



Active and Social At All Ages

Universally designed and
age-friendly outdoor areas and
meeting places

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(Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)
Back cover photo: Bryggestien at Hølen, Sarpsborg
(Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

The Centre for an Age-Friendly Norway is a national competence centre that seeks to enable development of sustainable and age-friendly communities. Our goal is for seniors to be able to live good, meaningful and independent lives for as long as possible. Older people’s capabilities should be used for optimal benefit to themselves and their community.

The Centre’s work is founded on collaboration with various community actors through a municipal network and partnerships with businesses, organisations and researchers. The Centre is based in Ålesund and is organised as a section within the Directorate of Health.



KS is an organisation for municipal sector employers and their interests. Members include all of Norway’s 357 municipalities and 15 county councils, plus approximately 500 municipal, inter-municipal and county council undertakings.

KS actively strives for good, age-friendly communities. KS’ municipal network for universal design was established in 2013. Its aim is to foster inclusive communities by sharing knowledge and eliminating obstacles. The network is funded by the Ministry of Culture.



s. 16



s. 36



s. 50

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s. 58



s. 68



WATERFRONT PROMENADE FOR EVERYONE: Astrid Halvorsen (81) is one of many seniors who have exchanged their house for a flat in Leirvik, the main town in Stord municipality. The universally designed waterfront promenade is an important contributor to the good life in the centre of town. Read more on page 44.

Age-friendly communities will make a difference for all of us

We have an ageing population and a decreasing number of younger people. This is one of the major societal changes of our time, and it brings both challenges and opportunities.

This trend concerns us all because, fortunately, most of us will grow old. The question is what kind of community we want for those who are old now – and for future seniors. The goal of age-friendly development is to create communities that are accessible and inclusive, and that promote active ageing. It involves both physical and social environments.

It also involves cultural values – not treating everyone above retirement age as a “burden”, but rather including older people, acknowledging that they are a resource for the community, and facilitating their active participation throughout life.

Universal design is a prerequisite

Universal design of shared spaces is a prerequisite for an age-friendly community. It is about how we create and develop neighbourhoods, housing, meeting places, transportation systems and activities in cities and communities, to fulfil the needs of a diverse group of older citizens.

The current demographic trend affects most of society’s institutions, sectors and markets, and will lead to change. The challenges and opportunities must be met across disciplines and sectors. This cannot be handled by the healthcare sector alone.

The networks for age-friendly communities and universal design have worked together to compile knowledge about and examples of outdoor areas and meeting places. Norway’s municipalities have provided many great examples of how to plan and develop outdoor areas and meeting places with a focus on universal design and age-friendliness.

Create local solutions

The title of this folder – “Active and Social At All Ages” –

describes something we all want to be. For this to be possible, we must take action and make adjustments. The measures do not always have to be large scale and expensive, but they should be based on local needs and solutions, so they benefit everyone in the community.

The age-friendly perspective has not always been considered in projects right from the start; instead, it has been included later on as an important factor in further development. Basically, universal design and age-friendly initiatives boil down to the same thing: ensuring that all of us – regardless of where we are in our life course, regardless of functional ability – can participate equally in our communities. The key to success is to keep all these perspectives in mind when planning new projects.

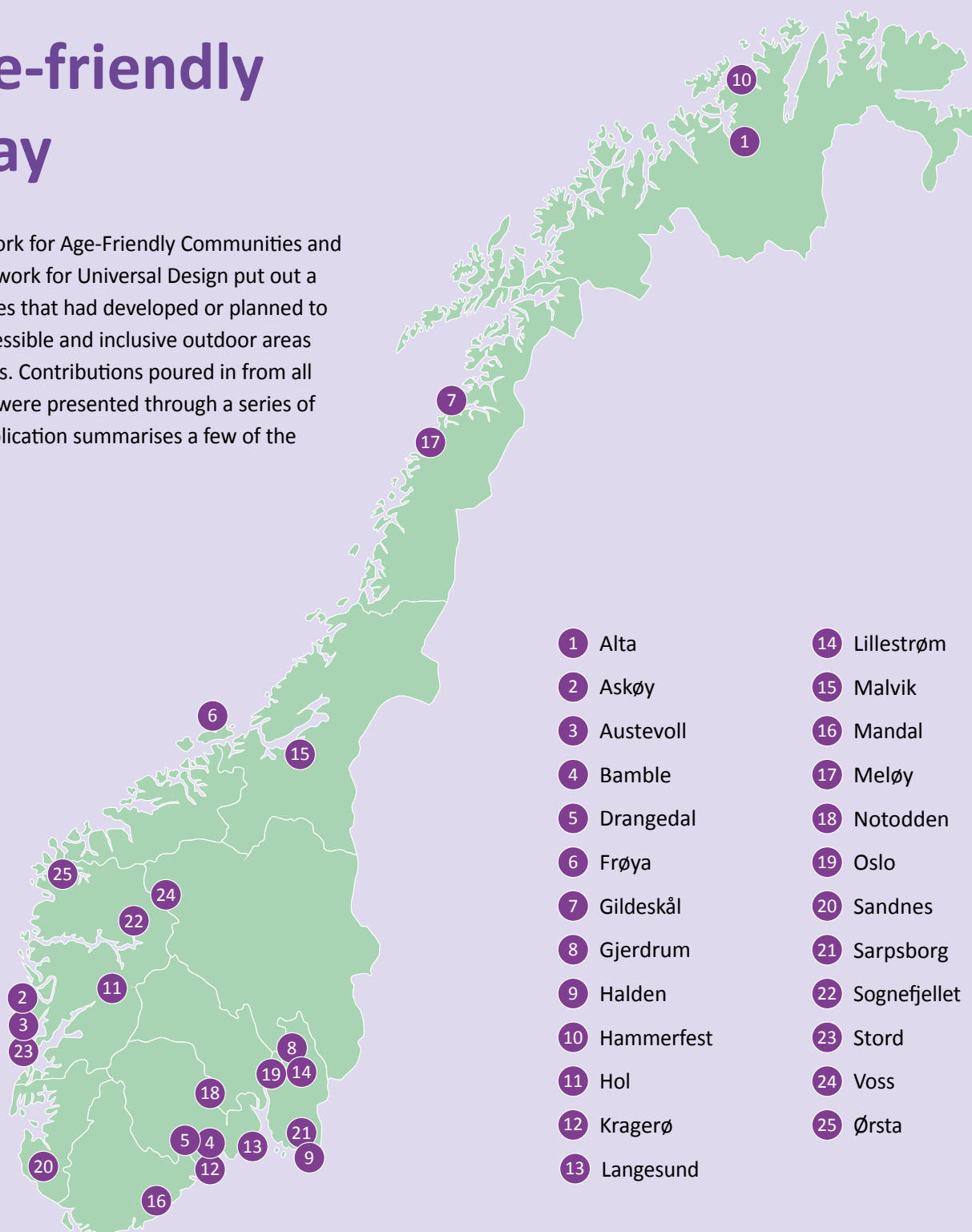
Pay attention to wishes and needs

Co-creation is central to age-friendly development and runs as a common thread through all the projects described in this booklet. Residents must be included in planning and developing the community. Their local knowledge helps us design more accessible, inclusive and age-friendly solutions in communities and neighbourhoods.

