



Inclusive Healthy Places Action Guide for Planners

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Executive Summary

Gehl's [Inclusive Healthy Places Framework](#) presents a system of principles, drivers, and indicators to help built environment practitioners, public health professionals, local leaders, and engaged community members advance inclusivity and health equity through efforts to shape public space. American Planning Association research staff developed this action guide to explore how planners could apply the framework in the communities they serve. Each principle, driver, and indicator in the framework has widespread implications for planning practice. Planners can use this action guide to operationalize the Inclusive Healthy Places Framework through research and analysis, engagement and collaboration, plan and policy making, program design and implementation, and project support.

Introduction

In 2018, Gehl (formerly the Gehl Institute) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) developed the [Inclusive Healthy Places \(IHP\) Framework](#) as a tool to help planners, public health professionals, other built environment practitioners, local leaders, and engaged community members evaluate and shape public spaces to advance inclusivity and health equity. In 2020, the American Planning Association (APA) partnered with Gehl and RWJF to develop a companion guidebook to help planners operationalize the framework in the communities they serve.

Overview of Inclusive Healthy Places Framework

The IHP Framework provides a conceptual model to help planning process participants plan, design, and implement public spaces that serve all users and promote equitable health outcomes. It is rooted in research exploring connections between the built environment and health and synthesizes concepts from more than 50 preexisting frameworks examining place, health, or inclusion in the built environment. And it includes a supplementary list of suggested metrics. The core components of the framework are principles, drivers, and indicators ([Figure 1](#)).

Principles

At the highest level, the IHP Framework identifies four guiding principles for shaping public spaces:

1. Understand Community Context
2. Support Inclusion in Process
3. Design and Program Public Spaces for Health Equity
4. Foster Social Resilience

These principles function as top-level goals for planning interventions, and they mirror the lifecycle of an idealized planning process, starting with initial research and concluding with ongoing monitoring and adjustment.

Drivers

Under each principle, the framework identifies multiple associated drivers. These drivers represent conditions, activities, or interventions that provide ways to characterize or achieve health equity in the context of public spaces.

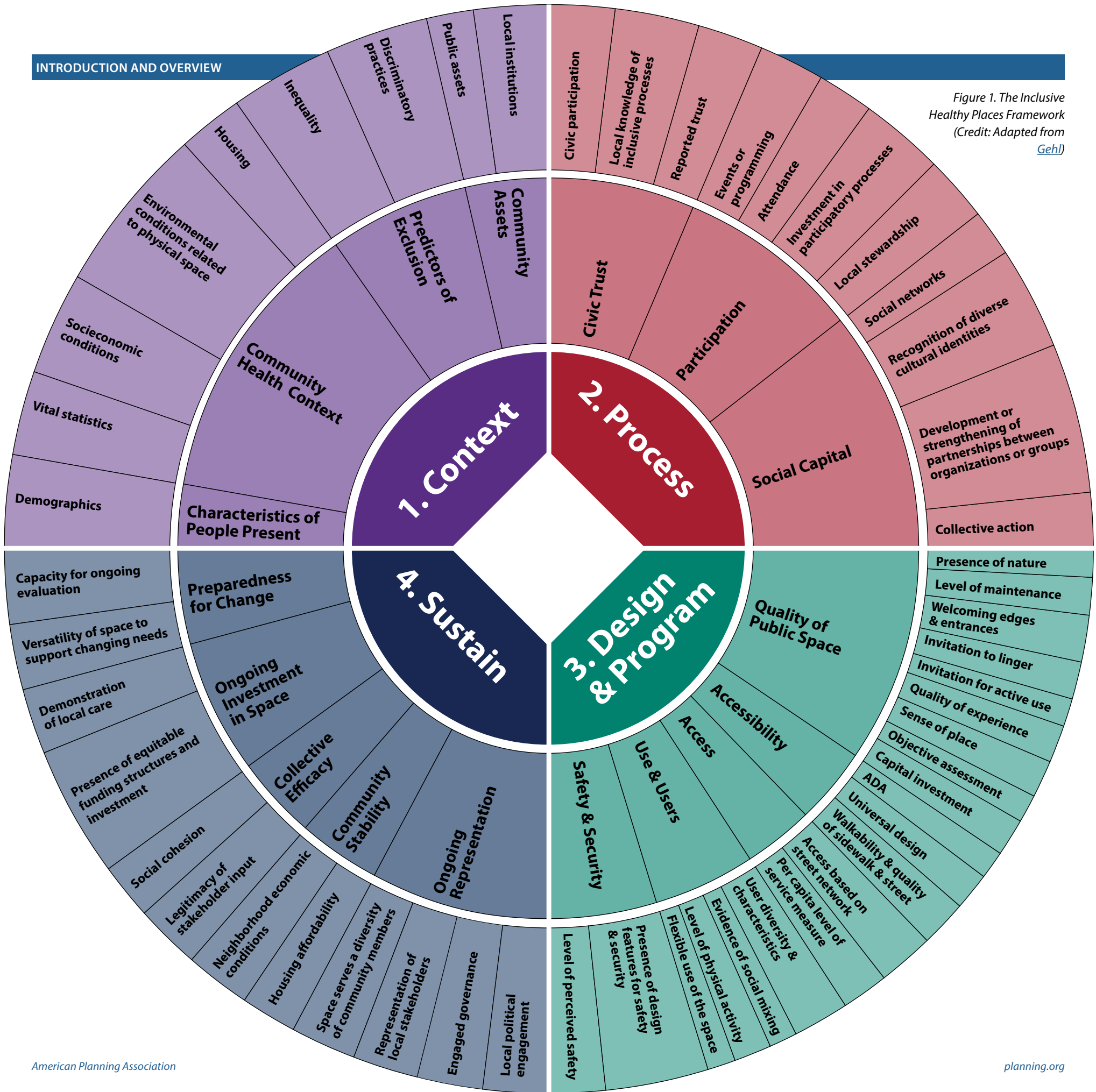
Indicators

For each driver, the framework identifies one or more associated indicators. These indicators are topical domains for quantitative or qualitative measures that provide simplified insights into complex community conditions.

Metrics

Finally, the framework suggests one or more metrics for each indicator. These metrics are units or standards of measurement, representing a single, specific type of data.

Figure 1. The Inclusive Healthy Places Framework
(Credit: Adapted from [Gehl](#))



How to Use This Guide

This guide serves as an adaptation and extension of the IHP Framework, focusing on actions planners can take to advance inclusion and health equity in efforts to shape public space. Here, public space refers to the interconnected system of publicly owned and accessible land and facilities in a city, town, county, or metropolitan area—or any part of that system. This includes both outdoor spaces, such as parks, streets, amphitheaters, and plazas, as well as indoor spaces, such as recreation and community centers, libraries, schools, and meeting halls.

The guide's structure mirrors that of the IHP Framework. It steps through each principle, driver, and indicator in the same sequence as the framework. However, you should not feel obligated to read the guide from front to back. Rather, feel free to skip around, based on your interests and the specific needs in your community.

For each indicator, the guide includes a paraphrase of the framework's suggested metrics and a list of potential actions for planners. Each action is categorized under one of five areas of planning practice: (1) research and analysis, (2) engagement and collaboration, (3) plans and policies, (4) programs, and (5) projects. See the [supplemental workbook](#) for a searchable, sortable itemization of all actions by category.

Each driver section concludes with a list of supplemental resources that provide additional context or guidance to help planners take the actions suggested under each component indicator. However, much of the analysis and many of the actions presented throughout this guide are rooted in ideas, themes, and recommendations from the following APA resources:

- [Planning for Equity Policy Guide](#)
- [Healthy Communities Policy Guide](#)
- [AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#)
- [Planning With Diverse Communities](#)
- [Integrating Planning and Public Health: Tools and Strategies to Create Healthy Places](#)

Furthermore, APA members have access to the following APA [Research KnowledgeBase](#) collections, which include links to many other APA and non-APA resources that may prove helpful for planners interested in taking many of the actions presented in this guide:

- [Built Environment and Health](#)
- [Social Equity](#)
- [Age-Friendly Communities](#)



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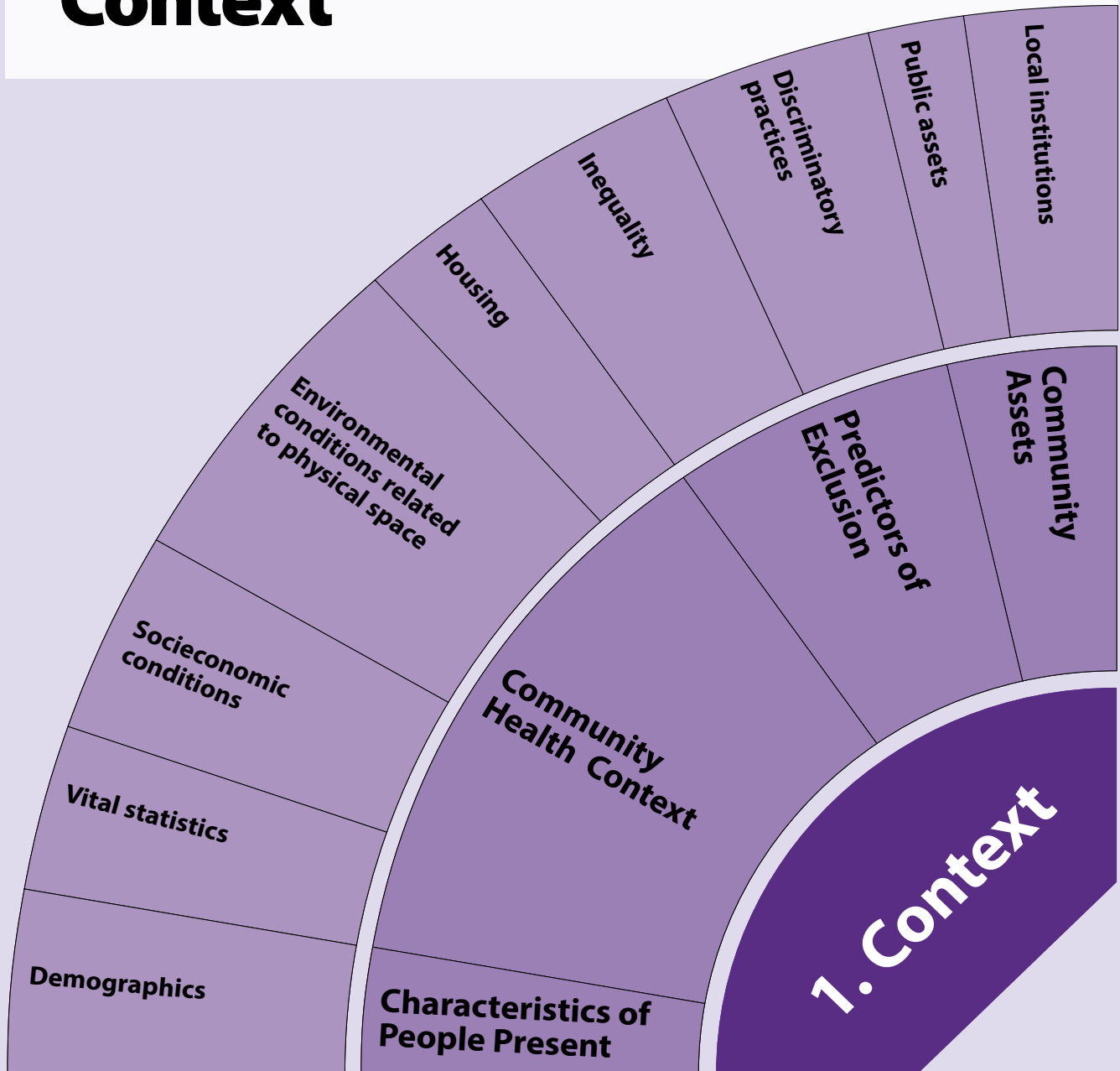


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Understand Community Context



Before initiating any effort to shape public space, it is important for planners to develop a deeper understanding of the community by exploring existing conditions, assets, and lived experiences. The IHP Framework identifies (1) the characteristics of people present, (2) community health context, (3) predictors of exclusion, and (4) community assets as core drivers for understanding community context.



