FROM PEOPLE PARK'S ANNEX TO OHLONE PARK

The Wandering Body and Accessible Park Space

By Yuqi Tian

This paper focuses on disability access in urban greenspace through the case study of Ohlone Park in Berkeley, California. Initially built as People's Park Annex in the 1960s, Ohlone Park was used as an alternative space for political activism after the first closing of People's Park. This paper argues that the development pattern of Ohlone Park as a controlled public space away from its radical past suggests an anticipation of an idealized type of user that occupies the park as a temporary recreational area, which perpetuates the exclusion of disabled and unhoused bodies in the park. This idealization extends to the questions of bodies and space as well as perpetuates the hypervisibility of crip movement. The combination of lawn and lane in the park suggests that the dichotomy of nature and culture in landscape design is inter-perpetual with the imagination of an able-bodied walker. This paper explores how the question of body underlies themes including elements of nature in the built environment, history of the Free Speech Movement, and different forms of moving through greenspaces. This paper ends with the proposal of wandering as a methodology that counters the walker's imagination and recognizes the multiplicity of spatialities formed moving through the park.

I. Introduction

This paper examines the experience of using an electric wheelchair and theorizes how this particular form of moving addresses questions of access and awareness of needs in public greenspace. The ways in which the spatial layout of Ohlone Park shapes behavioral patterns of the users can be considered as the material expression of power in the built environment. This demonstrates a particular interpretation of the body of the users when it comes to disability access of the park. Disability access, in this paper, is considered through not only the rights to public space and the design strategy of the built environment, but also how the idealization of walking perpetuates the imagined users of urban parks as able-bodied. Analyzing how the idea of nature (or the notion of the so-called "nature" existing outside of "culture") connects with bodily imagination and accessible infrastructure, I ask how

the question of access can be answered by considering space through experiences and interactions.[1]

In the chapter "'Making Do': Uses and Tactics," Michel de Certeau argues that space is organized through uses and actions. This form of space-making situates its effects in the participatory experience and in the everyday "now." Certeau distinguishes strategies and tactics and argues that while strategies attribute relation to a place through implementing designated elements and focus on asserting power over action through taking away time from space, tactics concentrate on the relation between space and time. While "power is bound by its very visibility," tactics look into what is invisible in the strategies through which power is sustained.[2] What Certeau answers here is the question of why everyday experiences are important to understand a space, the way in which it is organized, and its resistance to the erasure of the past. By contextualizing Ohlone Park within Certeau's theory, this paper intends to counter the current image of Ohlone Park as a recreational greenspace away from political debates and reimagine the park through traces of the past and situated experiences of the present.

In this paper, I argue that the park's limiting of the users' ways of moving, through its landscape design of lanes and lawns, adopts an imagination of able-bodied walking as the *intended* way of being in the park. This imagination perpetuates a dualistic notion of nature as detached from culture, and disabled bodies as detached from "nature," which is then reflected in the built environment and the power it has in directing the users. The particular modes of thinking and being shaped by this geography feed back into how the park is built, designed, and maintained.

I begin in the section "Imagined User: Accessibility Equals Checking Boxes?" with a landscape analysis of Ohlone Park, where I argue that the park is structured as an exclusive public space. This argument is followed by an overview of Ohlone Park's construction history and its relation to People's Park and The Free Speech Movement in the section "People's Park Annex: The Question of Accessibility as Who Gets To Be Where." This historical account focuses on how the question of "who gets to be where" shapes the spatial development of the park. Here I argue that accessibility in Ohlone Park is a direct form of power centered around the idealization of imaged users, whether in terms of its countercultural origin or the eventual spatial layout. The section "Legibility of Disability: Who Gets to Say and Who Gets to Be" focuses on the legibility of disabled bodies in the design of Ohlone Park through examining the information regarding the creation and renovation of the park. I argue that accessible infrastructure includes not only the physical output, but also the legibility of different needs; that is, how access needs are recognized, legislated, and addressed.

In the section "Wandering in Nature: Crip Spatiality and the Ideal," I focus more on how these forms of production feed into the experience of access in Ohlone Park. I consider disability legibility (the recognition and consideration of needs for differently-abled bodies) as more than just boxes to be checked in laws and regulations, but the understanding that different needs co-exist. This part of the paper analyzes the relationship between hyper-visibility (the sense of being surveilled) and disability legibility in this particular context of greenspace. I propose a theoretical model to analyze the ways in which the ideological construction of the dichotomy between "nature" and "culture" perpetuates the othering of disabled bodies (I focus on bodies with physical disabilities, wheelchair users in particular) in urban greenspace. I end the paper by critiquing the idea of walking as a way of able-izing the imagined user of the park. In the last section "Wandering as Methodology: Towards a Participatory Criticism," I propose reconsidering being in park space as wandering instead of walking, in efforts of recognizing the spatialities outside of the normalized condition of walking.

---

1 While I acknowledge that the park's layout considers various uses of the park and the requests of the surrounding communities, I focus on how elements of "nature" implanted in the park define which parts of it are accessible. While the lawn grass may be intended to allow direct interactions, my personal experience of using an electric wheelchair suggests that the lawn grass is not designed with wheelchair access in mind. While I understand that my limited personal experience is not representative of how the design of the park may relate to other issues of physical accessibility and that various weather conditions could be a factor in changing the condition of the lawn, what I am more interested in is how the design of the park according to a designated user group influences how the space is approached and experienced beyond this single category.

2 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (University of California Press, 1984), 37.

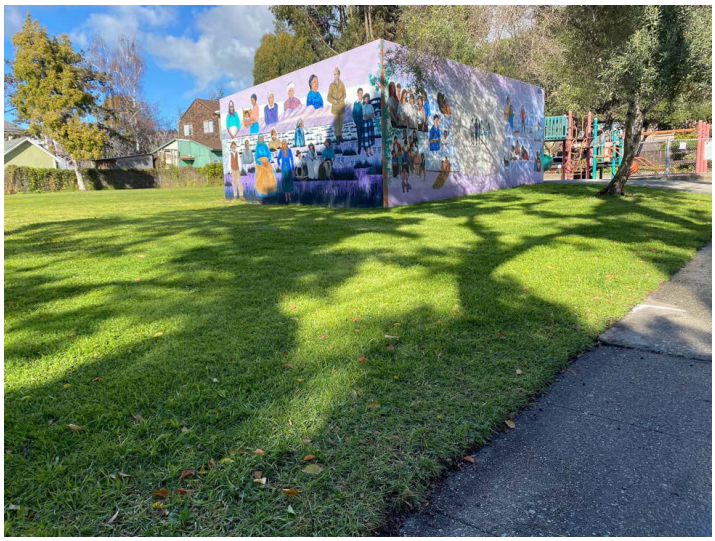


Figure 1. Mural in Ohlone Park (February 2023).

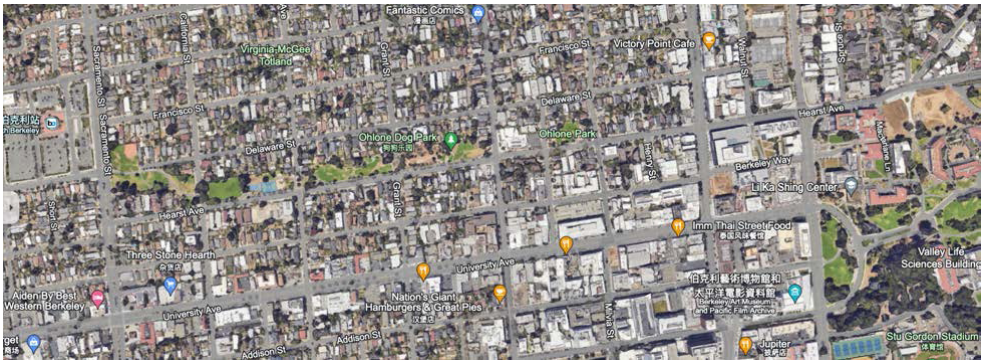


Figure 2. Map of Ohlone Park (from Google Earth). Google Earth, accessed October 14, 2024, https://earth.google.com/web/.

II. Imagined user: accessibility equals checking boxes?

Ohlone Park was built on BART-owned property in the 1970s, next to the current North Berkeley BART Station on Sacramento Street, which is surrounded by private housing. According to the City of Berkeley website, the park is a public space catering to recreational and sports activities, with a playground for school-aged children and an off-leash dog park. The city frames the development history of Ohlone Park to be partially the continuation of People's Park as well as "one of the first dog parks in the country."[3] The naming history of the park is suggested to be a consensus among community members as a symbolic inclusion of the Ohlone people, which is also reflected in the mural by Northern Paiute/Achomawi artist Jean LaMarr on the BART vent in the 1990s (Figure 1).[4] While the city focuses on the contemporary meaning of the park, celebrating the idea of Ohlone culture and the park's function as a community-centered recreational space draws the park away from the history of its establishment—a counterculture experiment of public space.

The City of Berkeley's history of Ohlone Park focuses on the symbolic meaning of the park, but its physical placement demonstrates a power of "what to do where"; that is, a "socially correct" way of moving through space. The park is located on Hearst Avenue, occupying five blocks between Sacramento Street and Milvia Street. While Hearst Avenue composes the Northern border of the UC Berkeley campus, the park itself and its particular strip shape divide the commercial area from the residential units of North Berkeley (Figure 2). That is, two blocks South of the park is University Avenue, which concentrates restaurants, stores, and bus stops; but North of the park is a more residential area with single-family homes. The way in which the strip shape is designed to fit the

3 "Ohlone Park," City of Berkeley, accessed July 20, 2024, https://berkeleyca.gov/community-recreation/parks-recreation/parks/ohlone-park.

4 "Ohlone Park – 50th Anniversary," Friends of Ohlone Park, accessed July 21, 2024, https://ohlone.transbay.net/index.php/50th-anniversary-of-ohlone-park-june-1st/.

Figure 3. Image of regulations in Ohlone Park.

Figure 4. Lane in Ohlone Park (the block of Grant Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Way).

purpose of separation also perpetuates the park being used as an exclusive space, with restrictions in the opening hours and surveillance over who is using the park (Figure 3).

Moreover, from the map we see that Ohlone Park includes multiple usages such as the dog park, basketball field, and children's playground. The park is also connected to Ohlone Greenway, a bike path that goes from Berkeley to El Cerrito. Inside the park, we see a large expanse of grass composed of different species of plants (Figures 4 and 5) and a trail connecting the park from East to West. The connected blocks of park space also form a physical barrier for cars: between Sacramento Street and Martin Luther King Jr Way, the only method of passing the belt of the park from the South to the North is to either bike or walk, as there are simply no car lanes. The way in which the connected blocks of the park shape modes of transportation further emphasizes that the residential area is separate from the commercial center as well as the vehicular traffic. The park foregrounds an illusion of a walkable/bikeable path from downtown Berkeley to the private homes.

