

Inclusive Healthy Places

Framework
& Metrics
Overview



**A Guide to Bridging the
Health Equity Gap in
Our Public Spaces**

Gehl

Support
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Foundation



Every neighborhood should provide people what they need to live a healthy life.

—
Communities nationwide are confronting the lasting impacts of structural racism on health. To close the health equity gap in our places, Gehl, the former Gehl Institute, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) developed the Inclusive Healthy Places (IHP) Framework in 2017. The research-backed framework helps translate big picture goals into action, creates a shared language for practitioners across the worlds of urbanism and health, and offers a library of resources for setting and measuring outcomes.

Enclosed is a brief overview of the Framework — including the indicators and metrics to draw from as you work to bridge the health equity gap in your community.



To access the full report, visit bit.ly/ihpframework

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The Inclusive Healthy Places Framework

Understanding how the public places we share influence our health and lived experience is key to addressing health equity. Inclusion and health equity go hand in hand in the public realm.

In the Framework, we show how design and programming strategies for shaping public space and influencing health can help rebalance advantage to benefit those who have been excluded, both intentionally and unintentionally.

To promote inclusion in public spaces, we must design, program, maintain, and evaluate them with the knowledge that our differences affect our experiences, perceptions, and needs. Following is a brief guide to the Framework content.

How to Read the Framework Matrix

The Framework's structure and content reflect its complexity. Research on health, inclusion, and public space does not indicate many clear causal relationships. It does, however, suggest correlations among key elements of inclusive healthy places and identifies areas for testing and future study—which we capture as the guiding principles addressed in Part 1.

To improve understanding of these dynamic relationships, the Framework groups drivers, indicators, and metrics together under each guiding principle to outline potential connections for purpose of analysis (see definitions of these terms below).

What Are Drivers?

For the purposes of this framework, we define *drivers* as the conditions, activities, and/or interventions that create pathways for achieving health equity in the context of public space. The Framework does not suggest, at this stage, causal relationships, but aims to identify impacts, correlations, and associations among indicators, which are grouped thematically under each driver. For our purposes here, drivers are a mix of political, economic, or social structures and institutions, as well as physical features and conditions, that are rooted in and reflective of social preconditions, norms, and values and determine the directions and processes of change.

What Are Indicators?

An *indicator* is a quantitative or qualitative measure derived from observed facts that simplifies and communicates the reality of a complex situation. Indicators reveal the relative position of the phenomenon being measured and, when evaluated over time, can illustrate the magnitude and direction of change (up or down; increasing or decreasing).

In this way, indicators are variables, meaning that the outcome of the measure may change over time or across scales. Indicators may be applied at a single point (e.g., to establish a

baseline measure) or repeatedly (to demonstrate change or variation over time or across places). Indicators may be quantitative (e.g., rates of change over time, counts of people representative of a group). Qualitative indicators may include self-reported health status, survey data, or conditions.

Indicators may also measure the presence or existence of a feature or characteristic (a yes/no variable). Generally, in order to be meaningful for an evaluation, indicators must be highly specific, observable, reliable, valid, and measurable. Strong indicators are often simple and lend themselves well to observation and analysis.

The Framework presents a range of indicators developed through this study's multi-method research process. The indicators are linked to, and therefore give shape to, the drivers supporting each guiding principle in the Framework.

When using the Framework, it is important to remember that not all the indicators need to be measured, present, or demonstrated in every context, place, or project. Instead, evaluators may select a suite of indicators to best capture the desired baseline data set, based on the intended impact and outcomes for a particular public space intervention. There is no set prescription for an inclusive healthy place; the indicators are intended to give practitioners and evaluators a sense of the key aspects that help monitor changes over time and determine whether a space or intervention supports health, equity, and inclusion as intended. We hope that ongoing testing of the Framework will lead to more best practices, including for measurement.

What Are Metrics?

Simply put, metrics are units or standards of measurement. Metrics represent a single, specific data point (e.g., the number of people who attended a public meeting or the percentage of homeowners within a study area).

