specifically collect data on race or income.

situated within **medium-density residential** zones

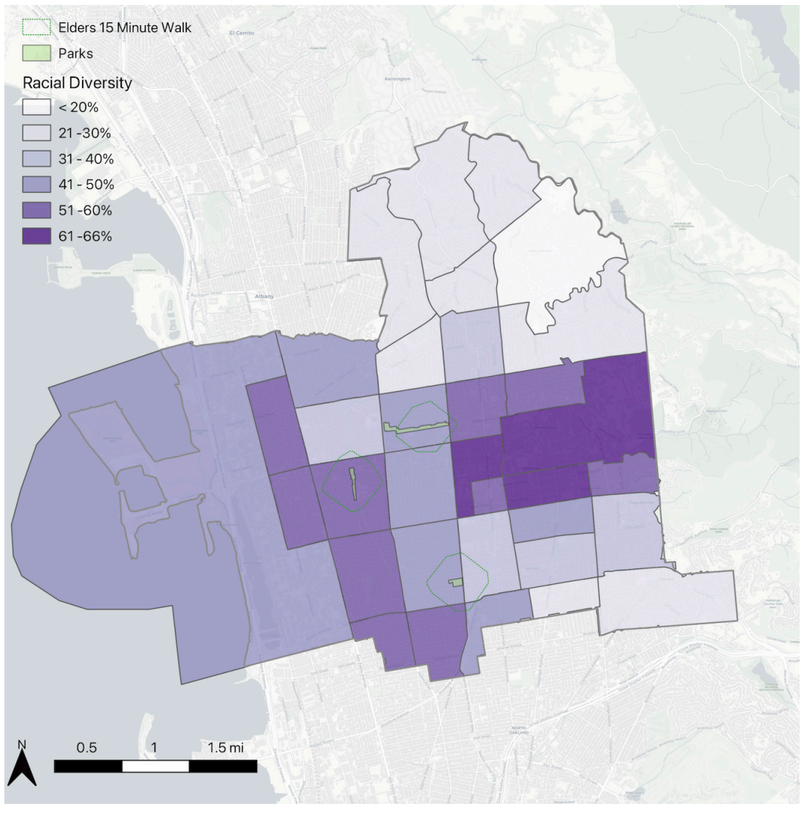
situated within **higher racial diversity** area

calculated by the percentage of non-white

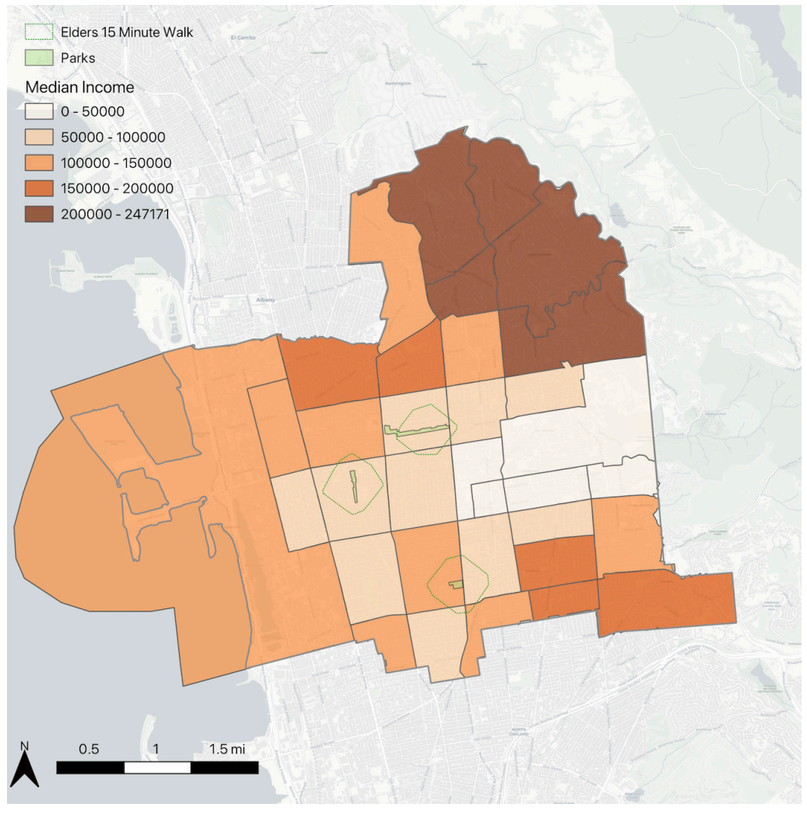
situated within **lower to middle income** area



Berkeley Land Use
Data Source: City of Berkeley



Berkeley Racial Diversity based on Percentage of Non- White
Data Source: American Community Survey 2023 table B02001



Berkeley Median Income
Data Source: American Community Survey 2023 table B19013



Literature Review

The literature review provides an overview of various aspects of aging and health, intergenerational interaction, spaces for intergenerational interaction, and measuring the quality of the public space. The literature review also highlights the importance of examining the role of the public space in fostering intergenerational interaction to inform the development of effective strategies for creating inclusive, age-friendly communities that overcome barriers to the built environment.

Literature Review

Aging and Health

Global and Local Demographic Trends

Life expectancy is increasing globally, people are expected to live beyond 60 years or over, making a shift in the demographic landscape. The World Health Organization highlights that one in six people in 2030 will be aged 60 or older. This demographic shift also happened within the United States at a much faster rate over 100 years from 1920 to 2020.

Alameda County reflects this trend locally as it is projected to experience a 51.5% increase in residents aged 60 and older between 2020 and 2060, with this age group expected to make up nearly 32% of the total county population by 2060. Berkeley is no exception; the elders population will double in the next decade, with one in five residents being over 65 years old (City of Berkeley, 2018).

Challenges in Aging Society

Ageing is the process of growing older that is often associated with life transition. A challenge that is faced by the elders population is social isolation which can trigger loneliness (Age Friendly Alameda, n.d.). This has become an epidemic in the United States, affecting all age groups, especially the older population (Health (OASH), 2023). Alameda County-wide surveys show that loneliness and social isolation are major concerns for older adults with nearly half of them reporting such feelings (County of Alameda, 2024). Barriers to social participation by older adults include physical or mental health challenges and transportation issues that are closely related to the city planning field.

Intergenerational Interaction

Definition

Intergenerational interaction refers to purposeful engagement between different generations, typically involving the elders or older generation and the younger generation within a shared space. The aim is to build respect, understanding, and mutual help (Peters et al., 2021). When this contact is organised around shared activities such as art, games, or gardening, it is called intergenerational practice (MacCallum et al., 2006). Researchers note that such practice is one of the most helpful ways for older people to stay active and "age in place," because it offers regular social contact with younger people (Zhong, Lee, & Lee, 2020).

While the Intergenerational Planning Community Report defines intergenerational interaction narrowly, focusing on those aged 18 and younger and those aged 65 and older, this study adopts a broader definition that includes youth, early adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults. This expanded perspective highlights the importance of engaging all age groups in meaningful exchanges, recognizing that relationships between midlife adults and other generations are equally valuable. By designing spaces that meet the needs of all generations, communities can foster inclusive environments that enhance social cohesion and strengthen intergenerational connections (American Planning Association, 2022).

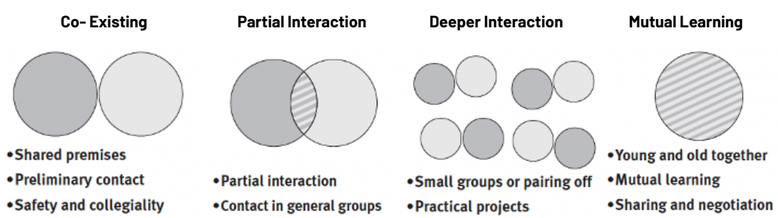
Benefits of Intergenerational Interaction

Connections across generations hold clear intrinsic value, yet everyday life rarely offers regular contact between young and old. Recent evidence shows that well planned intergenerational programmes can bridge this gap by bringing together age groups that seldom meet, thereby strengthening social connectedness (Webster et al., 2023). Such engagement is also viewed as a promising way to combat ageism and social isolation while encouraging active, healthy lifestyles in later life; in fact, neighbourhood design that supports casual, cross age encounters is critical for helping older adults remain active (Zhong, Lee, & Lee, 2020). Beyond social benefits, intergenerational initiatives have been linked to better mental health among older people by reducing loneliness and fostering a greater sense of purpose (Murayama et al., 2015, as cited in Zhong et al., 2020). Ultimately, the goal of intergenerational urban space is to "enhance social and emotional understanding between age groups, increase harmony, and reduce generational conflict" (Biggs & Carr, 2015). To achieve this, programmes and public space designs aim to remove physical and social barriers—creating accessible, inclusive settings where shared experiences and mutual learning can thrive (MacCallum et al., 2010).

Types of Intergenerational Interaction

Intergenerational interactions can take various forms based on the level and type of engagement between generations. Whitehouse et al (2000, as cited in MacCallum et al., 2006) identify four types of intergenerational practices:

1. Passive interaction and co-existing: Young and older generations participate in activities arranged by organizations in the same premises without direct interaction.
2. Partial Interaction: Programs include limited interactions like brief interaction, the two generations shared spaces with low levels of engagement.
3. Deeper interaction in pairs: Older and younger individuals collaborate in small groups or as pairs on specific tasks or projects.
4. Mutual Learning: Young and old create shared learning or work environments where outcomes are collaboratively negotiated and shared. These settings foster deeper, sustained engagement.



Types of Intergenerational Interaction
Source: MacCallum et al., 2006

Challenges to Intergenerational Interaction
Below is a summary of the identified challenges in intergenerational planning, as written in the Intergenerational Community Planning Report .

1. Limited Integration in Planning:
   Policy and urban planning often focus on older adults' needs separately from those of children and youth. Without a coordinated approach, opportunities for intergenerational synergy are missed.
2. Siloed Programmatic Efforts:
   Programs for older adults and younger populations often operate independently, rarely aligning their resources or goals to benefit from joint initiatives.
3. Competing Generational Needs:
   Public discourse sometimes frames resource allocation as a zero-sum game, pitting older adults' interests against those of younger people rather than recognizing the interdependence between generational well-being.
4. Unsupportive Built Environments:
   Urban design frequently overlooks the value of spaces that encourage natural cross-generational encounters. The spatial separation of different age groups impedes organic interaction.

Space for Intergenerational Interaction

Age-Friendly Cities and Intergenerational Contact Zone
Building on the World Health Organization's (WHO) conceptualization of age-friendly communities, it is evident that these environments must transcend a narrow "elders-friendly" focus and instead offer benefits and opportunities to all members of society (WHO, 2007). While age-friendly design often centers on addressing older adults' functional and social needs—ensuring accessible infrastructure, comfortable public spaces, and supportive community services—its broader goal aligns with creating places where individuals of all ages can thrive. Rather than being limited to physical improvements, age-friendly communities encourage social participation, respect, and a sense of belonging across generational lines.

Intergenerational design shares many principles with age-friendly planning, but it goes beyond ensuring accessibility and comfort for older adults by explicitly encouraging meaningful interactions among people of different ages. The concept of an Intergenerational Contact Zone (ICZ) centers on designing public spaces that cater to the diverse interests and abilities of both younger and older users, facilitating shared experiences and joint activities. Key design principles for creating intergenerational and age-friendly recreational environments include ensuring accessibility, inclusivity, safety, proximity, and creativity (Kaplan, 2020) .

Public space
Public space refers to open space that is public to everyone, comprised of streets, sidewalk, parks, plazas, and other open spaces (SF Planning, n.d.). Age-Friendly City guidelines suggest that well-designed outdoor spaces can support social participation and well-being as it plays an important role in enhancing social interaction among older adults. Neighborhood designs that support "age integration," or age-diverse communities, can help reduce social isolation and enhance older adults' engagement within the broader community. As Schlarlach (2009 as cited in Cushing and Vliet, 2016) argues, older adults prefer to "age in place," requiring that public spaces be designed to offer opportunities for intergenerational interaction.

According to an expert survey by Sinan Zhong and Chanam Lee (2024), shared open spaces are among the most important areas for supporting social interaction. Accessibility and walkability are identified as key features that enable these spaces to serve as effective sites for interaction. Furthermore, community environments that promote intergenerational interaction, streets emerge as significant venues for these interactions, second only to private or commercial spaces like supermarkets and restaurants (Zhong et al., 2020). Based on this literature, parks, open spaces, and sidewalks or streets stand out as the most likely types of public spaces to facilitate intergenerational engagement.

Methodology

This research will be divided into several phases using a mixed-methods approach, focusing on three parks and their surrounding areas in Berkeley where intergenerational interaction is likely to occur. The study combines both primary and secondary data. Parks and sidewalks are both essential parts of public space. Recognizing that public space is often experienced as a continuous journey rather than as separate elements, this study explores both park and sidewalk use.

To understand user behavior, the research uses three primary data collection methods: observations, intercept interviews in parks, and walking interviews along sidewalks. In addition, a review of precedent studies and planning toolkits will help provide context for the findings and support the development of strategic recommendations.