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Characteristics of People Present

Planners should know the demographic characteristics of the local population before beginning any public-space-shaping effort. These characteristics serve as a key indicator of who lives in a community and how that population may be changing over time.

Demographics

Demographics are core statistics about the population within a specific geography. Planners need this data to evaluate whether planning process participants are representative of the broader community, and they can

use this data to identify segments of the population who are at greater risk for negative health outcomes, among other purposes. Useful metrics include population by age, sex, gender or gender identity, race, ethnicity, individual income, educational attainment, and nativity status.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to build and share a demographic profile of a community:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use U.S. Census Bureau data to create demographic snapshots and analyze demographic trends.



Credit: SDI Productions/Getty Images

- **Research and Analysis:** Compare demographic data with other data, such as crime and health statistics, to identify correlations between different variables.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage with local leaders, social service providers, mutual aid associations, religious institutions, and other community-based organizations to identify members of population groups that may be underrepresented in existing data sets, such as recent immigrants, non-English speakers, and people experiencing homelessness.
- **Plans and Policies:** Document demographic statistics in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.

+ Additional Resources

- Garcia, Ivis, Andrea Garfinkel-Castro, and Deirdre Pfeiffer. 2019. *Planning With Diverse Communities*. PAS Report 593. Chicago: American Planning Association.
- Measure Evaluation. 2023. [Population Analysis for Planners](#).
- University of Minnesota. 2023. [IPUMS USA: U.S. Census Data for Social, Economic, and Health Research](#).
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. ["Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data: What State and Local Government Users Need to Know."](#) August.
- Williamson, Christopher. 2008. *Planners and the Census*. PAS Report No. 553. Chicago: American Planning Association.

Community Health Context

Planners should work to build a holistic picture of the health and well-being of the community before setting goals and objectives for efforts to shape public space. The IHP Framework identifies (1) vital statistics, (2) socioeconomic conditions, (3) environmental conditions related to physical space, and (4) housing as key indicators that can help establish the community health context.

Vital Statistics

Here, vital statistics refers to population-level data about significant life events and self-reported health status. Planners should collect and analyze this data to identify population groups that are at greater risk for adverse health outcomes. Useful metrics include life expectancy, mortality rates from all causes, leading causes of mortality, and birth rates by sex, race, ethnicity, and neighborhood income; leading causes of morbidity by sex, race, and ethnicity; leading causes of hospitalizations and emergency department visits; and self-reported state of health and rate of physical activity.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to compile and share vital statistics:

- **Research and Analysis:** Contact the local or state department of public health to collect readily available vital statistics data.

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Partner with public health officials, social service and health-care providers, mutual aid associations, and religious institutions to identify and collect data about traditionally undercounted segments of the community.
- **Plans and Policies:** Document vital statistics in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Include vital statistics as one component of a neighborhood indicators data collection, monitoring, and sharing program.

Socioeconomic Conditions

Socioeconomic conditions are population-level measures related to educational attainment, income, and employment. Because socioeconomic status has a positive correlation with health and longevity, planners should consider socioeconomic conditions in all efforts to shape public space. Useful metrics include the percentage of residents living below the federal poverty line and the percentage of employed residents by age, sex, race, and ethnicity.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to document and understand socioeconomic conditions:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use U.S. Census Bureau data to create snapshots of socioeconomic conditions and to analyze socioeconomic trends.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Partner with schools, workforce development organizations, social service providers, mutual aid associations, religious institutions, and other community-based organizations to deepen understanding of socioeconomic conditions.
- **Plans and Policies:** Document socioeconomic conditions in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Include socioeconomic conditions as one component of a neighborhood indicators data collection, monitoring, and sharing program.

Environmental Conditions Related to Physical Space

Here, environmental conditions related to physical space refer to aspects of the built and natural

environment that affect physical activity and access to healthy food. Because access to healthy food and access to spaces conducive to physical activity have positive correlations with health and longevity, planners should consider these environmental conditions in all efforts to shape public space. Useful metrics include air pollution rates, the number of residents within a 10-minute walk from a public space, supermarket square footage per neighborhood population, space devoted to parks (with at least six contiguous acres) as a proportion of neighborhood land area, percentage of children living within one mile of a safe and well-maintained playground, and urban tree canopy tree coverage area as a proportion of neighborhood land area.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to document and understand environmental conditions related to physical space:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations, community surveys, and land-use permitting, property tax, and air-quality-monitoring data to create an initial picture of environmental conditions.
- **Research and Analysis:** Use GIS to analyze air quality patterns and food and open-space access patterns.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Partner with parks and public works officials, environmental health professionals, schools, economic and community development organizations, environmental justice groups, and other community-based organizations to deepen understanding of environmental conditions related to physical space.
- **Plans and Policies:** Document environmental conditions that affect physical activity and access to healthy food in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Include environmental conditions related to physical space as one component of a neighborhood indicators data collection, monitoring, and sharing program.

Housing

In this context, housing refers to characteristics of the local housing market that relate to neighborhood stability. Because housing quality and affordability have a positive correlation with health and longevity,

planners should consider neighborhood or community-wide housing conditions in all efforts to shape public space. Useful metrics include the proportion of secure, affordable housing options, reported levels or incidences of housing quality issues, housing tenure, and duration of neighborhood residence.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to document and understand housing conditions related to neighborhood stability:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations, community surveys, and U.S. Census Bureau, land-use permitting, property tax, and code enforcement data to create an initial picture of housing conditions.
- **Research and Analysis:** Use GIS to analyze spatial patterns of housing affordability, quality, tenure, and duration of occupancy.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Partner with housing officials, community-development corporations, social service providers, housing advocacy groups, block clubs, owner and tenant associations, and other community-based organizations to deepen understanding of housing conditions.
- **Plans and Policies:** Document housing conditions in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Include housing conditions as one component of a neighborhood indicators data collection, monitoring, and sharing program.

+ Additional Resources

- Barth, David. 2016. "[Alternatives for Determining Parks and Recreation Level of Service.](#)" *PAS Memo*, May/June.
- Jones, Melissa. 2018. "[Data-Driven Housing Assessments and Action Plans, Part 1: The Data.](#)" *PAS Memo*, May/June.



Credit: iStock.com/Christa Boaz

- Ricklin, Anna, and Sagar Shah. 2017. [Metrics for Planning Healthy Communities](#). Chicago: American Planning Association.
- University of Minnesota. 2023. [IPUMS NHGIS: Download U.S. Census Data Tables & Mapping Files](#).
- Urban Institute. 2023. [National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership](#).
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2023. [Environmental Information by Location](#).



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Predictors of Exclusion

Planners should work to understand existing economic disparities and their root causes before setting goals and objectives for efforts to shape public space. The Inclusive IHP Framework identifies (1) inequality and (2) discriminatory practices as two key indicators that can help characterize predictors of exclusion.

Inequality

Here, economic inequality refers to differences in income, wealth, and job opportunities across all segments of a community. Because health and longevity have a positive correlation with economic well-being, planners should consider the presence, types, and extent of economic inequality in all public-space planning interventions.

Useful metrics include median household income by race and ethnicity; rates of incarceration by race, ethnicity, sex, age, and income; and the concentration of residential poverty across a neighborhood, city, or county.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to foster a greater awareness and understanding of economic inequality:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use GIS to identify spatial patterns of economic inequality, such as concentrations of income, wealth, poverty, and employment, educational attainment, and incarceration status.
- **Research and Analysis:** Use GIS to compare spatial patterns of economic inequality with spatial patterns

of public investments in facilities and services.

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage social service and health-care providers, mutual aid associations, and religious institutions to deepen understanding of economic vulnerabilities among different segments of the community.
- **Plans and Policies:** Document economic inequality in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.



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Discriminatory Practices

In this context, discriminatory practices are any public policies and actions that have contributed to economic and health disparities. To avoid repeating or reinforcing past harms, planners should analyze the effects of previous public-space planning initiatives. Useful metrics include the presence of historical and current discriminatory practices, including redlining and predatory lending, and self-reported rates of unfair treatment or experiences of discrimination by race, ethnicity, and other relevant demographics.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to understand and acknowledge discriminatory practices:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use equity assessment tools to identify discriminatory features of existing plans, policies, programs, and projects.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Hold virtual or town-hall-style community listening sessions to better understand the individual and collective effects of historical and ongoing discriminatory practices.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage antidiscrimination organizations, civil rights groups, and local leaders and institutions that represent or serve population groups that have been negatively affected by specific discriminatory practices to deepen understanding of those effects and explore options to correct past harms.

- **Plans and Policies:** Consider initiating a formal truth and reconciliation process to acknowledge past harms and build trust for future initiatives.
- **Plans and Policies:** Acknowledge the harmful effects of previous discriminatory practices in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.

+ Additional Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2023. [Social Determinants of Health \(SDOH\) and PLACES Data](#).
- Ezell, Kyle. 2022. ["Three Essential Questions for Better Planning."](#) *PAS Memo* 110.
- Kuhn, Holly, Nola Farrell, and Emily Sheftman. 2021. ["Truth and Reconciliation Commissions."](#) Burlington, Vt.: University of Vermont, Vermont Legislative Research Service.
- Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity. 2023. [Tools & Resources](#).
- National League of Cities. 2023. [Repository of City Racial Equity Policies and Decisions](#).
- Philadelphia City Planning Commission. 2023. ["Planning and Equity: A Commitment to Change."](#)
- Vock, Daniel C. 2020. ["Confronting Systemic Inequity With Institutional Change."](#) *Planning*, July.



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Community Assets

Every community has physical, social, economic, and political assets that planners should acknowledge and engage with in processes related to shaping public spaces. The IHP Framework identifies (1) public assets and (2) local institutions as two key indicators that can help characterize community assets.

Public Assets

In this context, public assets are spaces, facilities, and services open to all members of the community, such as parks, streets, school and library sites, transit services, and educational or assistance programs. Planners should work to identify, understand, and leverage existing

public assets in all public-space planning interventions. Useful metrics include the proportion of active and passive open spaces to land area; a mobility analysis documenting the mode split percentages for commuting trips, the average transit commute time, and the cost of transportation as a percentage of median income; the quality of public spaces in the study area compared to those in surrounding neighborhoods, cities, or counties; access to free public facilities; and the presence of community services.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support identifying, understanding, and leveraging public assets:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use publicly available satellite and aerial imagery to complete an initial assessment of the quality of public open spaces.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community in asset-mapping exercises to create an inventory of public assets.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage with arts and culture professionals to identify and understand assets that planners may not know of or readily recognize.
- **Plans and Policies:** Document public assets and establish policy support for an asset-based approach to community development in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Identify ways that capital improvements and technical and financial assistance programs can enhance and complement existing public assets.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the design and implementation of public-space projects that enhance or complement existing public assets.