Different metrics serve different purposes. Each indicator in the Framework may be supported by several metrics. Although each metric supports the same indicator, they may have different data sources, may measure at different scales, or may be based on different research findings. It is important to take the time to decide which are the right metrics for a given project—and to revisit that decision over time as conditions change. Such is the dynamic nature of place-based work.

It is important to note that the list of metrics proposed here is not exhaustive but illustrative. In testing and applying the Framework, we anticipate that practitioners will identify alternatives and improvements to the metrics.




Data Types for the Indicators

The Framework includes a set of icons describing the type of data to be collected for measuring a particular indicator with a given metric. This is to help users prioritize metrics based on their level of ambition and the amount of time they have. For example, does the project timeline allow for collection of detailed pre/post-evaluation measures that include on-site observational methods? Or will a study of the social networks supporting a public space intervention require time to conduct resident surveys?

Some data sets are readily available, such as administrative data collected by public agencies and shared through open data portals. Some data sets may require special requests for access,
























or they may even need to be created by the evaluator or practitioner. In all cases, geography is an essential consideration, as are the inherently political implications of collecting and using data about people within defined geographic boundaries like ZIP codes or political districts. This is a general note that carries perhaps even greater weight in the evaluation of inclusion and health in place-based work.

We do not offer specific recommendations regarding data-collection methods, although we broadly recommend using relevant best practices for data collection associated with each type of metric to produce valid and reliable data.

Data Typology	Description
Desktop 	
Administrative Data	Data collected by public agencies, hospitals, or other organizations required to report on outcomes at boundaries dictated by administrative or political districts; these data are not collected for research purposes
Economic Data	Data about public investment, business, finance, money, and markets (e.g., consumer markets, real estate values, housing market trends)
Population Data	Sociodemographic data
Publicly Available Data	Data collected by public agencies, governments, or private entities and made available for public use
Vital Statistics	Data collected for the registration of vital events, specifically for this work, births and causes of death
Policy Data	Information about public policies, including legislation, regulations, benchmarks or targets as well as policies of relevant institutions or organizations
Observational 	
Built Environment Data	Quantitative or qualitative data about the features and characteristics of physical space (e.g., park amenities, streetscape elements, accessibility)
Spatial Observation Data	Primary data collected by researchers through use of observational methods in space. This may include systematic or non-systematic observational methods
Survey 	
Survey Data	Data collected by researchers from a population of interest using standardized questions via various modes, including in-person, telephone, web-based, or paper questionnaires
Interview	Primary data collected by researchers through conversations, structured or unstructured, including interviews, focus groups (group interviews), and other discursive methods

The Inclusive Healthy Places Framework
















Indicator	Data	Metric
Characteristics of People Present¹		
Demographics		Population by age, sex, gender or gender identity, race and ethnicity, individual income, education, nativity status
Community Health Context²		
Vital statistics		Life expectancy by sex, race and ethnicity, neighborhood income
		All-cause mortality rate by sex, race and ethnicity, neighborhood income
		Leading causes of mortality rate by sex, race and ethnicity, neighborhood income
		Birth rates by race and ethnicity, neighborhood income
		Leading causes of morbidity by sex, race and ethnicity (diabetes, obesity, hypertension, asthma)
		Leading causes of hospitalizations, emergency department visits (diabetes, asthma, mental illness)
		Self-reported state of health and rate of physical activity
	Socioeconomic conditions	
		Percentage of population employed by age, sex, race and ethnicity, etc.
Environmental conditions related to physical spaceⁱ		Air pollution rates
		Number of residents within max. 10-minute walk from the public space (level of service measure) ³
		Supermarket square footage per neighborhood area ⁴
		Proportion of large park space (6+ contiguous acres) to neighborhood land area ⁵
		Percentage of children living within 1 mile of a safe and well maintained playground ⁶
		Proportional area of urban tree canopy to land area ⁷
		Proportion of low-income residents with access to green space
Housingⁱⁱ		Proportion of secure affordable options (rent control, public housing, affordable housing, etc.)
		Reported level or incidences of housing quality issues ⁸
		Housing tenure
		Duration of residence in neighborhood
Predictors of Exclusion		
Inequalityⁱⁱⁱ		Median household income by race and ethnicity ⁹
		Rates of incarceration by race and ethnicity, sex, age and income ⁹























I. It has become evident that environments affect the eating and exercise habits of residents. Scientists and medical professionals agree that lack of access to healthy food options and safe outdoor spaces is a central contributor to obesity (Policy Link, *Equitable Development Toolkit*).

