

# 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.)

**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](mailto: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.