Local Institutions

Local institutions are community actors connected by a shared purpose or interest, such as public agencies, schools, voluntary associations, community-based organizations, and major businesses. Planners should work to identify, understand, and leverage existing local institutions in all public-space planning interventions. Useful metrics include counts of all public and private institutions by type; the number of community-relevant health and social services provided by these institutions; and the locations of local landmarks, symbols, art, and cultural and religious organizations.

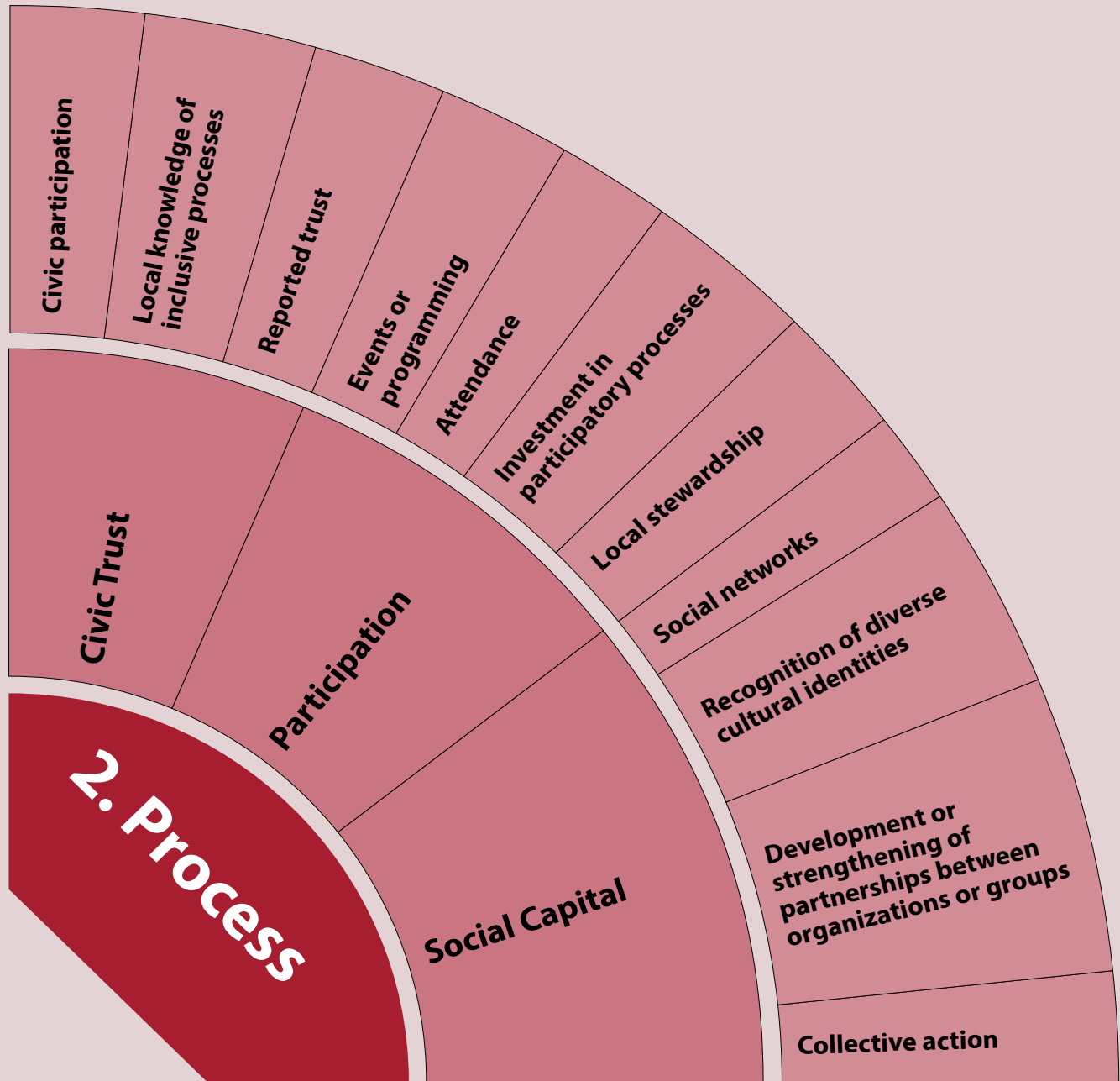
Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support identifying, understanding, and leveraging local institutions:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community in asset-mapping exercises to create an inventory of local institutions.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage hospitals, colleges and universities, major employers, community-development corporations and financial institutions, and cultural and religious organizations in plan- and policy-making processes and explore opportunities to collaborate on public-space projects that enhance or complement existing community assets.
- **Plans and Policies:** Document local institutions and establish policy support for an asset-based approach to community development in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Identify ways that capital improvements and technical and financial assistance programs can enhance and complement the efforts of local institutions.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the design and implementation of public-space projects that enhance or complement the efforts of local institutions.

+ Additional Resources

- Burns, Janice C., Dagmar Pudrzynska Paul, and Silvia R. Paz. 2012. *Participatory Asset Mapping: A Community Research Lab Toolkit*. Los Angeles: Catalyst California.
- Gomez, Alexandra. 2021. "[Asset-Based Community Development](#)." *PAS QuickNotes* 97.
- Hall, Romi, Tachel Fischer, Omar Carrillo Tinajero, Ashlee Cunningham, and Stephanie Walker. 2022. *From Silos to Collaborations: Building a Health Partner Investment Strategy*. Washington, D.C.: Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation and Center for Community Investment.
- Initiative for a Competitive Inner City. 2023. [Anchor Initiatives](#).
- Roman, Caterina Gouvis, and Gretchen E. Moore. 2004. *Measuring Local Institutions and Organizations: The Role of Community Institutional Capacity in Social Capital*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.
- University of Western Australia. 2013. [Public Open Space Desktop Auditing Tool](#).

Support Inclusion in Process



Throughout processes related to shaping public space, it is important for planners to embrace public participation and decision-making practices that allow all segments of the community to meaningfully shape outcomes. The IHP Framework identifies (1) civic trust, (2) participation, and (3) social capital as core drivers for supporting inclusion in process.

Civic Trust

Planners should work to build trust across all segments of a community to create the necessary conditions for authentic public participation in public-space-shaping processes. The IHP Framework identifies (1) civic participation, (2) local knowledge of inclusive processes, and (3) reported trust as key indicators of civic trust.

Civic Participation

Civic participation encompasses any act of political engagement or volunteerism intended to improve society or the quality of life in a community, including participating in electoral politics, performing a community service, and advocating for specific causes or issues. Because civic participation increases social cohesion and trust, planners should look for opportunities to support various forms of civic participation in all efforts to shape public space. Useful metrics include voter turnout by various demographic categories and self-reported rates of civic participation.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to foster civic participation:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and community-based service and advocacy organizations to learn more about existing opportunities for and barriers to civic participation.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage civic-tech organizations to explore opportunities to leverage open-source and low-cost tools to boost civic participation.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for shared-use community facilities—such as schools, community and recreation centers, libraries, and meeting and performance spaces—in the local comprehensive and all relevant subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Enter into shared-use agreements with civic organizations to improve access to civic participation opportunities for traditionally underserved or underrepresented segments of the community.

Local Knowledge of Inclusive Processes

In this context, local knowledge of inclusive processes refers to the degree to which community members understand existing opportunities for them to participate in local



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government decision-making processes. Transparent and inclusive planning and decision-making processes are essential to building and sustaining civic trust, and planners are instrumental in increasing local awareness of these processes. Useful metrics include self-reported levels of local awareness of public processes, various levers of local governmental power (e.g., legislative, executive, and quasi-judicial decisions), and funding structures that can support community-oriented development.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to increase local knowledge of inclusive processes:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use community surveys and booths at community events to learn more about how well community members understand opportunities to participate in planning and decision-making processes.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Use online community calendars, social media channels, and booths at community events to share information about upcoming public participation opportunities.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Partner with community-based service, development, and advocacy organizations and local leaders to educate traditionally underrepresented segments of the community about public participation opportunities.
- **Plans and Policies:** Include activities designed to build awareness of opportunities to participate in all public participation plans.
- **Programs:** Create a community planning academy to prepare traditionally underrepresented community members to participate in official planning processes.

Reported Trust

Here, reported trust refers to the degree to which people say they have confidence in their fellow community members, including public officials and civic leaders, to fulfill their commitments. Because social and institutional trust are preconditions for truly inclusive planning processes, planners should seek opportunities to build trust, especially among traditionally underrepresented, underserved, or otherwise marginalized segments of the community. Useful metrics include self-reported trust in government, civic associations, and fellow community members; self-reported rates of informal socializing; and self-reported frequencies of unplanned contacts.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to build trust:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Get to know representatives of local institutions that serve or represent marginalized population groups, and consider attending those institutions' public meetings and events, either as an active participant or an empathetic listener.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Have open and reciprocal communication with community members about the scope, limits, and risks of participating in any public-space-shaping effort.
- **Plans and Policies:** Make a formal commitment to collaborative governance in all efforts to shape public space.
- **Programs:** Hire planners or community organizers from underrepresented, underresourced, or otherwise marginalized segments of the community.
- **Programs:** Create a community storytelling program that provides space for members of marginalized population groups to share their experiences.
- **Projects:** Follow through on your commitments, communicate early and often about any necessary adjustments to project timelines, and acknowledge personal shortcomings.

+ Additional Resources

- Alegria, Rowena. 2023. "[Storytelling as Authentic Engagement](#)." *PAS Memo* 114.
- Bravve, Elina. 2022. "[The Baltimore Planning Academy: Community Empowerment Through Civic Education](#)." *PAS Memo* 112.
- ChangeLab Solutions. 2023. "[Shared Use: Unlocking Possibilities for More Community Space](#)."
- Garcia, Ivis, Andrea Garfinkel-Castro, and Deirdre Pfeiffer. 2019. *Planning With Diverse Communities*. PAS Report 593. Chicago: American Planning Association.
- Grueber, Leslie, and Emily Mello. 2022. "[How Can Local Governments Earn Community Trust?](#)" *Centre for Public Impact Insights for Better Government*, May 10.
- Hurtado, Petra, Benjamin Hitchings, and David Rouse. 2021. *Smart Cities: Integrating Technology, Community, and Nature*. PAS Report 599. Chicago: American Planning Association.

Participation

Planners have an ethical obligation to support authentic and inclusive public participation in all efforts to shape public space. The IHP Framework identifies events or programming, attendance, investment in participatory processes, and local stewardship as key indicators of participation.



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Events or Programming

Here, events or programming refers to all gatherings and activities that are open to the general public and use public land or facilities, such as festivals, street fairs, concerts, sporting events, park cleanups, and farmers' markets. Because these events and programs encourage community members to connect around shared goals and interests, planners should look for opportunities to support events and programming in efforts to shape public space. Useful metrics include the number of community programs that represent diverse cultural identities, the number of community events, the percentage of community-led public events and programs, and the number of volunteer opportunities.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support community events and programs:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions to learn more about barriers to planning and hosting community-led events and programs.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for community events and programs that use public land or facilities in the local comprehensive and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Plans and Policies:** Update special event requirements and other regulations governing the use of public land and facilities to remove unintentional barriers to community-led gathering and activities.
- **Programs:** Provide staff support or grant funding to help community groups plan and host public gatherings and activities.
- **Programs:** Create and share educational resources in multiple formats and languages that explain how community members and groups can use public land and facilities for gatherings and activities.