Methodology

Observation in Parks

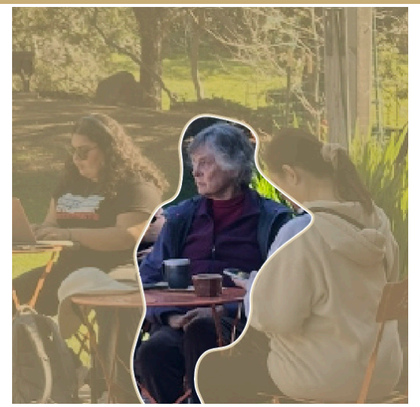
The observations I conducted to understand how elders use space were inspired by the Public Life Study developed by Jan Gehl and Svarre (2013). These studies emphasize systematic observation of people's interactions in public spaces, captures both quantitative data (counts) and more qualitative observations about behavior, interaction. The observation tool I used is included in Appendix A. The need for a more observational approach is supported by Zhong, Lee, and Lee (2020), who advocate for further studies that examine community environments through a combination of methodologies to understand how intergenerational interactions are facilitated or hindered.

I observed the three sites at three different times - 10-11 am, 1-2 pm, and 4-5 pm, which represent morning, afternoon, and evening. Observations were conducted on one weekday and one weekend day, with each hour observed on a different day. All observations were conducted on sunny days in the hopes of maximizing visitor observations.

Observations were conducted for a full 1 hour and were performed alone. Because the observations were conducted alone and the area was quite large, I stood at two different points within each space to cover the entire area for the three parks. In addition, I mapped and took photographs of elders during the observation to determine movement patterns and where social interactions occured.

To better understand patterns of intergenerational interaction in public spaces, I observed and noted perceived age into three categories: childrens (and youths), adults, and elders. Children and youth are those who appeared to be of school age, roughly up to grade 12. Adults are individuals who appeared in their 20s and late 50s, who appeared to be in their working age. Elders seemed to be around 60 years or older. I estimated age based on visual cues such as hair color and movement patterns.

Then, I observed how long people stayed in the park. This aspect of observation aimed to understand the possible relationship between the length of stay and intergenerational interaction. These observations provided insights into how different age groups use public space and whether the duration of their stay might influence the likelihood or depth of their interactions.



Elders
60+ years old



Adult
20s - 50s



Children and Teens
Up to K-12



Stay
> 10 minutes



Transit
< 10 minutes

I also observed activities and interactions of elders with users of other generations and later categorized the interactions based on "Types of Intergenerational Interaction" by Whitehouse et al (2000, as cited in MacCallum et al., 2006) :

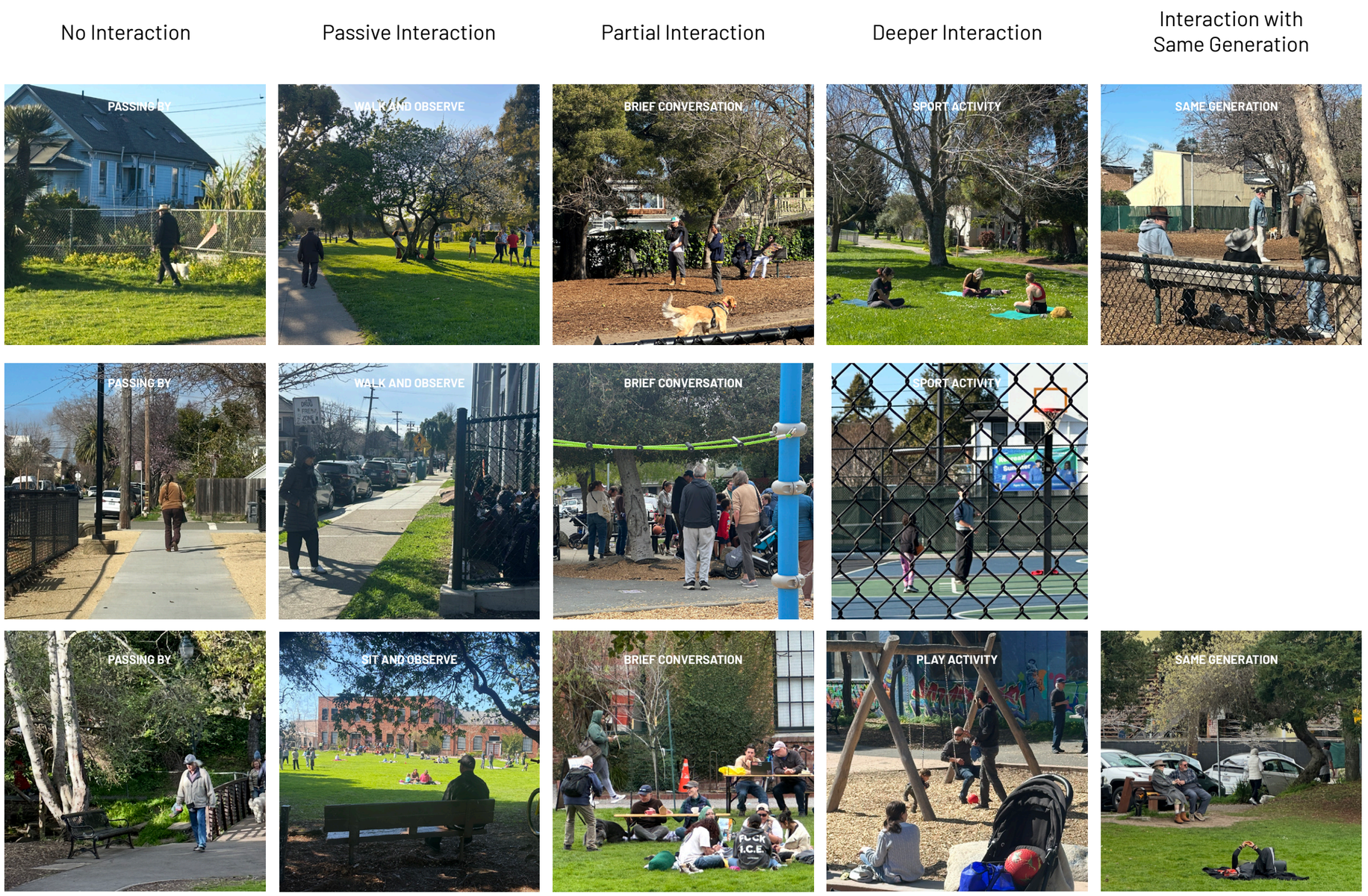
1. Passive Interaction and Co-existence :People passively acknowledge each other, like observing others.

2. Partial Interaction: Includes brief and casual exchanges, such as small talk while waiting in line or light conversation.

3. Deeper Interaction: People engage more actively, like having meaningful conversations, playing recreational sports, or spending time together at a playground.

4. Mutual Learning: Involves teaching, learning, or sharing skills and experiences across generations.

I also noted if they did not interact at all or if they interact with the same generation.



Observation of Intergenerational Interaction
Source: Author

Intercept Interviews in Parks

I conducted intercept interviews to understand the nuances of how elders use public spaces. The purpose of these interviews was to complement direct observations with personal reflections from older adults already present in the parks. The method involved short, informal conversations held on-site during or after their park visits. These interviews were conducted at two parks—Strawberry Creek Park and Ohlone Park—as no participants were available at Grove Park. The focus was to explore comfort levels, physical and social barriers, personal preferences, patterns of interaction, and frequency of visits. There were three interviews at each park. I asked interviewees their views on age-friendly cities and ways to support intergenerational interaction in public spaces.

Intercept Interviews in Sidewalks surrounding Parks

I conducted walking interviews to better understand how elders experience the sidewalk environment. By conducting walking interviews, I was able to capture participants' reflections on the sidewalks, observe their behaviors, and understand how they navigated their surroundings. Each interview started at a familiar place, such as a community center or park, and at the starting point. Interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes.

The questions in this interview have five objectives, detailed interview questions included in Appendix B:

1. Understanding what is walkable for the elders and route choices,
2. Understanding if they interact with others while walking,
3. Identifying urban design elements that encourage intergenerational interaction,
4. Identifying physical barriers to interaction, and
5. Identifying areas for improvement.

The questions asked are semi-structured, adapting to the flow of the conversation, as interviewees often enjoy discussing various topics in conversation.

I interviewed elders aged 60 and above, with a range of physical abilities. In total, I completed four formal walking interviews—two around Ohlone Park and two around Grove Park. I also conducted one intercept walking interview near Strawberry Creek Park, and one walking group session with two elders around Ohlone Park.

Precedent Case Studies

After synthesizing the primary data from observations and interviews in Berkeley, I conducted a precedent case study from planning toolkits and built projects to inform the development of strategic design recommendations. I did not use these case studies to generate findings. Instead, I used them to translate local insights into design strategies by examining how other cities have addressed similar challenges in creating age-friendly and intergenerational public spaces. This review allowed me to move from analysis to action. While the fieldwork helped me understand how older adults experience sidewalks and parks in Berkeley, the case studies showed how other communities have responded with specific design solutions and spatial interventions. I drew on these examples to strengthen the relevance and feasibility of my own proposals.

I focused on two types of sources:

1. Built Project Case Studies from both the U.S. and international contexts. I selected projects that demonstrate how public spaces can support interaction.
2. Design Toolkits and Policy Guides from organizations like AARP and municipal governments. These documents offer principles and design prompts for creating more inclusive streets and parks.

Findings

The findings draw on data collected through sidewalk walking interviews and park observations. Both methods revealed overlapping themes, highlighting consistent factors that facilitate intergenerational interaction in the public space. Below are the insights gathered from each method:

Insight from Parks Observation and Interviews

- Elders show consistent park presence throughout both weekdays and weekends.
- Facilities and proximity of nearby centers may influence park use by age.
- Safe and proper sidewalks help elders visit parks and meet people.
- Opportunities to sit may encourage elders to linger and engage
- Spending more time in parks is linked to more meaningful intergenerational interactions
- Flexible and varied spaces support casual interaction and social connection.
- Dogs can acts as a conversation starter for casual interaction in parks
- Sensory experience attract people of all ages to spend time in shared space
- Elders adapt park spaces for health and exercise.
- Playgrounds support active intergenerational interaction, not just child-centered play.

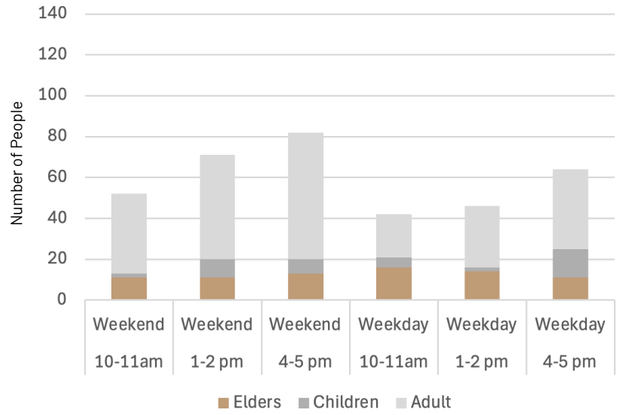
Insights from Walking Interview on Sidewalks

- Physical barriers on sidewalks limit mobility and interaction
- Elders walking patterns may shape their social experience
- Lack of space to pause to linger at the sidewalk
- Encounters on the street sparks connection

Elders show consistent park presence throughout both weekdays and weekends

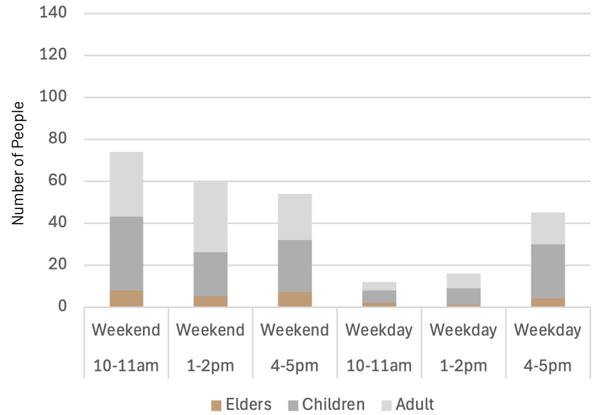
Elders show a relatively steady presence across all times of day compared to children and adults, reflecting more flexible daily schedules and consistent park use.

Based on observation across all three parks — Ohlone, Grove, and Strawberry Creek — the number of elders remains relatively stable throughout different time slots on both weekdays and weekends. In contrast, the number of children and adults fluctuates more significantly, typically peaking during evening hours (particularly 4–5 PM) as work and school schedules end. This pattern suggests that older adults have more flexible schedules, allowing them to use parks consistently across the day, not just during peak recreation hours. The steady elder presence highlights the importance of designing parks that remain welcoming, comfortable, and engaging throughout the entire day, not just at peak usage times.