The park's design as a form of ordering can further be seen in its spatial layout. Figure 4 is an image taken from the Hearst side of the park. While the grass on the left potentially functions as the park's border, the lawn on the right has a relatively flat surface, suggesting its recreational purpose. The different types of grass here imply specific ways the spaces are intended to be utilized and convey a directory power behind how people interact with this space. That is, the ways in which the park is blocked into lawn and road, dog park and playground, with various fences (such as wire fences or plants) working as an indication of purposeful spaces. The idea of "what to do where" is staged and reinforced through the facilities in the park. The spatial layout in the park simultaneously defines which part of the park is accessible and which is not, as well as presents the ideal ways to move through it. A large portion of the park is divided into two elements: the lane and the lawn, meaning that the user is expected

Figure 5. Close-up of grass in Ohlone Park.

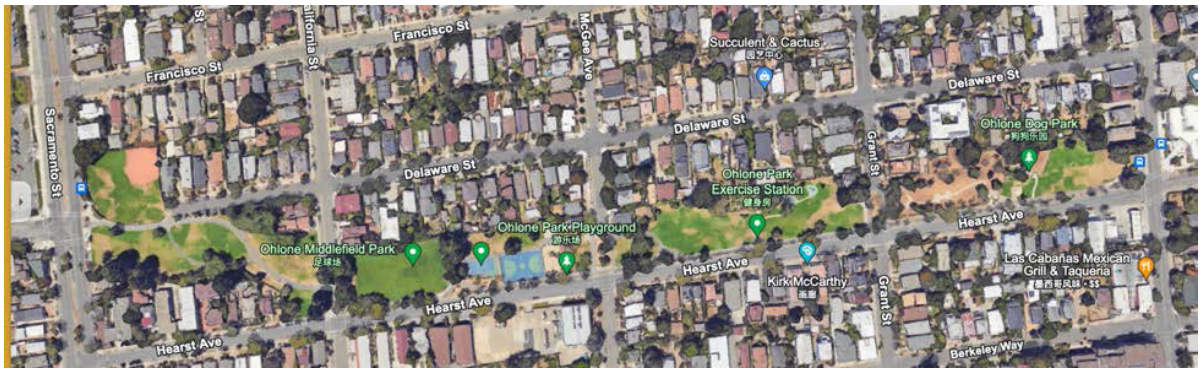


Figure 6. Map of Ohlone Park (from Google Earth). Google Earth, accessed October 14, 2024, https://earth.google.com/web/.

to be on one of these surfaces and observe the other. Hence the way of being in the park is divided into two parts: to move and to observe. Within such logic of designing the park space, the ideal user is also imagined to be an able-bodied person who would move by walking or biking in order to access these two spaces.[5]

The accessibility aspect of Ohlone Park appears to be framed around the goal of fitting into legal requirements, but it is consequently limited in terms of practical usage. In the description of the park on the City of Berkeley website, it is described to include features such as a community garden (which is rarely open), a lawn, a picnic area, walking and biking trails, and wheelchair accessibility.[6] According to the California Building Code, an accessible surface should be "stable, firm and slip resistant," features that are not reflected in the lawns, as the general textures of grass and soil could change due to diverse weather conditions and maintenance procedures.[7] Lawn grass is not a fully accessible surface, and depending on the difference in mobility tools, the unstableness of this surface could result in different layers of issues. The only element that adheres to the accessibility description in the California Building Code is the lane on the side of the park that is closer to Hearst Street, leaving a large area of grass with no concrete road leading to it (Figure 6). Though the park legally meets the requirements of accessibility, the ambiguity of the conditions present in the park does not guarantee its accessibility for visitors.

I further consider the framing of public park accessibility through the idea of legibility. That is, if the park is designed for an ideal type of user's body and ideal ways of being and moving, what particular category of disability is legible for the park planning to provide accessibility, and which specific needs are seen as important enough to be catered for. According to the description on the City of Berkeley website, the physical use of the

5 By the term "able-bodied" I refer to the ideal body type viewed under ableism notions that relate to specifically the ability to perform physical activities.

6 City of Berkeley, "Ohlone Park."

7 "Chapter 11A Housing Accessibility: Housing Accessibility, California Building Code 2022 (Vol 1 & 2)," UpCodes, accessed July 20, 2024, https://up.codes/viewer/california/ca-building-code-2022/chapter/11A/housing-accessibility.

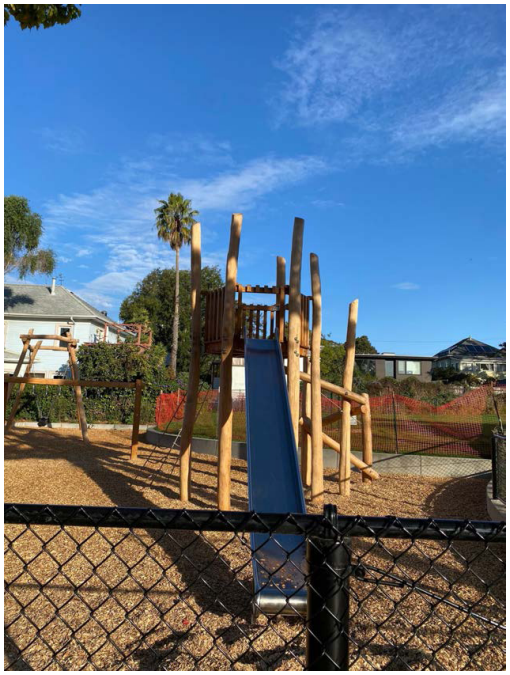


Figure 7. Playground of Ohlone Park (Milvia Street Block).

park only includes walking and biking access.[8] It remains unclear whether diversified needs in interacting with the park are actively present in the decisions of where to plant grass or where to lay concrete paths. The website emphasizes the park's importance of being a controlled public area for people to walk around in and for children to play in. How the body of the user is imagined to move in the park is reflected in the design of the space and feeds back into how this park is used. For instance, Figure 7 shows one of the playground facilities in the park. To use the slide, the user needs to be able to climb on either side of the ladder. The equipment itself requires active climbing to engage with it, and the wood mulch on the ground prevents the majority of wheeled tools from accessing most of the playground.

The current recreational facilities in Ohlone Park demonstrate a normalization of able-bodiedness in its imagined usages as well as fail to recognize differently-abled users in the park. The early planning documents of the park indicate that wheelchair-accessible exercise stations were considered in the original design (Figure 8).[9] While it is clear that an accessible exercise station was ultimately excluded, Ordinance 5303 fails to address what fostered this change of plan. The deduction of physical access facilities in the park space as a form of invisibility reflects the way the constitution of the park carries certain notions of ableism: accessibility in the park becomes less prioritized once the bare minimum is achieved (the wheelchair-accessible path). The contrast between the advertisement of the park and its physical spatial layout indicates that the idealized user to access the park is an able-bodied person, someone who can walk or bike.

III. People's Park Annex: the question of accessibility as who gets to be where

While the current landscape of the park indicates an attempt to separate differently-purposed urban areas, the historical connection between Ohlone Park and People's Park poses the question of accessibility in terms of the availability of public space. People's Park is a block of land south of the UC Berkeley campus. The UC "acquired the site through eminent domain in 1967" and "quickly demolished the houses on the property" despite a funding shortage for building the intended dormitory.[10,11] In 1969, "an alliance of students, community activists, and local merchants" claimed this block of land intending to create "a user-controlled park in the midst of a highly

8 City of Berkeley, "Ohlone Park."
9 "Ordinance No. 5303-N.S," City of Berkeley, December 9, 1980, https://berkeley.municipal.codes/enactments/Ord5303-NS.
10 Don Mitchell, "The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy," in *Common Ground?: Readings and Reflections on Public Space*, ed. Anthony Orum and Zachary Neal (Routledge, 2010), 83.
11 Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?" 83.

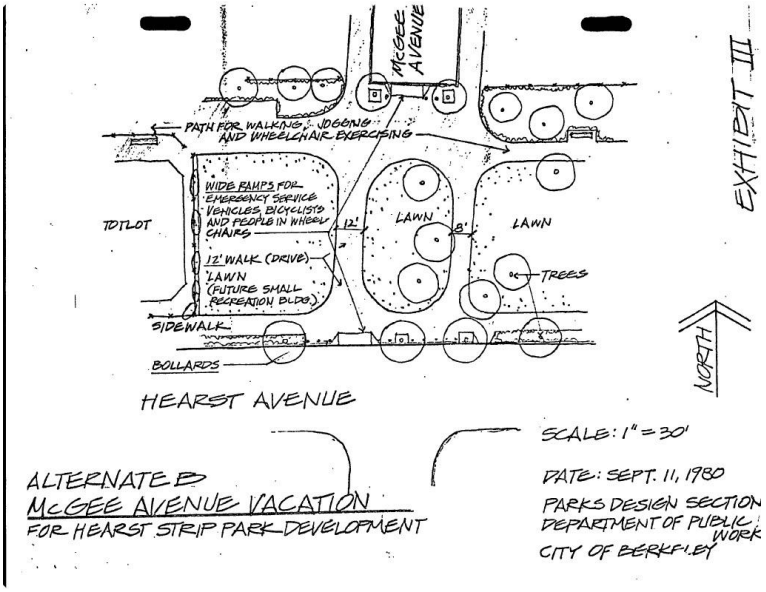


Figure 8. Planning document of Ohlone Park Grant Street intersection. "Ordinance No. 5303-N.S," Berkeley City Council, December 9, 1980, https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AUmzKoG1a5U73CN3olphir0q8tB3OsAbCFnYYoIXKR4ocnYxQObnPP40c%C3%89QwbmTUQHmMgMud7gqB7wcLanph9Zs%3D/.

urbanized area" that would host people excluded from the "fully regulated urban environment."[12,13,14] It was "a small unalienated space within a city as a whole defined by alienations" and an "open community-controlled political space."[15,16] The construction of People's Park has symbolic meanings and encompasses acts such as anti-policing, enacting collective student will and, more importantly, building a space for and of its residents and surrounding communities. The park signifies discourses between the university trying to establish its authority and park builders and activists trying to maintain a space available for political gatherings and expressions. Through 1969 and the 1970s, People's Park remained an object of conflict. It was fenced off by the university proposing building housing, which activists resisted. Around the 1980s, the park gradually became a space for hosting unhoused people, seen as "a zone of danger and trouble" by the student body and the general public.[17] The conflict and tension between People's Park as a public space and the "ordered" university land persisted into the next century. In early 2024, People's Park was closed off for further construction by the university in collaboration with the police force during the university's winter break. The construction site has been guarded and monitored since.[18]