Attendance

In this context, attendance means community member presence or participation in public gatherings and activities. Because broad-based participation is essential to inclusive planning processes, planners should work to remove barriers to attendance across all segments of the community. Useful metrics include the presence of community members at community-wide celebrations or other organized events, the percentage of the total population that is actively participating in local programs or activities, and self-reported rates of attendance.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to increase attendance at public meetings and events:

- **Research and Analysis:** Analyze attendance of public meetings and events to identify underrepresented segments of the community.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions that represent or serve marginalized segments of the community to learn more about barriers to participation.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Ensure all participatory planning activities have clear objectives and provide opportunities for participants to positively affect decision-making.
- **Plans and Policies:** Include a wide range of public engagement strategies, participation techniques, activity formats, and event locations in all public participation plans.
- **Programs:** Offer incentives, such as transit passes, free food, onsite childcare, or participation stipends, to increase meeting or workshop attendance among traditionally underrepresented segments of the community.

Investment in Participatory Processes

Here, investment in participatory processes consists of public policies, technical assistance, or funding to support broad-based participation in both governmental and community-led planning and decision-making processes. Because public investments demonstrate commitment to broadening participation, planners should explore opportunities to expand or deepen these investments. Useful metrics include the per-capita allocation of funding available for public engagement and community-generated projects, the presence of technical assistance for community-generated projects, the presence of participatory budgeting processes, and the presence of public processes that accommodate, support, or require multiagency, public-private, and private-sector partnerships.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to increase public investment in participatory processes:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions that serve or represent marginalized segments of the community to learn more about their experiences with inclusive participatory processes.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for participatory budgeting and other participatory decision-making processes in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Plans and Policies:** Make a formal commitment to participatory budgeting processes, in which residents vote on how to allocate public funds.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds and create technical assistance programs to engage traditionally underrepresented segments of the community.
- **Programs:** Create and share educational resources in multiple formats and languages to help community members understand and participate in local budget processes.
- **Programs:** Seek public or private funding to cover participation incentives, such as transit passes, free food, onsite childcare, or stipends.

Local Stewardship

In this context, local stewardship refers to a communal sense of responsibility for protecting and enhancing

public resources. Because local stewardship is essential to the long-term success of efforts to shape public space, planners should work to foster this sense of responsibility across all segments of the community. Useful metrics include the presence of community-led volunteer projects and programs, the presence of grassroots organizing groups or efforts, the rate of volunteerism in public-space programs, the rate of volunteerism in the community, and self-reported levels of volunteerism.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to encourage local stewardship:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage volunteer-based organizations to learn more about their goals, activities, and challenges.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Co-create plans with grassroots partnerships to advance community-led projects.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for local stewardship activities and community-led projects in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds and create technical assistance programs to help local institutions plan and implement stewardship activities.
- **Projects:** Integrate opportunities for volunteer programming or maintenance into public-space projects.

Additional Resources

- American Planning Association. 2023. "[Online Public Engagement](#)." Research KnowledgeBase Collection.
- Davis, Dave, Josh Meyer, Aatisha Singh, Molly Wright, and Paul Zykofsky. 2013. [Participation Tools for Better Community Planning](#). Sacramento, Calif.: Local Government Commission.
- Herd, Milton. 2019. [A Planner's Guide to Meeting Facilitation](#). PAS Report 595. Chicago: American Planning Association.
- Holley, Kip. 2016. [The Principles for Equitable and Inclusive Civic Engagement: A Guide to Transformative Change](#). Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Kirwan Institute.
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Social Capital

Planners should work to build social relationships and networks that can maximize the efficacy of efforts to shape public space. The IHP Framework identifies (1) social networks, (2) recognition of diverse cultural identities, (3) development or strengthening of partnerships between organizations or groups, and (4) collective action as key indicators of social capital.

Social Networks

Social networks are ecosystems of relationships, both strong and weak, within a community. Because these relationships form the foundation of social capital, planners should seek

opportunities to promote social interaction in all efforts to shape public space. Useful metrics include representation within local leadership; self-reported willingness to cooperate, help, and exchange favors; self-reported strength of ties within relevant networks; self-reported frequencies of experience interacting with people from diverse backgrounds; presence of place-based conditions that inhibit the formation of neighborhood social ties; and self-reported frequencies of contact with relevant social networks within a specific amount of time.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to promote social interaction:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations and community surveys to identify the features of existing public spaces that seem to facilitate social interaction.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions that represent or serve marginalized segments of the community to deepen understanding of the public-space features that facilitate social interaction.



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- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for public-space features that facilitate social interaction in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds for public-space features and programming that facilitate social interaction.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the design and implementation of public-space features that facilitate social interaction.
- **Projects:** Host or provide support for social activities, such as community celebrations and construction workshops, to mark key milestones in public-space-shaping projects.

Recognition of Diverse Cultural Identities

Recognizing diverse cultural identities refers to an ongoing process of acknowledging and respecting the fact that every community is an amalgam of groups—each united by race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, social class, age, ability, sexual orientation, or other shared characteristics—with distinct customs, institutions, and norms. Cultural identity is an important conduit to social capital, and planners aspire to understand and respect the needs and desires of different identity groups and promote consensus building in all public

space-shaping efforts. Useful metrics include the representation of different cultures through public art, monuments, signage, and other physical symbols in public spaces and the frequency of opportunities for cross-cultural social interaction.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to understand and recognize diverse cultural identities:

- **Research and Analysis:** Conduct a cultural audit to create a better understanding of cultural context, relationships, knowledge, barriers, and engagement across different identity groups within a community.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage and actively listen to local leaders and institutions that represent or serve different identity groups to deepen understanding of cultural identities and connections across the community.
- **Plans and Policies:** Document cultural diversity and establish policy support for creative placemaking and cultural preservation strategies in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Create and participate in cultural competency and cultural humility training programs.
- **Programs:** Create a community-led cultural preservation and placemaking program.

Development or Strengthening of Partnerships Between Organizations or Groups

Developing and strengthening partnerships between organizations and groups refers to sustained efforts to foster multiparty cooperation and collaboration throughout the community. Because partnerships are a powerful tool for leveraging social capital, planners should work to support institutional cooperation and collaboration in all efforts to shape public space. Useful metrics include the self-reported presence of collaboration and information sharing between organizations, the presence of cross-sector partnerships, and evidence of successful outcomes from partnerships.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to promote the development or strengthening of partnerships between organizations or groups:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local institutions to learn more about their priorities for shaping public spaces and willingness and ability to collaborate on public-space-shaping projects.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage leaders of existing cross-sector partnerships working to improve public health or the built environment to explore opportunities to leverage existing collaborative efforts in new public-space-shaping projects.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for cross-sectoral partnerships dedicated to advancing goals related to shaping public spaces in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Plans and Policies:** Make a formal commitment to join a new or existing cross-sector partnership dedicated to improving public spaces.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds or staff resources to support cross-sector partnerships dedicated to improving public spaces.

Collective Action

Collective action refers to activities taken by a group of people to advance a shared goal. Because collective action represents applied social capital, planners should look for opportunities to support collective action in efforts to shape public space. Useful metrics include participation in protests, public gatherings,

and voter registration drives and the presence of active membership-based advocacy groups.

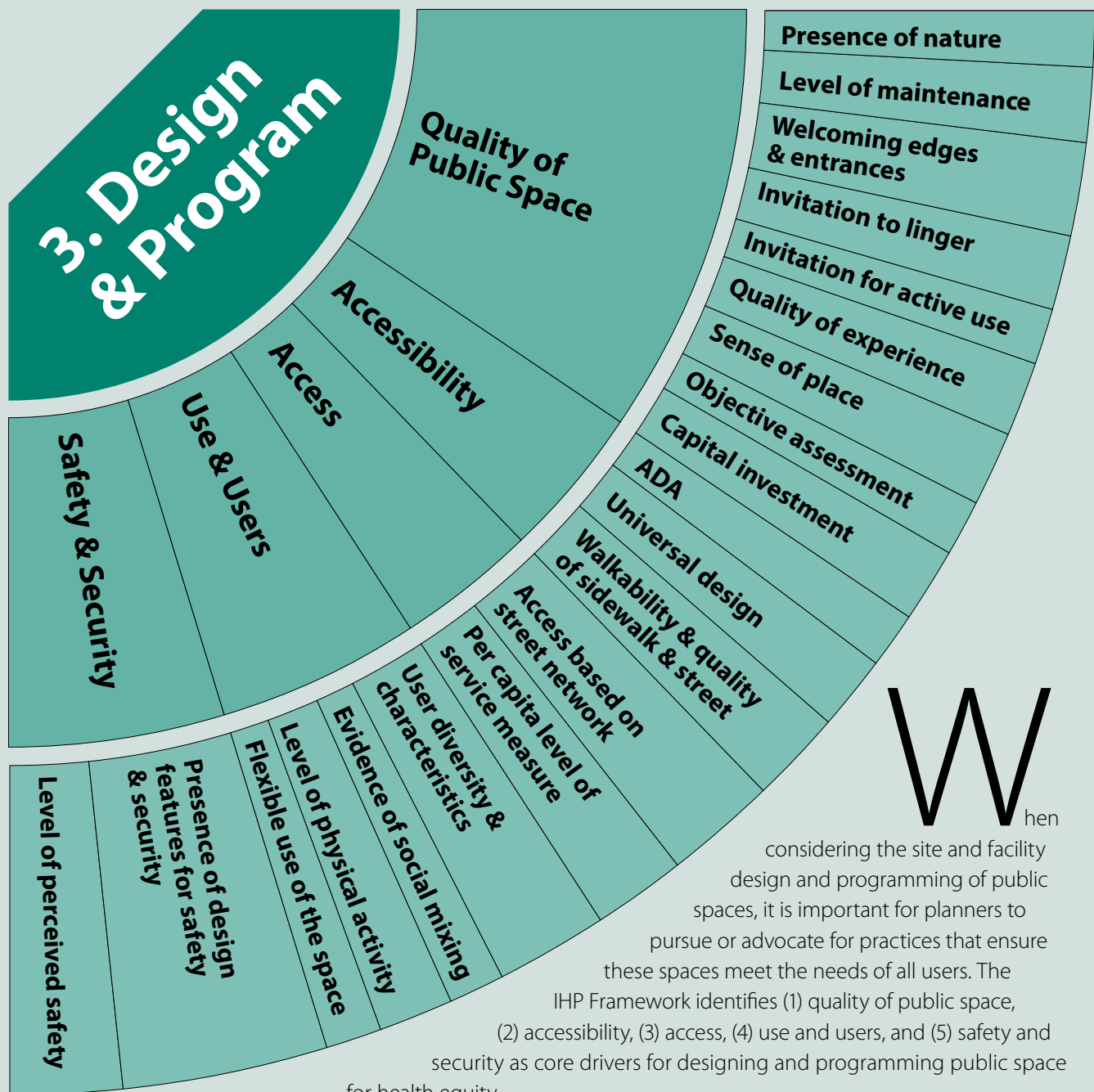
Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support collective action:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions that serve marginalized segments of the community to learn more about barriers to collective action.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for the use of public land and facilities for various forms of collective action, including mass assembly and self-organized improvement projects, in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Plans and Policies:** Update regulations governing the use of public land to remove unintentional barriers to collective action, such as prohibitions on gardening in public rights-of-way and on vacant or underutilized land.
- **Programs:** Create a tactical urbanism or urban greening program to provide funding or technical assistance for self-organized public-space-improvement projects.
- **Projects:** Use community organizers and local faith-based organizations and advocacy groups that practice direct action to inform the design and implementation of public-space features that facilitate public gatherings, marches, and protests.