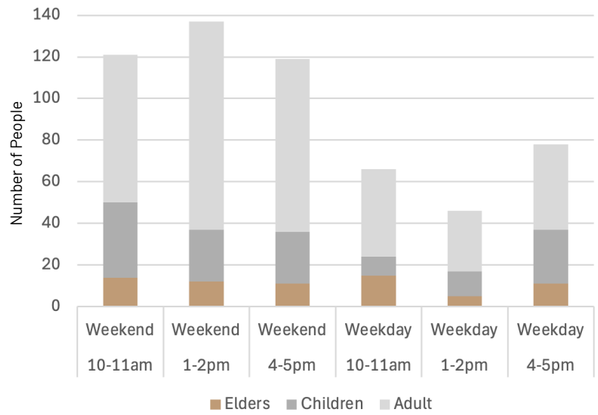
Ohlone Park Age Distribution

Source: Observation Data



Grove Park Age Distribution

Source: Observation Data



Strawberry Creek Park Age Distribution

Source: Observation Data

"I walk every day. Every morning."

- Elder in Ohlone Park

Ohlone Park Observation

The map below shows where elders interacted, along with the level of interaction. It combines findings from six observations conducted at three different times during one weekend day and one weekday.



The sports fields, especially the pickleball courts, are used by elders to exercise with both their own generation and different generations. This type of activity creates more meaningful interaction.



The flexible space at Ohlone Park, such as the lawn, is used for exercise activities that can lead to intergenerational interaction.





Interactions at Ohlone Park were centered around the gated dog park. This setting allows elders to comfortably engage in other activities while also interacting passively, partially, or with others from their own generation.





The linear layout of Ohlone Park encourages many interactions between generations, often observed as pairs walking together.

Ohlone Park Elders Mapping
Source: Author

Grove Park Observation

The map below shows where elders interacted, along with the level of interaction. It combines findings from six observations conducted at three different times during one weekend day and one weekday.

Some elders walking through Grove Park were also observed pausing for a while to watch children playing in the playground area.



Because Grove Park does not have a designated space for dogs, visitors use the baseball field to walk their dogs. Elders interact with other generation while walking their dogs.



Oregon St.

Baseball Field

Sport Field

Martin Luther King Jr Way

Youth Center

Playground

Library



On weekends, when there are baseball games, elders often stop and pause for a while to watch the children playing.



move stay

- no interaction
- passive interaction
- partial interaction
- pair interaction
- mutual learning
- interaction with same gen

All partial interactions around the playground happened during the weekend when youth events were taking place. Some elders came and ended up interacting with other adults and children.

Russell St.

Sidewalk

100 200 300ft

Grove Park Elders Mapping
Source: Author

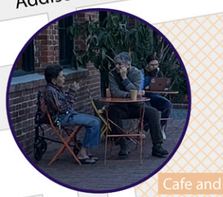
Strawberry Creek Park Observation

The map below shows where elders interacted, along with the level of interaction. It combines findings from six observations conducted at three different times during one weekend day and one weekday.

School

Addison St.

The café serves as a spot for interaction between different generations.



The presence of a café also encourages elders to interact briefly while waiting to for their orders.



Cafe and Shops

Seating Area

Lawn

Creekside

Picnic Tables



Seating areas placed at the corners of the park give elders a space to stop and enjoy the surroundings. This also encourages passive interaction through observation.

Senior Housing

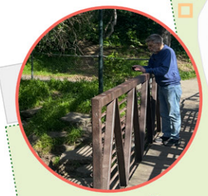
Acton St.

The presence of pop-up events attracts people of all ages, leading to brief interactions, either through shared interests or simply out of curiosity.

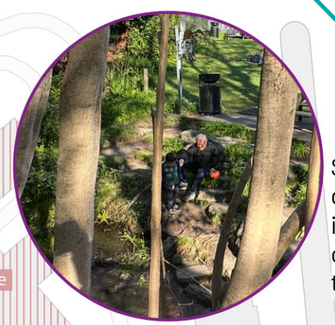


Bonar St.

Bancroft



The creek in this park attracts people of all ages. It was observed that when children played in the creek area, elders passing by tended to stop and watch for a while.



Some elders individuals supervise their grandchildren at the creek, leading to paired interactions. They often walk to the edge of the creek and need to be extra cautious because of their physical limitations.

Curtis St.



A similar situation was observed in the playground area. Some elders who were walking would pause for a while to watch the children playing.

Youth Center

Senior Care

Playground



Several elders spend time at the playground, interacting with children and even using some of the play equipment themselves.

Allston Way

Allston Way

move stay

- no interaction
- passive interaction
- partial interaction
- pair interaction
- mutual learning
- interaction with same gen

100 200 300ft

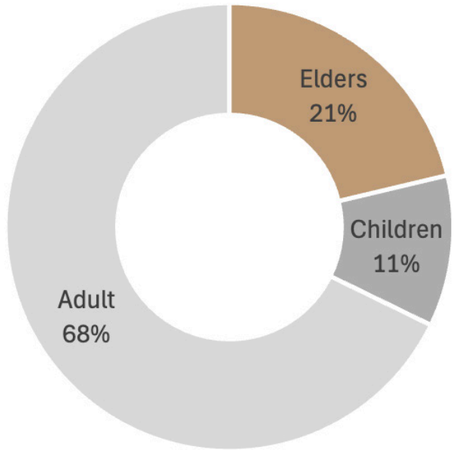
Strawberry Creek Park Elders Mapping
Source: Author

Facilities and proximity of nearby centers may influence park use by age

Although older adults make up 21% of Berkeley's population, their lower presence in some parks suggests that park facilities and proximity to senior centers may influence their use.

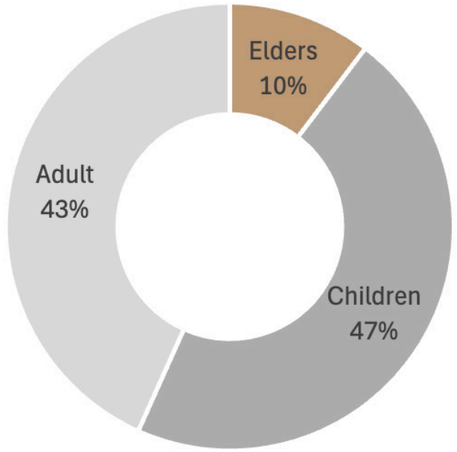
Although older adults make up approximately 21% of Berkeley's population, their representation in parks remains limited, particularly in Grove Park (10%) and Strawberry Creek Park (12%). Only Ohlone Park attains parity with the citywide elder population at 21%, suggesting some parks might not adequately support or attract older residents. In contrast, children disproportionately represent certain parks, comprising 47% of users in Grove Park while making up only 21% of the population.

Strawberry Creek Park shows more balanced use within each demography group, possibly due to its nearby café, senior housing, and youth center. At Ohlone Park, the higher presence of older adults and fewer children may be influenced by its location next to a senior center, while children might prefer nearby playgrounds instead. In contrast, Grove Park's lower elder presence, despite being near a senior center, might be linked to the lack of direct adjacency and the stronger connection to a youth center. These patterns suggest that both the design of park facilities and their proximity to key destinations can influence who uses them.



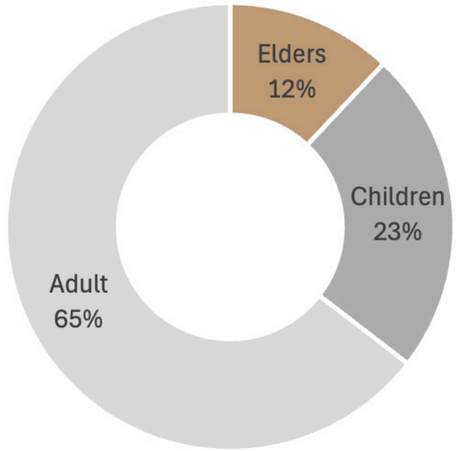
Ohlone Park Age Distribution

Source: Observation Data



Grove Park Age Distribution

Source: Observation Data



Strawberry Creek Park Age Distribution

Source: Observation Data

Safe and proper sidewalks help elders visit parks and meet people

Proximity alone is not enough. Walkable environment is necessary for elders to safely and comfortably access parks.

Many older adults walk to the park, but they often face problems when walking. Even though Berkeley's sidewalks are usually good, there are still broken or uneven parts that make walking hard and dangerous. Some older adults said they prefer walking in the street because the sidewalks are too bumpy and they are afraid of falling. These problems can make it harder for elders to reach the park safely.

Older adults also said that more signage and better design to separate cars should make streets safer for walking. Some were worried about areas where cars and people share the road and suggested adding warning signs. Having smooth and well-paved sidewalks is important not only for elders but also for children and other park users. These findings show that making sidewalks and streets safer is very important if we want older adults to keep using parks and meeting other people in public spaces.



Elders Walking in the Street
Source: Author

"I usually walk in the street because I have tripped over a raised sidewalk and broke two ribs. So I walk in the street, which is flatter."

- Elder in Ohlone Park

One elder expressed concern about the lack of clear separation between the park and the adjacent street

" Yeah, I would agree with my daughter about the fence, especially along the street. I was kind of shocked—we were just walking past there, and all of a sudden there's a street and a car coming. I didn't expect that. So, I mean, I guess you'd have signage—'Street Ahead' or something—or else you could close the street. "

- Elder at Strawberry Creek Park



Park and Street Transition
Source: Author



Cracked Sidewalk
Source: Author

"Street paving is important. Even kids can get badly hurt if they fall on rough surfaces. A well-paved street is better."

- Elder in Strawberry Creek Park

Physical barriers on sidewalks limit mobility and interaction

Uneven sidewalks are a common barrier for the elders.

Elders emphasized that daily walking is important for their health. However, in six walking interviews, all elders discussed the presence of uneven sidewalks. For elders who use walkers, even a small crack in the sidewalk gives them a barrier to walk safely.

One elder mentioned constantly watching the ground while walking. This can reduce the experience of unplanned interaction with someone who is passing by. Several also shared that because of the sidewalk condition, they tripped and developed a bad health condition – an issue that is also discussed in the park intercept interviews. Some elders reported avoiding certain streets because of sidewalk conditions, suggesting that poor conditions may influence their daily movement patterns.

One interesting thing noted by one elder is that there is a community initiative to visually make the uneven sidewalk more visible. While temporary and unofficial, these visual cues may increase situational awareness and help elders plan their steps more cautiously, potentially preventing falls. It also raises an important point for cities: simple, low-cost interventions can have an outsized impact on accessibility and safety.



Cracked Sidewalk and Walkers
Source: Author



Visibility of Cracked Sidewalk
Source: Author

I'm already paying attention [to the cracks], but if there's a lot of it, it takes away from looking around.

- Elder with low physical ability

Elders with limited mobility are more sensitive to curb design.

Elders have different levels of physical ability. Those who are still active and can walk easily have fewer problems with walkability. However, elders with limited mobility, such as those who use walkers or need to walk slowly and carefully, find curbs and street edges more challenging.

Two elders using walkers agreed that the yellow tactile paving at intersections made walking more difficult. One mentioned trying to walk around the tactile surface whenever possible, though it isn't always an option. This insight is fascinating, as features intended as universal design elements—like tactile paving—may become obstacles for specific users.

Another elder talked about the height difference between the curb and the street, saying lifting their foot sometimes took extra effort. This suggests curbless paths might be easier and safer for older adults with limited mobility.

"You see in all the corners with the yellow raised curb? it's really difficult crossing those. I mean, they're real barriers. I try to go around them, but you can't always. Because they're all bumpy"

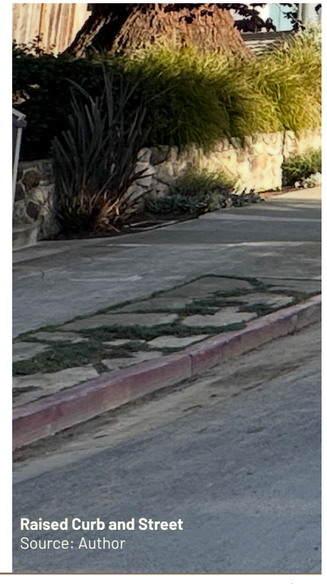
- Elder with walkers



Yellow Tactile Paving
Source: Author

"Sometimes curbs are tall, and lifting a leg over a high curb may seem simple—but for a senior, it could mean the difference between continuing or falling."

- Elder in walking group



Raised Curb and Street
Source: Author

Elders walking patterns may shape their social experience

Elders preferred quieter and low-traffic streets.

Throughout the walking interviews, elders highlighted that the choice of walking routes was strongly influenced by noise and traffic levels. Busy arterial roads were described as unpleasant due to constant noise from traffic and perceived danger when crossing streets. In contrast, quieter residential streets offered a sense of safety and comfort.

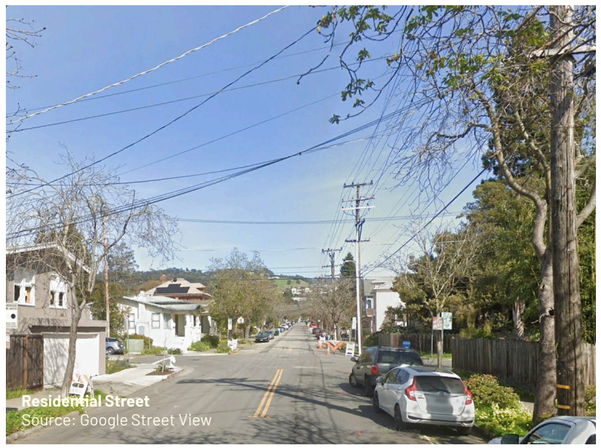
Quiet surroundings also appeared to affect the mood of the walk itself, making elders more open to casual interaction. One elder pointed out that noise made conversations difficult: if there was heavy road noise, *"it's hard to have a conversation with the cars going by."* This challenge can be even greater for older adults, as many experience hearing loss with age. These findings suggest that quietness is not just a preference for comfort, but a factor that may influence interaction when walking.