The complexity of People's Park in contrast to the current state of Ohlone Park connects the question of accessibility with the right of public expression. However, the development history of Ohlone Park suggests an attempt to foreground an imagination of public order and an erasure of its radical history as the People's Park Annex that remains relevant today. In 1969, after People's Park was fenced off by the UC, activists and park supporters started planting and setting up playground equipment on the empty lot of BART property on Hearst Street and Grant Avenue.[19] The area then became People's Park #2, or People's Park Annex (Figure 9). On May 29th, park supporters built a baseball field and other facilities in People's Park Annex and used it as a preparation station for marches against the fencing and demolishing of People's Park (Figure 10). In the annex, supporters demanded, "THE PEOPLE'S PARK MUST BE RETURNED TO THE PEOPLE."[20] The connection between People's Park,

12 Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?" 83.
13 Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?" 83.
14 Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?" 83.
15 Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (Guilford Press, 2003), 7.
16 Mitchell, *The Right to the City*, 108.
17 Mitchell, *The Right to the City*, 114.
18 As of December 2024.
19 Steve Duscha and Joe Pichirallo, "New Park Thrives Today: Picketing, March to Provo," *The Daily Californian*, May 26, 1969, 1.
20 Gerry Boss, "Marchers Prepare with Party," *The Daily Californian*, May 30, 1969, 2


ple from across the state to participate.
Reagan said Berkeley area officials, law officers and University
governor replied, "Yes."
A spokesman for the Park forces said last night that no force would be used against the
tions near the end of a heated three-hour debate on the matter indicated the Senate's desire that
—Photo by R. T. SAMMONS
PEOPLE'S PARK #2 . . . began Sunday and is still being developed.

Figure 9. Screenshot from *The Daily Californian*, May 26, 1969. Steve Duscha and Joe Pichirallo, "New Park Thrives Today: Picketing, March to Provo," *The Daily Californian*, May 26, 1969.

People's Park Annex (Ohlone Park), and political activism does not stop at the origin stories but continues to active usage. In 1969, People's Park Annex was constantly used as a space for public expression, with rally paths either from Lower Sproul Plaza to People's Park Annex or People's Park to the Annex.[2122] However, People's Park Annex in the end was not necessarily returned to the people but constructed as an ordered public space. In the City of Berkeley council meeting on June 3rd, 1969, a group of Hearst Street residents and committee members of the People's Park Annex discussed the political activities in the Annex and the future of the area. Although the Annex was originally part of the plan to widen Hearst Avenue, the meeting eventually landed on a public study session regarding the building of the Annex as a user-generated park.[23] From then on, People's Park Annex started to merge with the vision of public space that remains controlled and censored.

The accessibility of Ohlone Park is framed under the idea of a post-activist order. That is, while the usage of the land as a park follows the radical urban design that People's Park initiates, the current version of Ohlone Park is a reflection of ordered public life, the direct opposite of People's Park. In an article called "The Limits of Counterculture Urbanism: Utopian Planning and Practical Politics in Berkeley, 1969–73," Raynsford discusses how the radical urban culture that People's Park represents, or its "alternative planning," is not marked solely by events concerning it but also the places built in its legacy.[24] Following the creation of People's Park, a form of counterculture architecture and "radical urbanism" emerged in other places.[25] Defining Ohlone Park as an initial attempt at counterculture urban planning following People's Park, Raynsford discusses how this plan adopts "a kind of variegated infill" (the large expanse of lawn) into the existing urban infrastructure to challenge the conventional sense of zoning and making grids and how there is an abstraction in terms of borders in a differently purposed space.[26]

In terms of Ohlone Park's purpose of anti-gentrification and experimenting with radical urban planning, Raynsford specifically discusses a group called "People's Architecture" and their function in developing Ohlone Park as a multi-purpose greenspace. An article published in the *Berkeley Tribe* (a radical newspaper published in Berkeley from 1969 to 1972) in 1969 briefly summarizes the processes of the council meetings regarding the

21 "March Today: Peace Hopes," *The Daily Californian*. May 30, 1969, 1.
22 "Moratorium Schedule," *The Daily Californian*, October 15, 1969, 10.
23 "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council," Berkeley City Council, June 3, 1969, https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AYxnWMMzOPXn%C3%89jxXp82Fn1V3aTFWD30x1wGAVEjWP88Vgzjn23yxfiiTm0QQqF3JMitI6%C3%89laH5elruGD3GW5zOs%3D/.
24 Anthony Raynsford, "The Limits of Counterculture Urbanism: Utopian Planning and Practical Politics in Berkeley, 1969–73," *Journal of Planning History* 23, no.1 (2023): 52, https://doi.org/10.1177/15385132231193389.
25 Raynsford, "The Limits of Counterculture Urbanism," 51.
26 Raynsford, "The Limits of Counterculture Urbanism," 57.

Figure 10. Screenshot from *The Daily Californian*, May 30, 1969. Gerry Boss, "Marchers Prepare with Party," *The Daily Californian*, May 30, 1969.

future schemes for the park: while People's Architecture was attempting to put forward an idea for the park, the presentation meeting had "consistently been scheduled last and then put off."[27] In the article, the construction of the park is discussed as a counter strategy to "a jungle of garages and high-rise apartments."[28] This proposal was not supported by the Redevelopment Commission, and the article calls for support in pushing forward the plan for the park. The design included in the *Berkeley Tribe* has multiple similarities with the current Ohlone Park, particularly the placement of the lanes (Figure 11). The current-day Ohlone Park takes shape largely according to the decision of a neighborhood organization called the North Berkeley Council:

> In 1970, the neighborhood council drew up a land-use proposal for the strip that included open space, child-care facilities, low-cost housing and a senior citizen's center. It was considered by the City Council along with the council's proposal for a four-lane street and the planning commission's suggestion that bicycle lanes be created on Hearst Avenue.[29]

Although the current park space adopts these facilities to a certain level, the land use proposal of an open public greenspace as a counter-strategy to gentrification indicates a sense of reconstructing an accessible urban environment. This definition of public space follows the People's Park model of reimagining collectiveness in the existing capitalist framework.

While the emergence of Ohlone Park relates back to the adaptation of counterculture architecture and radical urban planning, the contemporary usage of the park is a memorialization of this history and a promotion of the sense of ordered public space. While Ohlone Park originated as People's Park Annex, the name of the Annex did not last: "At first known as the Hearst Strip Park, residents debated other names, including "Everybody's Park," until consensus formed around Ohlone Park."[30] The name "Ohlone Park" was confirmed in 1981.[31] Presently, Ohlone Park is known as a dog park, the "nice and peaceful" community space, in contrast to its predecessor People's Park, an "unwanted" space hosting unhoused people. While People's Park is described as a "failed" initiative, Ohlone Park is a "successful" example of how neighborhood participation in spatial development

27 A.T. et al., "Berkeley Tribe," *Berkeley Tribe* 1, no. 22 (December 5, 1969), https://jstor.org/stable/community.28033775, 17.
28 A.T. et al., "Berkeley Tribe," 17.
29 Kate Gallagher, "1969–1982: The Annex Grows Up," *The Daily Californian*, May 14, 1982, 17.
30 The City of Berkeley, "Ohlone Park."
31 "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council," Berkeley City Council, March 17, 1981, https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AU0KHkt%C3%81dqnzqMGI7xtOA6gz1mWlnCJdtYCp9CQTF%C3%81JC5eHAR6oXpVxAlTumbFJ%C3%817pM0aBy7yrM%C3%81hlqlSgE7bro%3D/.

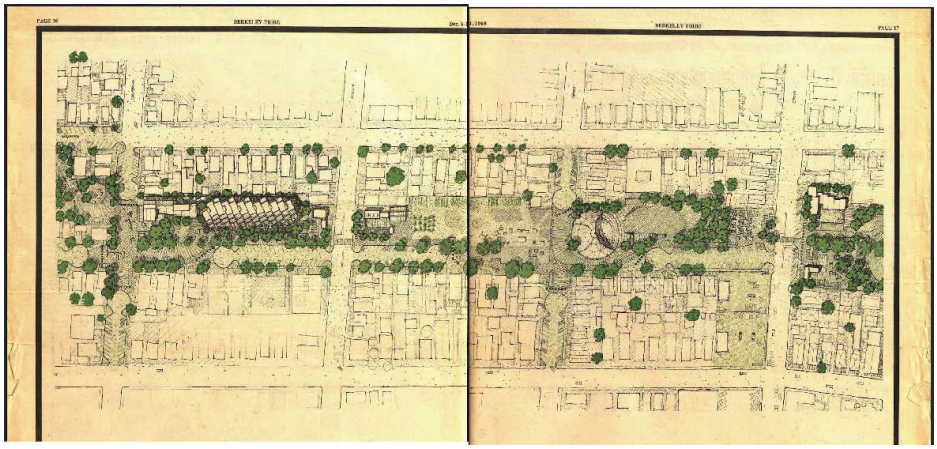


Figure 11. Plan of Ohlone Park from *Berkeley Tribe*. A.T., J.B., Jj, et al., "Berkeley Tribe," *Berkeley Tribe* 1, no. 22 (December 5, 1969): 16–17, https://jstor.org/stable/community.28033775.

produces a so-called ideal park space. The North Berkeley Council published the final plan for Ohlone Park in their 1978 newsletter with an article called "Two 'People's Parks': A Historical Sketch."[32] The juxtaposition of Ohlone Park and People's Park reinforces a restoration of a particular sense of governmental and state order and marks an end of Ohlone Park being the continuation of the countercultural activism represented by People's Park.

While the name Ohlone Park is a gesture of recognizing Indigenous presence, such naming history diverted attention from memorializing the legacy of the park's purpose as alternative planning and advocacy for anti-gentrification. The changing of the name "People's Park Annex," in a way, put Ohlone Park's connection with People's Park in the past. The memorialization of the radical *past* can also be seen in the developing plans of these two parks, whether the plan of building student/commercial/transitional housing in People's Park, or the transitioning of Ohlone Park from an anti-gentrification public space to a multi-purpose community garden catering towards families with small children (the playground) and dog owners. From an article about the 50th anniversary of Ohlone Park by "Friends of Ohlone Park," the future of the park is perceived as a site honoring Indigenous culture and heritage:

> Monica Arrellano, vice chair of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Council, opened the mural rededication with a prayer in Chochenyo, and nineteen tribal members sang a song in the original language of the East Bay. Mayor Jesse Arreguin spoke about Berkeley's Native heritage and the importance of traditional ecological knowledge for the future. And artist Jean LaMarr told the audience that an art garden with indigenous plants will be created around the mural in the near future.[33,34]

Here we see a large emphasis on the park as a space for revitalizing Indigenous knowledge and practices, its future framed to care for decolonial space making, in particular with an Indigenous plant garden. The homepage of "Friends of Ohlone Park" discusses the renovation of a native plant garden in the park and how the park can serve multiple community-based purposes, which is indicated particularly in the more recent renovations on the Milvia block.[35] A planning map included here also provides a detailed visualization of how the Milvia block of the park would be renovated with a playground and different facilities like drinking fountains and benches (Figure 12).[36] The native plant garden and children's playground emphasize removing the vision of Ohlone Park from the discourses and struggles of People's Park. People's Park Annex can only exist in the story of the 50th anniversary.