Additional Resources

- American Planning Association. 2023. "[Tactical Urbanism](#)." Research KnowledgeBase Collection.
- Aspen Institute. 2017. [The Intersector Toolkit: Tools for Cross-Sector Collaboration](#).
- García, Ivis, Andrea Garfinkel-Castro, and Deidre Pfeiffer. 2019. [Planning With Diverse Communities](#). PAS Report 593. Chicago: American Planning Association.
- Hafiz, Tarana. 2021. "[6 Ways to Plan for Civic Assembly](#)." *Planning*, October.
- University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development. 2023. [The Community Toolbox](#).
- Warner, Mildred. 2001. "[Building Social Capital: The Role of Local Government](#)." *Journal of Socio-Economics* 30: 187–92.

Design and Program Public Space for Health Equity



When

considering the site and facility design and programming of public spaces, it is important for planners to pursue or advocate for practices that ensure these spaces meet the needs of all users. The IHP Framework identifies (1) quality of public space, (2) accessibility, (3) access, (4) use and users, and (5) safety and security as core drivers for designing and programming public space for health equity.



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Quality of Public Space

Planners should work to establish and enhance features that encourage community members to engage in social and physical activities in public spaces and that foster a collective sense of ownership of those spaces. The IHP Framework identifies (1) presence of nature, (2) level of maintenance, (3) presence of welcoming edges and entrances, (4) presence of site furnishings and amenities that invite people to linger, (5) presence of amenities and site furnishings that invite people to actively use the space, (6) quality of experience, (7) sense of place, (8) objective quality assessment, and (9) capital investment as key indicators of quality of public space.

Presence of Nature

In this context, presence of nature refers to a public space's vegetation and wildlife. Because trees and other natural

features provide numerous ecosystem services that make social and physical activities more pleasant and healthful, planners should work to promote equitable access to nature in efforts to shape public space. Useful metrics include the percentage of a space with vegetative cover and the number, size, and location of trees within a public space.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support equitable access to nature:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations, satellite or aerial imagery, and GIS to spatially analyze the presence, extent, and distribution of natural features in public spaces.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn more about how preferences for and perceptions of nature vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.

- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for equitable access to nature in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Create a tree-planting program to equitably expand tree coverage across the community.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the planting and maintenance of trees and other forms of vegetation in public-space projects.

Level of Maintenance

Here, level of maintenance is a commitment to and evidence of keeping public spaces clean and fully operational. Well-maintained spaces are safer, more inviting to use, and communicate a sense of ownership; therefore, planners should look for opportunities to ensure equitable maintenance of public spaces. Useful metrics include the presence and amount of graffiti and litter, the presence of staff and volunteer stewards, and the overall condition of space and features.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support equitable levels of maintenance:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations, community surveys, and GIS to spatially analyze the condition of public space and features.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn more about how preferences for and perceptions of the level of maintenance vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for equitable investments in public-space maintenance in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Create a public-space stewardship program to equitably involve community members in public-space maintenance activities.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform maintenance efforts associated with public-space projects.

Presence of Welcoming Edges and Entrances

In this context, presence of welcoming edges and entrances refers to the appearance and site design of



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public-space boundaries and access points. Because edges and entrances affect people's decisions to use a public space and their first impressions of that space, planners should consider how their work can help make boundaries and access points more welcoming to traditionally marginalized segments of the community. Useful metrics include an assessment of the quality of entrances, access routes, and crossing intersections; the number of entrances per linear foot of a public space's boundary; and the total number of points of access.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support welcoming edges and entrances:

- **Research and analysis:** Use field observations, community surveys, and GIS to spatially analyze the boundaries, access routes, and access points of public spaces.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn more about how preferences for and perceptions of public-space boundaries, access routes, and access points vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for creating welcoming public-space edges and entrances in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.

- **Programs:** Allocate funds for signs, sculptures, or other features that can help with wayfinding or otherwise make public-space entrances more inviting.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the design of public-space boundaries, access routes, and access points.

Presence of Site Furnishings and Materials That Invite People to Linger

Here, presence of site furnishings and materials that invite people to linger refers to public-space features and programming that encourage people to stay rather than merely pass through. Because the health benefits of visiting public spaces often increase with longer stays, planners should look for ways to encourage public-space designs and programming that make people want to linger. Useful metrics include the presence of playgrounds or play features; formal or informal seating; picnic tables; shade and sheltering structures; barbecues; gardens and planted areas; concessions, kiosks, and other commercial services; public toilets; water features; evidence of programming; and the use of noise-reduction strategies and natural materials.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to encourage longer stays:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations, community surveys, and GIS to spatially analyze the presence and distribution of features and programming that encourage longer stays in public spaces.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn more about how preferences for and perceptions of features and programming that encourage longer stays in public spaces vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for features and programming that encourage people to extend their visits to public spaces in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds for features and programming that encourage longer stays in public spaces.

- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the selection and implementation of features and programming that encourage longer stays in public spaces.

Presence of Amenities and Site Furnishings That Invite People to Actively Use the Space

In this context, presence of amenities and site furnishings that invite people to actively use the space refers to public-space features that encourage physical activity. Because physical activity confers various health benefits, planners should look for opportunities to encourage public-space amenities and furnishings that are conducive to competitive sports, active play, recreational walking, and exercise. Useful metrics include the presence of sport fields or courts, exercise equipment, walking and bike paths, shade along paths and seating areas, and signs that dogs are allowed.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to encourage physical activity:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations, community surveys, and GIS to spatially analyze the presence and distribution of public-space features that are conducive to physical activity.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn about how preferences for and perceptions of features intended to facilitate physical activity in public spaces vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for public-space features that encourage physical activity in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds for public-space features that encourage physical activity.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the selection and implementation of public-space features that encourage physical activity.



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Quality of Experience

Here, quality of experience refers to how well a public space aligns with usage patterns and user expectations. Because every space has a unique set of intended and actual users, planners should look for ways to ensure that each public space matches the needs of the community. Useful metrics include the self-reported degree of satisfaction with the quality of the public space, the degree of disparity in self-reported perceived quality among different groups, the distribution of space devoted to people's demonstrated or desired patterns of use, and the self-reported level of positive sensory experience when using the space.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support quality of experience improvements:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations, community surveys, and GIS to spatially analyze the distribution of public space devoted to people's demonstrated or desired patterns of use.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn about how preferences for and perceptions of quality of experience vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for aligning the distribution of public space with

people's demonstrated or desired patterns of use in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.

- **Programs:** Allocate funds for public-space features that enhance the quality of experience.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the selection and implementation of public-space features that meet the needs of the community.

Sense of Place

In this context, sense of place represents the holistic value of a public space. Because there is no single recipe for a meaningful public space, planners should work to establish and enhance the features and programming that create and strengthen community members' sense of place. A useful metric is the self-reported perceived value of public spaces.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to encourage sense of place:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use community surveys to create an initial picture of the extent to which community members value different public spaces.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn about how perceptions of value vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for public placemaking in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Create a community-driven placemaking program to provide funds or technical assistance for placemaking projects.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the selection and implementation of public placemaking projects.

Objective Quality Assessment

Here, objective quality assessment refers to how well public-space features align with commonly accepted or official performance standards. Because these quality standards promote a baseline of safety and functionality and allow for easy comparisons between public spaces, planners should look for opportunities to enhance public spaces in alignment with accepted or official standards. Useful metrics include positive ratings of features according to advocacy report cards, agency asset assessment tools, and structural reports.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support alignment with objective quality standards:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use commonly accepted or official performance standards to assess the quality of public spaces and to make comparisons between different spaces.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn about how well objective quality assessments align with perceptions of quality among different population groups.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for public-space level-of-service standards in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds for public-space features that improve the objective quality of public spaces.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the selection and implementation of public-space features that improve the objective quality of public spaces.

Capital Investment

In this context, capital investment represents public funds spent on the purchase, construction, or replacement of physical public-space features not covered by the annual operating budget. Because capital improvements are often necessary to bring public spaces into alignment with community needs and desires, planners should look for opportunities to support equitable public investments in public-space features. A useful metric is the history of capital investment in a space or within a study area.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to encourage equitable capital investments:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use GIS to spatially analyze capital investment patterns across a community and over time.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn about how perceptions of capital investment patterns vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for equitable capital investments in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Prioritize equitable investments in public-space features in the capital improvement program.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the design and implementation of all capital projects in public spaces.

+ Additional Resources

- American Planning Association. 2017. [Great Urban Parks Campaign](#).
- Barth, David. 2016. "[Alternatives for Determining Parks and Recreation Level of Service](#)." *PAS Memo*, May/June.
- Braun, Lindsay Maurer, and Anna Read. 2015. [The Benefits of Street-Scale Features for Walking and Biking](#). Chicago: American Planning Association.
- Brown, James, and Helen Santiago Fink. 2022. [Planning for Biophilic Cities](#). PAS Report 602. Chicago: American Planning Association.
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- Gehl Institute. 2019. [Public Life Data Protocol](#).
- Morris, Marya. 2006. [Planning Active Communities](#). PAS Report 543/544. Chicago: American Planning Association.
- Mutai, Joy. 2020. [City-Wide Public Space Assessment Toolkit](#). Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

Accessibility

Planners should work to ensure that public spaces are physically accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. The IHP Framework identifies (1) Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, (2) universal design elements, and (3) walkability and the quality of the sidewalk and street experience as key indicators of accessibility.



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ADA Compliance

ADA is federal law that prohibits discrimination against those with disabilities. ADA rules establish [minimum accessibility standards](#), so planners have a legal and ethical obligation to promote ADA compliance in all efforts to shape public space. Useful metrics of ADA compliance include the presence of ADA-required features in the public space and surrounding areas and the quality and maintenance of pavement and surfaces.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support ADA compliance:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use ADA audit tools and community surveys to create an initial assessment of ADA compliance for existing public spaces.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions that represent or serve community members with disabilities to deepen understanding of existing ADA compliance issues.
- **Plans and Policies:** Make or update an ADA self-evaluation and transition plan.
- **Programs:** Review all investments in public-space features for ADA compliance.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of community members with disabilities to inform the design and implementation of all public-space projects.

Universal Design

Universal Design is a process that aims to create an environment that people of all ages and abilities can access and use. Because universal design is the physical manifestation of inclusivity, planners should consider the

seven principles of universal design in all efforts to shape public space: equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and size and space for approach and use. These principles are also useful metrics.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support universal design:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use universal design audit tools and community surveys to create an initial assessment of adherence to universal design principles for existing public spaces.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions that represent or serve community members with disabilities, older adults, and young children to deepen understanding of existing public-space accessibility and use issues.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for universal design in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Review all investments in public-space features for adherence to universal design principles.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of community members with disabilities, older adults, and small children to inform the design and implementation of all public-space projects.