"Well, it's very quiet. You know, the streets are quiet and not—not a lot of traffic. I mean, it's—it's pleasant that way. It's very peaceful."

- Elder with walkers

"It's hard to have a conversation with the cars going by. Where it's kind of quiet, it lends itself to that"

- Elder with low physical ability



Residential Street
Source: Google Street View



Arterial Street
Source: Google Street View

Elders are mix between random and routine but routine may build familiarity.

Elders expressed diverse preferences when it came to choosing their routes. Some valued variety, walking intuitively or based on what caught their interest on a given day. These participants described taking different streets to avoid monotony or to discover visually engaging elements. One elder said they walked "based on intuition and spontaneous motives," and another mentioned walking just "for no particular reason," indicating a desire for exploration and flexibility in their walking routines. For these elders, spontaneity was part of what made walking enjoyable.

In contrast, others preferred to walk the same routes regularly, often for reasons of safety or familiarity. These repeated routines allowed elders to recognize the same neighbors over time and gradually build trust and informal connections. One participant noted that by walking the same route each day, "you meet somebody in the neighborhood and you get acquainted with that person." This kind of regular presence in the street slowly contributed to a mutual recognition. One elder explained they avoided a particular stretch of Virginia Street because of its rough surface, highlighting how familiarity also meant knowing where not to walk.



Sidewalk with Front Garden
Source: Author

It's random—based on intuition and spontaneous motives. I try to be diverse. Repetition doesn't amuse me—I like variety.

- Elder in walking group

"I think people get acquainted walking—I have—but it's usually if you do it regularly. You run into the same people. I've met some of my best friends that way."

- Elder with low physical ability

Lack of space to pause to linger at the sidewalk

Elders may perceive the sidewalk as a movement space, not as a social space.

Most sidewalks are used mainly to walk through, with little to no interaction happening along the way. Elders said they do not often talk to others during their walks; when they do, the interaction is usually short and straightforward. These moments are brief and friendly, it rarely turn into a long conversations.

One reason may be the lack of design features like benches, shade, or signs that invite people to pause. Without places to stop and rest, people tend to keep moving, making it harder for interaction between generations to happen. For elders with trouble walking, stopping without proper seating can be uncomfortable or unsafe. Because of this, many sidewalks feel like transition zones, not places to stay or connect. One elder shared that they only stop to talk when near a park or somewhere with a place to sit, showing how the design of the space affects the chance for connection.

"The street right now just doesn't have those opportunities to stop. There's not really a stopping place."

- Elder with good physical ability



Sidewalk as a Passing Space
Source: Author

"A lot of the public furniture around here is laid out so that it discourages people from sleeping. So, you know, there are a lot of public benches, but they're extremely uncomfortable."

- Elder with good physical ability

Physical obstacles like trash can or overgrown garden prevent side-by side walking.

Side-by-side walking creates essential opportunities for casual conversation. However, many elders noted that common physical barriers—such as trash bins left on the sidewalk, overgrown gardens spilling into the path, or narrow pavement—often make walking next to someone else difficult. These conditions restrict mobility and reduce the chance of conducting productive dialogue while walking. In places where sidewalks are already narrow or uneven, even small obstructions can force people into single line, breaking the natural rhythm of walking together.

Elders shared that walking side by side is rare on many streets, even if the intention is to talk or enjoy a shared route. These limitations affect intergenerational interaction by making walking a less social experience. One elder explained that on typical sidewalks, "the chances of you walking up side by side are slim," showing how space constraints discourage walking as a social activity. Without enough clear, unobstructed width, sidewalks become isolating paths rather than connective public spaces.



Sidewalk with Trash
Source: Author

"There are trash can like here. We have to go single line, so we cannot walk next to each other."

- Elder with low physical ability



Elders need to Take Turns with Walker
Source: Author

Opportunities to sit may encourage elders to linger and engage

Having opportunities to rest—whether through formal seating or informal stopping points—may support elders in lingering longer, which could increase chances for social interaction.

Interview participants emphasized the opportunity to stop enabling the chance to have interaction. Observation data across three parks support this insight. At Grove Park, benches are mainly near the playground and sports fields. However, elders were rarely observed using them unless accompanied by family. One possible explanation is that these areas are strongly associated with certain age groups, which might make elders feel out of place.

At Ohlone Park, elders were more likely to sit near the dog park, where environment surrounding them provided a reason to linger. In contrast, benches along the trail were rarely used. Walking interviews suggest that this pattern may be influenced by physical challenges—particularly among elders using walkers—who noted that once they decide to rest, they prefer to remain seated for a longer period.

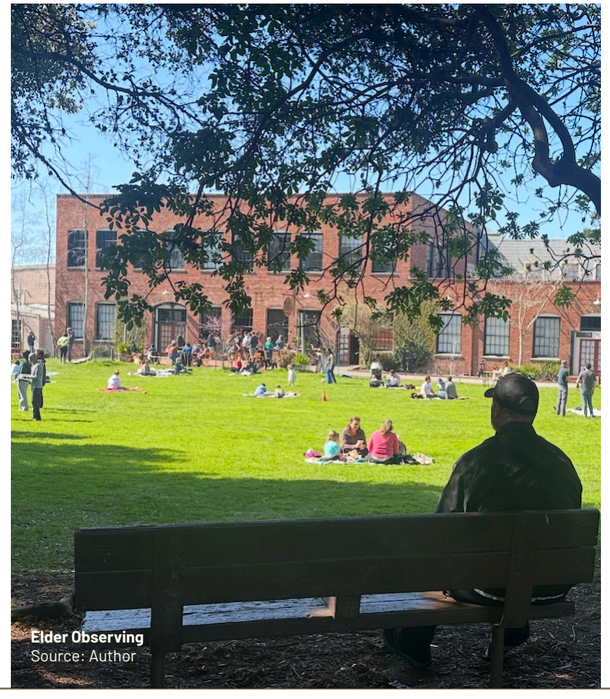
In contrast, Strawberry Creek Park showed a wider range of elder gestures related to sitting, both formal and informal, particularly in the lawn area. These gestures included resting, observing activities, and in some cases, engaging in brief conversations with people from other generations. This suggests that comfortable and flexible resting spots, especially in areas not tied to a specific age group, may encourage greater intergenerational presence and interaction.



Elder Informal Seating
Source: Author



Interaction around Bench
Source: Author



Elder Observing
Source: Author

"This is my favorite bench because it doesn't have a table. I usually sit here or on the grass, hoping someone younger will sit nearby before I go back. That way I can talk to someone for a while."

- Elder in Strawberry Park

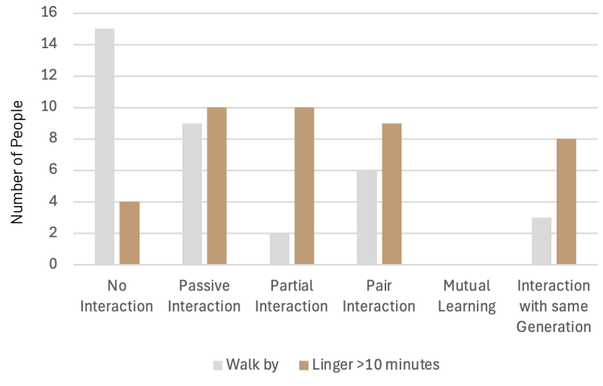


Elder Informal Seating
Source: Author

Spending more time in parks is linked to more meaningful intergenerational interactions

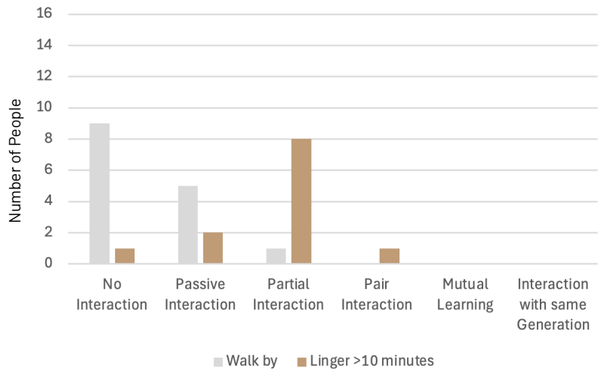
Different time spent in the parks reveals different patterns of intergenerational interaction.

Across all parks, lingering (staying for over 10 minutes) appeared to be associated with more meaningful social interactions, including partial engagement, paired conversations, and interactions across or within generations. In contrast, brief walk-by or transit behavior was more commonly linked to either no interaction or only passive observation. Parks like Strawberry Creek and Ohlone, which offer amenities that may encourage longer stays — such as cafés, playgrounds, and proximity to senior centers — tended to show richer patterns of intergenerational engagement. Meanwhile, Grove Park, where walk-by behavior was more frequent, showed fewer instances of deeper interaction. These observations suggest that the presence of amenities supporting longer visits might play a role in fostering social connections, although further research would be needed to confirm this relationship.



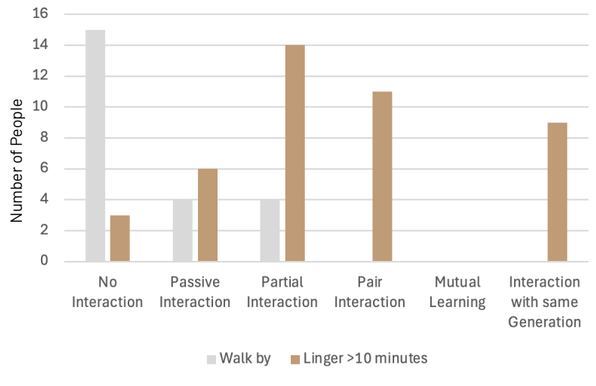
Ohlone Park
Types of Interaction

Source: Observation Data



Grove Park
Types of Interaction

Source: Observation Data



Strawberry Creek Park
Types of Interaction

Source: Observation Data

0 - No Interaction



1 - Passive Interaction



2 - Partial Interaction



3 - Deeper Interaction in Pairs



5- Interaction with the same generation



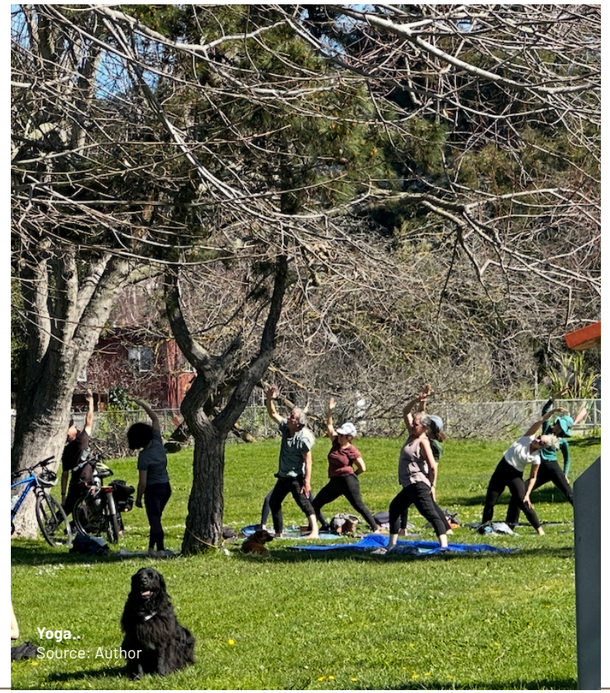
Observation of Intergenerational Interaction
(Explained in the Method Section)
Source: Author

Flexible and varied spaces support casual interaction and social connection

Parks with flexible spaces and a variety of activities create more chances for people of all ages to connect.

At Strawberry Creek Park, the café consistently attracts visitors who stay longer, creating more chances for casual conversation. Other spaces in the park host pop-up events or informal gatherings, like birthday parties or small markets. Similarly, Ohlone Park provides community programs like yoga and tai chi classes. On the other hand, Grove Park mostly has sports fields and playgrounds, which mainly attract youth and families. As a result, older adults may find fewer reasons to engage unless they are accompanying children.

Elders mentioned that the variety of things happening in the park made age-friendly. Some people joined activities, while others simply enjoyed the environment. Flexible spaces, areas that can be used for many different activities and attract people of all ages. Having spaces where both formal programs and informal gatherings happen helps create more natural opportunities for people to meet and talk.



Yoga..
Source: Author



People Watching Baseball
Source: Author



Birthday Party
Source: Author

"It seems to me that one of the reasons this park helps that interaction is because it's so varied."

- Elders at Strawberry Creek Park



Pop-Up Market
Source: Author

Dogs can acts as a conversation starter for casual interaction in parks

Dog presence helps spark conversation among elders, both in spaces designed for pets or not.

Dog parks and dog-walking areas offer spaces where people naturally gather and engage in brief exchanges. At Ohlone Park, for example, various interactions were observed around the gated dog park, although most were only partial — often limited to simple greetings, such as saying hello, without longer conversations, as one elder described. The presence of a gate helps dog owners feel more relaxed, knowing their dogs are safe, which may make casual conversation easier.

