

Social Space Survey

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SOCIAL SPACE SURVEY

This tool helps you look at how public space design and programming catalyze or hinder social interaction and inclusivity. The survey is meant to be used as an engagement and evaluation tool for communities and design professionals. It helps us understand how the design and programming of a space can foster coexistence between different types of people. Survey users will spend time in a space, note what they see there, and then diagram the relationship between these elements.

Diversity, inclusion, and social interaction are complex topics. Elements of peoples' background and identity are not always visible to others. A diverse place isn't necessarily inclusive to all, and the people who spend time there may not be interacting with one another. Nevertheless, this tool helps us focus on the role public space plays in shaping these issues.

As more people use these tools to assess different contexts, data will become available for researchers to generate insights into how public space design and programming can do a better job of fostering spaces of diversity and interaction.

Use this tool if you want to:

Understand what makes a space welcoming and how it creates opportunities for social interaction.

Plan an intervention that makes a space more inviting to more people.

Lead a group in a workshop to raise awareness of this topic.

DIRECTIONS

- **SELECT YOUR SITE.** This tool works best in places we think of as 'public places' like parks and plazas. It can also be useful on streets but it was designed with defined public places in mind.
- **PLAN YOUR TRIP.** This survey will be most useful during an active time of day. But it could also occur at any time of the day, on any day of the week, since it looks at elements that do not change very much.
- **GET READY.** Bring a clipboard, a manila envelope, a thick pen and a thin pen, and clothes for the weather.
- **WHEN YOU GET TO THE SITE** take at least five minutes to simply observe. This survey is not timed, but it is important that you take time to understand the space before you use the survey tool itself.
- **IF YOU ARE IN GROUPS** be sure to perform the survey on your own and then convene at the end for a conversation and comparison of evaluations.

INVENTORY THE SITE

Investigate whether the space has design elements or program elements that are likely to invite diverse publics and foster social interaction. These features may not be obvious during your first visit. Use your best judgment or ask someone who uses the space frequently. Also note any spatial elements that might hinder interaction.

PHYSICAL FEATURES OR PROGRAMMING THAT INVITE INTERACTION + DIFFERENT TYPES OF USERS

1 Does the place offer a variety of places to sit and rest?

No Yes _____
How many?

2 Does the place offer things to look at / nice views?

No Yes

3 Does the place have a slope or steps that are nice for sitting?

No Yes

4 Does the place have gateways or well-defined entrances?

No Yes

5 Does the place offer areas for exercise?

No Yes

12 Does the place offer areas for team sports?

No Yes

6 Does the place have a playground or kid-friendly play space?

No Yes

7 Does the place have a multipurpose lawn? (i.e., a lawn big enough for frisbee or picnics)

No Yes

8 Does the place have a multipurpose plaza? (i.e., a plaza big enough for markets or demonstrations)

No Yes _____
How many?

9 Are there fixed food and drink vendors in the place? (Including food carts.)

No Yes

10 Are there a variety of active ground floor businesses adjacent to the place — including food and drink vendors?

No Yes _____
How many?

11 Does the place have tables for eating and socializing?

No Yes

13 Does the place have public restrooms?

No Yes

14 Does the place have good lighting at night?

No Yes Not sure

PHYSICAL FEATURES THAT HINDER INTERACTION

15 Are there any unnecessary permanent fences / barriers?

No Yes

16 Are there any off-limits areas?

No Yes

17 Are there any extreme grade changes, uneven paving, or other barriers for people with limited mobility?

No Yes

18 Are the only food or shopping options very expensive or only accessible to high-income people?

No Yes

SKETCH THE “PATTERNS” OF THE SITE

This tool focuses on three patterns which, when working together, usually facilitate social interaction. Use the three symbols provided and diagram the key elements of the site and their relationships to one another. In architecture, this type of drawing is called a parti. Use your thick pen for symbols and your thin pen for labels and notes. You can make up your own diagrams if you feel they are necessary. The diagram does not have to be to scale.



MAGNET

Attraction / magnet (can be people). Increase size of symbol for stronger magnets. Label each magnet.

- Active storefront
- Event
- Great view
- Water feature
- Art
- Food / drink vendor
- Play area



RANGE OF PARTICIPATION

Ability to be at different levels of remove from magnet. Draw actual physical features like benches, seatwalls, or other ‘occupiable edges.’