In this booklet we have collected examples of measures to help ensure that outdoor areas and meeting places are universally designed and age-friendly. Then they can be used by all generations, regardless of functional ability, and benefit everyone. We hope the booklet will be a source of inspiration for your municipality. It is important that we make some changes in order to meet the demographic trends and create a good, age-friendly community, one where we can look forward to ageing – alongside others, old and young. ● →

An age-friendly Norway

In 2022, the Network for Age-Friendly Communities and the Municipal Network for Universal Design put out a call for communities that had developed or planned to develop more accessible and inclusive outdoor areas and meeting places. Contributions poured in from all over Norway, and were presented through a series of webinars. This publication summarises a few of the contributions.



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Universal design + co-creation + local knowledge =

An age-friendly community

“Meeting local needs through extensive co-creation is the key to building an age-friendly Norway.”

Anne Berit Rafoss, project manager
The Centre for an Age-Friendly Norway

“Universal design is a prerequisite for age-friendly communities.”

Christian Hellevang, senior adviser
Universal design KS



TAKING A BREAK: Vegard Alfsen (83) enjoys his coffee after strolling along Bryggestien, the waterfront path in Sarpsborg. The path offers him both an accessible toilet and a table to sit at. Furthermore there are many benches along the way. Read more on page 54.



WORKSHOP: A workshop with community residents gave insight into people's wishes and needs in the area being developed. (Photo: Inger Agnete Reppen Vrålstad)



Inger Agnete Reppen Vrålstad, project manager, Drangedal municipality



mapping

Mapping over coffee

A friendly chat over coffee, a workshop with 11th year schoolchildren and questionnaires via SMS: these are a few of the methods used by Drangedal municipality in order to involve and engage their inhabitants.

Right in the centre of Drangedal is Doktormyra, about six hectares of undeveloped wetland bordered on either side by housing estates and a grocery store, and right next to the road. The desire to transform it into an age-friendly outdoor area is strong, though how to achieve it is less clear. But in autumn 2022, a project manager was hired and the mapping phase began.

“The demographic trend towards more older people and fewer younger people hits especially hard here in Drangedal”, says project manager Inger Agnete Reppen Vrålstad.

Drangedal is a rural municipality in the middle of Telemark. Many residents live in single-family homes outside the centre of town.

“And most of those homes were built before 2000, which probably says something about how it feels to grow old in them. Besides, home care takes a lot of time because the houses are spread out. Something must be done”, says the project manager.

Gain insight

Doktormyra might be part of the solution. The goal is to create an area with housing, a healthcare service facility, and outdoor areas with inclusive meeting places, simultaneously connecting different parts of the centre of town.

Since the project began in September 2022, they have worked to compile a solid knowledge base. Within a short time span, they have completed a study visit to Iveland municipality and arranged a workshop with local residents to take stock of their wishes and needs.

No age limit

People of all ages got involved in the effort to create an age-friendly space. The project manager, who used to be a teacher, visited her former students with a 3D model and a

bag of LEGO blocks in tow. One of the tasks assigned to the 11th year students was to use LEGO blocks to construct their vision of a future Doktormyra on the 3D model. They had many suggestions, including a mix of housing, shortcuts, cafés, flowerbeds, a shopping centre, a zoo, and a youth centre next door to the nursing home.

Earlier, a co-creation workshop with local residents had discussed similar questions:

“What could we achieve in this area? A lean-to shelter? A lodge with a campfire grill? Walkways across the marsh? Shortcuts between the flats and the grocery store? Good meeting places? There was general agreement that an age-friendly area would benefit everyone. Other topics and suggestions included space in a shed for the snow-blower, a football pub to prevent loneliness among older men, co-localisation of various health services and gathering rooms open to all.

Take it to the people

Now project manager Reppen Vrålstad is working to prepare a survey in collaboration with the senior citizen council and others. The objective is to find out if people can continue to live in their current homes if they become frail, and if not, where and how they want to live instead. A link to the survey will be sent by SMS to all municipal residents, but responses from people aged 55 or more are of particular interest.

“We will also have a paper version of the survey. It will be made available at the doctor’s office, the local shop, the service centre, or through home care staff. We must respect the fact that not everyone is equally digital. If we only get responses from people who use digital technologies, we may only have reached those who are most open to change. I also want to hear from people who are less enthusiastic about change.”

→ Coffee at your place

In parallel with the survey, the project manager pays home visits to people who have ideas about housing, old age and the future. Later, there will be a community meeting.

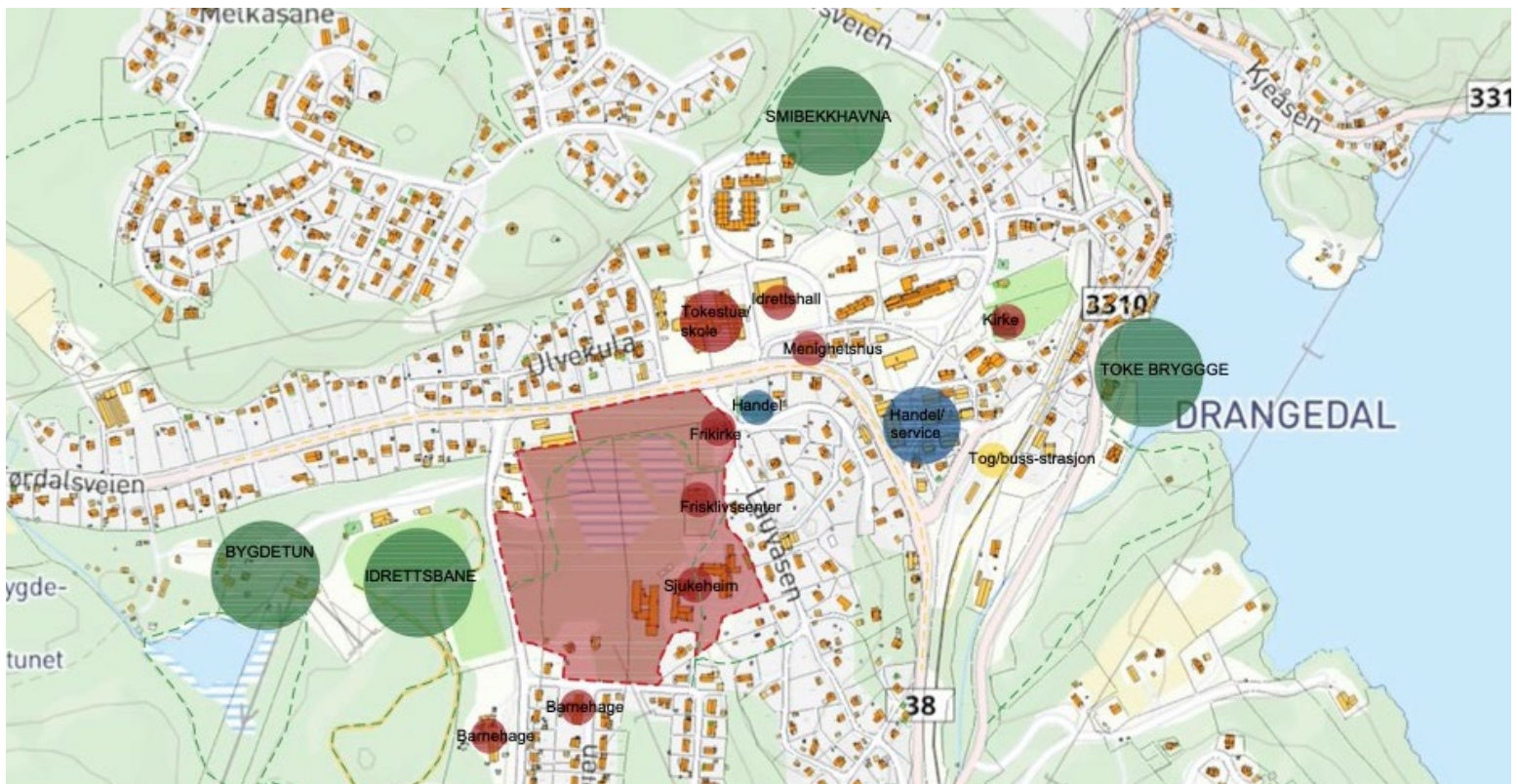
“If we’re doing co-creation, we have to actually mean it. Co-creation mustn’t be merely an item to cross off on a checklist. We need to start slowly, make it clear that it will take time before any plan is in place, because as soon as people think there’s a plan, they disappear”, says Reppen Vrålstad, then adds, “The project needs publicity so we can reach people where they are. It’s also a good idea to contact municipalities that have done something clever. I’ve been quite cheeky and still haven’t had any negative reactions.” •