II. Although this framework focusses on public spaces, it is important to note the relationship between housing and health to develop a thorough understanding of the health context of a place. Unaffordable housing and poor housing conditions are closely associated with poverty and poor health (*NYC Community Health Profiles, 2015*).

III. There is growing evidence opportunity is a leading determinant of health and longevity. “Disadvantage drives health disparities—People at society’s lowest rungs are more likely to become sick, more likely to get diagnosed and treated later (if at all), and more likely to die sooner than people higher up the ladder” (Policy Link, *Why Place and Race Matter*).

Indicator	Data	Metric
Predictors of Exclusion		
Inequality		Concentration of residential poverty based on income on a citywide or district scale (measured as a percentage) ¹¹
Discriminatory practices		Presence of historical and current discriminatory practices (e.g., redlining, predatory lending)
		Self-reported rates of unfair treatment or experiences of discrimination by race and ethnicity and other relevant demographics
Community Assets¹²		
Public assets		Proportion of open spaces to land area (by active and passive recreation) ¹³
		Mobility analysis: ¹⁴ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Percentage of transportation mode split to work (car, public transport, bike, walking) – Average transit commute time – Cost of transportation as a percentage of median income
		Quality of sample public spaces compared with a larger boundary of analysis (surrounding neighborhoods, district, county, borough, etc.) ^{iv}
		Access to free public facilities (school, library, recreation, etc.)
		Presence of community services (e.g., early childhood education centers, community recycling facilities, cultural organizations, Meals on Wheels, etc.)
Local institutions		Number of diverse local Institutions, both public and private (e.g., schools, libraries, hospitals, police, service agencies, other nonprofits, major businesses) ¹⁵
		Number of community-relevant local health and social services provided (measured either as a total number or as a percentage of total services provided) ¹⁶
		Presence of local landmarks, symbols, and local art
		Presence of cultural organizations and institutions
		Presence of religious organizations and institutions



















IV. Refer to Principle 3 indicator *Quality of public space* for metrics related to quality of physical features

Indicator	Data	Metric
Civic Trust^{v 17}		
Civic participation		Voter turnout by relevant demographics ¹⁸
		Self-reported rate of civic participation (e.g., participation at political meetings, membership in political clubs, advocacy and organizing groups, participatory budgeting) ¹⁹
Local knowledge of inclusive processes		Self-reported level of local awareness of public process and various levers of power within government
		Level of local awareness of funding structures that can support community-oriented development
Reported trust²⁰		Self-reported trust in government and civic associations ²¹
		Self-reported trust in fellow community members (on a scale created/determined by the evaluator) ²²
		Self-reported rate (e.g., daily, weekly, etc.) of informal socializing ²³
		Self-reported frequency (e.g., daily, weekly, etc.) of unplanned contact ²⁴
Participation		
Events or programming^{vi 25}		Number of community programs that are relevant to the community/represent diverse cultural identities. ²⁶
		Number of community events (e.g., festivals, street fairs, sporting tournaments, etc.) ²⁷
		Percentage of community-led public events and programs
		Number of volunteer efforts (e.g., park cleanup, corporate-sponsored efforts, etc.)
Attendance^{vii}		Presence of community members at city-level celebrations or other organized events ²⁸
		Percentage of total population that is actively participating in local programs or activities (membership heterogeneity) ²⁹
		Reported rate of attendance
Investment in participatory processes		Allocation of funding available for public engagement per capita
		Allocation of funding available for community-generated projects per capita
		Presence of technical assistance for community-generated projects
		Presence of participatory budgeting
		Presence of public process that accommodates, supports, or requires multiparty partnerships: multiagency, private-public, private-private
Local stewardship³⁰		Presence of community-led volunteer projects or programs
		Presence of grassroots organizing groups or efforts

V. Finding from research interviews and site visit in Malmö and Copenhagen: Interviewees (Dearborn, Hand, Lopez, Odert C, Towe V, Wilkerson) emphasized the value of trust in and positive interaction with government and local community organizations for building broad community trust and cohesion and how trust in others affects community collaboration and participation in placemaking processes and their outputs (such as in Superkilen and Folkets Park, Copenhagen).


