- Slope
- Prospect / refuge
- Nice things to lean against
- Places to stay
- Places to people watch

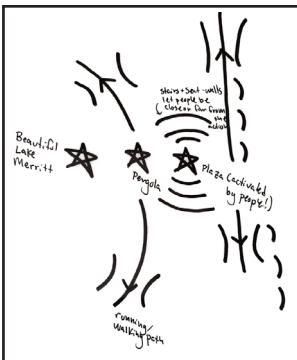


COMPRESSION

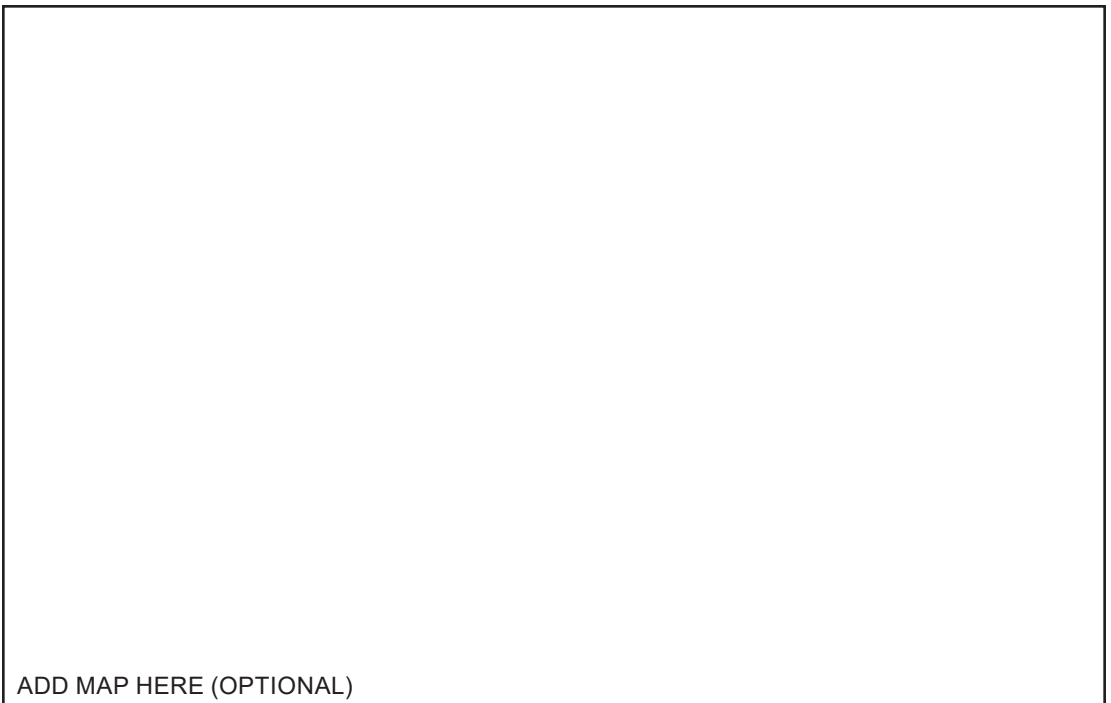
Design feature that brings people closer together. A feature that allows casual closeness to a stranger without being perceived as rude.

- Gateway
- Path
- Alley

USE THE SYMBOLS ABOVE TO MAP THE PHYSICAL ELEMENTS THAT ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THIS SPACE. Pay attention to overlapping patterns. Add entries and exits, and a general boundary line.



Example: Lake Merritt, Oakland, CA



ADD MAP HERE (OPTIONAL)

THOUGHTS + NOTES

Is this place good for...

People-watching / coexisting with people you don't know?

— — —

Not at all Maybe Yes Totally

Doing different types of activities?

— — —

Not at all Maybe Yes Totally

Being social / being with friends / family?

— — —

Not at all Maybe Yes Totally

Inviting people with different interests / backgrounds?

— — —

Not at all Maybe Yes Totally

1 Observe who is here. In what ways are the people here diverse? In what ways are they homogeneous? Identity is complex. It is not always visible to others. Nevertheless, think about age, race, gender, physical ability, profession, perceived income, education, diversity, etc.

2 Describe the big design and program elements that help or hinder this place to be diverse and foster interaction:

3 Look at where people are and what they are doing. Is social activity happening where you thought it might happen? Why or why not? (Reference Stationary Activity Mapping tool if you can)