Lessons learned

“We must respect the fact that not everyone is equally digital. If we only get responses from people who use digital technologies, we may only have reached those who are most open to change.”

“If we’re doing co-creation, we have to actually mean it. Co-creation mustn’t be merely an item to cross off on a checklist.”

Inger Agnete Reppen Vrålstad



MANY SUGGESTIONS: The aim is to develop a neighbourhood with housing, a healthcare service facility, outdoor areas with good meeting places, and connect different parts of central Drangedal. (Illustration: Arkitekthuset Kragerø)



mapping



DOKTORMYRA: Doktormyra is an undeveloped wetland of about six hectares. The road runs right beside it. A housing estate is on one side and a grocery store on another. The aim is to transform Doktormyra into an age-friendly area. The question is how best to achieve that. (Photo: Inger Agnete Reppen Vrålstad)



YOUNGSTERS ON THE CASE: People of all ages have been engaged in the process. Schoolchildren were tasked with putting together suggestions for Doktormyra's future. (Photo: Inger Agnete Reppen Vrålstad)



Co-creation

Completed and planned:

Workshop

•

Survey for everyone over 55.

The survey is being developed in cooperation with the senior citizen council.

Will be sent via SMS link, paper version available where people pass by

•

Home visits

•

Community meeting

•

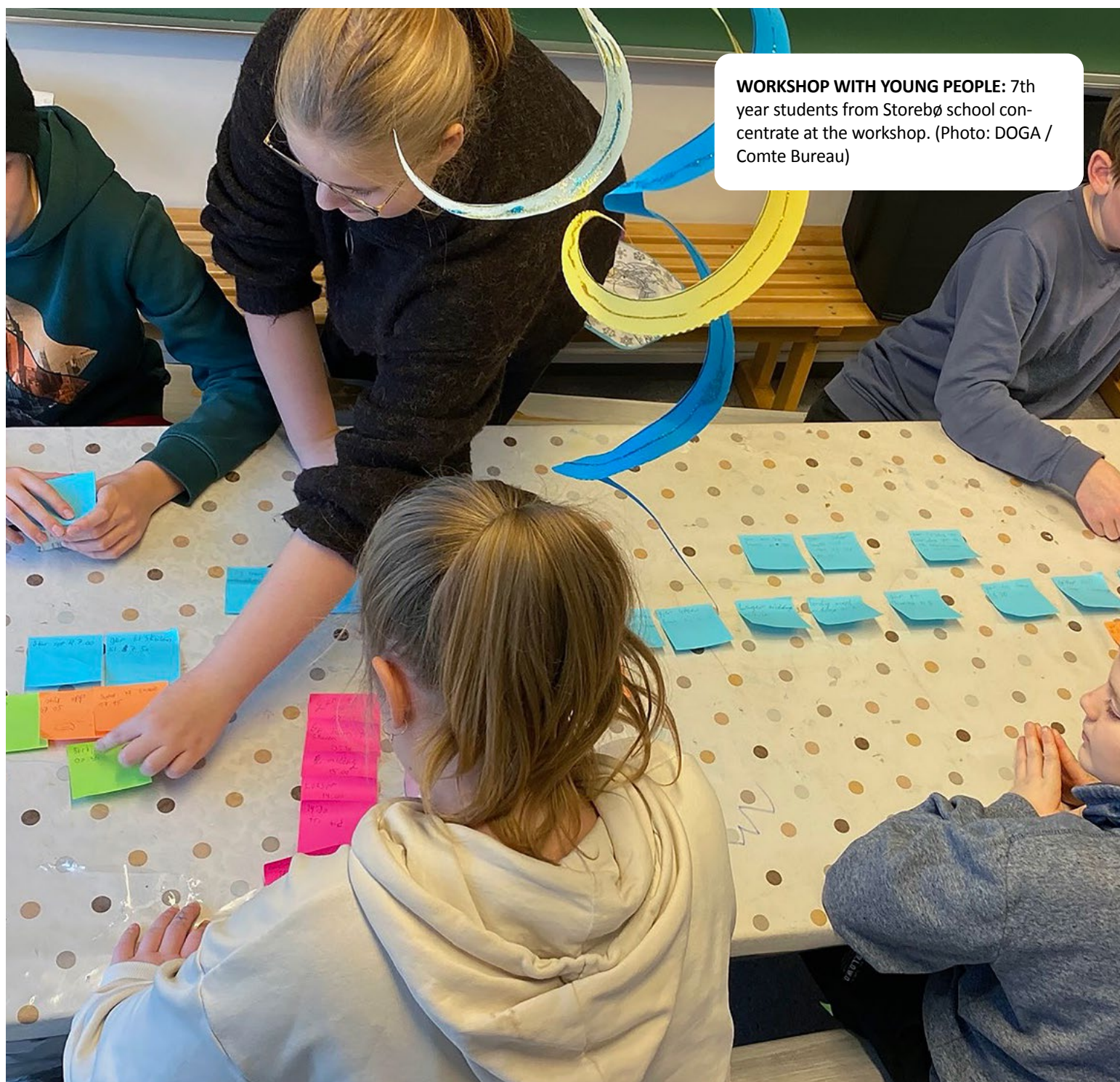
A 3D model showing the entire area makes it easier to understand the possibilities

•

Collaboration with the youth council concerning outdoor areas and joint-use facilities

•

Dialogue with secondary school students



WORKSHOP WITH YOUNG PEOPLE: 7th year students from Storebø school concentrate at the workshop. (Photo: DOGA / Comte Bureau)



mapping

What enables and inhibits activity?

They are mapping not only where people go, but also why. This knowledge makes Austevoll better equipped to develop a town centre that promotes public health for young and old.

What enables and what inhibits, that is what they have been investigating in Austevoll municipality: what enables activity –and what inhibits it? The investigation was inspired by a pilot project called Everyday Travel, a collaboration between the municipalities in Sunne kommuner (part of WHO's Healthy Cities Network) and DOGA (Design and Architecture in Norway). The project also contributes to making Austevoll more age-friendly.

