

A Public Play Areas Role as an Urban Intervention for Increasing Social Capital Among Adults

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Introduction

Neighborhoods without parks, recreational, or open spaces are missing a vital tool for growing social connectivity amongst residents. The implementation of **playgrounds or play spaces** are typically designed to facilitate this, but **children are the main users of such spaces**. What comes of the adults accompanying them, who may come into contact with each other?

For previous research in play areas, information social capital between parents and adults who accompany children is limited, which leaves a gap in the understanding of how this urban intervention affects a community's social connectivity.

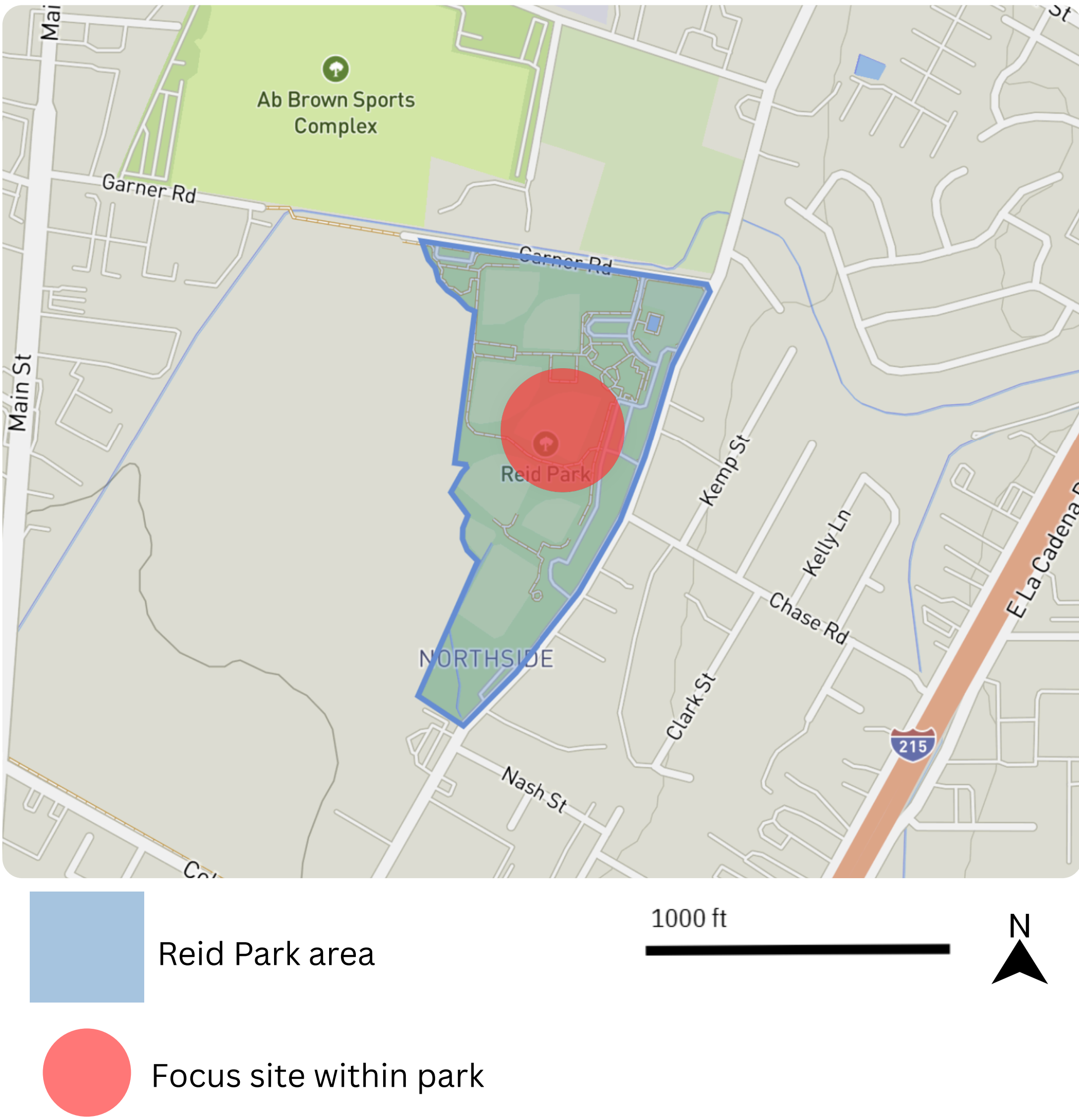
This study aims to shed light on social interaction between **parents and adults** who accompany children at play areas, and which park designs features facilitate this creation of social capital.

Methodology

This study will be site-specific to Reid Park, located in Riverside. The method of study is qualitative analysis, as social capital itself is nuanced and lacks a single true way to be measured directly. The data collecting methods are:

Observational Data Collection: Time spent at the park, focusing on perceived positive/beneficial interactions between parents and adults.

Staff Interviews: Reid Park staff participate in an interview, detailing if and how they have formed bonds with those who attend their park.



Key Findings

Observational Data Analysis: The playgrounds and sport fields were used by children accompanied by adults, more than picnic area or open space.

- Activities in which children interact with each other, increase parental interaction

Staff Interviews: Reid Park staff mention that most park users are regular, and parents tend to build trust and familiarity with staff themselves.

- Sporting games could be mixed ages, and do not rely on official scheduling for activities

Details in the Built Environment

Playground: Parents tend to watch their children. The playground provided several benches spread-out, which either:

- Comfortably fit a single person and their belongings or
- Two or three acquaintances



Sport Fields: Parents and adults were able to play together during events such as baseball games.

- Longer benches allowed people to sit as close or as far away as they liked
- Stadium lighting provided good visibility, reassuring parents



Conclusion

Parents and adults who accompany their children to public areas such as parks, are bound to run into other parents doing the same.

While parents build trustng relationships with staff whom they see regularly, building trust with other parents must happen organically.

Facilitating interaction between these adults revolves around **how well the environment allows** them to responsibly watch and access their child.

- Is there a clear line of sight?
- Is their proximity close enough in case of an emergency?
- Can I see other park users?.

Ultimately, features of a park which made parental and adult users more social, corrlated to safe and comfortable they and their children were.



Recomendations

Playground: Expanding upon current amenities around the main child play area/playground may focus on increasing amount of seating for adult bystanders in close proximity.

- Tandem seating to facilitate both individual and shared seating

Providing more canopy area to increase prolonged stays by parents and adult bystanders.

Sport Field: Permanent shaded structures for the dugout area and the three spectator areas around the baseball field may be installed.

- Shade which must not block view from any angle

