

URBAN GREEN SPACE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE AGE-FRIENDLY DESIGN OF URBAN GREEN SPACES (courtesy of Professor Emerita Clare Cooper Marcus, from the book she co-authored, *Therapeutic Landscapes*):

Bench Design:

- Seating height should be higher than usual, 18 to 19 inches, with a maximum seat depth of 20 inches, arm height of 25 to 26 inches, and arms projecting forward from the seat to provide extra support when standing up.

Bench Positioning:

- Provide some seating at right angles or opposite each other, a short distance apart since seeing the person they are chatting with helps some older people who are hard of hearing. Provide sunny and shaded benches for different comfort levels.

Bench Spacing:

- Provide seating, alternating with a place to lean—a handrail, for example, or a half wall—at relatively frequent intervals along main pathways. A spacing of 15 to 20 feet is necessary for those who are quite frail and may encourage those who are unsure on their feet to take a short walk.

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RESEARCH ON THE HEALTH BENEFIT OF URBAN GREEN SPACE:

- [This is your brain on trees: Why is urban nature so good for our minds, and what happens when a pandemic isolates us from it?](#)
- [Visiting Green Spaces 3-4 Times Weekly May Lower Your Need for Meds, According to New Study](#)

TYPICAL ACCEPTABLE WALKING DISTANCES:

- The typical walking distance urban planners work with is 10 minutes. That's about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ miles of walking. 10 minutes of walking every day has proven health benefits. (More information on [walkability standards](#)).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION AND RAISING AWARENESS:

- Strike up a friendship with an elder at the Park and offer them support around 'getting out there'.
- Advocate at your City for improvements. It's very expensive to make a park area fully accessible but replacing some old park benches with new benches that follow the design principles outlined above is doable.
- Check out [Cognability](#), a website that provides tools to assess how your neighborhood supports brain health in later life.
- Listen to the At Home On Air Interview with Cognability founder and University of Michigan scholar, [Jessica Finley](#).
- Listen to the At Home On Air Interview with Professor [Clare Cooper Marcus](#) about the role of green spaces in her life and her work to make them accessible to all.

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