The idea is that all the everyday travel we never even think about – trips to work, school, the shop, recreation facilities – offers opportunities. What if the quality of this everyday travel could be improved? What if we walk rather than drive? That could increase both activity levels and quality of life, thus shaping a more age-friendly community.

At present, the town of Storebø is cut in two by the county road. There is a shopping centre, but no proper meeting places.

“Our plan is to densify Storebø and make the school the centre of the centre of town, right beside shops and healthcare facilities. We see a positive development trend. More older people are choosing to live in town; it is the start of a trend and we need to be positively involved at the planning stage.”

Stina Nordbak, municipal planner in Austevoll municipality, says that another important premise for development is to shift activities down towards the sea again.

The town hall used to be down by the water, and the road along the shore was the main thoroughfare. But as more people began driving, both the town hall and the grocery store

moved up towards the county road.

“Development has been fragmented, advancing bit by bit and with cars in mind”, says Nordbak.

Clear goals

Austevoll has clear goals, foremost of which is to redirect development from the county road down towards the shore. They intend to reframe Storebø as a town with zones for various activities, create interconnecting outdoor spaces, establish footpaths between different places, as well as better contact with the shoreline.

“It's tempting to assume that people do what they do and that things are the way they are for a reason. The question is how architecture and design influence people's choices. We began this project with a lot of assumptions. A service design agency helped us gain fact-based insight. By using various tools we were able to take stock of how and why people move around Austevoll in their everyday lives,” explains Stina Nordbak, along with public health coordinator Ingrid Kristina Danielsen Henrique, and municipal health and welfare manager Gro Kalvenes.

At home

The actual fact-finding was done in part by meeting people where they are – at the municipal swimming pool for instance.

“People from all over the county go there for leisure activities. We asked them to tell us about their everyday travel, and based on what they said, the service design agency →

→ sketched a timeline. For example, people were asked for details about why they drove a car to and from various places, and why they went home between work and leisure time instead of staying in town. We from the municipality were involved in the process, but the service designers were in charge.”

Students at the school were interviewed in the same way, and a workshop was held. In addition, several key people were directly asked to contribute.

“There are only just over 5000 inhabitants here – it’s a small town – so we used our local knowledge to identify people it would be relevant to discuss with. That way of going about it sort of turns things upside-down; we bureaucrats stepped off our pedestal and went in amongst the townspeople. We gained a lot of interesting insights”, they say.

Surprise, surprise!

They already knew that cars dominated everyday travel.

“We’ve got long distances here, and walking can be a hassle, but we were surprised that even people who live right in the centre of town drive a car for very short distances. Of course the weather plays a role – this is western Norway after all – but it may be that people misjudge the distances, thinking it’s farther than it actually is. That might be because we haven’t made the physical environment as simple and inviting as it could be”, they say. Then they talk about a sprightly 80-year-old woman without a driving licence.

“She walked from A to B, did her daily chores, and thought it was fine – but she never viewed the trip as a pleasant outing. It has to do with how the local environment is designed. The solution isn’t to stand there pointing a finger, but to create new options that help people establish new habits.”

This insight prompted a range of “nudging” projects. In one place, a string of lights has been put up over a walkway. The question is whether this encourages people to park their cars and use the illuminated shortcut rather than driving all the way around.



CREATE NEW HABITS: With insight, the municipality can more easily find solutions that help establish new everyday travel patterns. (Photo: Hallvard Atle Bjånesøy)



DOWN TO THE SEA AGAIN: One goal is to bring people closer to the sea, as here at Storebø Wharf. (Photo: DOGA / Comte Bureau)



mapping

Highly valuable

“We measure the effectiveness of these ‘nudges’ to see if they bring about behavioural changes. Many municipalities take action based solely on what people have asked for – a park bench here, a flowerpot there. It looks great, but maybe nobody will use it anyway. The insight we gain in this way gives us confidence that we can justify the cost: we know that the measures we implement are targeted and have been considered carefully.”

Municipal planner Stina Nordbak, public health coordinator Ingrid Kristina Danielsen Henrique, and municipal health and welfare manager Gro Kalvenes see great value in this approach, and believe it can be transferred to other parts of the organisation.

“Our goal is for this method to be used actively in continued development work within the municipality.” •



MAPPING OVER COFFEE: Visiting people’s homes and talking over coffee provided valuable insights during the fact-finding phase. (Photo: DOGA / Comte Bureau)

Lessons learned

“We used our local knowledge to identify people it would be relevant to discuss with.”

“We bureaucrats stepped off our pedestal and went in amongst the townspeople.”

Stina Nordbak



Co-creation

Detailed mapping conversations with people in places where many pass by, in this case, the municipal swimming pool

•

Recruiting key resource people into the mapping discussion

•

Meetings and workshop with school students – in the school itself

•

Home visits

Focusing on seniors benefits all of us

Creating an age-friendly community corresponds well with the principles of good urban planning. Nevertheless, if you look through age-friendly lenses you will see that a little more is needed.



YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: The City of Oslo was Norway's first member of the World Health Organization's (WHO's) Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. The city joined in 2014. Age-friendliness has been incorporated as an overarching concept, says Marianne Aas. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



mapping

The City of Oslo was Norway's first member in the World Health Organization's (WHO's) Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

"We had the good fortune to latch onto this quite early and develop our first plan of action", says Marianne Aas. She is unit leader at the planning and building authority in the City of Oslo, which has been part of the network since 2014. Age-friendliness is one of the social elements in the municipal master plan and has been incorporated as an overarching concept.

"Many of the general principles for good urban planning, such as universal design, coincide with age-friendliness, but other things are quite specific", Aas points out.

Good for everyone

Marianne Aas says that they are striving for a capital city with urban spaces and meeting places where everyone is welcome.

"We often say we need to consider children and young people, but perhaps one of the most crucial changes we need to make in our planning is to emphasise that we must also consider older people. Placing extra emphasis on seniors and their needs in our planning work does not mean we exclude anyone; it also benefits everyone else. Older people have a few specific needs that must be taken into account so they can use the meeting places we plan. They need accessible toilets, good seating in the shade, proximity to various activities as well as ways to withdraw from them, and benches that are not too far apart."

Aas says that for many old people, uncertainty concerning access to a public toilet is a reason to stay at home.

"The new school building in Bjørvika has public toilets facing the quayside promenade. This is a school we've been working on for four years, and the toilets are a result of our efforts for an age-friendly community."

Multipurpose use of space

Working to create an age-friendly community has resulted in a few aha moments for Aas. One of the things that surprised her

most was the importance of planning for chance encounters.

"That means planning in such a way that people's paths cross during their everyday errands. To me, that's a truly important reason for multipurpose use of space. If you put daycare next door to the medical centre, and the supermarket nearby, you also create meeting places where people actually are. A good life is a meaningful life, and loneliness is a huge problem, perhaps especially among older people. Paving the way for spontaneous meetings in people's everyday lives is a crucial part of making a community age-friendly."

Increased awareness

Aas and her colleagues are tasked with maintaining a broad perspective on how the city develops, and linking it together with age-friendly areas. As municipal planners, they have great influence and serve as guides in the work towards an age-friendly city.

"The city council makes the decision, and as part of the planning and building authority, we're in a unique and privileged position because we can get our ideas fully incorporated into the overall plans. We can advise on what might be relevant to make various projects more age-friendly, and can both recommend and demand extra measures", says Aas.