Walkability and Quality of Sidewalks and Street Experience

In this context, walkability and quality of sidewalks and street experience means the degree to which public



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rights-of-way and all paths to other public spaces are unobstructed, continuous, and safe for all users. Because streets function both as public spaces and a means of accessing other public spaces, planners should look for opportunities to promote walkability and a complete-streets approach in all efforts to shape public space. Useful metrics include the absence of obstructions on pathways and access points, the presence of street-level pedestrian crossings, the presence of safe and attractive routes to and from homes and public spaces, and pedestrian counts.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support walkability and improvements to the quality of sidewalks and street experience:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use walkability audit tools and community surveys to create an initial assessment of the walkability of public spaces and the quality of streets that provide access to those spaces.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions that represent or serve traditionally marginalized segments of the community to deepen understanding of barriers to walkability.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for walkability and complete streets in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Review all investments in public-space features for adherence to complete streets principles.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of community members who rely on sidewalks for transportation to inform the design and implementation of all public-space projects.

+ Additional Resources

- American Planning Association. 2023. "[Complete Streets](#)." Research KnowledgeBase Collection.
- AARP. 2022. [Walk Audit Tool Kit](#).
- AARP, 8 80 Cities, and Trust for Public Land. 2022. [Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages](#). Washington, D.C.: AARP
- Ezell, Kyle, Galyna Korniyenko, and Rick Stein. 2018. "[Autism Planning and Design Guidelines 1.0](#)." *PAS Memo*, July/August.
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- New England ADA Center. 2017. [ADA Title II Action Guide for State and Local Governments](#).
- Nienabler, Suzanne, and Bryan Ross. 2018. [Assembly: Civic Design Guidelines](#). New York: Center for Active Design.
- University at Buffalo Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access. 2003. [Universal Design Audit Checklist](#).



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Access

Planners should work to ensure that all community members can comfortably and efficiently reach public spaces from their homes. The IHP Framework identifies (1) access based on the street network and (2) per capita level-of-service measure as key indicators of access.

Access Based on Street Network

Here, access based on street network refers to the distance community members must travel along public streets to reach public spaces. Decreasing the distance between homes and public spaces increases cumulative access to those spaces, so planners should look for opportunities to improve street network connectivity and equitable public-space siting. Useful metrics include the street network distance to the nearest public space (of a particular type) from each residential address in a study area and the total

number of public spaces (of a particular type) within one mile of each residential address in a study area.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support improved access based on street network:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use GIS to spatially analyze public-space access based on street network connectivity.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions that represent or serve traditionally marginalized segments of the community to deepen understanding of barriers to accessing public spaces using the existing street network.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for street-connectivity standards in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.

- **Plans and Policies:** Include street-connectivity standards in land-use and development regulations.
- **Programs:** Use connectivity standards to help prioritize street construction projects in the capital improvements program.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the design and implementation of all street construction and improvement projects.



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Per Capita Level-of-Service Measure

In this context, per capita level-of-service measures represent methods of characterizing aggregate access to public spaces. Because high levels of service contribute to an equitable distribution of public spaces, planners should explore ways to improve per capita level of service. Useful metrics include the number of residents living within a 10-minute walk to a public space, the total land area devoted to public spaces (of a particular type) within a one-mile street network, the total land area of public spaces (of a particular type) by population, and the total number of operating hours for a public space by day, week, month, or year.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support improved per capita level of service:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use GIS to spatially analyze the proximity of residences to public spaces and the amount of park space per capita by planning area.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions that represent or serve traditionally marginalized segments of the community to collaboratively develop level-of-service standards.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for public-space level-of-service standards in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Plans and Policies:** Develop a public-space-system plan with level-of-service standards.
- **Programs:** Use level-of-service standards to help prioritize public-space projects in the capital improvements program.

+ Additional Resources

- Barth, David. 2016. "[Alternatives for Determining Parks and Recreation Level of Service.](#)" *PAS Memo*, May/June.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity. 2019. [The Active Communities Tool \(ACT\): An Action Planning Guide and Assessment Modules to Improve Community Built Environments to Promote Physical Activity.](#) Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
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- National Recreation and Park Association. 2023. [Creating Equity-Based System Master Plans.](#)
- National Recreation and Park Association. 2023. [NRPA Park Metrics.](#)



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Use and Users

Planners should work to foster public spaces that serve diverse purposes and populations. The IHP Framework identifies (1) user diversity and characteristics, (2) evidence of social mixing, (3) level of physical activity, and (4) flexible use of space as key indicators of use and users.

User Diversity and Characteristics

Here, user diversity and characteristics refers to how intensely and multifariously a public space is used. Intensely used public spaces signify a close match between community needs and public-space design and programming, so planners should seek to promote public-space features and programs that align with community needs and desires. Useful metrics include the number of users in a space, the number of users performing different activities, the number or percentage

of users sharing different behavioral attributes, the user volume throughout a period of time, and self-reported individual frequency of use.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support increased usage of public spaces:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations, community surveys, and GIS to document and analyze public-space usage patterns.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn about how preferences for public-space features or programs that motivate use vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for public-space features and programs that facilitate a wide range of activities in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.

- **Programs:** Allocate funds for public-space features and programs intended to increase the intensity of space use.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the design and implementation of public-space features and programming intended to increase the intensity of a space's use.

Evidence of Social Mixing

In this context, evidence of social mixing is degree to which different demographic groups simultaneously use the same public spaces. Because a high degree of social mixing indicates a cohesive and resilient community, planners should work to encourage the design and implementation of public-space features and programs that help users interact with those who are different from them. Useful metrics include the presence of design features or site elements that promote diverse types of use and the presence of a demographically diverse set of users, including racial, ethnic, age, gender, and socioeconomic diversity.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support increased social mixing in public spaces:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations, community surveys, and GIS to document and analyze the demographic diversity of public-space users.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn about how public-space features or programs that motivate social mixing vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for public-space features and programs that facilitate social mixing in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds for public-space features and programs intended to facilitate social mixing.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the design and implementation of public-space features and programming intended to facilitate social mixing.

Level of Physical Activity

Here, levels of physical activity refer to the ways, and extent to which, community members use public spaces for bodily movement. High levels of physical activity indicate a healthier community, so planners should look for opportunities to promote public-space features and programs that invite a diverse set of users to move more. Useful metrics include self-reported time spent outside, level of physical exercise, and types of physical activity.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support increased physical activity in public spaces:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations, community surveys, and GIS to document and analyze levels of physical activity among public-space users.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn about how public-space features or programs that motivate higher levels of physical activity vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for public-space features and programs that facilitate higher levels of physical activity in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds for public-space features and programs intended to increase physical activity.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the design and implementation of public-space features and programming that facilitate higher levels of physical activity.

Flexible Use of Space

In this context, flexible use of space means the degree to which public-space features are used for different purposes at different times. Because multipurpose public spaces attract a diversity of users, planners should work to encourage the design and implementation of features that users can adapt to different purposes. Useful metrics include the presence of a diversity of user groups over time, the proportion of space allocated for flexible programming, and the number of diverse groups hosting programs or events in a space over a defined period.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support flexible use of public spaces:



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- **Research and Analysis:** Use field observations, community surveys, and GIS to document and analyze the flexibility of public spaces.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage all segments of the community to learn about how public-space features or programs that motivate different activities at different times vary by demographic factors or cultural identity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for public-space features and programs that facilitate flexible use

in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.

- **Programs:** Allocate funds for public-space features and programs intended to increase the flexibility of use.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the design and implementation of public-space features and programming that facilitate flexible use.

+ Additional Resources

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- Morris, Marya. 2006. [*Planning Active Communities*](#). PAS Report 543/544. Chicago: American Planning Association.
- Mutai, Joy. 2020. [*City-Wide Public Space Assessment Toolkit*](#). Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme.
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Safety and Security

Planners should work to foster public spaces that protect all users, including older adults, women, and children, or other traditionally marginalized groups, from danger and harm. The Inclusive Healthy Places Framework identifies the presence of features intended to improve levels of safety and security and the level of users' perceived safety as key indicators of safety and security.

Presence of Features Intended to Improve Levels of Safety and Security

Here, the presence of features intended to improve levels of safety and security refers to how well public spaces integrate fixtures, equipment, site designs, and symbols that can protect users from danger or harm. Subtly visible

security features and areas dedicated to acts of community stewardship can decrease risks of violence in public spaces, so planners should look for opportunities to promote the integration of these features into public-space projects. Useful metrics include the presence of crime prevention through environment design (CPTED) strategies, sufficient lighting, and visible evidence of care and investment.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support public-space features intended to improve safety and security:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use CPTED audit tools and community surveys to create an initial assessment of implementation of CPTED strategies for existing public spaces.

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions that represent or serve older adults, women, and young children, as well as other traditionally marginalized groups, to deepen understanding of existing public-space security issues.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for co-designed CPTED strategies in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Review all investments in public-space features for their potential effects on safety and security.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of women, older adults, young children, and other members of traditionally marginalized segments of the community to inform the design and implementation of CPTED strategies in public-space projects.

Level of Perceived Safety

In this context, levels of perceived safety means how safe public-space users feel, regardless of the presence of any physical safety features. Because people must feel safe in a public space before they will use it, planners should seek to foster conditions that decrease perceptions of danger or risk in public spaces. Useful metrics include the percentage of women, children, and older adults among the users of a public space; the presence of active storefront commercial spaces and residences with windows surrounding the space; the amount of violence, crime, or injury in the space and surrounding areas; and the safety ratings of physical features used for play in the public space.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support improved perceptions of safety within public spaces:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use community surveys and accident and crime report data to compare of perceptions of safety within existing public spaces with reported incidences of injury, threats, or violence in or near those spaces.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage public safety officials, violence-prevention organizations, health-care providers, and local leaders and institutions that represent or serve women, older adults, and young children, as well