The park land is not indigenously-owned or planned, and the majority of it is still covered by lawn grass instead of native plants. The recognition of Indigenous existence and culture in the park changes neither the ownership of the parkland nor the usage of the majority of the park space. Moreover, the article from "Friends of

32 Alex Nicoloff, "Two 'People's Parks': A Historical Sketch," Berkeley Historical Society, 1978.
33 A citizen initiative that participates in maintaining and decision making regarding Ohlone Park.
34 Friends of Ohlone Park, "Ohlone Park – 50th Anniversary."
35 "Home," Friends of Ohlone Park, accessed July 21, 2024, https://ohlone.transbay.net/.
36 Department of Parks, Recreation and Waterfront, *Ohlone Park East Improvement* (City of Berkeley, October 3, 2022).

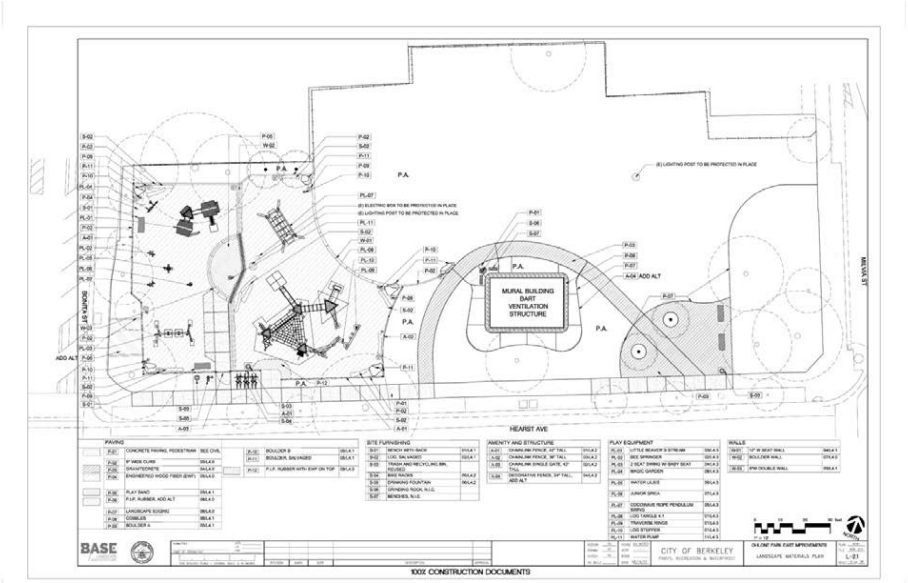


Figure 12. Renovation plan of the Milvia Street Block. Department of Parks, Recreation and Waterfront, *Ohlone Park East Improvement*, City of Berkeley, October 3, 2022.

Ohlone Park" includes several documents, including the early plan from People's Architecture for Ohlone Park and digitized video footage regarding the start of People's Park Annex in 1969.[37] Presenting these documents as legacies of the park perpetuates the idea that the history of activism, as well as the engagement with People's Park struggles, is in the past, and that the multi-purposing of the space creates boundaries of who gets to use this space.

Furthermore, the speculative planning of a multipurpose community park does not change the park's function as an exclusive space. On the one hand, the strip shape of the park creates a barrier between the areas of downtown Berkeley, the Eastern side of the university campus, and the residential areas. On the other hand, how Ohlone Park is maintained is closely related to the exclusion of encampments: a page on "Friends of Ohlone Park" includes detailed methods of how to contact the city of Berkeley regarding encampments and why the park space does not open for people to stay overnight.[38] The park is ordered and managed to eliminate encampment, demonstrating the sense that the park is a public space available only for a selected group of people, in contrast to People's Park prior to 2024.

That said, the connection between Ohlone Park and People's Park has never disappeared. In "The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy," Mitchell cites a resident Virginia's reaction to the UC's plan of making the area of People's Park a student recreational facility: "It's only a matter of time before they start limiting the people able to come here to college kids with an ID."[39] Unfortunately, this statement did not remain a dystopian imagination. Towards the end of winter break at the start of 2024, I received a WarnMe email (community advisory email to private emails with @berkeley.edu from UCPD) indicating that a few blocks surrounding People's Park would be closed for construction in the park.[40] The email included links to a newspaper article describing a vision for the People's Park construction site and called the protesting activities regarding the usage of the park "unlawful."[41] The article also contained an update on the progress of the construction site, from which we learn that the blocking process lasted six days.[42] Moreover, an email from UC Berkeley's Division of Student Affairs sent on January 6th, 2024 indicated that residents in the student housing

37 Friends of Ohlone Park, "Ohlone Park – 50th Anniversary."

38 "How to Contact the City," Friends of Ohlone Park, accessed July 22, 2024, https://ohlone.transbay.net/index.php/how-to-contact-the-city/.

39 Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?" 85.

40 UC Berkeley WarnMe, email, 2024.

41 Gretchen Kell, "UC Berkeley launches closure of People's Park construction site," *UC Berkeley News*, January 3, 2024, https://news.berkeley.edu/2024/01/03/uc-berkeley-launches-closure-of-peoples-park-construction-site.

42 Public Affairs, "Updates on People's Park construction," *UC Berkeley News*, January 10, 2024, https://news.berkeley.edu/2024/01/10/live-updates-on-people-s-park-construction.

Figure 13. Photo of People's Park (February 2024).

around the park would have to show student IDs to enter the checkpoints.[43] People's Park was then blocked on all sides with double-layered cargo containers. On February 1st, 2024, almost a month after the start of the blocking, the cargo containers remained in the surroundings of the park and there was still at least one guarding station (Figure 13). But the influence of People's Park reaches beyond the border marked by containers.

Increased encampments could be observed in Ohlone Park at least half a month (and more) after the start of construction on People's Park, particularly around the East and West edges of the park. Such observation provokes questions regarding the connection between Ohlone Park and People's Park. How might these greenspaces, almost a mile away from each other, be related through the question of "who gets to be where?" This is also the question that frames Ohlone Park as a public space: "who gets to be where" is not only a question about encampment, order, and policing, but a form of power exertion around space, body, and ability. In the case of Ohlone Park, the right to the city is not only who can access where, but also which places can be accessed, and what should be considered accessible. The question of urban greenspace accessibility in the case of Ohlone Park is not only about "who can be where," but also "who is expected to be where."

IV. Legibility of disability: who gets to say and who gets to be

Analyzing how a particular understanding of accessibility needs, independent living, and presence of people with disabilities are expressed in the park, Ohlone Park emerges as an exclusive public space. The question, "who can be in Ohlone Park," is, on the one hand, about catering towards an idealization of controlled public space users. On the other hand, accessibility of the park is about how the able-bodied norm clashes with diverse needs. The key term I will be using in this section is "legibility of disability." This framework allows me to ask at what point categorizations become insufficient in representing everyday experiences and how experiences become a form of resistance that react and feed back to categories and planning strategies. This section questions what it means, socio-politically, to consider the variety and complexity of accessible needs in public spaces, and what it means to recognize experience-based spatialities in approaching urban greenspace. Through theorizing "legibility of disability," I emphasize the categorization of disabilities and disability needs and whether they are taken into account in designing parks. In the case of Ohlone Park, the need for recognition that disability includes more than just bodily features divergent from the able-bodied norm is apparent, meaning that disability needs must be met with more than a singular wheelchair ramp added to the otherwise inaccessible space.

43 UC Berkeley Division of Student Affairs, email, 2024.

The regulatory design of the built environment restricts the needs of access to the dualistic framework of the public and the private. To theorize the relation between the socio-ideological perceptions of disability and how they are reflected in legislation and regulations, I refer to Rob Imrie's critique on the built environment and disablism (the making of disability). I build from his *Disability and the City: International Perspectives* in my analysis of how questions of mobility in the design of public space perpetuate the marginalization of disabled bodies. Imrie connects the attitudes towards the concept of disability, the reinforcement of disablism, and the built environment. He argues that the assumption of the built environment as catering to the need of the "majority" perpetuates the question of accessibility to be limited to the realm of individual responsibility.[44] Yet the built environment adopts and reinforces the socio-politically constructed discriminations, inequalities, and struggles, so the idea of the majority can never represent the diversified users. The dualism of public and private space further perpetuates disability access and needs being defined as personal and private: "the advent of the special institution, of segregated spaces to deal with the 'peculiarities' of the disabled, precipitated spatial markers which somehow set them apart, socially estranged and outside the mainstream of society, effectively ghettoized."[45] Here, Imrie argues that the notion of accessibility needs as occurring in private spaces (opposed to that of the public in terms of ownership and on a personal level) perpetuates the marginalization of people with disabilities. This notion then shapes the design of the built environment; for example, in the case of wheelchair accessible design, some buildings have stairs leading to the main entrance and ramps in the back.[46] Imrie frames this phenomenon as the issue of mobility and indicates that the design features that provide certain conditions of mobility, in fact, shape the bodily mobility of wheelchair users as "constrained, channeled, even denied."[47]

In Ohlone Park, we can clearly see this sense of directed accessibility, with the concrete lane going around the edge and through the lawn. Arguably, Ohlone Park is wheelchair accessible in the sense that to enter and explore the park, the visitor could drive the wheelchair on the concrete lane. Its lack of accessibility, however, is in the fact that this lane is the only wheelchair accessible feature of the park. Mobility in Ohlone Park is further limited not only by how the park is designed, but also by the very definition of disabled bodies.