VI. As described by the Design Trust for Public Space to NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio, cooperative planning to organize and publicize civic events has the added value of fostering new relationships and resilience across neighborhoods.






















VII. The presence of community members at community events in core urban areas has led to higher levels of self-rated health as outlined by Daniel Kim and Ichiro Kawachi.

Indicator	Data	Metric
Civic Trust		
Local stewardship	 	Rate of volunteerism in public space
		Rate of volunteerism in the community
		Self-reported level of volunteerism
Social Capital		
Social networks		Representation within local leadership (religious, civic, etc.) ³¹
		Self-reported willingness to cooperate, help, and exchange favors ³²
		Self-reported strength of ties (strong or weak) within a relevant network
		Self-reported frequency of experience interacting with people of diverse backgrounds ³³
		Presence of place-based conditions that inhibit the formation of neighborhood social ties (e.g., crowding and high-density living; dangerous or noisy settings; presence of high crime or high fear of crime) ³⁴
		Self-reported frequency of contact with social network within a specific amount of time (e.g., week, month) ³⁵
Recognition of diverse cultural identities ^{viii 36}		Representation of different cultures via public art, monuments, signage and other physical symbols in public spaces ³⁷
		Frequency of opportunities for cross-cultural social interaction
Development or strengthening of partnerships between organizations or groups ³⁸		Self-reported presence of collaborations and information sharing between organizations ³⁹
	 	Presence of cross-sectoral partnerships
		Evidence of successful outcomes from partnerships
Collective action ^{ix 40}	 	Participation in collective action (e.g., protests, public gatherings, voter registration drives, presence of active political membership groups, etc.)

VIII. The failure to recognize that members of minority groups have a cultural identity of their own with distinctive traditions of importance and value negatively impacts the capacity to build strong social cohesion, as argued by Thomas Maloutas and Maro Malouta.

IX. Taking part in collective action is only beneficial for health if others in your neighborhood are doing the same. There is some evidence that empowerment might be important for health at the individual level, as noted by Daniel Holman and Alan Walker.
















Indicator	Data	Metric
Quality of Public Space		
Presence of nature	 	Percentage of the space with vegetative cover ⁴¹
	 	Number, size, and location of trees within a public space ⁴²
Level of maintenance		Presence of features and amenities that demonstrate maintenance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – lack of presence of graffiti⁴³ – lack of presence of litter⁴⁴ – presence of staff – presence of volunteer stewards – quality of overall condition of repair of space and features⁴⁵
Presence of welcoming edges and entrances		Quality assessment of entrances, access routes and crossing intersections ⁴⁶
		Number of entrances per linear foot of a public space's boundary; number of points of access ⁴⁷
Presence of site furnishings and materials that invite people to linger		Presence of basic public space features and amenities that encourage lingering and physical activity, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – children's playground and/or features for play – seating, formal or informal – picnic tables – shade or sheltering structures – barbecues – gardens or planted areas⁴⁸ – evidence of programming (see event and programming indicator in P2) – concessions, kiosks, or other commercial activity serving the space – public access toilets – use of noise-reduction strategies in the space – use of natural materials in the space – water features
Presence of amenities and site furnishings that invite people to actively use the space		Presence of features and amenities that enhance diversity of public space experience, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – presence of features or facilities that promote physical activity⁴⁹ – walking paths – bike paths – shade along walking paths or seating areas – signs that dogs are allowed⁵⁰
Quality of experience		Self-reported degree of satisfaction with quality of the public space
		Degree of disparity in self-reported perceived quality of a public space among different groups ⁵¹
	 	Distribution of space to people's demonstrated or desired patterns of use (e.g., percentage of area dedicated to pedestrians based on volume of pedestrians) ⁵²
		Self-reported level of positive sensory experience, sense of high aesthetic quality in the space ⁵³
Sense of place		Self-reported perceived value of public spaces
Objective quality assessment		Positive rating of features (e.g., advocacy report cards, agency asset assessment, structural reports, etc.)
Capital investment		History of capital investment in a space or within a study area ⁵⁴