In contrast, Grove Park and Strawberry Creek Park do not have dedicated off-leash dog areas. Even so, dog owners still visit and sometimes start interacting after meeting in open spaces like the lawn. Having a dog appears to make it easier for people to connect, offering a shared topic of interest to initiate conversation.



Interactions with Dog Owners
Source: Author



Interactions with Dog Owners
Source: Author



Interactions with Dog Owners
Source: Author

“I see the same owners every day—some people chat, some don’t, but the dogs always meet.”

- Elder at Ohlone Park



Interactions with Dog Owners
Source: Author

Sensory experience attract people of all ages to spend time in shared space

Elements that engage with senses seem to engage elders and children alike whether or not it comes from the nature.

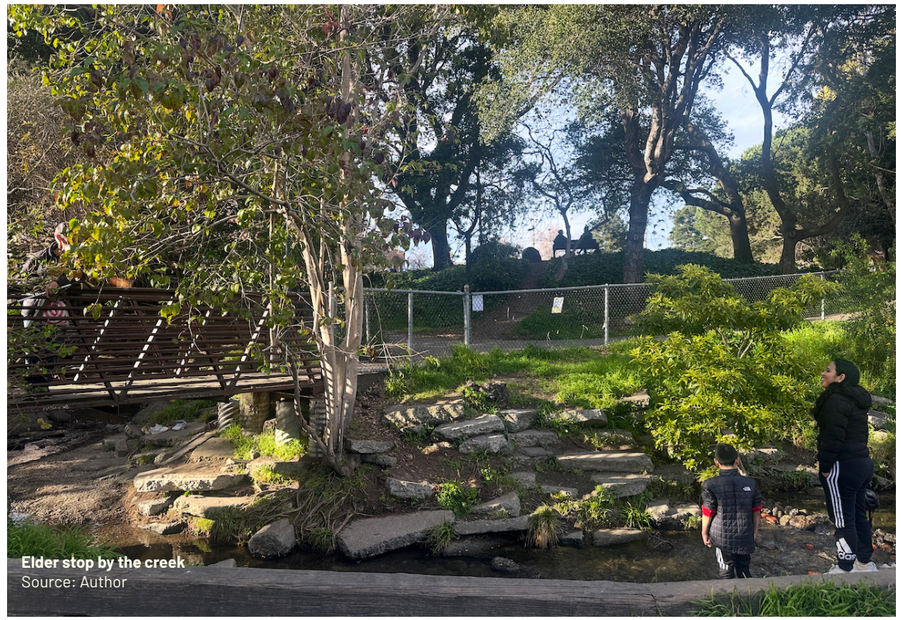
Sensory elements refer to features in a space that engage the senses—such as sight, sound, touch, or smell. At Strawberry Creek Park, the creek area often drew children to play, while many elders walking nearby were observed pausing to watch. In some cases, this pause led to brief conversational interactions between generations, suggesting that sensory features can create opportunities for both passive and active interaction.

At Ohlone Park, one elder noted enjoying the sounds of birds as well as music played during tai chi sessions. They mentioned that even simply observing these activities from a distance provided a pleasant experience, highlighting how sensory stimulation can foster passive forms of social connection.

Previous research also points to the broader benefits of multi-sensory experiences in urban parks. A study by Zhang et al. (2019) found that multi-sensory perceptions of parks can have restorative effects on mental health. The study further suggested that these sensory experiences may positively influence emotional well-being.



Elder and Children at Creek
Source: Author



Elder stop by the creek
Source: Author

"There are some people doing Tai Chi next to us—that was nice to see them and hear the music."

- Elders at Ohlone Park

"I love when the water is running. I can see the parents out there. If I had been in Berkeley when my son was little, I would've taken him down to the water too. I would've met so many more parents and kids."

- Elders at Strawberry Creek Park



Elder stop by the creek
Source: Author



Taichi
Source: Author

Encounters on the street sparks connection

Pets, in this case dogs, can create oppportunities for elders to engage with other through a spontaneous encounter in sidewalk.

Similar pattern was observed on the sidewalk. Whether elders were walking their own dogs or passing by others with pets, these moments often led to short conversations, greetings, or simple nods. While not all elders were looking to talk, the presence of a dog made it easier to connect without needing a reason.

Several elders shared that dogs were key to creating opportunities for casual social interaction during their walks. One elder explained how they became known in the neighborhood simply for carrying dog treats, which helped them build recognition and friendly ties with other dog owners. Even elders with quiet or less playful dogs still ended up talking to others—sometimes just to tell a child or parent that their dog was friendly. These small but regular moments made their walks feel less lonely and helped create a light sense of connection with others.

"Almost mostly people who have dogs around here know me now, because I always carry treats for the dogs. So, you know, the dogs see me alone. That was one way of making friends."

- Elder with walker



Encounter with Dogs
Source: Author

Visually interesting street elements enrich the walking experience and may invite brief interaction or shared appreciation.

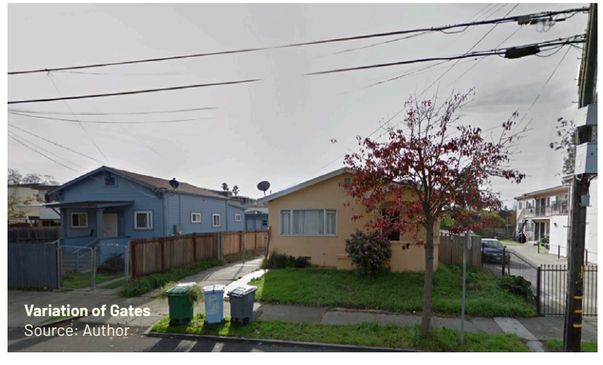
Street elements that are visually interesting can make walking more enjoyable and may lead to short interactions or shared appreciation. Some elders chose walking routes based on beauty or something unique, like a block filled with flowers or a building with special details. These small moments helped create a more positive walking experience.

During walking interviews, elders often paused or changed the topic to point out things they found interesting, such as unusual buildings or elements in sidewalk. While these features did not usually lead to direct conversations, they seemed to build a sense of pride and connection to the neighborhood. In some cases, they opened small chances for interaction—for example, making a short comment about a blooming yard or stopping at a little free library when someone else was nearby. These interactions were short, but they helped elders feel more connected to the place.

Regarding neighborhood frontage and gates, most elders were not strongly affected by the presence of gates but appreciated design variation. Some preferred see-through fences or gates that felt more open and friendly, while also understanding that others might use them for pets or security.



Mini Library
Source: Author



Variation of Gates
Source: Author

"But if it's like a variation of them [the gate], a gate you can see through is kind of nice-looking versus just blocked."

- Elder with good physical ability

Elders adapt park spaces for health and exercise

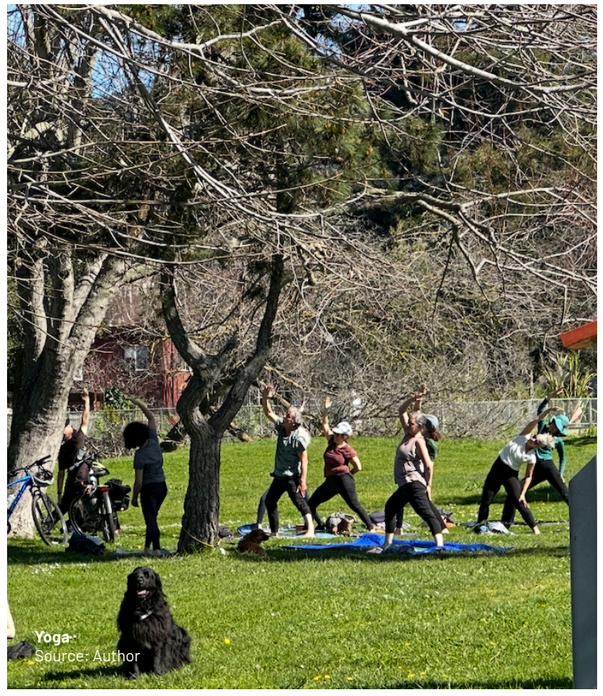
Beyond sports courts, older adults use open lawns, benches, and sidewalks for health activities.

Across all three parks observed, older adult visitors often used the park areas for activities that support their health. Most of these activities were seen happening in the morning, as a way to start their day, especially when the weather was nice.

All parks offered a variety of sports facilities, such as baseball fields, basketball courts, and pickleball courts. Elders were seen using these spaces, either playing pickleball with friends their age or teaching basketball to their teenage grandchildren. In addition to using these designated sports areas, older adults also creatively used unprogrammed spaces like open lawns for yoga (Ohlone Park) or group stretching (Strawberry Creek Park). Some elders even used benches, curbs, and grassy areas for stretching and exercising, showing a possible need for more dedicated exercise spaces for them. At Grove Park, one elder even brought their own barbell and exercised by walking along the park's sidewalks.



Elder Stretching
Source: Author



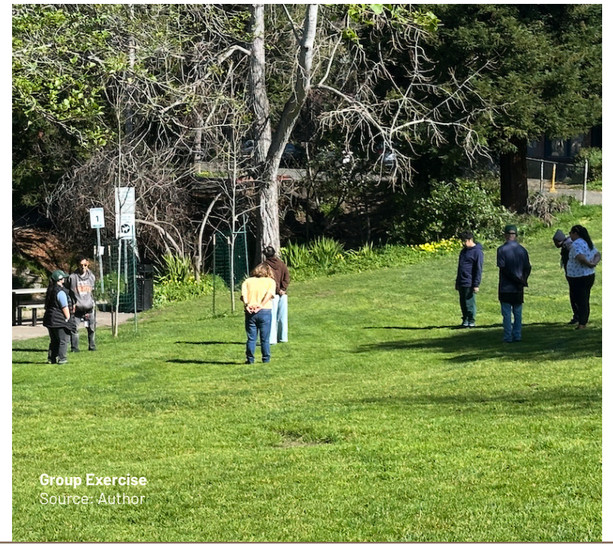
Yoga
Source: Author



Pickle Ball
Source: Author



Elder Stretching
Source: Author



Group Exercise
Source: Author



Basket Ball
Source: Author

Playgrounds support active intergenerational interaction, not just child-centered play

Playgrounds are not just child-centric spaces but can also generate meaningful intergenerational interactions.

In the observed playground environments, elders who engage with younger family members, such as grandchildren, often actively participate by using the playground equipment themselves. Rather than solely supervising, many elders become physically involved, also playing alongside children. This active participation suggests that the element of play is not just for children but also can be for all ages.

At Strawberry Creek Park, the most significant intergenerational interactions were observed around the playground. The playground's open design—without enclosing gates—creates a welcoming environment that encourages spontaneous social engagement. While gates can enhance safety, their absence here fosters a more fluid and inviting atmosphere where interaction feels natural. Caregivers, often grandparents, were seen deeply engaged in play, strengthening their bonds with children while also participating physically. Everyone who stayed near the playground interacted with younger generations, and even casual passersby could easily exchange smiles or brief greetings, highlighting how open design can support everyday moments of intergenerational connection.



Elder in Playground
Source: Author

"Especially when I'm near the playground part—it's really fun. That's where I meet people."

- Elders at Strawberry Park



Elder in Playground
Source: Author



Elder in Playground
Source: Author

Recommendations

The recommendations includes strategies, action steps, and case studies to support the City of Berkeley's implementation. Drawing from the findings, eight key themes have been identified to foster intergenerational interaction within the built environment. Each theme pairs targeted interventions with examples to illustrate practical actions.

8 Elements that Encourage Intergenerational Interaction in Public Space

These are eight elements that can support intergenerational interaction in public space. The elements are arranged based on the level of interaction that can happen. To build deeper intergenerational interaction, there must first be a foundational system that supports movement, allowing older adults to meet others in public space. Then, the space should be designed to let people pause and stay for a while, so it is not just a place to pass through. Finally, when public space offers chances to engage, it can help foster interaction and eventually lead to intergenerational connection.



Elements that Encourage Intergenerational Interaction
Source: Author

Strategy 1:

Rhythms

Elders prefer walking in sidewalks that feel safe, quiet, and familiar. When these loops are in low-traffic, walkable streets with smooth conditions, they encourage regular movement and increase the chance for casual, intergenerational encounters.

Prioritize Low-Traffic Streets for Walking Loops

Map walking loops along calm residential streets and safe crossings. Avoid arterial roads where noise and speed discourage walking and conversation.

Offer Loop Variations

Provide multiple loop options with varying lengths and effort levels, so elders can choose what fits their energy and needs that day.

Quietways, London

London's Quietways network—launched in 2015—provides over 100 km of low-traffic, way-marked routes along back streets, green corridors, and towpaths, complementing high-capacity Cycle Superhighways by focusing on calm, pleasant streets. By 2018, approximately 100 km of Quietways were designated across all London boroughs; these have since been rebranded as "Cycleways." Routes prioritize residential streets and green corridors where motor vehicle volumes and speeds are minimal, reducing noise and stress for older users. By adapting London's Quietways principles—continuous low-traffic alignment, wayfinding, smooth surfaces, and community engagement—cities can craft effective familiar loop networks.