The advisory role is built into everything they do, including increasing awareness about age-friendliness throughout the organisation.

"We've been working on age-friendliness issues in various processes at various times in planning and building applications: What do we need to keep in mind here? We're also trying to incorporate more written advice in our internal systems", says Aas.

To raise awareness, they arrange in-house lectures, with simple reminders about age-friendly measures.

"It doesn't take much; a lot of this thinking has already become second nature to us, so we just need to implement our knowledge and make use of it."

→ Advantageous being small

Oslo is a large city, home to many big organisations: that can be a challenge.

“Being a small municipality can be an advantage in this endeavour. It requires cooperation between multiple sectors, moving in the same direction at the same pace. That can be easier to do when distances are shorter and the numbers smaller. It’s probably harder achieving consensus among 500 employees than among ten”, says Aas.

She relates that the City of Oslo has worked with development in different ways, including pilot projects, cooperation with volunteers and with various interest groups.

“We started at the bottom and saw what worked, and at the same time we built that into our strategies. We’ve made sure to share both theories and practical experiences, to spread knowledge. The goal is that people will always look through age-friendly lenses when initiating a project, large or small. The goal is to create places where people want to go, that they are able to reach, and where they feel welcome.” ●

Lessons learned

“We started at the bottom and saw what worked, and at the same time we built that into our strategies.”

“We’ve made sure to share both theories and practical experiences, to spread knowledge.”

“We’ve stuck to simple principles such as access to toilets, benches, and universal design”.

Marianne Aas



Co-creation

Pilot projects

•
Collaboration with volunteer organisations

•
Collaboration with various interest groups and neighbourhoods

•
Meetings with focus groups and old people in the area being developed

•
Information meetings

•
Inspections/walkability audit



mapping

More benches, public toilets, and the preservation of a footbridge are tangible results of the age-friendly approach behind several projects in Oslo:



Hovseter is home to many seniors. The district's old meeting place, Hovseter square, has lost some of its good attributes and functions. Hovseter school is being renovated and comple-

mented with a new building intended as a meeting place for all. The park around the new school will offer an age-friendly hiking circuit. Sheltered housing is also planned.

In connection with that, the district put the planning and building authority in touch with potential users.

"We worked a lot on which joint use opportunities ought to be present in the new school building. The district helped us find people of various ages, functional abilities and interests", says Marianne Aas. She heads a unit at the planning and building administration in the City of Oslo.

"That made it clear to us that the new school building needed facilities suitable for use by more people."

Among other things, the building will house a youth club, a library, a book café, and an accessible toilet. Many stressed the need for a toilet everyone could use.

Collaboration with the potential user group also saved a footbridge that might otherwise have been demolished.

"It had to remain because they emphasised how important it was for older people", says Aas.

There are big plans for expansion at Mortensrud. There will be a new school, a school for arts and culture, new sports facilities, nursing home, sheltered housing, library,



volunteer centre, youth leisure centre, foot-paths and parks. The age-friendly focus has resulted in a demand for benches along the main path that connects the various

parks and neighbourhoods.

"We've also planned for places where people can bump into each other. It's important to have places for chance encounters, places near to where everyone goes anyway", Marianne Aas emphasises.

The schools in Haugerud and Trosterud are to be regulated, and in connection with that, an urban space for everyone will also be created.

"We've thought hard about how to make this age-friendly. People in this area come from many backgrounds and have different financial situations. It's important to have welcoming, non-commercial, centrally located meeting places. One part of the solution will be an urban space between the two schools on either side of a commons. Another part is a meeting place between a housing project and the school. A good urban space must offer several different activities, and solutions for different activity levels: you should be able to join in the activity, but also withdraw from it. At this site we wanted to create places where people could meet outdoors and eat together – like a big outdoor common room – and all free of charge", says Marianne Aas.



NOT JUST A COVERUP: “The majority expressed a desire to reclaim the area: repair it, make it safe, put it to good use and make it accessible to the public as some kind of park”, says Berit Adriansen. (Photo: Gjerdrum municipality)



Berit Adriansen, manager of planning, surveying and construction in Gjerdrum municipality



mapping

Landslide site becomes intergenerational park

What should be done with the area devastated by the tragic landslide in Gjerdrum? To find out, the municipality contacted those most affected. Their solution was a universally designed park for all ages.

In the early hours of 30 December 2020, a quick clay landslide hit Gjerdrum. The Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE) assisted in rescue efforts and was also given the task of securing the affected site.

“NVE advised us to start thinking as soon as possible about how the area could be used, so they could adjust their stabilisation strategy to suit our plans”, says Berit Adriansen.

She is the operational manager of planning, surveying and construction in Gjerdrum municipality.

The plan for parts of the area will be realised In the summer of 2024.

“A universally designed park for everyone between the ages of zero and 100. A park that invites spontaneous activities and is available to the general public. That’s what we’re planning”, says Adriansen.

Meeting with those affected

The project to reestablish the landslide site began in the summer of 2021. But how did people want the area to be used, and was that achievable? In autumn the same year, a broad co-creation process began.

“I’ve never been involved in a process like that one, I doubt it even exists. We couldn’t take a clinical approach when so many strong emotions were in play. We started with those most deeply affected and who had faced the greatest difficulties. Raising these sensitive issues with them was quite demanding. Somehow we had to let them know, gently, that we had begun this process”, says Adriansen.

“The first meetings with the bereaved were extremely

demanding. Five psychologists were present and listened to the dialogue. Planners and architects also attended the same meetings. We wanted to find out what was important to them, what the site should – and shouldn’t – become.” Berit Adriansen says that no one reacted negatively to them broaching the issue.

“I think that’s thanks to this careful approach.”

Reclaiming the area

“We spoke with many groups, from those deeply affected, to the general population, to landowners and rights holders, to formulate an overarching objective for the area. Very few could imagine putting new buildings there. Many stressed the importance of preserving the site, not simply covering up what had happened. The area mustn’t end up overgrown and abandoned. Most expressed a desire to reclaim the area: repair it, make it safe, put it to good use and make it accessible to the public as some kind of park”, says Adriansen.

A responsive process

Through meetings and other co-creation processes, the municipality gathered input and used it to make concrete proposals, which were then subjected to new rounds of discussion.

“We began broadly with open minds, no guidelines, no agendas; we wanted to hear what people thought. If their input had emphasised other things, it’s quite possible the outcome would have been completely different”, says Adriansen, describing the importance of co-creation processes.



→ Hustle and bustle

The result of the project *As good as possible for as many as possible* is an extensive park landscape.

Early in the planning phase someone suggested a fenced-in area for ball games. It would have been near a housing and treatment centre, and noise was a potential problem.

“Maybe we assumed that quiet was important, but our conversations with employees at the centre revealed that they wanted hustle and bustle again. Before the landslide, they had been next door to a daycare centre, which had been a positive part of their everyday lives”, says Berit Adriansen.

Maximise possibilities

The municipality has consistently worked to make optimal use of the possibilities the project offers.

“For example, it’s easy to make a playground that’s great for kids between two and five, but then you’re only catering to a few. Our thinking is that if one- and two-year-olds can enjoy themselves here, the hundred-year-old can, too – along with everyone in between. We aimed high and broad, and are aware that we must also deliver. It’s really important that those who participated in this co-creation, and who feel strong ownership in this project, should be able and eager to use the park”, Adriansen emphasises.