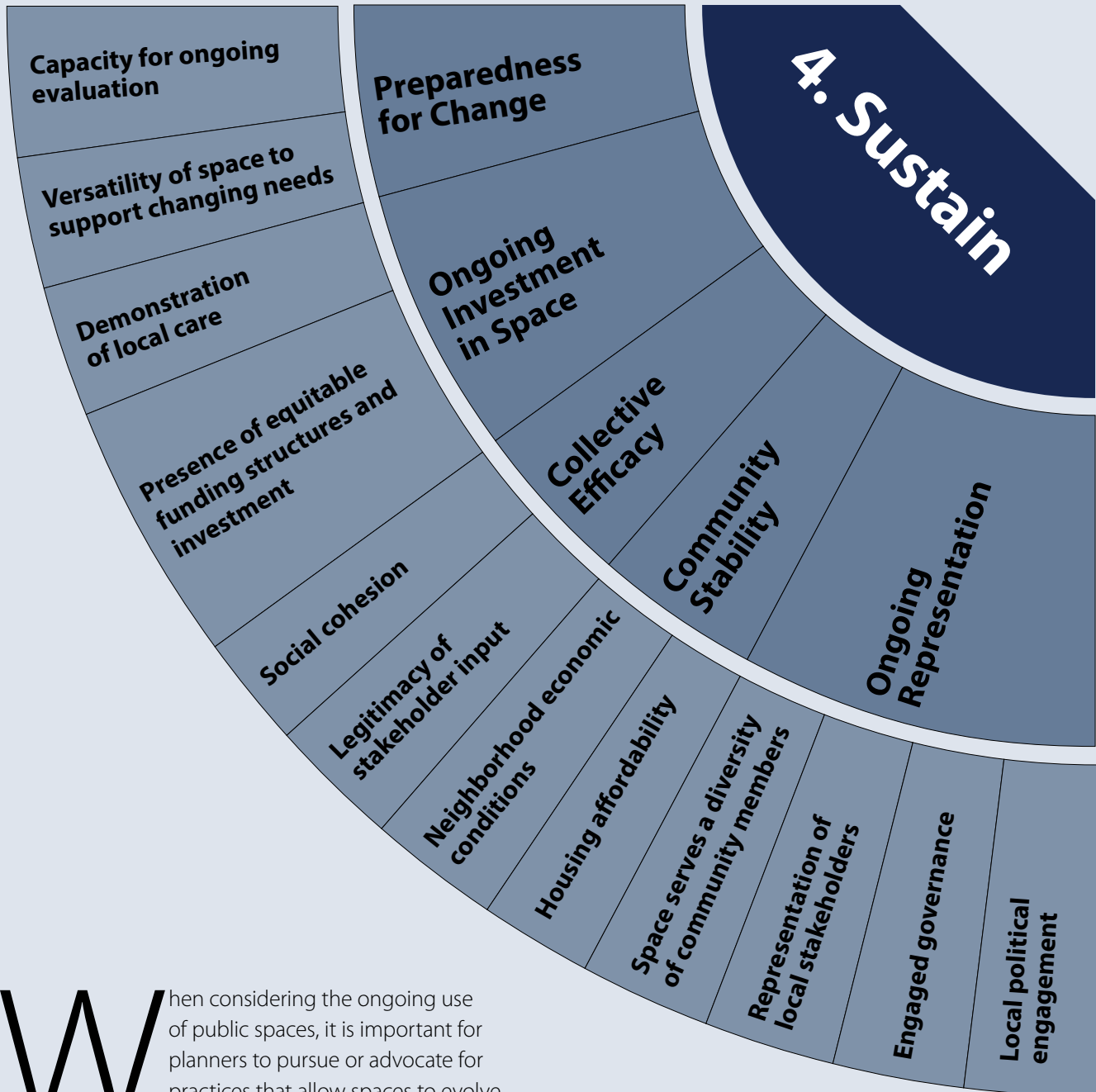
as other traditionally marginalized groups, to deepen understanding of the relationship between perceptions of safety and actual incidences of harm in or near public spaces.

- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for a vision-zero approach to transportation planning and community-based violence intervention and prevention programs in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds for vision-zero projects and community-based violence intervention and prevention programs.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of women, older adults, young children, and other members of traditionally marginalized segments of the community to inform the design and implementation of public-space interventions intended to increase perceived levels of safety.

+ Additional Resources

- Barker, Anna, George Holmes, Rizwana Alam, Lauren Cape-Davenhill, Sally Osei-Appiah, and Sibylla Warrington Brown. 2022. [*What Makes a Park Feel Safe or Unsafe? The Views of Women, Girls, and Professionals in West Yorkshire*](#). Leeds, England: University of Leeds.
- Begault, Larissa. 2017. [*Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design: A Public Life Approach*](#). New York: Gehl Institute.
- Carleson, Lotte Fast, Zina Matouk, Louise Fiil Hansen, Cecilie Jessen, Stine Illum, Bui Quy Son, and Ine Kjelgard. 2021. [*Safe Urban Spaces: A Nordic Approach and Toolbox*](#). Copenhagen: Nordic Safe Cities.
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Foster Social Resilience



When considering the ongoing use of public spaces, it is important for planners to pursue or advocate for practices that allow spaces to evolve with the surrounding community. The IHP Framework identifies (1) ongoing representation, (2) community stability, (3) collective efficacy, (4) ongoing investment in space, and (5) preparedness for change as core drivers for fostering social resilience.



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Ongoing Representation

Planners should work to sustain social learning, participatory decision-making, and collaborative governance as public spaces change over time. The IHP Framework identifies (1) local political engagement, (2) engaged governance, (3) representation of local stakeholders, and (4) the degree to which a space serves a diversity of community members as key indicators of ongoing representation.

Local Political Engagement

In this context, local political engagement represents both levels of community member participation in formal political processes as well as the degree to which local officials succeed in serving the public interest. Because this bidirectional form of engagement is essential to collaborative governance and a healthy democracy, planners should look for opportunities to bridge the gap between elected officials and the public. Useful metrics are the rates of voter participation by ward, district, or community planning area in both local and national elections

compared to community-wide rates by relevant demographics, and self-reported levels of satisfaction with representative leaders by ward, district, or community planning area compared to community-wide rates by relevant demographics.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to help sustain local political engagement:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Facilitate discussions, meetings, and workshops to inform and engage elected officials on public-space-planning processes and create opportunities for collaboration between officials and community stakeholders.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Use data and stories to communicate community experiences and priorities to and share successes with decision makers.
- **Plans and Policies:** Make a formal commitment to regularly share information about local government performance.
- **Programs:** Incorporate data about local government performance into performance management dashboards and open-data portals.

Engaged Governance

Here, engaged governance refers to the availability, extent, and quality of participatory planning and collaborative governance processes. Broad-based participation in these processes is essential to equitably managing change in communities, so planners should work to sustain community participation in public-space planning and decision-making processes. Useful metrics include the percentage of the population participating in planning and decision-making processes, the number of engagement opportunities or points of access for community participation, and the number of diverse stakeholder groups engaged.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to help sustain engaged governance:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions to deepen understanding of the factors that encourage and discourage sustained participation in planning and collaborative governance processes.
- **Plans and Policies:** Make a formal commitment to a set of public participation principles and performance-reporting practices, and create a standing public participation advisory board with appointment guidelines to ensure diversity.
- **Plans and Policies:** Create a multiyear public participation plan that includes performance indicators and metrics.
- **Programs:** Incorporate data about public participation and collaborative governance into performance management dashboards and open-data portals.
- **Projects:** Gather feedback on performance for each public participation event or activity.

Representation of Local Stakeholders

In this context, representation of local stakeholders is the extent to which people and groups participating in planning processes and governance decisions reflect the diversity of the constituent community groups affected by those processes and decisions. Because proportional representation can increase the likelihood of equitable outcomes, planners should seek to sustain diverse participation in public-space planning and decision-making processes. Useful metrics include the diversity of

stakeholders participating in decisions shaping their local environment proportional to study area demographics, the consistency of the level of participation in public meetings or programs, and the level of leadership and engagement of local nongovernmental organizations.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to sustain proportional representation of local stakeholders:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Maintain relationships with local leaders and institutions that represent or serve traditionally marginalized segments of the community to stay abreast of emerging barriers to participation in public-space planning or decision-making processes.
- **Plans and Policies:** Incorporate stakeholder identification and engagement activities in all public participation plans.
- **Programs:** Incorporate data about stakeholder engagement activities into performance management dashboards and open-data portals.
- **Projects:** Gather information about the organizational affiliations of participants at each public participation event or activity.

Space Serves Diversity of Community Members

Here, space serves diversity of community members means the extent to which public spaces meet the needs of all actual and intended users. Because the composition of any community changes over time, planners should work to ensure that public spaces continue to evolve with the community. Useful metrics include proportional representation of people using the space in relation to overall neighborhood demographics, the number of programs and activities in public spaces that cater to the diversity of neighborhood demographics, the diversity of participation in programs or activities, and the number of community-organized activities.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to help ensure that public spaces continue to meet community needs and desires:

- **Research and Analysis:** Regularly use field observations, community surveys, and GIS to spatially analyze how public-space usage changes over time and how expectations for public spaces evolve.

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Maintain relationships with local leaders and institutions that represent or serve traditionally marginalized segments of the community to keep informed about evolving perceptions of the quality of public spaces.
- **Plans and Policies:** Regularly review and update, as necessary, public-space level-of-service standards to ensure they continue to meet community needs and expectations.
- **Programs:** Incorporate data about public-space quality into performance management dashboards and open-data portals.

+ Additional Resources

- Arnos, Diane, Edward Kroll, Emma Jaromin, Hannah Daly, and Elsa Falkenburger. 2021. "[Tools and Resources for Project-Based Community Advisory Boards.](#)" Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.
- University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development. 2023. "[Chapter 36: Section 6, Participatory Evaluation.](#)" In *Community Tool Box*.
- Hatry, Harry P. 2020. *Evaluation Guide for Public Service Program Managers*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.
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- Working Group on Legal Frameworks for Public Participation. 2013. *Making Public Participation Legal*. Denver, Colo.: National Civic League.
- Young, Gerald. 2019. *Getting Started: Performance Management for Local Government*. Second edition. Washington, D.C.: International City/County Management Association.



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Community Stability

Planners should work to sustain community conditions that contribute to an equitable distribution of benefits from efforts to shape public space. The IHP Framework identifies (1) housing affordability and (2) neighborhood economic conditions as key indicators of community stability.

Housing Affordability

Here, housing affordability refers to the degree to which there is an adequate supply of high-quality housing at prices that community members can afford to pay, while still having money left over for other needs. Because high levels of housing affordability correlate with neighborhood stability, planners should seek to promote the ongoing development and preservation of a range of housing types that meet the evolving needs of the community. Useful metrics include the change in housing costs within a neighborhood or planning area compared to the community-wide median over time and the change in the amount of secured affordable

tenure options, such as rent-controlled units, public housing units, or deed-restricted affordable units, within a neighborhood or planning area.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support improved housing affordability:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use periodic community surveys; updates to U.S. Census Bureau, land-use permitting, and property tax data; and GIS to spatially analyze and monitor neighborhood-level housing affordability.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Maintain relationships with community development organizations, real estate professionals, and local leaders and institutions that represent or serve traditionally marginalized segments of the community to stay in touch with evolving perceptions of housing affordability and housing market dynamics.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for the development of new income-restricted affordable housing, the preservation of naturally occurring and income-restricted affordable housing, and zoning reforms aimed at expanding the supply and diversity of housing in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds and provide staff support for affordable housing development and preservation programs.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of housing-cost-burdened community members to inform the design and implementation of new public housing.

Neighborhood Economic Conditions

In this context, neighborhood economic conditions represent the overall economic well-being of a neighborhood. A strong economy is an important component of a stable neighborhood, so planners should look for opportunities to support local business and workforce development. Useful metrics include the median household income within the neighborhood or planning area compared to community-wide or regional household median income, the neighborhood employment rate compared to the community-wide or regional employment rate, and the number of diverse retailer types within the neighborhood.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support improved neighborhood economic conditions:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use periodic community surveys; updates to U.S. Census Bureau, land-use permitting, business licensing, and property tax data; and GIS to spatially analyze and monitor neighborhood-level economic conditions.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Maintain relationships with economic development agency staff, workforce development organizations, business owners, and local leaders and institutions that represent or serve traditionally marginalized segments of the community to stay in touch with neighborhood economic dynamics.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for homegrown business retention and expansion and workforce development programs in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds and provide staff support for small business and workforce development programs.