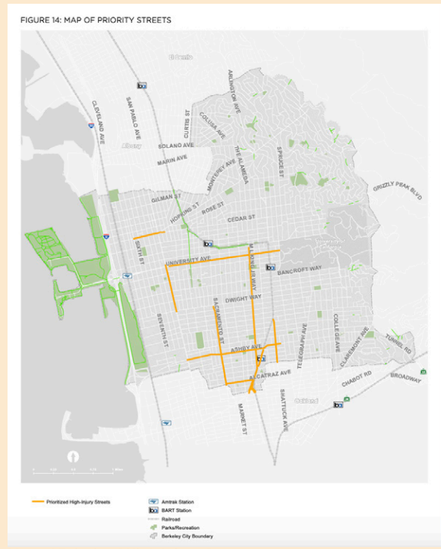


London's Quietways
Source: aseasyasriding

Berkeley Pedestrian Priority Area, Berkeley

Note on Current Practice (Berkeley Pedestrian Priority Area):

Most pedestrian-priority improvements today target major arterials—supporting Vision Zero and broad safety goals—but often overlook calmer neighborhood streets. Older adults, however, tend to favor routes with less traffic and noise, where social connection and peace of mind matter as much as technical engineering aspects.



Map of Priotized High Injury Street
Source: Berkeley Pedestrian Priority Plan

Strategy 2:

Safety

Create safer and more welcoming connection between neighborhoods and parks that will ensure all ages arrive to the park safely. Streets should not be seen as barriers, but as extensions of the park experience.

Paint Uneven Sidewalks

Tactically address sidewalk issues by using bright and colorful paint to mark uneven sidewalks when full repairs are not possible. This can help people of all ages to see and avoid hazards, while aading a fun element to the walk.

Roma Norte street, Mexico City



Colored Cracked Sidewalk
Source: Alf A. Nieto

This is an intervention by Peruvian artist, Xomatok. By painting bold spectrums—pinks, yellows, blues—onto cracked sidewalks, he transforms urban damage into art. His work invites people to notice, reflect, and engage more consciously with the everyday spaces they walk through.

Clear Signage

Create park entrances with signs and visual guides to help people with cars know they are entering a park area where people are walking. Signs should also be placed at park exits to remind visitors to be careful of cars when they return to nearby streets.

Various Example of Signage







1. **Slow Your Roll Sign**
   Source: City of Greenville
2. **Watch for Cars Sign**
   Source:shutterstock
3. **City of Trenton Sign**
   Source: PPS

Signs in the park can serve two purposes: they give helpful information and also strengthen the park's identity. Bold visuals like "Slow Your Roll" or using simple graphics speak to diverse age groups and literacy levels.

Bollards at Entrances

Bollards can serve as a safety buffer between the street and the park. With creative design, they can also spark conversation and encourage informal use, making the transition space more engaging for all ages.

Buren's Columns, Paris



Buren's Columns
Source: sociallifeproject

Buren's Columns (Les Deux Plateaux) in the Palais Royal courtyard is an example of how simple structures can generate different use across generations. With varying heights, they invite climbing, sitting, and playing— may encourage spontaneous interaction among visitors of all ages.

Slow Traffic as Park Gateway

Implement traffic-calming designs around park edges to slow vehicles and prioritize pedestrian access and safety.

Silver Zone, Singapore



Singapore Silver Zone
Source: Land Transport Authority Singapore

Singapore's Silver Zones, pioneered by the Land Transport Authority in 2014, act as "slow-traffic gateways" at park edges and senior-centric corridors by deploying gateway treatments that cue drivers to slow to 30–40 km/h (18 - 25 miles/hours) and stay vigilant for pedestrians. These enhancements typically stretch 400 m to 800 m along park-adjacent streets.

Seamless Curb and Shared Street

Introduce curbless transitions and shared-street designs in key areas such as dead-end streets or roads near intergenerational facilities like parks, senior centers, and youth centers. These designs can help make the space more accessible people of all ages to move safely.

Vibrant Midtown 'Art Walk', Atlanta



In 2018, Curbed Atlanta proposed transforming Cypress Street—between North Avenue and Arts Center MARTA stations—into a pedestrian plaza under the "Art Walk" concept. This aims to connect transit riders and park-goers through a continuous public space. By using a curbless shared-street approach, blending sidewalk and roadway with subtle material changes (pavers, stamped concrete), the strategy prioritizes people over cars while incorporating art for a welcoming environment for all ages.

Engaging Elders in Assessing Universal Design

Not all universal design elements help—tactile paving, for instance, may not suit everyone. Understanding the needs of older adults, particularly those with limited mobility, is crucial to avoid creating new obstacles.

Age-Friendly Walkability Audit, Ottawa



In 2012–2014, the Council on Aging of Ottawa's Pedestrian Safety Committee partnered with older adult volunteers to co-evaluate the city's universal design elements through three season-long walk audits in Beaverbrook, Hintonburg, and the Glebe. Participants used an All-Season Pedestrian Safety & Walkability Checklist alongside a Sidewalk Hazard Report Form to record issues with curb ramps, detectable warning surfaces (tactile paving), seating access, and street furniture placement.

Strategy 3:

Pause Nodes

Sidewalks are often treated as places for movement rather than pausing. While some elders enjoy short, spontaneous pauses, those with mobility challenges tend to rest only when they can do so comfortably for longer. Comfortable and well-placed resting areas can encourage adults to linger longer in parks or sidewalks - creating more opportunity for observation and interaction with other generation.

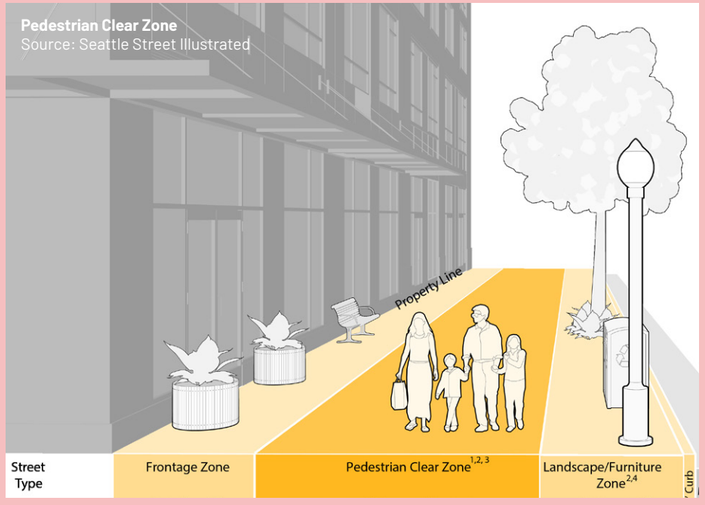
Remove Physical Obsatacles

Maintain clear sidewalk widths and park trail by managing trash bins, pruning vegetation, and removing obstructions so elders can approach pause points without difficulty.

Curb Bulbs and Gathering Pockets

Use curb extensions to widen corners or mid-block areas for seating, planting, and gathering. These spaces improve safety and invite spontaneous interaction.

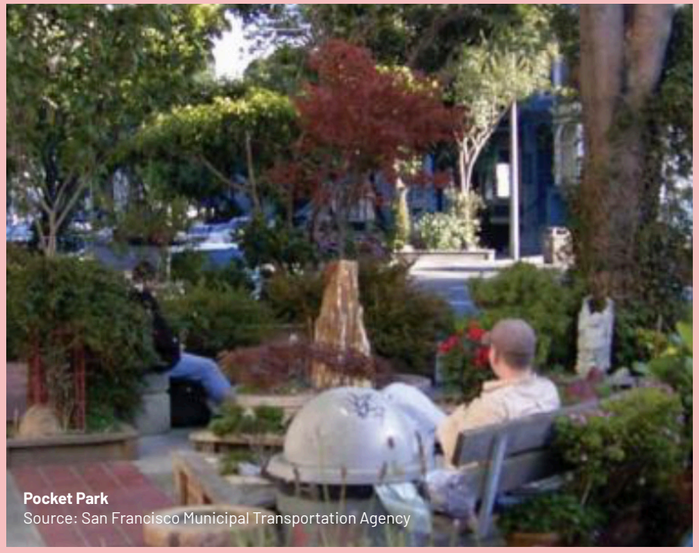
Pedestrian Clear Zone



Pedestrian Clear Zone
Source: Seattle Street Illustrated

Pedestrian clear zones must be obstacle-free on city sidewalks to ensure safe walking for everyone, especially older adults and those with mobility aids. The ADA Standards for Accessible Design set 48 in (1.22 m) as the minimum clear width for pedestrian routes. Berkeley's Municipal Code (§14.48.150) increases this to 6 ft of required horizontal clear space. This follows best practices from cities like Seattle, where the Age-Friendly Street Design Toolkit recommends a minimum 5-foot clear zone and 6 to 8 feet on high-traffic corridors for two-way pedestrian flow and pause areas.

Duboce Triangle, San Francisco



Pocket Park
Source: San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency

On several blocks radiating from Duboce Park, the city has installed curb extensions—also called bulb-outs—at corners and mid-block pinch points. By shifting the curb into the parking lane, these bulbs shorten crossing distances and calm turning vehicles, while their widened sidewalks accommodate planting beds, seating walls, and even small "pocket parks."

Strategy 4:

Age Neutral Space

Spaces that are too strongly associated with a specific age group may unintentionally exclude others. Age-neutral zones are intended to be adaptable, inclusive, and multi-functional, fostering a natural mix of seniors, adults, teenagers, and children in the same space.

Adaptable Space

Parks with flexible spaces and a variety of activities create more opportunities for people of all ages to connect. Spaces that accommodate both formal programs and informal gatherings help foster natural opportunities for intergenerational interaction.

Diverse Ways of Use

Provide a mix of formal seating, like benches with backrests, and informal options, such as planter edges and grassy mounds, to support diverse comfort needs and social preferences.

Esprit Park, San Francisco



Esprit Park Plan
Source: Fletcher Studio

Esprit Park transitioned from a corporate green space into a dynamic community park organized around a single, adaptable central lawn. This expansive meadow is located at the heart of the park and framed by programmed zones like playground or outdoor classroom—dog-off-leash and dog-free areas—yet remains flexible enough to host informal gatherings, fitness activities, or seasonal events

West Bund Waterfront, Shanghai



Different Types of Seating
Source: Hassell Studio



Different Types of Seating
Source: Hassell Studio

Originally part of Shanghai's heavy-industry corridor, the West Bund was transformed in 2008 into the Shanghai Corniche, a lively waterfront promenade. It offers several seating options: formal benches with supportive backrests are spaced evenly along the path; raised wooden and stone platforms double as viewing decks and informal meeting spots; and gently sloping grassy terraces and wide planter ledges provide natural seating areas. Together, these varied elements invite visitors of all ages to pause, rest, and enjoy.

Strategy 5:

Sensory Experience

Parks and sidewalk should engage all the senses—sight, sound, smell, touch—to create calming and joyful experiences for people of all ages through natural and man-made elements.

Visual Engagement

Position visually interesting elements public art, little free libraries where people might naturally pause and notice together, increasing the chance for casual conversation across generations.

Seasonal and Textural Variety

Create sensory gardens or plantings that evolve throughout the year—using fragrant herbs, colorful flowers, soft grasses, and textured wall or pathways.

PDX Sidewalk Joy, Portland



Sidewalk Installation
Source: PDX Sidewalk Joy



Sidewalk Installation
Source: PDX Sidewalk Joy

PDX Sidewalk Joy is a community-driven initiative that installed about 100 sidewalk “nodes”—including Little Free Libraries, micro-galleries, seed exchanges, and art installations—throughout Portland neighborhoods, encouraging passersby to pause, observe, and interact with their surroundings

Therapeutic Garden @ TBP, Singapore



Therapeutic Garden
Source: National Park Board Singapore

Singapore’s sensory gardens weave seasonal and textural variety into purpose-built “therapeutic” landscapes by grouping plants into multi-sensory zones—fragrance, colours & textures, edibles, and biodiversity—and selecting species that bloom, scent, or change foliage through the year.
These designs showcase how seasonal shifts and varied surface textures can engage sight, smell, touch, and even taste to support well-being for older adults and other visitors.

Cultivate Natural Habitats

Combine native flowers, shrubs, and trees with gentle water features—like shallow streams, rain gardens, or small ponds—to attract biodiversity. Nature attracts people of all ages—children are drawn to explore, while adults are more likely to enjoy the calming atmosphere.

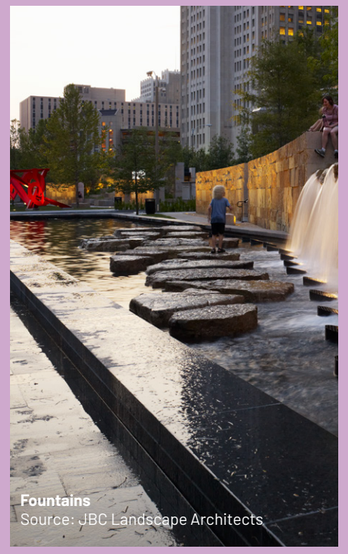
Percussion and Musical Play Features

Interactive elements such as drums, chimes, or outdoor xylophones can invite spontaneous participation from all ages. These features can transform ordinary moments into shared experiences when placed along seating areas or pathways.