Lessons learned

“We began broadly with open minds and without guidelines. Then we built on the ideas and suggestions that were repeated most often.”

“The co-creation process was demanding, but it reached far more people, perhaps especially seniors who aren’t very active on social media.”

“You’re probably a lot more prejudiced than you think. Listen carefully to the suggestions you get.”

Berit Adriansen



mapping



MUST DELIVER: “We aimed high and broad, and feel we must also deliver. It’s really important that those who participated in this co-creation, and who feel strong ownership in this project, should be able and eager to use the park.”
Berit Adriansen, Gjerdrum municipality. (Ill: NSW)



Co-creation

Meetings with the bereaved

Public meetings

Future café

Co-creation portal

Walk and talk

Youth workshop

Meetings with the youth council

Meetings with the senior citizen council

Meetings with the municipality’s council
for people with reduced functional ability

→ The northernmost part of the park will provide space for several different activities, and the closer you get to the housing and treatment centre, the more age-friendly the design will be, with equipment that even the oldest seniors can use. But the goal is that most of it can be used by most people.

“Take gym equipment, for example. It’s a good idea to choose a type of equipment that can also be used by older people for physiotherapy. If it works for that group, younger people can also use it”, she explains.

The placement is also important. The outdoor gym equipment will be positioned slightly out of the way, so people aren’t forced to exercise where everyone can watch. There will also be a small skating rink. The plan is to use it for roller skating in the summer.

“And now we’re trying to figure out if it can also be used for skateboarding. A pump track for our youngest cyclists is also in our blueprints.”

Multiple uses

“If we make arrangements for a snow cannon nearby, we will have a fun skiing and sledding area in the winter.”

A ravine where the landslide knocked down part of a forest has already attracted pheasants, frogs and ducks. It will be complemented with a campfire grill, benches and a lean-to shelter.

The park’s largest new structure will be highly symbolic: a circular wooden bridge reflecting the landscape’s surface level prior to the landslide.

“It can also serve as the backdrop for a stage and will be outfitted with audiovisual equipment.”

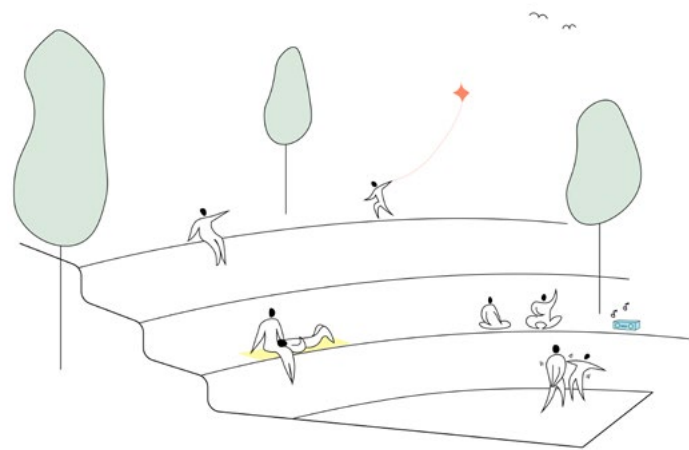
Operational manager Berit Adriansen emphasises that it doesn’t necessarily take much to open up specialised facilities for multiple uses.

“If we have playground equipment that’s fun mostly for kids, we should also provide benches for the people watching them, and paths where walking aids can be used.

Taking ownership

When the project is being realised, the municipality will identify sub-projects to be implemented in collaboration with groups of volunteers and associations. For example, members of the gardening association will help in shaping green spaces, and the local cyclists will handle the pump track.

“If you’ve been here and planted something, or worked with the pump track, it doesn’t feel like a purely municipal project anymore. It’s something you’re proud of, are familiar with, use, and take care of. With this project, we’re giving something back to our citizens.” ●

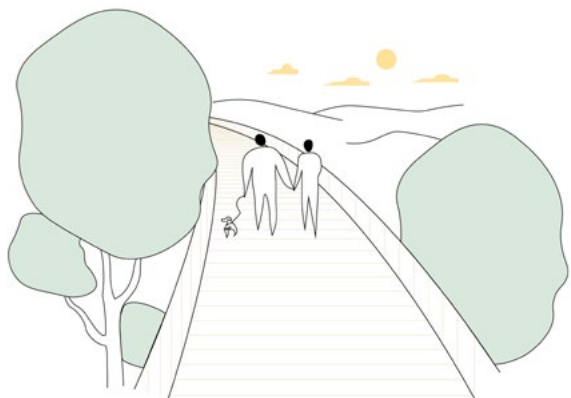


PARK AND AMPHITHEATRE

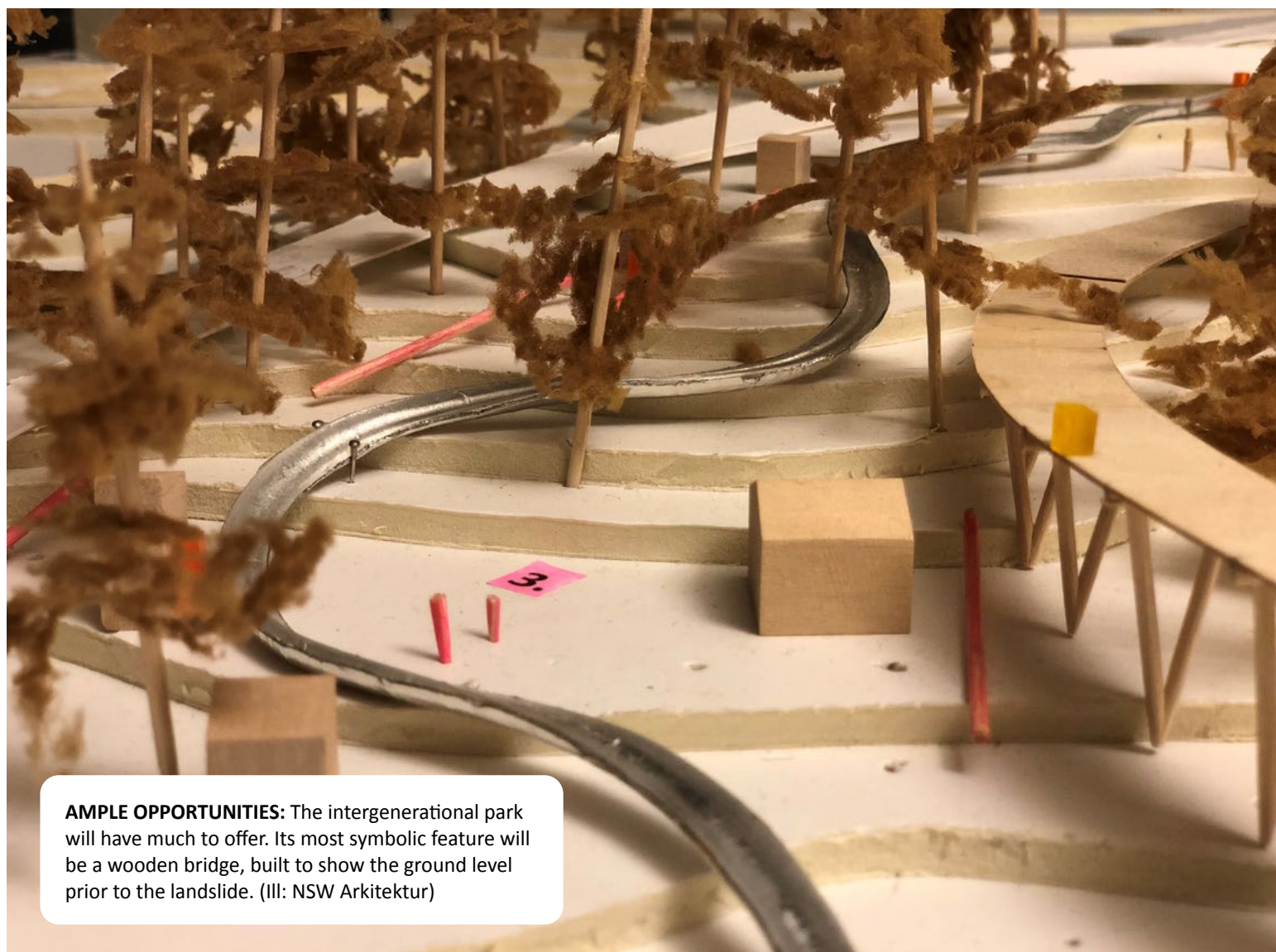
This intergenerational park will offer a variety of activities and an amphitheatre. (Ill: NSW Arkitektur)



