SENIORS' OUTDOOR SURVEY (SOS)

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Your Name, Location_____

Which Outdoor space? _____ Date/ Time _____

PLEASE READ before using this tool:

STEP 1: **Choose an outdoor area** – First, decide on the boundaries of the outdoor space to be evaluated. (Features that are viewable should be included when appropriate, even if beyond the space itself.)

STEP 2: **Walk and sit in the area -** Imagine **YOU** are a senior resident with sensory and functional disabilities, using a walker or wheelchair. Walk around slowly, test the furniture, look at the area from different positions – including wheelchair height.) **ASK: "**How well does this space support the needs of frail older adults?"

STEP 3: **Evaluate the area** – Rate each item from 1 to 7 (1 = worst, 7 = best), based on the climate, context, and functional level of residents, considering what you could *reasonably expect* in this type of setting. If there are several features in an item, rate overall how well they support outdoor usage.

OVERALL, how well does this outdoor area provide a real sense of escape and relief from being indoors? (a feeling of fresh air, views, sky, sunshine, lush plantings, other senses)   **Very well _____ Fairly well _____ Not well _____**

1. ACCESS TO NATURE (14)   *Subtotal _____ ÷ 14 = _____   Score for this category*

Abundant greenery - Does this area include or view a substantial quantity of healthy green plants ___; with a diverse mix of trees, vines, flowers and shrubs ___? (instead of all hard paving, or just a few types of plant)

Flowers and color - In season, would residents see an abundance of color, as flowers or bright foliage ___?

Reachable plants - Can residents in wheelchairs see, touch, or smell attractive plants at hand or eye level ___?

Viewscapes - Does seating have pleasant views ___, and are hard boundaries partly screened by plants ___?

Water and motion - Can residents see, hear, or interact with water, such as fountains, ponds, birdbaths, etc. ___? Do any features have movement ___? (e.g., wind chimes, waving banners, spraying fountains, grasses moving in the breeze)

Wildlife/ pets - Does this area provide amenities for pets ___; or to attract wildlife, such as squirrels, birds, and butterflies ___; or does it have views of domestic or farm animals ___? (such as rabbits, chickens, grazing cows or horses)

Private and quiet - Is the garden overall fairly quiet, and free from obnoxious noises ___; with privacy from nearby resident rooms ___; and at least one or more private outdoor places to sit ___?

2. OUTDOOR COMFORT AND SAFETY (15)   *Subtotal _____ ÷ 15 = _____ Score for this category*

Available seating - Is there plenty of seating available ___; with at least a few different types of seating ___?

Sitting choices – Are there places to sit in sun or shade ___; with some seating easily movable by residents ___?

Safe seating - Is the seating stable so it will not tip over ___; with backs and arms to help residents get up safely ___?

Sitting comfort - Are chairs and benches comfortably shaped ___; made of materials that do not get too hot or cold ___; with at least some seat cushions ___?

Sitting amenities - Are there tables near some of the seating, to place a cup of coffee or food ___; and are there any rocking chairs, swings or gliders available ___?

Restroom/ drinking water - Is there a nearby restroom, with access to a drinking fountain or water cooler___?

Maintenance/ air quality/ climate control - Is the outdoor area well-maintained ___; are any smoking areas well-separated from other areas ___; and is there any microclimate control ___? (e.g., outdoor fans, heaters, etc.)

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3. WALKING AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES (14)   *Subtotal ____ ÷ 14 = ____ Score for this category*

Looping walkways - Can residents choose from an abundance of walks of different lengths ___; with round-trip walks available ___; with interesting views ___?

Safe paving - Is paving level, smooth, no deep cracks, and easy for wheelchairs ___; with a non-skid, non-glare surface ___?

Comfortable safe walkways - Are walkways partly shaded from mid-day or hot afternoon sun ___; with handrails along at least a few parts of the walkways ___?

Walkway seating - Can residents find seating along walkways at frequent intervals (~50') ___; with some shaded seating ___?

Attractions/ destinations - In this outdoor area, can residents see interesting features to enjoy or walk toward ___? (such as a sundial, bird house, arbor, pergola, gazebo, fountain, fish pond, flower bed, etc.)

Social interaction/ children - Are there places that support social activities___; (such as picnic tables, gathering spots, etc.) and play areas or other amenities for children, where residents can watch and/or interact with them ___?

Recreation/ exercise/ gardening - Does this area have amenities for residents to watch or engage in specific outdoor activities ___; (such as croquet, horseshoes, golf putting practice, swimming, an exercise station, etc.); are there places that encourage residents and staff to engage in gardening ___?

4. INDOOR-OUTDOOR CONNECTION (11)   *Subtotal ____ ÷ 11 = ____ Score for this category*

Visibility - Can this outdoor space be easily viewed from well-used indoor areas ___; and is it easy to reach ___?

Alternate entrances - Are there multiple ways residents can reach this outdoor area from inside the building ___?

Transition zones - Are there comfortable places to linger next to the doorway, indoors ___; and outdoors ___?

Doors - Are doors unlocked during daytime ___; can residents easily open the door with little effort ___; and the door does not close too quickly ___; is there an automatic door available, that is easy to use___?

Thresholds - Can residents in walkers or wheelchairs easily cross the door threshold without difficulty ___; and is there a wide paved landing outside the doorway ___?

5. CONNECTION TO THE WORLD (6)   *Subtotal ____ ÷ 6 = ____ Score for this category*

Front porch - Is this space an "Entry Garden" or front porch, located at (or next to) a main entry of the building ___?

Watch visitors, deliveries - From this area, could residents watch vehicles arriving at the facility ___; or watch front-door activities, with a chance to greet people ___?

View landscape features - From this area, can residents see nearby landscape features such as trees, hills, etc. ___?

See nearby surroundings - From this area, can residents watch nearby streets and traffic ___; or human activities, buildings, and neighborhoods ___? (such as stores, houses, apartments, a bus stop, people walking, bicycling, etc.)

THANK YOU for using this tool – please feel free to contact us at **rodiek@tamu.edu** with any questions.

You can add up the subtotal for each category, and divide by the number of items to obtain the score for that category; the total will give you an overall score. Using the same process, you can compare different outdoor areas.

Weighting is being developed to generate scores that reflect the relative importance of the 60 different items. This will be based on the relevant literature, residents' surveyed preferences, outcome-based findings, and surveyed expert opinions. Weighting will be available as a formula embedded in an Excel spreadsheet, allowing you to enter your raw scores, and convert them into weighted scores.

Please see the Access to Nature website at http://www.accesstonature.org/resources.html for more copies of this evaluation tool, and to access an Excel spreadsheet, when available, for weighting your results.

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