The planning history of Ohlone Park demonstrates an explicit focus on building the park as a space catering to walkers and bikers and as an alternative to widening Hearst Street. Under this vision, disability legibility appears to be considered primarily under these two framing ways of usage. On June 3rd, 1969, the city council decided to hear the voices of community members in their regular meeting, during which multiple residents expressed their negative opinions towards the ongoing activism activities. One resident asked the city to accept the lease from BART for the area of the Annex to build a public community space, while the then-president mentioned a plan of widening Hearst Street instead.[48] On June 17th, 1969, a recommendation was made to lease the area of People's Park Annex for "continued development as a citizen-planned and built neighborhood park."[49] December 9th, 1969, the city council meeting reviewed the possibility of and opposition to widening Hearst Street, which was followed by a proposal of a year to search for the alternatives.[50] In 1978, the grant application for construction of Hearst Strip Park (the current Ohlone Park) was submitted by the City of Berkeley.[51] The resolution approving the design

---

44 Robert Imrie, *Disability and the City: International Perspectives* (St. Martin's Press, 2022), 15.

45 Imrie, *Disability and the City*, 15.

46 Imrie, *Disability and the City*, 19.

47 Imrie, *Disability and the City*, 18.

48 Berkeley City Council, "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council," June 3, 1969.

49 "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council," Berkeley City Council, June 17, 1969, https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/ARmNH24oKtu9oJeNJvwd8LpFgIbh6tOuteCWXRX0rkehqRFtaplObiQSa9lTwOb%C3%89MDnPY3djxA6tss24CFvVxDc%3D/.

50 "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council," Berkeley City Council, December 9, 1969, https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AblfhjNHypRE7Z2LBvoqXEERSEUvec1s9S5C6dNqrk1GzLzb99bwvkUzF0qZtdlqM3f7Ayg757XwGR2vvGmDAik%3D/.

51 "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council," Berkeley City Council, September 12, 1978, https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/ARR8c2S%C3%89wLtGeQjpsppVMQOCKddSrGUqecSjXahgiZcy4y1QXlJzhPRp7TUEtFAV0wtWTlMIxZ8cSwuJv%C3%89U0ewo%3D/.

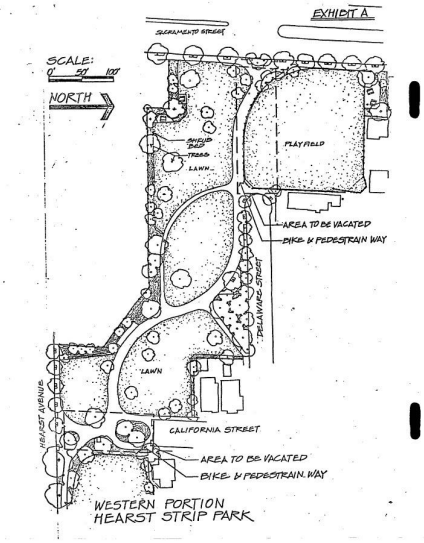


Figure 14. Plan for Ohlone Park (Sacramento-California block). "Ordinance No. 5202-N.S.," Berkeley City Council, October 23, 1979, https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AZ0IXkj3JLKJf%C3%89bc3RQ6%C3%89qrHVy9TPX135mdOYoGym2CJvk1SuGpGRqRxIrED1f4xmN9bK%C3%81kBP5Uwi0lcDdy8vnA%3D/.

of Ohlone Park was made by the city government in January, 1979.[52] In October, 1979, a portion of the block of Delaware Street and California Street was mentioned in an ordinance to be vacated and built into the Hearst Strip Park. The ordinance mentions that the use of this block by pedestrians and cyclists is constant and necessary, and the streets will be kept as such.[53] The document also includes a proposed map of the West of Ohlone Park (Figure 14). The lanes are specified for pedestrian and bike use, indicating that the proposed wheelchair accessible path is the same one as the bike lane, and that the model of the lane-lawn combination is prescribed from the beginning.

The way wheelchair access in Ohlone Park is designed in tangent with the bike lanes can also be seen in the initial planning documents.[54,55] The recommended design for the block of Grant Street in Ohlone Park indicates that the ramps and lanes proposed for wheelchairs are simultaneously used for bikes (Figure 15). Although the documents of the planning decisions do not tell us the exact logic behind the current spatial layout of Ohlone Park, we know that the wheelchair access to the park is added upon the design provided by People's Architecture, which proposed the large portion of lawn with small lanes going through it (Figure 11). The initial planning of Ohlone Park, therefore, assumes the mobility of wheelchairs solely on the proposed lanes and ramps. The focus of the planning document on bikeability and its lack of consideration of more holistic wheelchair access suggest not only the limited legibility of needs but also how the planning process prioritizes the imagined majority: the biker and the walker. Considering Ohlone Park from the perspective of built environment and legibility of disability, the question of building mobility in the park is also that of "who gets to decide and who gets to do what."

V. Wandering in nature: crip spatiality and the ideal

In the previous sections I focus on the historical and socio-political functions and significance of Ohlone Park. Here, I examine the deeper ideological connotation of spacious greenness as well as the framed mode of movement in the park. I theorize the awareness of disabled bodies in an able-ized space through the terms "crip spatiality" and

52 "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council," Berkeley City Council, January 23, 1979, https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AUpwfHttxnkn6UifRJ1K287grc9%C3%89UMDklEemMm%C3%89l0%C3%81Tcy3dFmOCd8puFj%C3%891UUcpjqZhcuXsiXg%C3%81909fdb%C3%81cmXvg%3D/.

53 "Ordinance No. 5202-N.S," Berkeley City Council, October 23, 1979, https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AZ0IXkj3JLKJf%C3%89bc3RQ6%C3%89qrHVy9TPX135mdOYoGym2CJvk1SuGpGRqRxIrED1f4xmN9bK%C3%81kBP5Uwi0lcDdy8vnA%3D/.

54 City of Berkeley, "Ordinance No. 5303-N.S."

55 "Ordinance No. 5308-N.S," City of Berkeley, December 9, 1980, https://berkeley.municipal.codes/enactments/Ord5308-NS.

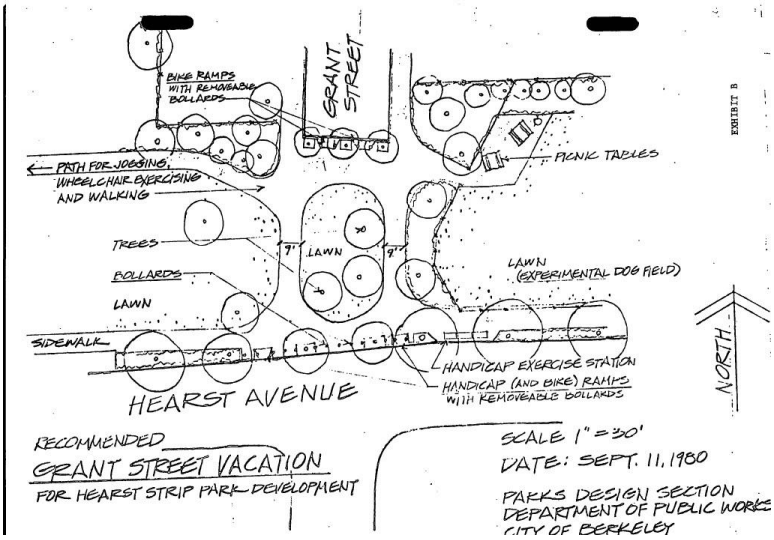


Figure 15. Recommended plan for Grant Street intersection. "Ordinance No. 5303-N.S.," Berkeley City Council, December 9, 1980, https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AUmzKoG1a5U73CN3olphir0q8tB3OsAbCFnYYoIXKR4ocnYxQObnPP40c%C3%89QwbmTUQHmMgMud7gqB7wcLanph9Zs%3D/.

the troubling of nature as a built concept. With "crip spatiality," I emphasize how people with disabilities move through, build relationships with, navigate, and create knowledge of particular spaces. I consider the recognition of crip spatiality as a way of resisting and countering the taken-for-granted planning strategies that prioritize able-bodied needs. The normalization of able-ized spaces also feeds back to the imagination of users in the spaces, producing a gaze associated with the regulatory power constructed with and through the space. This term hence helps me examine the specific dynamic between bodies, constructed gaze, models of movement, and the design of urban spaces. The dichotomy of nature and culture prevails in the built environment and is not unique to Ohlone Park today, but can trace back to writings about exploring wilderness or the historical construction of parks in the U.S. However, in Ohlone Park, the division between "nature" and "culture" becomes hyper-visible through the elements of lane and turf. The imagination of bodies and movement is, then, further shaped by what is associated with such visibility—the idealized able-bodied walker/biker interacting with parks and lawns through observation and direct participation.

The invention of a dualistic notion of "nature" is associated with not only the idealization of an able-bodied explorer, but also a particular model of moving. This dynamic of space and experience can be seen in the cultural meanings of gardens and parks. Classic literature about the act of walking, the making of the everyday experience, and the production of "natural" spaces reinforces the imagination of walking in an urban park as an idealized form of moving. In Henry Thoreau's essay "Walking," he describes the action of walking in "nature," or spending time outdoors, as necessary leisure, associating "nature" and exploration, or interaction with "nature," with the idea of freedom. However, the ideas Thoreau presents about spending time outdoors are largely elitist. The body that explores "nature" in Thoreau's essay signals the imagination of an able-bodied masculine figure who can spend a significant amount of time outdoors without having to worry about chores or work. Thoreau proposes a vision of moving "freely" in the "wilderness" and a way of living that constantly contains the opportunity to walk and to explore:

> I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least—and it is commonly more than that—sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements. You may safely say, A penny for your thoughts, or a thousand pounds. When sometimes I am reminded that the mechanics and shopkeepers stay in their shops not only all the forenoon, but all the afternoon too, sitting with crossed legs, so many of them,—as if the legs were made to sit upon, and not to stand or walk upon,—I think that they deserve some credit for not having all committed suicide long ago.[56]

56 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (Modern Library, 1992).

Here we see how Thoreau criticizes the idea of engaging in life and space without moving, but his critique comes from a perspective that overlooks the positions of people who do not adopt his way of "wandering in wilderness." Thoreau's wandering in "nature" is further associated with his stability in financial status, time available to spend, and access to space. Hence the imagined user in Thoreau's description is a figure pictured via able-bodied ideologies, privileging walking as a normalized way of being.

Thoreau also proposes a model of how the space of "nature" or "wilderness" can be interpreted and interacted with: the ways in which a space is understood and performed is through gaze, or observation.

> Two or three hours' walking will carry me to as strange a country as I expect ever to see . . . . I saw the fences half consumed, their ends lost in the middle of the prairie, and some worldly miser with a surveyor looking after his bounds, while heaven had taken place around him, and he did not see the angels going to and fro, but was looking for an old post-hole in the midst of paradise.[57]

Here we see a description of the experience of walking in "wilderness" from Thoreau's perspective: the activity of wandering in "nature" is not just about the action of walking, but about being able to gaze at the landscape. He proposes a model of interacting with the space through both walking and seeing. This model inherits an ableist vision: the body walking in wilderness in Thoreau's vision is defaulted to be someone who *is able to* walk and look. In Thoreau's depiction, the body of the user is not the major focus of his idea of being in the "wilderness." However, his prioritization of the movement of walking as well as the action of looking, in a way, perpetuates his vision of an able-bodied walker navigating the "wilderness" while excluding any alternatives.