Additional Resources

- Albee, Allison, Rebecca Johnson, and Jeffrey Lubell. 2015. *Preserving, Protecting, and Expanding Affordable Housing: A Policy Toolkit for Public Health*. Oakland, Calif.: ChangeLab Solutions.
- American Planning Association. 2023. "[Accessory Dwelling Units](#)," "[Affordable Housing Programs](#)," "[Housing Needs Assessment](#)," "[Inclusionary Housing](#)," "[Residential Infill Development](#)," "[Rethinking Off-Street Parking Requirements](#)," "[Tiny Houses and Micro Apartments](#)," and "[Zoning Reform and Code Writing](#)." Research KnowledgeBase Collections.
- Boone, Bobby, and Rick Liu. 2020. "[Planning for a Resilient Retail Landscape](#)." *PAS Memo*, January/February.
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- Moore, Terry, Stuart Meck, and James Ebenhoh. 2006. *An Economic Development Toolbox: Strategies and Methods*. PAS Report 541. Chicago: American Planning Association.

- Morton, Elizabeth. 2022. "[Legacy Business Programs: Emerging Directions.](#)" *PAS Memo* 109.
- Nunez, Luis. 2017. "[Advancing the Economic Development Element in Comprehensive Plans.](#)" *PAS Memo*, January/February.

Collective Efficacy

Planners should work to sustain collaborative planning and decision-making practices that promote equitable outcomes from efforts to shape public space. The IHP Framework identifies (1) legitimacy of stakeholder input and (2) social cohesion as key indicators of collective efficacy.

Legitimacy of Stakeholder Input

In this context, legitimacy of stakeholder input is the degree to which community members who participate in planning and decision-making processes affect public-space outcomes. To sustain broad-based participation, stakeholders must see positive results from their investment of time, attention, or other resources,

so planners should seek to ensure that ongoing participation provides meaningful rewards for the community. Useful metrics include the level of impact of stakeholder involvement on local decision-making, the presence of local culture in public-space designs, the proportion of decisions made with stakeholder input, self-reported levels of perception of ownership over a space, and the presence of effective mechanisms for cross-sector collaborations.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to sustain legitimate stakeholder input:

- **Research and Analysis:** Monitor rates of participation in collaborative planning and decision-making processes over time to identify changes in rates of participation among different segments of the community.
- **Research and Analysis:** Monitor the implementation of community-driven plan recommendations and policies over time to identify unfulfilled commitments.



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- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Maintain relationships with local leaders and institutions that represent or serve traditionally marginalized segments of the community to stay in touch with evolving perceptions of the value of participating in public-space-shaping processes.

- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for ongoing implementation monitoring and reporting in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.

- **Programs:** Provide periodic status updates on the outcomes from each public-space-shaping program.
- **Projects:** Acknowledge the specific contributions of local stakeholders in announcements and during celebratory events tied to public-space projects.



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Social Cohesion

Social cohesion refers to the strength of shared values and norms across a community. Because high levels of sustained social cohesion are necessary to maximize the long-term efficacy of efforts to shape public space, planners should look for ways to institutionalize practices that unite people around common goals. Useful metrics include self-reports of the strength of personal local networks, feelings of trust towards others both in and beyond public spaces, and ongoing levels of recognition among neighbors, as well as observations of the sustained rate of passive contact and spontaneous interaction in public spaces.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to sustain social cohesion:

- **Research and Analysis:** Use periodic community surveys to monitor changes in community trust and social capital.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Maintain relationships with volunteer-based organizations to better understand changes in levels of social cohesion.

- **Plans and Policies:** Make a formal commitment to regularly update the comprehensive plan and other relevant functional and subarea plans to ensure they stay rooted in community priorities.
- **Programs:** Incorporate measures of social cohesion into performance management dashboards and open-data portals.

+ Additional Resources

- Aspen Institute. 2017. [The Intersector Toolkit: Tools for Cross-Sector Collaboration](#).
- Bohrer-Kaplan, Nicole, Ameneé Siahpush, and Samantha Nemana. 2019. [Social Cohesion: A Practitioner's Guide to Measurement Challenges and Opportunities](#). New York: 100 Resilient Cities.
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- Leighninger, Matt. 2017. ["Strengthening and Sustaining Public Engagement: A Planning Guide for Communities."](#) Brooklyn, N.Y.: Public Agenda
- Royal Town Planning Institute. 2020. [Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes Research](#).
- Zeanah, John. 2021. ["Guiding Plan Implementation With Degree of Change."](#) PAS Memo, July/August.



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Ongoing Investment in Space

Planners should work to sustain investments of time and money to ensure public spaces maintain their value to the community. The IHP Framework identifies (1) presence of equitable funding structures and investment and (2) demonstration of local care as key indicators of ongoing investment in space.

Presence of Equitable Funding Structures and Investment

In this context, presence of equitable funding structures and investment means clear policies and programmatic commitments that prioritize inclusive participation and equitable outcomes in public-investment decisions that affect public spaces. Because disinvestment leads to disparities in the maintenance of public spaces and health outcomes, planners should look for opportunities to institutionalize equitable public-investment practices.

Useful metrics include the presence of funding structures that support an equitable distribution of public assets, the degree to which public-private project budgets and timelines accommodate stakeholder engagement, the allocation of funding available for public engagement per capita, the presence of policies enabling locally supported investment, and the allocation of funding available for community-generated projects per capita.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to help sustain equitable funding structures and investment:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Engage local leaders and institutions that represent or serve traditionally marginalized segments of the community to identify potential policy changes and programmatic reforms that could ensure sustained investments in public spaces.

- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for inclusive participation in and equitable outcomes from all public-space investment decisions in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Include funds for public engagement as an ongoing activity in the annual budget.
- **Programs:** Create and use an equity assessment tool to rank capital projects for inclusion in the capital improvements program.
- **Programs:** Incorporate data about public-space investments into performance management dashboards and open-data portals.

Demonstration of Local Care

Here, demonstration of local care refers to public and private commitments to ongoing public-space maintenance. Successful long-term stewardship is typically a collaborative effort, so planners should explore ways to broaden community member participation in public-space maintenance activities. Useful metrics include the presence of ongoing maintenance of a public space and the number of local stewards of the space.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to help sustain local care for public spaces:

- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Create a public-space working group, comprising representatives from local government, community members, business owners, and other stakeholders, to identify priorities, issues, and opportunities to enhance the care of public spaces.
- **Plans and Policies:** Develop a strategic plan to establish internal maintenance policies and responsibilities for departments responsible for taking care of public spaces.
- **Plans and Policies:** Establish policy support for volunteer-driven public-space stewardship programs in the local comprehensive plan and all relevant functional and subarea plans.
- **Programs:** Create and allocate funds or staff support for volunteer public-space stewardship programs.
- **Programs:** Incorporate data about public-sector and volunteer public-space maintenance and stewardship efforts into performance management dashboards and open-data portals.

Additional Resources

- City Parks Alliance. 2023. [Equitable Park Funding Hub](#).
- High Line Network. 2022. "[Community First Toolkit: Embed Equity in All Phases of Park Planning](#)."
- National Recreation and Park Association. 2021. [Engaging Diverse Groups in Building Community Equity Through Stewardship](#). Ashburn, Va.: National Recreation and Park Association.
- San Francisco Planning. 2023. [Public Space Stewardship Guide](#).



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Preparedness for Change

Planners should work to ensure public spaces maintain the ability to adapt to the changing needs of the community. The IHP Framework identifies versatility of space to support changing needs and the capacity for ongoing evaluation as key indicators of preparedness for change.

Versatility of Space to Support Changing Needs

Here, the versatility of space to support changing needs represents a public space's ability to meet evolving community needs and desires. Flexible public spaces are better able to support changing needs than rigidly designed and programmed spaces, so planners should look for opportunities to support the adaptation of public spaces to new activities. Useful metrics include housing costs in the area surrounding a public space

compared to the community-wide median and the percentage of a public space that is not allocated to a specific fixed use.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to sustain versatile public spaces:

- **Research and Analysis:** Regularly use field observations, public-investment data, and GIS to document and analyze changes in the distribution of programmed and unprogrammed areas in public spaces over time.
- **Research and Analysis:** Regularly use community surveys and demographic and housing market data to monitor the effects of changing neighborhood conditions on public-space preferences.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Maintain relationships with local leaders and institutions that represent or serve traditionally marginalized segments of the community to better understand evolving public-space preferences.
- **Plans and Policies:** Regularly update level of service standards for public spaces to maintain alignment with evolving community needs.
- **Programs:** Regularly review and adjust public-space programming to meet evolving community needs.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the design and implementation of public-space features and programming that facilitate adaptation to new uses.

Capacity for Ongoing Evaluation

In this context, capacity for ongoing evaluation refers to the ability of the community to monitor and assess the degree to which public spaces are meeting evolving needs. Because ongoing evaluation helps communities target new efforts to shape public space, planners should seek to sustain public-space monitoring and assessment. Useful metrics include the presence of a process and the capacity for evaluating a space over time and the existence of mechanisms to translate evaluations into future public-space changes.

Planners can take or advocate for the following actions to support ongoing evaluation:

- **Research and Analysis:** Regularly use public-space assessment tools to monitor and evaluate the alignment of existing public spaces with community goals.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Partner with local leaders and institutions that represent or serve traditionally marginalized segments of the community to engage community members in public-space evaluation site visits and workshops.
- **Plans and Policies:** Make a formal commitment to regularly evaluate the alignment of public-space features and programming with community goals.
- **Programs:** Allocate funds and staff time for regular public-space monitoring and evaluation efforts.
- **Projects:** Use the knowledge and experiences of traditionally marginalized community members to inform the selection and implementation of real-time or periodic monitoring tools, devices, or systems into public-space projects.

Additional Resources

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- Hurtado, Petra, Benjamin Hitchings, and David Rouse. 2021. [*Smart Cities: Integrating Technology, Community, and Nature*](#). PAS Report 599. Chicago: American Planning Association.
- Martinuzzi, Chiara, and Christelle Lahoud. 2020. [*Public-Space Site-Specific Assessment: Guidelines to Achieve Quality Public Spaces at Neighbourhood Level*](#). Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Program.
- Pearsall, Hamil, Stephen Dickinson, Kyle Cruz, and Maggie Loesch. 2020. [*Public Space Evaluation*](#). Philadelphia: William Penn Foundation.
- Project for Public Spaces. 2022. [*"Placemaking: What If We Built Our Cities Around Places?"*](#)
- Reimagining the Civic Commons. 2019. [*Measure What Matters: DIY Toolkit*](#).
- Urban Land Institute. 2021. [*The Pandemic and the Public Realm: Global Innovations for Health, Social Equity, and Sustainability*](#). Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute.



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Conclusions

Planners have numerous opportunities to advance inclusion and health equity through efforts to shape public space. The specific actions compiled in this guide are suggestive, but not exhaustive. And many, if not most, of the issues and actions highlighted above are relevant to other planning efforts, including those focusing on influencing private land-use and development decisions.

Each community has its own needs and opportunities. Consequently, this action guide is not a prescriptive recipe for planning, designing, building, and operating public spaces. Rather, it is an idea book, rooted in the evidence-backed [Inclusive Healthy Places Framework](#). Furthermore, this guide is not the final word on how planners can use inclusive planning processes

to shape public spaces in ways that reduce health disparities. There is still much work for planners to do—in collaboration with public health professionals, other built environment practitioners, local leaders, and engaged community members—to test and refine its ideas through practice.

These caveats are not, however, an excuse for inaction. Health disparities are increasing in many communities and, without careful planning, are highly likely to be further exacerbated by ongoing climate change and other [existing, emerging, and potential future trends](#). The good news is that all planners have opportunities to act now to promote inclusive planning processes that increase the likelihood of equitable outcomes. And while improving public spaces isn't the only domain for action, it's a great place to start.