Indicator	Data	Metric
Accessibility		
ADA		Presence of ADA-required features in project area and surrounding space ⁵⁵
		Level of quality and maintenance of pavements and surfaces ⁵⁶
Universal design elements		Principle 1: Equitable Use Principle 2: Flexibility in Use Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use Principle 4: Perceptible Information Principle 5: Tolerance for Error Principle 6: Low Physical Effort Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use ⁵⁷
Walkability and quality of the sidewalk and street experience		Absence of obstructions along pathways and access points ⁵⁸
		Pedestrian crossings at street level ⁵⁹
		Safe and attractive routes to/from residential homes to public space/local park
		Pedestrian count ⁶⁰
Access		
Access based on street network^{x 61}		Street network distance to the nearest (same type of) public space from a study participant's home address ^{xi}
		Total number of (same type of) public spaces within 1 mile of a study participant's home
Per capita level of service measure^{xii}		Number of residents within max. 10-minute walk from the public space
		Total area of (same type of) public space within a 1-mile street network
		Total area of (same type of) public space by population
		Total number of hours of access to space, in specified unit of time (e.g., daily, weekly, etc.)
Use & Users		
User diversity and characteristics		Number of users (e.g., measured in a snapshot, over time, by zone) ⁶²
		Number of users performing an activity (e.g., cycling, walking, sitting, etc.) ⁶³
		Number or percentage of users characterized by a specific attribute (e.g., users participating in groups, eating food, using electronics, walking dogs, etc.) ⁶⁴
		User volume throughout the day, week, year
		Self-reported individual frequency of use
Evidence of social mixing		Presence of physical design features or site elements that promote diverse types of use ⁶⁵
		Presence of racial and/or ethnic, age and gender diversity ⁶⁶
		Presence of socioeconomically diverse user groups within the same public space ⁶⁷

X. Metrics taken from the Public Space Access Index, which can be used in its entirety.



































XI. Each of these metrics can be further understood by doing counts by demographic group.

XII. A ten-minute walk corresponds to an approximate 1/2-mile walk radius, measured on the street network, and is a common level of service measure for urban parks departments in the United States. NYC Parks uses a combination of 5- and 10-minute walk analyses on the street grid to determine access to small and large parks, respectively.






















Indicator	Data	Metric
Use & Users		
Level of physical activity		Self-reported time spent outside per day/week
		Self-reported level of physical exercise
		Self-reported type of physical activity
Flexible use of the space	 	Presence of a diversity of user groups over time
	 	Ratio of allocated space for flexible programming
		Number of diverse groups hosting programs or events in the space over a defined period of time
Safety & Security		
Presence of features intended to improve levels of safety and security		Presence of CPTED strategies ^{xii 68}
		Presence of sufficient lighting for the space
		Presence of visible care and investment in the space (e.g., gardening, murals) ⁶⁹
Level of perceived safety		Percentage of women and percentage of children using the public space ^{xiii 70}
		Presence of active streets surrounding the space (proportion of activated commercial areas adjacent to the space, day/night; proportion of blind street fronts adjacent to the space) ⁷¹
	 	Incidence or rate of injury, crime, or violence documented within the space or surrounding area
		Reported safety rating of features in parks and public spaces used for play ⁷²

XII. Refer to Gehl Institute's framework, *CPTED: A Public Life Approach*: "CPTED was developed under the premise that safe space is "defensible space." Gehl Institute believes that, ironically, when spaces are designed to be defensive and uncomfortable to certain groups, they can become unwelcoming to everyone (*A Mayor's Guide to Public Life*). "Removing barriers to participation in public spaces and enabling a wider range of people to enjoy the space is key to creating thriving, safer, and more just cities" (*CPTED, A Public Life Approach*).