Citygarden, St. Louis, Missouri



Rain Garden
Source: JBC Landscape Architects



Fountains
Source: JBC Landscape Architects

Citygarden's rain gardens and adjoining water features create layered zones where toddlers can splash safely in the spray plaza, school-age kids delight in interactive fountains, and seniors can rest on the gently sloping "meander wall," all within sightlines that encourage shared activities and casual conversation .

Rotary Park, Moab



Outdoor Xylophone
Source: Moab City

Established in 1996 on Mill Creek in Moab, Rotary Park is celebrated as the oldest and largest outdoor music park in the world. Its centerpiece, the "Xylophonus Rex" oversize xylophone, was the first instrument installed and has since grown into a sprawling ensemble of durable percussion instruments set along a shaded creekside trail. Children marvel at striking the giant xylophone bars, while teens experiment with rhythm on chimes and adults and seniors pause on nearby benches to improvise or simply listen.

Strategy 6:

Health and Fitness

Fitness in parks doesn't need to be intense to be meaningful. Besides sports courts, parks should also offer equipment and spaces that older adults can safely use. By designing with different age groups in mind, parks can support active spaces for everyone—not just the young.

Low-Impact Fitness Equipment

Provide accessible equipment that promote gentle movement and cater to older adults or people with limited mobility.

Placement Along Trail and Other Activity Zones

Considering placing fitness equipment along walking loops or popular gathering spots that can encourage spontaneous movement and engagement through visibility and proximity.

Normoyle Park, San Antonio



Fitness Equipment
Source:KSAT

AARP sponsored Normoyle Park to have fitness equipment for elders and people with different levels of ability and fitness. If the equipment is friendly for the seniors, it will most likely be suitable for all ages, focusing on low-impact, joint-safe movement, core strength, and flexibility.

Motorik Park 10, Vienna



Motorik Park 10
Source: Gugerell

Motorikpark 10 in Vienna's Helmut-Zilk-Park features 10 stations with equipment that supports endurance, strength, balance, and coordination. The park is designed to encourage play, exercise, and social interaction by placing equipment along the main pathways and close to picnic, café, and gathering areas.

Strategy 7:

Shared Play

Play isn't just for kids. Playground that welcome grandparents, teens, parents, and toddlers into shared moments of play create spaces for bonding across generations.

Play Opportunities

Include equipment supporting side-by-side play or parallel participation, allowing grandparents and caregivers to play with children, not just supervise.

Play not only in Playground

Children and older adults can enjoy playful moments not only in the playground. Adding fun elements like like stepping stones, murals, chalkboards, or other things that can touch and explore in different parts of the park may a great addition.

Beverly Park, Knoxville



Intergenerational Play
Source:Knox County Parks & Rec

Beverly Park in Knoxville, Tennessee, opened its Intergenerational Playspace in November 2023 as purpose-built playground designed for all ages. It was funded through a partnership of Legacy Parks, Trinity Health Foundation, Knox County, and local sponsors. By blending adult-oriented exercise equipment directly into children's play zones—and pairing it with accessible pathways and communal seating—the playground turns supervision into mutual participation.

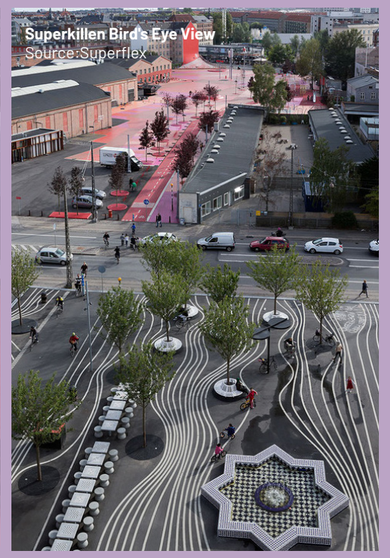
Superkillen, Copenhagen



Superkillen Chess Table
Source:Landezine



Superkillen Red Square
Source:Pop Up City



Superkillen Bird's Eye View
Source:Superflex

Rather than confining play to a single playground, Superkilen's 750 m park is divided into three color-coded strips—Red Square (cultural plaza), Black Market (urban living room), and Green Park (rolling hills and plantings)—each embedding playful elements along the main cycle and pedestrian spine. Superkilen turns every step of the journey into a potential play moment.

Seamless but Safe Boundary

Create gate-free playgrounds that are visually accessible to all ages. Use landscape edges or low barriers to ensure safety without restricting interaction or engagement.

Portsmouth Square, San Francisco



Portsmouth Square Plan
Source: SWA

The new design of Portsmouth Square in San Francisco is an example of seamless playground boundaries. It features terraced levels and hardscape plazas that naturally define areas without physical fences. Instead of gates, the park uses landscape elements, such as new plantings and terracing, and strategically placed seating to define the edges of play areas gently.

Helen Diler Playground, San Francisco



Helen Diler Playground
Source: KLA

By combining landscape-based barriers with a clear, unfenced perimeter, the Helen Diller Playground exemplifies how “seamless but safe” boundaries can preserve visibility, encourage intergenerational interaction without the visual or psychological barrier of a traditional fence.

Strategy 8:

Social Activation

Interaction through events can be more inviting than from design alone. These events don't have to be extensive; even small, recurring gatherings can build routine and community over time and give them reasons to return.

Partner with Local Organizations

Work with senior centers, schools, youth groups, libraries, and local nonprofits to co-design and co-host intergenerational activities

Recurring Events

Establish recurring programs—such as weekly or monthly events—that help people build social habits over time. Predictable scheduling makes participation easier and allows people of all ages to to plan around their routines.

It's Wonderful with Grandpas, Orvinio



Sharing Activities
Source: ToyProject

"Che bello con il nonno!" brought together two classes of 8–9-year-olds and twelve grandparents in a nature park near Orvinio for guided walks, storytelling, and hands-on workshops exploring local ecosystems and sustainable living. The program fostered strong emotional bonds—children hugged grandparents they'd just met—and allowed elders to share traditions and deepen mutual respect across generations.

Play Street LA, Los Angeles



Play Street
Source: Los Angeles Department of Transportation

On the first Saturday of every month, Boyle Heights transforms County+9th Streets into a two-block festival zone under LADOT's Play Streets Pilot. This monthly event may build momentum: children form playdate routines, and seniors anticipate the chance to reconnect with familiar faces—strengthening the community.

EXISTING RESOURCES

Park Guideline Case Studies

Here are additional resources that can help design public spaces—parks—to be more age-friendly and support intergenerational interaction.

Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages, a Step by Step Guide

Author
AARP Livable Communities, 8 80 Cities, and the Trust for Public Land

Context
United States of America - Nationwide

Scope
The guide focuses on improving parks and public spaces—collecting data, evaluating opportunities, and generating ideas—for ages 8 to 80, which will eventually be designed for people of all ages. Its goal is to explain how to increase the quality and quantity of parks nationwide.

Audiences
- Local planners and policymakers
- Community leaders and advocates

Key Findings
The guide is divided into two main parts: park strategies with accompanying case studies from real world examples and a hands-on toolkit:

1. Goal and strategies for Parks and Public Space:
   - Enhance Existing Parks: Add programs and activities, comfortable amenities for all ages e,g play or fitness element, so current parks draw a wider age mix and stay lively year-round, and engagement strategies.
   - Improve Access to Parks :Make it easy and safe to reach green space: walkable routes, slower traffic, better crossings, transit stops, and clear way finding from nearby neighborhoods.
   - Create New Parks in Unused Spaces :Turn vacant lots, rooftops, street edges, or parking areas into pocket parks or plazas to extend the network where land is scarce.
2. Hands-on Toolkit:
   - Use the Hands-On Toolkit:Use the walk audit worksheets, public space audit, mapping exercises, and programming templates that the guide supplies to diagnose needs and test ideas quickly.


GOAL
Connect People to Parks
In 2017, San Francisco became the first city in the United States to ensure that all of its residents were within a 10-minute walk of a park. People who lived within walking distance of a park during the COVID-19 pandemic, could safely get outside, gather with friends, exercise and perhaps better maintain their mental health. Alas, the 100 million Americans who don't have a park close to home were vying for the same patch of outdoor space as many of their neighbors. And as the data around access to parks shows, that was too often the case for low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, the same communities that were hit hardest by the virus.
STRATEGY
Put Pedestrians First
Walking is the most popular activity in parks. The economic, social and health benefits of walking are well-documented, so much so that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention describes walking as "the closest thing you can have to a wonder drug."
Walking allows people to interact, which encourages a sense of belonging. People who interact often with others are less likely to experience dementia if they walk regularly, and research shows that children who walk to local destinations, such as school or a park, exhibit higher levels of happiness, energy and relaxation.
Among the ways to put pedestrians first:
PUT PARKS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE
Can a parent or caregiver easily push a stroller to a local park? Can a teen or older person walk to a park to meet a friend? An area might have green spaces galore, but if people can't walk to those places, many in need of time outdoors won't get out and about.
THINK HUMAN SCALE
If the walk to a park is difficult or unsafe, people won't make the effort. That's why streets must be designed at a human scale, which means creating an atmosphere of comfort, dynamism and safety for pedestrians, as well as a connected network of sidewalks that are maintained, properly lit, and lined with a varied and interesting streetscape.
SLOW DOWN THE STREETS
Lower-income neighborhoods see a disproportionately high number of pedestrian fatalities. Older adults and children account for more than 25 percent of all pedestrian deaths and more than 20 percent of all pedestrian injuries. Pedestrians struck by vehicles traveling at 40 mph die as a result 80 percent of the time. When struck by a vehicle traveling 20 mph, pedestrians survive 90 percent of the time.[1] Slower speeds, safe crossings and continuous sidewalks are key ingredients for connecting parks to the people who need them the most.
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SPOTLIGHT
Tattnall Square Park
16 acres | Macon, Georgia
Dubbed the "green fountain," Tattnall Square Park's signature structure inspires splashing — and reading. The brick paths leading to the fountain feature inspiring words ("Trust," "Hope," "Justice," "Love") and other engraved messages. The fountain also doubles as displays for quotations from both famous names and local residents.
Tattnall Square Park is one of the oldest parks in the United States. But over time, as the city of Macon's fortunes declined, the park was poorly maintained and became crime-ridden.
The creation of the volunteer group Friends of Tattnall Square Park and a grant in 2010 from the Knight Foundation helped restore the public square into a vibrant gathering space in Macon's College Hill neighborhood.
Numerous design changes made the park a safer, more comfortable and overall more useful place for people of all ages.
Many of the improvements were inspired by the municipality's decision to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. (Learn more about that program at AARP.org/AgeFriendly.) Working with AARP Georgia and a liability consultant, local stakeholders assessed the walkability and age-friendly features of the park and its surroundings.
Among the recommended and implemented changes: bicycle lanes and wide sidewalks were installed. A roundabout was constructed to make the nearby streets safer by slowing the fast-moving traffic around the park. Motor vehicles are now banned from the park's interior.
Asphalt surfaces were torn up and replaced with pervious pavers, and new public performance spaces and drinking fountains were added. The lighting was updated, and an elegant fountain was installed to replace one removed in the 1960s. Prominent entrances welcome pedestrians into the park and define Tattnall Square's boundaries.
"People of all ages can enjoy nature without being a consumer, without purchasing anything," said Andrew Silver, chair of Friends of Tattnall Square Park. "Up to 1,000 people visit the park every week to enjoy the open space and trees."
RELEVANT TOOL: AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit, page 24
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Source Link:
https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2018/parks-and-public-places-PDF-download.html

Intergenerational Parks: Design Guide for Physical Activity and Social Engagement Across Generations

Author
QUT, Moreton Bay Regional Council, Playscape Creations, Conrad Gargett, 7 Senses Foundation, Heart Foundation, and National Wellness Institute of Australia

Context
Australia - Queensland

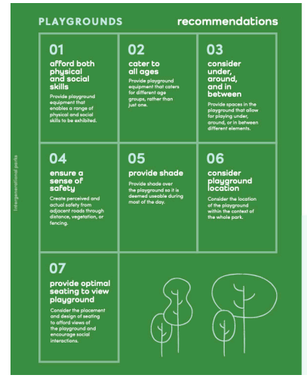
Scope
The guide focuses on The guide focuses on transforming suburban and neighborhood parks into health promoting public spaces

Audiences
- Local governments / parks & recreation departments
- Public health professionals & policy makers
- Community organisations & advocates
- Landscape architects & urban designers
- Researchers investigating age friendly or intergenerational environments

Key Findings
- Salutogenic Design:The guide puts "health creation" (not just safety) at the centre, recommending park layouts and equipment that actively support physical and mental well being for every age

- Entice — Enable — Engage Framework: Design moves first entice people to enter (visible play features, welcoming edges), then enable movement (looped paths, accessible surfacing), and finally engage them socially with gathering spots and programming.

