

## **Architecture and Landscape Architecture**

Healing spaces: improving health and wellbeing for the elderly through therapeutic landscape design

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### **Abstract**

Existing research supports a wide range of positive effects for physical, mental and social wellbeing from outdoor exercise, particularly through engagement with nature, however few current landscapes facilitate exercise participation and efficacy for older persons and often require targeted design refinement to foster accessibility, inclusivity and sociability. In order to identify how therapeutic landscape design can be developed to best assist older persons' health and wellbeing, epidemiological data, injury statistics, and currently available outdoor fitness equipment that is specifically marketed for use by older persons were examined. A number of problematic design issues were identified including poor equipment design; failure to integrate cognitive tasks; and minimal integration of safe, age and ability-specific elements. This paper advocates rekindling the connection to public green space in order to foster disability prevention and promote rehabilitation in older persons. The incorporation of design elements that specifically address elements of prevalent morbidities and concerns, such as psychological restoration, stress reduction, attention recovery, the health and wellbeing of older persons in the community could be improved. Age-specific design suggestions include integrating interactive landscapes with ecological regenerative planning to assist with the prevention of common morbidities in older persons.

Keywords: landscape; health and wellbeing; older persons; exercise; outdoor; therapeutic