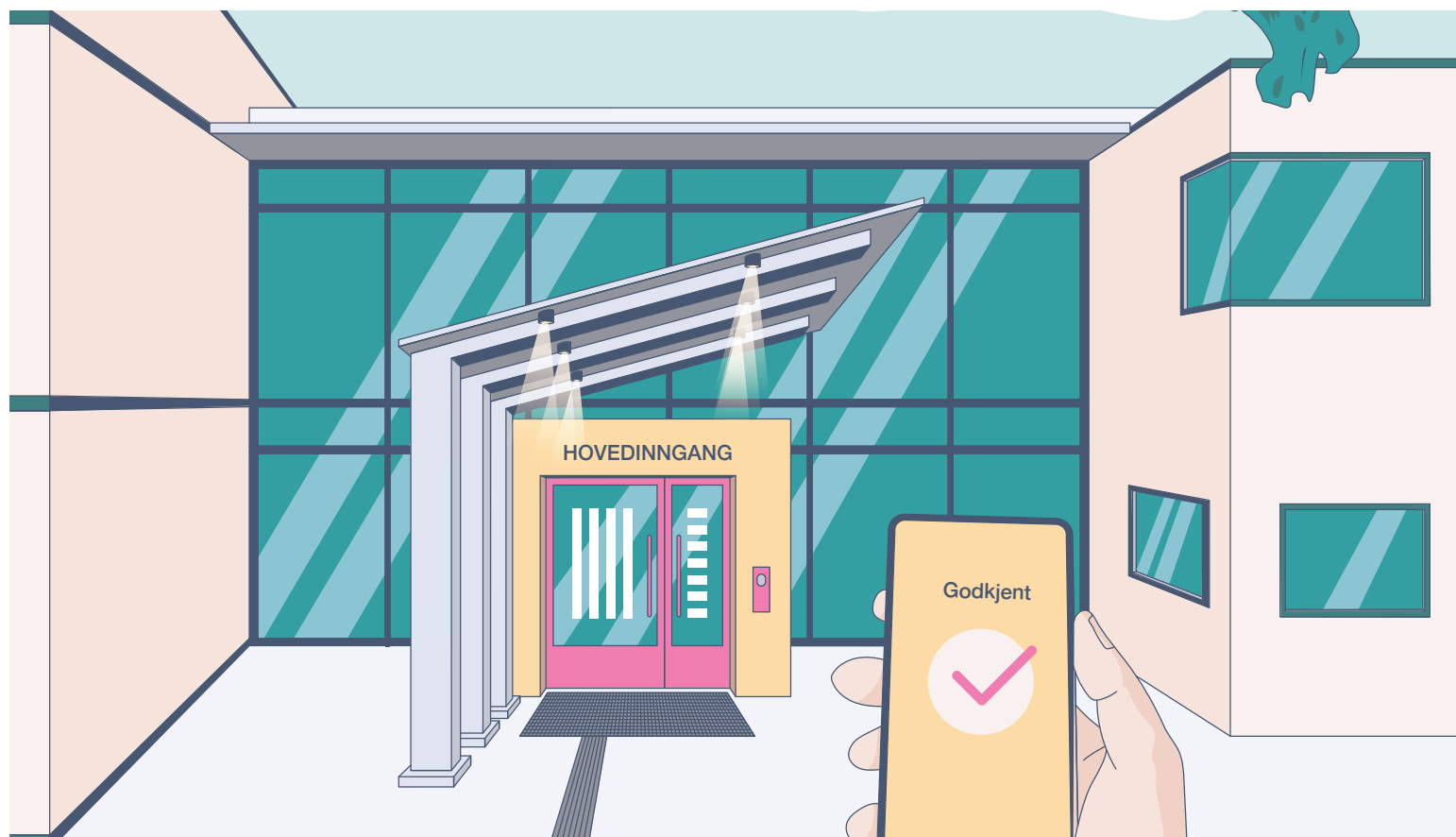
mapping



THE BRIDGE: The wooden bridge will take the form of a large circle.
(Ill: NSW Arkitektur)



AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES: The intergenerational park will have much to offer. Its most symbolic feature will be a wooden bridge, built to show the ground level prior to the landslide. (Ill: NSW Arkitektur)



Useful assessment tools

Preparation and planning are key to good results. Here are a few good assessment tools for universal design that municipalities can use to size up what is needed when trying to make an area more readily accessible and age-friendly.

Mapping Authority assessment app

The Norwegian Mapping Authority has developed its own assessment app to catalogue the accessibility of outdoor infrastructure.

From car parks to parks, by way of hiking trails and ski trails, to accessible toilets, seating areas, bathing ramps, campfire grills and lean-to shelters: the assessment app provides an overview of existing outdoor facilities, what the area is like,

and what might be done to improve accessibility. Its focus is on obstacles related to mobility and vision.

The Mapping Authority's online map ([Norgeskart.no](https://norgeskart.no)) will inform you whether an area has already been assessed or not, and what the assessment shows. When the app is used in the field, the assessment tool mainly requests yes/no answers or numbers. It is updated to reflect current standards. Responses



mapping

are entered directly into the database linked to Norgeskart.no. Data can also be retrieved as a file or a service via Geonorge.no. These data are freely available.

The mapping authority has developed useful guidelines:

[Use of the app as an assessment tool](#)

[Assessment in urban areas](#)

[Assessment in recreational areas](#)

Building for everyone

Building for everyone maps both buildings and outdoor public spaces. The tool provides both a broad overview and detailed insight. Users get immediate feedback about any deviations – for instance if they have forgotten to register something, or if the measurements they have registered deviate from the technical regulations for construction (TEK) and recommendations in pertinent standards.

Are there lifts? Accessible toilets? Do side entryways have ramps? Yes/no questions like these give you a broad impression of what could be improved. But the tool can also provide detailed information about the accessibility status of both buildings and outdoor public spaces.