While Thoreau depicts the sense of interacting with "nature" through gaze and walking, this imagination (of the space and of the user) influences how urban greenspace is shaped and understood, as well as who becomes the primary imagined user of these spaces. The idea of "wilderness" for Thoreau is essential in conceptualizing the relationship between movement and observation. In the chapter "The Arc of Desolation and the Array of Description," Edward Casey discusses the idea of being in "wilderness" as placing bodies in the mode of observation. Casey indicates that the body's movements contain an orientational dynamic of "to be here" and "to be there."[58] Hence, in terms of exploring "wilderness," there is an implied idea that "to walk is to gaze"; that is, the ways in which we experience (and construct) elements of "nature" in the built environment is through the imagination of "nature" being the object of observation. While "wilderness" is a space that is oftentimes characterized to be separated, whether geo-spatially or ideologically, from the idea of "culture" or the lived space, it is and remains to be part of the built environment. The urban greenspaces, such as parks and lawns, are more explicitly built-spaces that also contain the idea of "nature" as an object to be gazed upon. The construction of "nature" simultaneously creates distance between the space and the observer, reinforcing a dynamic of "I'm here, and the wilderness is there."

Simulating the experience of being in the "wilderness," Ohlone Park is built upon the idealization of having predominantly able-bodied users of the park. Such idealization is perpetuated through the construction of the vision towards, as well as, the empirical distance from open space with the lanes, the lawn, and the benches. According to the map of Ohlone Park, the park is belted by the singular lane, particularly around the blocks between California Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way (Figure 6). This design programs the user to the action of looking: one either stays on the lane and looks at the lawn or vice versa. Such vision is perpetuated by the placement of benches facing the lawn (Figure 16). While the space of the park is closely associated with the function of vision in forming the recreational experience, this particular form of association, in combination with the imagined idea of "nature," persists in the historical construction of gardens and greenspaces. In the late 1800s, American parks were derived "from an anti-urban ideal that dwelt on the traditional prescription for relief from the evils of the city–to escape to the country. The new American parks thus were conceived as great pleasure

57 Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, 632–633.

58 Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Indiana University Press, 2009), 185–226.

Figure 16. Photo of Ohlone Park.

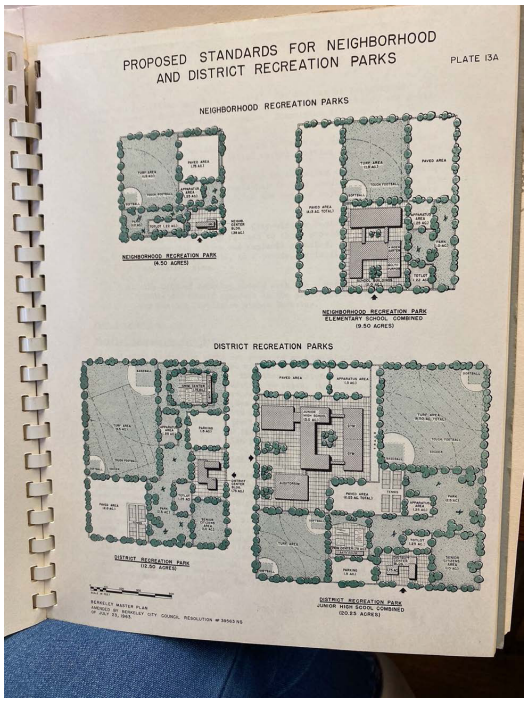
grounds meant to be pieces of the country, with fresh air, meadows, lakes, and sunshine right in the city."[59] The way in which the notion of "escaping to the country" is structured onto the park space, with elements of "nature," is exactly what Ohlone Park means to Berkeley residents: an escape from the chaos of the commercial side of the city, as well as an image of what a park in American urban living looks like.

Furthermore, the space of the park itself is a demonstration of how "culture" orders "nature." Specifically, the elements that differentiate a park from other forms of urban greenspace are the definitive items that represent the imagination of "nature." For instance, as Cranz summarizes in the socio-historical analysis of parks in the U.S., "mowed grass was basic to the pleasure ground. An urban park should provide an antithesis to bustling, paved, rectangular street blocks; this requirement would best be met by a large, open, tranquil meadow-like park."[60] While the motivation behind the use of lawn grass remains unclear, one can see how the park planning scheme not only includes, but also regulates the use of grass: the Berkeley Master Plan from 1966 contains a section about standards for regional and neighborhood recreational parks, including models of various scales and sizes of each area (Figure 17).[61]

While urban parks are intended to function as contrasting to the gridded city landscape, they often perpetuate the idea of ordered space. This phenomenon can be traced back to the construction of neighborhood parks in the early 1900s in San Francisco. The 1966 general plan provides a map of parks in Berkeley, where the present-day Ohlone Park is defined as a neighborhood recreational park (Figure 18). Neighborhood parks are built around the idea of the street as an active playground for children, quiet and potentially closed-off.[62] Regulating the users of the parks, neighborhood parks remain as ordered public spaces. According to Cranz, reform parks in the early 1900s in San Francisco held a few modeled elements: playgrounds, multipurpose exercising/gym facilities, and outdoor as well as indoor plants. These elements along with others further push the park users to conform to designated ways of being in the park: "paths and roadways were minimized to save space for games and direct use. . . . No illusion of more space than existed was called for, nor were the kinesthetic experiences of moving paths sought after. If anything, the pedestrian was offered a central, and axial array."[63] Cranz also mentions the way in which differently purposed areas in reform parks were fenced in to create specialized areas. Wire mesh fencing specifically, introduced as preventing baseballs, survives until today from the 1920s (Figure 19).

Ohlone Park's function as an ordered urban space is, therefore, a continuation and combination of the idealized user, dualistic notion of "nature," and controlled public greenspace, thus suggesting a particular imagination of urban living. These imaginations created primarily through park facilities like the lawn, the bike lane, and the playground work together to construct the current imagery of Ohlone Park as normalizing able-bodied movement. This particular form of power production lands back on the experience of the user and

59 Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America* (The MIT Press, 1982), 5.
60 Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design*, 40.
61 "Plate 13A," in *Berkeley Master Plan* (Berkeley City Planning Commission, 1966).
62 Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design*, 81.
63 Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design*, 87–88.



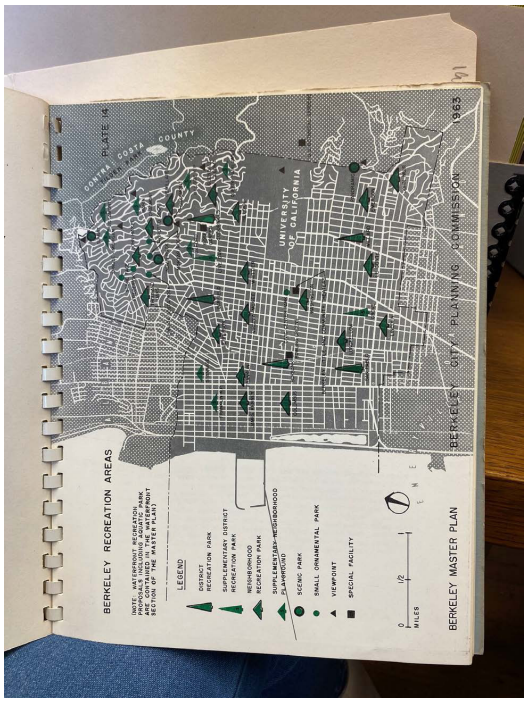


Figure 17. Left. **Figure 18.** Right.
Photo of Berkeley Master Plan 1966. *Berkeley Master Plan*, Berkeley City Planning Commission, 1966.

Figure 19. Photo of Ohlone Park.

makes hyper-visible differently-abled users. Recognizing the limitation of the built landscape in the park is simultaneously a way of reconsidering park design through situated experiences and diverse spatialities.

VI. Wandering as methodology: towards a participatory criticism

In the previous sections, I gave an overview of the origin, design, and historical development of Ohlone Park as well as analyzed the park as a space that produces hypervisible disabled bodies. Upon critiquing the way the park reinforces the walker/biker imagination, in this section, I interpret wandering as a methodology to examine greenspace as a point where urban ideals stop working. On the one hand, experiencing a space makes visible how its past haunts its present and how its landscape constantly feeds into directing its users; on the other hand, it is a way of knowing what the everyday life of this space is like and how it inherits implicit and explicit forms of power. Reconsidering movement in the park beyond the dualistic nature/culture or walker/not walker notion, I analyze how the question of gaze shapes the user and the park space itself.

The question of gaze is primarily associated with how movement and existence are understood and regulated in green spaces. In the case of Ohlone Park, as I pointed out earlier, the defaulted movements in the

Figure 20. Ohlone Park at nighttime.

design are walking and biking. The combination of these two movements in the design contributes to the function of Ohlone Park as an exclusive public space. Not only is walking in Ohlone Park restricted in movement itself, but also in terms of the time of day it occurs. The streetlights in Ohlone Park, in particular, demonstrate how the assumption of park users impacts its landscape. The lack of lighting equipment limits movements in the park space to daytime (Figure 20). The discouragement of nighttime access further makes the nighttime users hyper-visible. For example, the organization I mentioned earlier, "Friends of Ohlone Park," specifies on their website that they recommend contacting the police regarding night dwellers in order to prevent encampments.[64] The high awareness of how and when the park can be used "appropriately" suggests that the exclusivity of the space is structured upon a walker vs. not walker gaze. In the eyes of "Friends of Ohlone Park," the park is a space that requires and surveilles moving instead of dwelling.

While Ohlone Park is designed and maintained as a space with no long-term dwellers, the walker/not walker dualism further influences how movement is shaped in the park. Infrastructure with walking as the only imagined form of movement reinforces the power that directs, selects, and makes (in)visible the user of the park. Ohlone Park is arguably a walkable space, a characteristic that shapes the landscape of and the experience in Ohlone Park. Ohlone Park is proportionately composed of singular lanes and large expanses of lawn, with the lawn on a higher topographical position than the lane. If the user is present on the lane, they do not interact directly with the lawn but observe it; they can move on the edge of the lawn or somewhere around it but there's always something to look at throughout the journey. While the user's body is situated on the lane, their vision is opened to the lawn. However, this vision disappears once the user wanders off the lane and interacts directly with the lawn. In this case, the user emerges in the lawn and becomes part of the landscape.