XIII. Numerous studies agree that fear of crime is usually higher in women, elderly people and the youngest. Therefore the presence of such demographics in space would suggest that the perceived risk is lower (Daniel Carro, Sergi Valera, and Tomeu Vidal, "Perceived Insecurity in the Public Space").

Indicator	Data	Metric
Ongoing Representation⁷⁷		
Local political engagement⁷⁵		Rate of voter participation in both local and national elections comparative to citywide rates by relevant demographics
Engaged governance⁷⁶	 	Percentage of population participating in public processes (e.g., organizing networks, planning for service delivery, public sustainability efforts) ⁷⁷
		Number of engagements or points of access for community participation (e.g., promotion of meetings, online communications, personal invitation, flyering, etc.) ⁷⁸
	 	Number of diverse stakeholder groups engaged ⁷⁹
Representation of local stakeholders	  	Diversity of stakeholders participating in decisions shaping their local environment proportional to study area demographics (e.g., community boards, public process, community organizing and advocacy) ⁸⁰
	 	Consistency of level of participation in public meetings or programs (e.g., count of meeting attendees, proportional rate of program participation, etc.)
	 	Level of leadership and engagement of local nongovernmental organizations
Space serves a diversity of community members		Proportional representation of people using the space in relation to overall neighborhood demographics (e.g., if neighborhood is 30% Hispanic/Latino, are 3/10 of users Hispanic/Latino?)
	 	Number of programs and activities in public space catering to diverse neighborhood demographic ⁸¹
		Level of diverse participation in programs or activities ⁸²
	 	Number of community-organized activities ⁸³
Community Stability^{xiv 84}		
Housing affordability		Housing cost (rental and property value) in relation to city/county median including change over time
		Amount of secured affordable tenure options (e.g., rent control, public housing, affordable housing, etc.) ⁸⁵
Neighborhood economic conditions		Median area household income in relation to city/county median by relevant demographics ⁸⁶
		Percentage of population employed
	 	Number of diverse retailers (e.g., large chain stores, mom-and-pop shops, pharmacies, health food stores) ⁸⁷
Collective Efficacy		
Legitimacy of stakeholder input	 	Level of impact of stakeholder involvement on local decisionmaking ⁸⁸
		Presence of local culture in design elements ⁸⁹
	  	Proportion of decisions made with stakeholder input ⁹⁰
		Self-reported levels of perception of ownership over a space ⁹¹
	 	Presence of effective mechanisms for cross-sector collaborations ⁹²

XIV. Community stability is included here as this is a critical element in building long-term resilience, and can be considered a long-term impact or outcome associated with the recommended socioeconomic and demographic baseline conditions or context indicators (Principle 1).

Indicator	Data	Metric
Collective Efficacy		
Social cohesion⁹³		Self-reported strength of personal local networks
		Self-reported sustained feelings of trust towards other people, in or beyond public space ⁹⁴
		Self-reported ongoing levels of recognition among neighbors ⁹⁵
		Sustained rate of passive contact and spontaneous interaction ⁹⁶
Ongoing Investment in Space		
Presence of equitable funding structures and investment		Presence of funding structures that support equitable distribution of public assets
		Public/private project budgets and timelines accommodate quality stakeholder engagement
		Allocation of funding available for public engagement per capita
		Presence of policies enabling locally supported investment
		Allocation of funding available for community-generated projects per capita
Demonstration of local care	 	Presence of ongoing maintenance of the space
		Number of local stewards of the space
Preparedness for Change		
Versatility of space to support changing needs	 	Housing cost (rental and property value) in relation to city/county median, including change over time
		Percentage of space that is not allocated to a specific fixed use
Capacity for ongoing evaluation	 	Presence of a process for evaluating the space over time (e.g., use, benefits, safety)
	 	Presence of the capacity to evaluate the space over time
	 	Existence of mechanisms for evaluation to translate to future change

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