- Six park components, ranked by influence on activity & engagement:
  1. Pathways
  2. Playgrounds
  3. Open playing fields
  4. Dog exercise areas
  5. Outdoor exercise zones
  6. Other activity nodes


PLAYGROUNDS recommendations
01 afford both physical and social skills
Provide playground equipment that enables a range of physical and social skills to be exhibited.
02 cater to all ages
Provide playground equipment that caters for different age groups, rather than just one.
03 consider under, around, and in between
Provide spaces in the playground that allow for moving under, around, or in between different elements.
04 ensure a sense of safety
Create perceived and actual safety from adjacent roads through distance, vegetation, or fencing.
05 provide shade
Provide shade over the playground so it is deemed useable during most of the day.
06 consider playground location
Consider the location of the playground within the context of the whole park.
07 provide optimal seating to view playground
Consider the placement and design of seating to afford views of the playground and encourage social interactions.


01
afford both physical and social skills
Provide playground equipment that enables a range of physical and social skills to be exhibited.
entice & enable
Caregivers often visit parks to allow children to play on the playground (1). Many caregivers believe children are more active in the playground compared to other areas of the park, mainly due to the range of physical skills they exhibit (1). Consideration should be given to the range of physical skills promoted by the playground equipment, with a focus on including the greatest variety possible. This can be achieved by including a range of play types, such as climbing, swinging, sliding, spinning, jumping, and balancing. For older adults, accompanying and assisting children is often considered a contribution to their physical activity, e.g. pushing children on a swing (1).
Providing a variety of equipment promotes increased engagement with the space as it allows the children's attention and interest to move from one thing to another (1). Varied equipment that is visually appealing and encourages children to play for longer periods of time in the playground increases the chances of being active for longer. More equipment is associated with more users and higher levels of physical activity (Cohen et al., 2020).
engage
Playgrounds are typically used by intergenerational groups as caregivers are often present with children (1). Swinging and climbing are skills taught to children by adults in playgrounds (1). For young children, caregivers can have an important role in physical development, and provides an opportunity for valuable interaction between children and their caregivers.
51

Source Link:
https://eprints.qut.edu.au/235562/

Sidewalk Guideline Case Studies

Here are additional resources that can help design public spaces—sidewalks—to be more age-friendly and support intergenerational interaction.

Seattle Age Friendly Street Design Toolkit

Author
Seattle Department of Transportation in partnership with the Age Seattle initiative of Human Services and community advocates.

Context
United States of America - Seattle

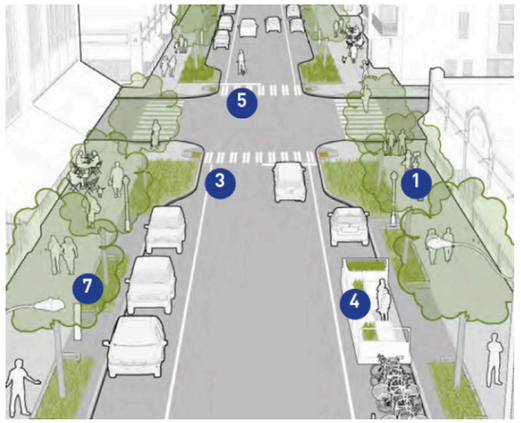
Scope
Focuses on pedestrian comfort and safety, while integrating bicycle facilities, transit stops, and landscaping into a single street life lens.

Audiences
- Policy makers and grant reviewers
- Capital project managers, private developers, and design consultants
- Community members and advocacy groups

Key Findings
- Streets as social infrastructure – By combining safety basics with engaging inserts, age friendly streets can transform 27 % of Seattle's land (the public right of way) into vibrant age-friendly streets.

- Standard design elements still matter – Adequate lighting, calm traffic speeds, short crossings, and continuous clear zones form the safety backbone for every age friendly street.

- Five engagement inserts amplify standard engineering :
  1. Learning: interpretive signs and landmarks give slower walkers a reason to pause and orient.
  2. Play: parklets, playful art, and low barrier games spark joy for children and older adults alike.
  3. Art & Color: visually rich crosswalks, bike racks, and signal box murals add identity and way finding cues.
  4. Exercise: compact fitness stations or marked loops invite moderate activity if they preserve pedestrian clear space.
  5. Nature: street trees and planting strips create buffers, shade, and a healthier micro climate for lingering.



Source Link:
https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/urban-design-program/age-friendly-street-design-toolkit

Monnee Valley Age'n'dem Toolkit

Author
- Lead authors: Guy Luscombe (SYSTEM Architects) & Carmel Boyce (Equity Justice Access).
- Commissioned by: Moonee Valley City Council under Victoria's State Dementia Plan funding (2016).

Scope
Focuses on practical toolkit for age and dementia friendly streetscapes, tested on Union Road—a retail strip with the municipality's highest concentration of older residents. The toolkit uses a "day in the life" narrative following an elder named Maria to translate technical advice into lived experience

Audiences
- Local councils
- Planners, transport engineers, landscape architects
- Community & advocacy groups

Key Findings
- The Age'n'dem Toolkit turns 94 very specific "tools" (design moves, audit checks, and maintenance tips) into 15 plain language topics, grouped under four project sequence sections.
  - Good Planning
    The Good Planning section helps stakeholders set the stage by mapping desire lines and selecting safe, legible routes that accommodate pets and foster community connections.
  - Building & Landscape
    The Building & Landscape section focuses on shaping the environment with distinctive landmarks, inviting open spaces, and supportive greenery that reinforce wayfinding and offer rest opportunities.
  - Easiness of Walking
    The Easy Walking section provides detailed recommendations on footpath surfacing, grade limits, crossing designs, and building thresholds to eliminate trip hazards and ensure smooth, safe movement for users with varying mobility.
  - Supporting Elements
    The Supporting Elements section rounds out the toolkit by prescribing the placement and design of seating, toilets, signage, and lighting to add comfort and clarity for users spending time outdoors.



Source Link:
https://universaldesignaustralia.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Age-Dementia-friendly-spaces-MVCC-Report-final.pdf



Conclusion

Intergenerational connections will not happen on their own—design can create the opportunity, but people choose how to engage. However it is still important for all entities to work together to try to make the environment support the opportunities to interact in public space. The insights from this study provide targeted considerations across eight key aspects to help planners, designers, and community organizations create public spaces that maximize opportunities for spontaneous, meaningful intergenerational interaction.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Intergenerational interaction in public spaces depends on more than chance—it requires intentional design, inclusive planning, and collective effort. This research highlights that everyday activities like walking often create the conditions for interaction, but only when the environment supports it. Streets must be safe, accessible, and welcoming—not only in technical terms, but also in how they are experienced by older adults. Similarly, parks hold the potential to become community anchors where people across ages gather, rest, and connect. To unlock this potential, designers and engineers must see both streets and parks as public spaces that serve social as well as functional purposes.

While design cannot force connection, it can create the setting where relationships grow naturally. Humans are a social creature. well-designed public spaces tend to draw people and people will attract other people. When more people are in the same area, public space can feel more welcoming towards the others, including older adults. However, elders might not always want to engage in interaction with other generation - in activities or conversation - and that is okay.

This research explores how Berkeley's public spaces can better support natural, intergenerational encounters. Thoughtful design helps create the environment where these relationships can grow over time. The observations in this study make the case for a broader set of analytical tools and a richer palette of design options that treat sidewalks and parks as an integrated public-space system, intentionally crafted to meet users' complex needs.

As cities prepare for aging populations, creating inclusive, age-friendly spaces is not just a design challenge, These insights can help inform future design, programming, and policy that supports more intergenerational interactions.

Limitations

1. Sample Size and Representativeness
   I acknowledge that although my walking interviews provided rich, first-hand insights, I spoke with only a small group of elders. As a result, I cannot be sure these findings reflect the full diversity of Berkeley's elders across racial, socioeconomic, or other backgrounds.

2. Temporal Constraints
   I conducted all observations and interviews during one season and within specific time-of-day windows. Because patterns of public-space use—and the chances for intergenerational encounters—can vary with weather, special events, or even different times, my observation may not capture the whole dynamic of public spaces.

3. Scope of the Built Environment
   In this study, I focused primarily on parks and sidewalks as places for intergenerational interaction. I recognize that other everyday settings—like transit stops, commercial corridors, or community centers—likely matter as well, but they fell outside my research scope.

4. Personal Behavior Influence
   I recognize that sociocultural factors—such as individual preferences, cultural norms, or comfort levels—also shape whether elders and younger people choose to engage. In this study, some share about their own characteristics that this study may inform design decision but still it will be different from people to people.

Further Study

1. Longitudinal and Seasonal Analysis
   Follow-up observations across different seasons, weekdays versus weekends, and varied times of day would capture how patterns of intergenerational use shift with weather, special events, and daily rhythms.

2. Quantitative Expansion
   Surveys could complement qualitative insights to validate and quantify trends of intergenerational interactions in public space.

3. Cross-Age Perspectives
   Voices of youth, caregivers, and other community stakeholders should be incorporated through interviews or focus groups to understand conditions that foster intergenerational connection from multiple perspectives.

4. Sidewalk Dynamics and Intergenerational Potential
   Structured, comparative observations of sidewalks in neighborhoods would give additional insight on top of walking interviews.

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APPENDIX A

Below are the dates on which I conducted observations:

Ohlone Park
Weekday
- Friday, Feb 21, 10-11 am
- Friday, Mar 7, 1-2 pm
- Friday, Feb 28, 4-5 pm

Weekend
- Saturday, Feb 22, 10-11 am
- Sunday, Mar 8, 1-2 pm
- Saturday, Mar 7, 4-5 pm

Strawberry Creek Park
Weekday
- Thursday, Mar 6, 10-11 am
- Friday, Feb 21, 1-2pm
- Thursday, Mar 6, 4-5pm

Weekend
- Saturday, Mar 8, 10-11 am
- Sunday, Feb 23, 1-2 pm
- Saturday, Feb 22, 4-5 pm

Grove Park
Weekday
- Thursday, Feb 27, 10-11am
- Friday, Feb 28, 1-2 pm
- Friday, Mar 7, 4-5 pm

Weekend
- Saturday, Feb 22, 10-11 am
- Sunday, Mar 8, 1-2 pm
- Saturday, Mar 7, 4-5 pm

Public Realm for Intergenerational Activity Count

Place
Date
Time In
Time Out
Weather

Desired Output:
1. Understanding the mix of age in park
2. Understanding the mix of activity in park
3. Look at comparison between elders/ other generation in shades
4. Across time and day, see the comparison of the mix of age

	Gender		Preceived Age			With Who?				Interact		Type of Interaction				Type of Interact			Pets		Activity										Others	Posture				Shades		Where?/ Mapping	Other Notes
Person	Male	Female	Children	Youth/ Young Adults	Elders	Alone	With Family	With Friends	# People	Yes	No	Passive	Brief Exchange	Conversation	Paired	With same gen	With different gen	Time of Stay	Yes	No	Eating	Talking	Playing	Reading	With Laptops	Recreational Sport	Walking	Playing	Cultural	Idle		Sitting- Formal	Sitting- Improvised	Lying	Standing	Yes	No		
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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTION
(Walking Interview)

Introduction
Hi, my name is Yora - I'm from UC Berkeley - studying City Planning and Urban Design, and I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me today. I'm interested in learning about your experiences as an elder in public spaces like sidewalks or parks. Mainly, I want to learn more about the elders and interaction with different age groups.
Before we begin, would it be okay to take notes and record our conversation? This will help me remember your thoughts accurately. Your responses will remain anonymous.

Warm-Up Question
- What year were you born?
- How long have you lived in this neighborhood?
- Who do you live with?
- How often do you take walks?
- How far would you usually walk?
- When do you usually go for a walk?
- Do you usually walk alone or with others?

Objective 1: Understanding What Is Walkable for Elders & Route Choices

- When you think of a place that is friendly for all ages, what comes to mind? What does an "age-friendly" space, place for all ages look like to you?
- Would you consider the street we're walking on right now a walkable street? Why so?
- When you choose a walking route, what influences your decision?
- Are there streets in this neighborhood you avoid walking on? Why so?
- Do you take rest in your walking?

Objective 2: Understanding If They Interact With Others While Walking
- When was the last time you interacted with younger or older people? What made it easy or natural to do so?
- What did you do during the last interaction with younger or older people while walking in this neighborhood?
- Who was part of the interaction?

Objective 3: Identifying Urban Design Elements That Encourage Intergenerational Interaction
- How would you describe streets and street features that feel vibrant and full of social life compared to those that seem quieter?
- How do buildings, front yards, street furniture or amenities make the street more inviting for all generations and encourage interaction?
- Do fences, walls, or hedges along homes make the street feel more private or less inviting? How does that affect whether people interact?

Objective 4: Identifying Physical Barriers to Interaction
- Are there any parts of this street that make walking difficult or uncomfortable? What do you notice?
- What experiences have you had that suggest certain parts of the street hinder the ability to pause or interact with other generations?

Objective 5: Identifying Areas of Improvement
- What do you think about ways to improve sidewalks - and the neighborhood for younger and older people to use together and promote interaction among different age groups?

Finishing Up
- Are there any additional comments you would add?
- Could you connect me with individuals interested in sharing their perspectives?

INTERVIEW QUESTION
(Intercept Interview)

- How did you go here?
- What is considered age-friendly public space for you?
- What element supports your interaction?
- What is the barrier of interaction?
- Improvements that you would like to see?