Hence, in Ohlone Park, to walk is to gaze. The design of the park proposes a combination of moving on either the lane or the lawn and looking at the image of "nature." The sense of nature here includes the element of grass and the normalized gesture of walking in the park. The lane persuades the user's movement while directing their vision towards the lawn (the "nature"). To walk as to gaze means the park design imagines and prioritizes able-bodied norms. Although one could argue that Ohlone Park is legally considered accessible to users with mobility disabilities, the park space reveals a lack of consideration of possible intersection of disabilities. The design of the park projects a disciplinary gaze on the body of the user: that is, the hyper-visibility of interacting with the park without walking/biking/looking.

The walker/biker imagination is specified as a designed way of moving in Ohlone Park. This not only suggests a "reconnection" with "nature" in the urban area where "nature" is imagined to be separated and far away, but also questions how much this notion shapes the experience of being in the park as a non-walker/biker. Earlier in the paper, I discussed how accessible exercise stations were ultimately eliminated in the park

64 "How to Contact the City," Friends of Ohlone Park, accessed July 22, 2024, https://ohlone.transbay.net/index.php/how-to-contact-the-city/.

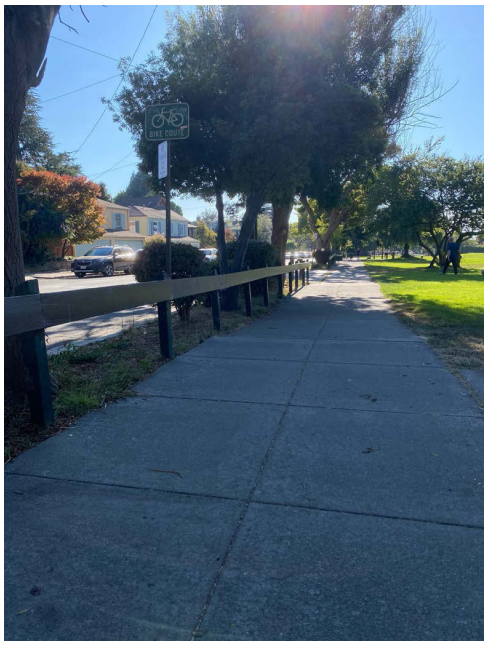


Figure 21. Bike route sign in Ohlone Park.

construction and how physical access to the park is equalized to satisfying ADA requirements. The park design leads to the hyper-visibility of disabled bodies and accessibility in the park is conformed to the walker/biker norm. In the chapter "Bodies of Nature: *The Environmental Politics of Disability*," Kafer argues that disability access in the built environment is largely impacted by the normalization of the imagination of ableism. Kafer focuses more on building accessible trails in national parks and the (dis)association between disabled bodies and wilderness. Kafer points out that oftentimes in building trails, disability access is contested for environmental issues and that this mindset is "an act of ableist forgetting."[65] That is, while accessibility for able-bodied people is addressed in the built environment, the hyper-visibility of disability access becomes "unconventional" or as Kafer puts it, "unnatural."

Through examples of how the images of physical disability are explicitly assumed as disassociated from activities "exploring" the "nature," Kafer specifies the separation between disabled bodies and the idea of wilderness as inherently ableist. Kafer asks, "how have compulsorily [sic] able-bodiedness/able-mindedness shaped not only the environments of our lives—both buildings and parks—but our very understandings of the environment itself?"[66] Pointing out how acknowledging the invention of "nature" as a notion requires it to be excluded from everything "man-made" and to be the object of the anthropocentric gaze, Kafer adds that such invention simultaneously defines the norms of being in "nature." Building accessible trails is considered "too human" and challenges the dualism between culture and nature as well as political and apolitical. Urban greenspace serves as an explicit example of the built "nature" as it intends to mimic what one can experience in a completely not "cultural" space; however, it adopts these dualistic visions, with either the sign saying "bike path" along the lanes in Ohlone Park (Figure 21), or the lawn covering mostly the Northern area of the park. Exploring greenspaces, even in the urban setting, assumes an able-bodiedness.

To reinterpret the space of Ohlone Park through the focus on quotidian experience, I distinguish "walking" from "wandering" in how the terms negotiate the relationship between mobility and the built environment. Walking is associated with urban living; it is about the mobility of the everyday and a way of connecting nostalgic memories of a place with the speculation of its future.[67] However, the term simultaneously perpetuates an able-bodied imagination of a person moving on foot, a PEDEstrian. Wandering can be more neutral. Walking focuses on the

65 Alison Kafer, "Bodies of Nature: The Environmental Politics of Disability," in *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities: Toward an Eco-Crip Theory*, ed. Sarah Jaquette Ray and Jay Sibara (University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 138, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1p6jht5.10.

66 Kafer, "Bodies of Nature," 130.

67 Evrick Brown and Timothy Shortell, *Walking in Cities: Quotidian Mobility as Urban Theory, Method, and Practice* (Temple University Press, 2015), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvrdf2qs.

movement of the walker's body, meanwhile wandering is more about experiencing and being in the space that one moves in. Walking is a term and action that draws connection between the spaces, the ways of moving, and the body of the walker. It is a term that defaults to the gesture of moving on foot in greenspaces. Walking can also be associated with the *flâneur*, an aimless male walker observing urban living. *Flâneur* as a character signifies an upper middle class able-bodied white male strolling along the paved roads and looking at the shopping windows and things around him. The *flâneur* is "an outsider . . . [that] move[s] with the crowd but [is] never part of it."[68] The aloofness of the *flâneur* indicates a discorrelation between the observer and the space he is in. Moreover, the *flâneur* also signifies observing the surrounding environment despite being in it. The *flâneur*, serves as a counter example of how wandering could be used as an analytical methodology through the focus on what is left out or made invisible in the narrative of an urban walker.

Walking as a methodology engages with the lived space through an empirical lens and produces gazes on the body of the walker and the space itself. Rebecca Solnit argues, "walking itself extends into the world as do those tools that augment the body. . . . Walking is a mode of making the world as well as being in it."[69] Walking traces the experienced spaces with movement. It is a form of representing as well as shaping a particular sense of interaction between the world and the body of the walker. Solnit further indicates that "the walking body can be traced in the places it has made; paths, parks, and sidewalks are traces of the acting out of imagination and desire; walking sticks, shoes, maps, canteens, and backpacks are further material results of that desire."[70] Here, Solnit points to how the assumption of walking and the walker's body can be traced in the built environment as well as the implied sense of desire to know, to explore, and to arrive at an intended destination via walking.

"Wandering," on the other hand, is a term encapsulating the interaction between the walker and the experienced space. It can be more directly related to the distance between one point and another or how fast one can move. It can also be about the experiences of space-body-interaction that extends beyond simply the action of walking. Wandering addresses questions such as what exactly the boundaries of the walking body are or how the built environment reflects a particular imagination of the user as well as their way of moving. Wandering is about participation instead of solely the empirical gaze. Wandering recognizes the co-construction of the built landscape, the body of the wanderer, and the lived quotidian experience of moving. Hence, wandering in Ohlone Park is a way of knowing what it means to be in the park with diversified experiences. The majority of the images I use in this paper are from random times and occasions I visited the park, but every time I am there, I notice something I had never noticed before. Wandering in the park is a critical approach that sheds light on the complexity of the park space beyond the website descriptions, the meeting notes, the historical information, or the planning map.

Inspired by the different relations underlying the space of Ohlone Park as well as a class landscape analysis, critical geography, and urban history, I led a field trip about Ohlone Park as an experiment of exploring the alternatives to understand urban greenspace. Although this research focuses more on pointing out an ongoing issue than providing a solution, the field trip aimed to analyze questions of disability access in the context of the group, rather than on the individual level, to which issues of disability are often reduced. Ohlone Park is an example of the imagination of order in the built environment but it also inspires the reconsideration of the different experiences shaped in a hyper-constructed park. I divided the field trip into two portions: the history of Ohlone Park as the People's Park Annex and the plan of the park as an idealized urban image.

The field trip was a valuable learning opportunity for me as my own observations and experiences were always limited. Throughout the field trip, I received very insightful comments and questions that continue to remind me to draw on the analysis of the park critically. Some questions included: "What would a greenspace that can actually address different forms of accessibility needs look like?" or "What would a potential solution be for the lack of accessibility in Ohlone Park?"[71] These are questions that I have not necessarily addressed in this paper, but they inspired me to search for connections between planning regulations and the developmental history of Ohlone Park in the existing materials. During the field trip, I was excited to see how different observations are

68 David Serlin, "On Walkers and Wheelchairs: Disabling the Narratives of Urban Modernity," *Radical History Review* 2012, no.114 (2012): 21, https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-1597988.

69 Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (Viking, 2000), 31.

70 Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 31.

71 Personal communication, April 2024.

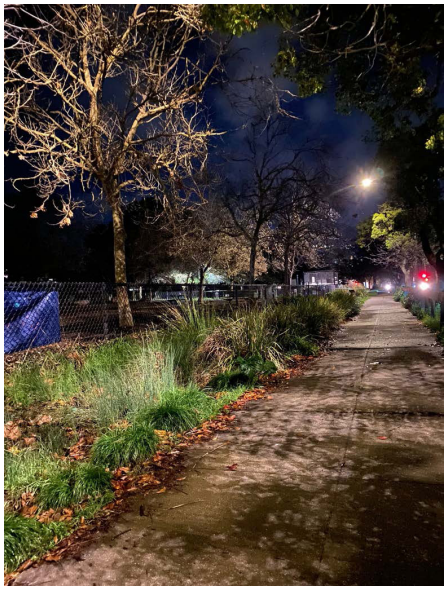


Figure 22. Ohlone Dog Park.

made about the park space. Some observations that stood out to me were that the benches all face towards the lawn or that the dog park is double blocked by grass and wire fences (Figure 22). The field trip allowed me to recognize how participation and interaction contribute to the understanding of a space beyond the narrative of urban order or the countercultural speculation of what a multipurpose park could look like. The comments and questions I received also helped me reflect on the limitations of my research in terms of scale as well as theoretical model.

Wandering in Ohlone Park allows the critical interpretation of the space beyond a block of greenspace on a map or a spot on a planning document. The space of the park is shaped through changes in political, economical, and ideological histories, which can be seen by the wanderer exploring the greenspace via movement and vision instead of top-down speculation. Wandering adds complexity in the understanding of park spaces beyond controlled open space. Ohlone Park occupies the threshold between ordered and not ordered, public and not public, accessible and not accessible. These dichotomies are challenged by wandering as a critical methodology in interpreting the particular landscape of the park.

VII. Conclusion

Ohlone Park connects and complicates various meanings of public space: sphere for public engagement of political discourses, space exclusive to limited groups of people, and the built environment conveying meanings and inventions of the planner and the inhabitants.[72] The erasure of the radical history and the hegemonic walker/biker imagination work together to reinforce the function of Ohlone Park as an exclusive and normative "public" space. The multi-purposed infrastructures, the memorialization of the past, the inaccessibility of information, and the park itself, establish the park today as a space with perfect urban "order." In contrast to People's Park, the former People's Park Annex diverges away from the history of political activism and reemerges to be the symbolic Ohlone Park.

The purpose of this paper is to recognize the memories hidden underneath the carefully maintained imagery in Ohlone Park and to understand the accessibility of the park through individual and collective experiences. The interpretation of a city lies in the "liminally conjoined spaces: that of history/memory, or that of objective thought/subjective testimony."[73] Boyer argues that the vision of Enlightenment rationalism occupies the storytelling of "modern" city space to be deprived of collective memory and experiences. Memory becomes a crisis that requires the recollection of the past life unfolded in the urban space. The postmodern memory crisis is a resistance to the

72 John L. Gulick, "The 'Disappearance of Public Space': An Ecological Marxist and Lefebvrian Approach," in *The Production of Public Space*, ed. Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

73 Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (MIT Press, 1994), 21.

utopian idea that modern urban planning pursues. Boyer points to how memory could lead to a new direction of future and a counter-progress storytelling form. The past of Ohlone Park still haunts every bit of it today, particularly at the time when the destruction of People's Park encounters the multiplicity of global crises. Towards the end of 2024, a non-profit organization called Where Do We Go established a protest encampment in Ohlone Park, providing basic needs resources for unhoused people, which was then removed by the City of Berkeley.[74] While the future of Ohlone Park remains ambiguous, the disappearance of public space renders the immense significance of recollecting and rewriting the stories of "who gets to be where." Although it seems that the current Ohlone Park attempts to move on from centering around political discourses and engagement, the park space reflects grander questions of accessibility and ableism.

My paper starts with the individual experience of wandering in Ohlone Park and ends with an attempt to reinterpret the built environment through collective wandering. Wandering as an analytical methodology, on the one hand, contextualizes urban greenspace accessibility further into the dichotomy between "nature" and "culture." On the other hand, wandering contextualizes the interactive relationship between user, movement, and the built environment and allows critical reconsideration of the (il)legibility of different needs in urban design. To ask why Ohlone Park became what it is today has no direct answer; however, through examining the experiences in the park, what becomes clear is the limitation of the normative "ideal" planning and the complex spatialities beyond the fragmented imagery of urban order. As a space that encapsulates discourses around counter culture and accessibility, Ohlone Park and its history invokes the question of how disability access can be designed in non-exclusive forms and how urban greenspaces can be truly open public spaces.

VIII. Bibliography

A.T., J.B., Jj, et al. "Berkeley Tribe." *Berkeley Tribe* 1, no. 22 (December 5, 1969). https://jstor.org/stable/community.28033775.

Berkeley City Council. "Ordinance No. 5202-N.S." October 23, 1979. https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AZ0IXkj3JLKJf%C3%89bc3RQ6%C3%89qrHVy9TPX135mdOYoGym2CJvk1SuGpGRqRxIrED1f4xmN9bK%C3%81kBP5Uwi0lcDdy8vnA%3D/.

Berkeley City Council. "Ordinance No. 5303-N.S." December 9, 1980. https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AUmzKoG1a5U73CN3olphir0q8tB3OsAbCFnYYoIXKR4ocnYxQObnPP40c%C3%89QwbmTUQHmMgMud7gqB7wcLanph9Zs%3D/.

Berkeley City Council. "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council." June 3, 1969. https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AYxnWMMzOPXn%C3%89jxXp82Fn1V3aTFWD30x1wGAVEjWP88Vgzjn23yxfiiTm0QQqF3JMitI6%C3%89laH5elruGD3GW5zOs%3D/.

Berkeley City Council. "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council." June 17, 1969. https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/ARmNH24oKtu9oJeNJvwd8LpFgIbh6tOuteCWXRX0rkehqRFtaplObiQSa9lTwOb%C3%89MDnPY3djxA6tss24CFvVxDc%3D/.

Berkeley City Council. "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council." December 9, 1969. https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AblfhjNHypRE7Z2LBvoqXEERSEUvec1s9S5C6dNqrk1GzLzb99bwvkUzF0qZtdlqM3f7Ayg757XwGR2vvGmDAik%3D/.

Berkeley City Council. "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council." September 12, 1978. https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/ARR8c2S%C3%89wLtGeQjpsppVMQOCKddSrGUqe

74 Kelcie Lee, "City Sweeps 3 Encampments and Protesters Establish 1 More," *The Daily Californian*, November 25, 2024, https://www.dailycal.org/news/city/housing/city-sweeps-3-encampments-and-protesters-establish-1-more/article_a987ba70-ab25-11ef-a493-7bca0a04769c.html.

cSjXahgiZcy4y1QXlJzhPRp7TUEtFAV0wtWTlMIxZ8cSwuJv%C3%89U0ewo%3D/.

Berkeley City Council. "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council." January 23, 1979. https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AUpwfHttxnkn6UifRJ1K287grc9%C3%89UMDklEemMm%C3%89l0%C3%81Tcy3dFmOCd8puFj%C3%891UUcpjqZhcuXsiXg%C3%81909fdb%C3%81cmXvg%3D/.

Berkeley City Council. "Regular Meeting of the Berkeley City Council." March 17, 1981. https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AU0KHkt%C3%81dqnzqMGI7xtOA6gz1mWlnCJdtYCp9CQTF%C3%81JC5eHAR6oXpVxAlTumbFJ%C3%817pM0aBy7yrM%C3%81hlqlSgE7bro%3D/.

Berkeley City Planning Commission. *Berkeley Master Plan*. Berkeley, California, 1966.

Boss, Gerry. "Marchers Prepare with Party." *The Daily Californian*, May 30, 1969.

Boyer, M. Christine. *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*. MIT Press, 1994.

Brown, Evrick, and Timothy Shortell. *Walking in Cities: Quotidian Mobility as Urban Theory, Method, and Practice*. Temple University Press, 2015. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvrdf2qs.

Casey, Edward S. *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*. Indiana University Press, 2009.

City of Berkeley. "Ohlone Park." Accessed June 19, 2023. https://berkeleyca.gov/community-recreation/parks-recreation/parks/ohlone-park.

City of Berkeley. "Ohlone Park (East) Playground Replacement and Site Improvements." March 4, 2021. https://berkeleyca.gov/your-government/our-work/capital-projects/ohlone-park-east-playground-replacement-and-site.

City of Berkeley. "Ohlone Park (East) Playground Replacement and Site Improvements Ribbon Cutting Ceremony." Accessed July 22, 2024. https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Ohlone%20Park%20%28East%29%20Improvements%20Program_0.pdf.

City of Berkeley. "Ordinance No. 5303-N.S." December 9, 1980. https://berkeley.municipal.codes/enactments/Ord5303-NS.

City of Berkeley. "Ordinance No. 5308-N.S." December 9, 1980. https://berkeley.municipal.codes/enactments/Ord5308-NS.

Cranz, Galen. *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America*. The MIT Press, 1982.

De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall. University of California Press, 1984.

Department of Parks, Recreation and Waterfront. *Ohlone Park East Improvement*. City of Berkeley, October 3, 2022.

Duscha, Steve and Joe Pichirallo. "New Park Thrives Today: Picketing, March to Provo." *The Daily*

Californian, May 26, 1969.

Friends of Ohlone Park. "Home." Accessed July 21, 2024. https://ohlone.transbay.net/.

Friends of Ohlone Park. "How to Contact the City." Accessed July 22, 2024. https://ohlone.transbay.net/index.php/how-to-contact-the-city/.

Friends of Ohlone Park. "Ohlone Park – 50th Anniversary." Accessed July 21, 2024. https://ohlone.transbay.net/index.php/50th-anniversary-of-ohlone-park-june-1st/.

Gallagher, Kate. "1969–1982: The Annex Grows Up." *The Daily Californian*, May 14, 1982.

Google. "Google Earth." Accessed October 14, 2024. https://earth.google.com/web/.

Gulick, John L. "The 'Disappearance of Public Space': An Ecological Marxist and Lefebvrian Approach." In *The Production of Public Space*, edited by Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998.

Imrie, Rob. *Disability and the City: International Perspectives*. St. Martin's Press, 2022.

Kafer, Alison. "Bodies of Nature: The Environmental Politics of Disability." In *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities: Toward an Eco-Crip Theory*, edited by Sarah Jaquette Ray and Jay Sibara. University of Nebraska Press, 2017. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1p6jht5.10.

Kell, Gretchen. "UC Berkeley Launches Closure of People's Park Construction Site." *UC Berkeley News*, January 3, 2024. https://news.berkeley.edu/2024/01/03/uc-berkeley-launches-closure-of-peoples-park-construction-site.

Lee, Kelcie. "City Sweeps 3 Encampments and Protesters Establish 1 More." *The Daily Californian*, November 25, 2024. https://www.dailycal.org/news/city/housing/city-sweeps-3-encampments-and-protesters-establish-1-more/article_a987ba70-ab25-11ef-a493-7bca0a04769c.html.

Mitchell, Don. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. Guilford Press, 2003.

Mitchell, Don. "The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy." In *Common Ground?: Readings and Reflections on Public Space*, edited by Anthony M. Orum and Zachary P. Neal. Routledge, 2010.

Nicoloff, Alex. "Two 'People's Parks': A Historical Sketch." Berkeley Historical Society, 1978.

Public Affairs. "Updates on People's Park construction." *UC Berkeley News*, January 10, 2024. https://news.berkeley.edu/2024/01/10/live-updates-on-people-s-park-construction.

Raynsford, Anthony. "The Limits of Counterculture Urbanism: Utopian Planning and Practical Politics in Berkeley, 1969–73." *Journal of Planning History* 23, no. 1 (2023): 49–70. https://doi.org/10.1177/15385132231193389.

Serlin, David. "On Walkers and Wheelchairs: Disabling the Narratives of Urban Modernity." *Radical History Review* 2012, no. 114 (2012): 19–28. https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-1597988.

Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. Viking, 2000.

The Daily Californian. "March Today: Peace Hopes." May 30, 1969.

The Daily Californian. "Moratorium Schedule." October 15, 1969.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, edited by Brooks Atkinson. Modern Library, 1992.

UpCodes. "Chapter 11A Housing Accessibility: Housing Accessibility, California Building Code 2022 (Vol 1 & 2)." Accessed July 20, 2024. https://up.codes/viewer/california/ca-building-code-2022/chapter/11A/housing-accessibility.