The tool is comprised of three modules: one for administration, one for registration, and one for the public. The first two can be used free of charge by municipalities, county councils and other authorities. Once an area has been inspected and registered, users can retrieve an action report summarising what needs to be done.

Assessment for small municipalities

At the request of KS (The Norwegian Association of local and regional authorities), Solveig Dale, universal design adviser in Trondheim municipality, has developed two free booklets with advice and tips to facilitate assessment of developed outdoor areas and public buildings. The booklets (in Norwegian) contain specific checklists, are richly illustrated, and also aim to increase awareness about universal design:

- Public buildings – Universal design, assessment, tips and advice
- Developed outdoor areas - Universal design, assessment, tips and advice

→ Can be ordered free of charge from ordre@lupro.no

“IK Bygg” – Internal control of buildings

IK Bygg is an internal control tool from the Norwegian Federation of Municipal Engineers. It was developed in response to a need identified by municipal property managers, who wanted a better overview than that offered by binders containing status reports about universal design in various buildings.

The result is a comprehensive yet intuitive tool that can be used without prior training. Based on Norwegian standards, IK Bygg defines three status levels: green indicates that everything is in order, yellow that something is not quite right, and red signals serious deviations.

The assessment is completely digital and is done in an app that requires a subscription. Each building is described in columns with green, yellow and red squares. By clicking on a square, users can access information explaining why that colour is shown. The results can be exported as a digital report.

The system is based on existing laws and regulations, and is revised annually in collaboration with government representatives. ●

Apply for grants

You can apply to the Mapping Authority for funding for assessments. Every year since 2015, about 20–25 projects have been awarded assessment funding.

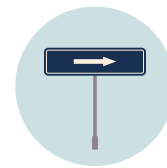
Check out: Kartverket.no for more information about deadlines and criteria.



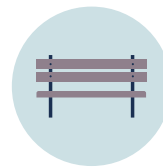
RESPONSIVE DISTRICT: Bjørg Duve is impressed by how responsive the district of Ullern is. One outcome is the path she is walking on. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



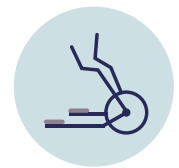
footpath/hiking trail



signage



benches



exercise equipment



A meeting place for the entire neighbourhood

Bjørg Duve (74) planted the seed. The district of Ullern in southwestern Oslo tended the seedling. The result is a footpath and an activity area that brings the neighbourhood's old and young people together.

The TV was on in Bjørg Duve's home that evening in September 2020. Suddenly something on the evening news caught her attention. The news feature from southern Norway was about Norway's first hiking trail for people with dementia. A series of wooden stakes topped with yellow paint made it possible for them to walk on their own; the paint made sure they could find their way back. And Bjørg thought, "Couldn't we use this in Ullern as well?"

As one of the driving forces behind a series of meetings arranged as part of a drive for an age-friendly community, she knew what to do. At the next meeting, she seized the opportunity to make a proposal.

"You see, I have the good fortune to live in a district that invites residents to share their ideas", Duve says. One place for sharing ideas is at MandagsSTOPPEN, a series of Monday meetings which from time to time include brainstorming sessions. The meetings are part of An Age-Friendly District, a collaboration between Ullern District and Ullern Cultural Centre. Duve herself both initiated and leads the meetings.

"I come up with ideas, and then the municipality figures out if they're feasible. To my delight, this idea panned out", grins Duve, standing at the trailhead.

It runs from the dementia care homes on Lilleaker Road, past Ullern Health Centre, and ends behind Ullern Nursing Home, which is surrounded by ordinary housing.

Planted a seed

Mari Bilben, senior adviser and coordinator of An Age-Friendly District, stands nodding at Duve's side.

"It's important that green areas in the neighbourhood are adapted so they can be used by people of all ages. Outdoor public spaces should be developed in collaboration with older people to ensure age-friendly local environments and areas where seniors can make use of what the community offers and be active", she says.

"To achieve this, we ought to focus more on joint use of spaces and on activities for all generations. Through Memory Lane and this space for activities, we have facilitated multipurpose use of this outdoor area by the nursing home, day and health centres, low-threshold mental health services, and dementia care homes. This contributes towards getting more people to use Memory Lane, and – by staying active – experience greater well-being and fitness as they age. This will benefit physical, psychological and social health across generations", says Bilben.

She gives Bjørg Duve much of the credit for Memory Lane: "The project probably wouldn't have got off the ground without Bjørg's proposal. I needed a seed, an idea, and it all grew from there. That's what's so fun about brainstorming, picking up suggestions, looking at them, finding out if there's anything we can move forward with."

"The starting point was a path for people with dementia, and it ended up being a path for all the residents of Oslo, but especially for the local people, a universally designed path for everyone: children, young people, old people, disabled people – and people with dementia", says Mari Bilben.

Evolved

In addition, they developed an activity space beside the path, right beside the nursing home.



→ “During a broad survey of seniors in 2019 someone suggested that an unused green area elsewhere in the district be used for activities. For various reasons, it couldn’t be done there, so while working on this project I thought that a trail and an activity area could be combined.”

In collaboration with the nursing home, it was decided that their café could be open to everyone who uses the trail and the activity area. The trail was also connected to the nursing home’s enclosed sensory garden. The activity area has benches with pedals for long and short legs, a pétanque terrain, and places to play chess.

“This wouldn’t have happened either, without close collaboration with the nursing home. They have been involved from the start and together we’ve developed both the placement and content of the activity area. The nursing home also offers low-threshold mental health services, and that’s where the wish for activities such as chess and pétanque came from”, says Bilben.

Name competition

Every sign along the path in Ullern District bears the name Memory Lane – thanks to Ann Marie Bjørgo. The local paper Aker-sposten announced a name competition, and her suggestion won.

“I thought about the old people, perhaps with dementia, who would be using the path, and loved ones walking at their side. Maybe they’re reminiscing. I also thought about making new memories together along this path”, Bjørgo explains.

Taken seriously

Bilben, Bjørgo and Duve are delighted with the results, both the path and the activity area, and the five new benches placed in the area. The seating is also a result of close dialogue between users and the district.

“The district learned early on that the older people wanted benches. So we went public in the newspaper and asked residents to tell us where they needed a bench. The response was overwhelming and the first bench had already been installed in 2019”, says Mari Bilben.

“It’s easy to imagine that when the district asks for advice,

your suggestion ends up in a drawer somewhere. But here they’ve realised that they can’t figure out what we need if they just stay in their offices. In Ullern District, they listen to what we have to say and take us seriously. That’s balm for our souls”, says Bjørg Duve, approvingly.

“And it makes work much more fun for us”, adds Mari Bilben.

“The inhabitants’ voices mean everything, actually. They’re the ones who point the way forward. So my bosses and I have to see what we can do within the boundaries of our mandate.” ●

Pilot for dementia-friendly signage

Along Memory Lane, there are twelve posts and ten signs with information about the path and local history. When working with the signs, senior adviser Mari Bilben asked the senior citizen council for assistance.

“I was struggling to find good ideas about what to write on the signs with local history, and thought I needed help. My meeting with the senior citizen council resolved the challenge and I got lots of excellent input.”

The signs and posts are part of a pilot project for dementia-friendly signage.

“The City of Oslo has an ambitious design programme focused on universal design. We also have principles for how to tell a good story. We’ve tested them on several target groups and obtained data on what is required: colours, good contrast between those colours, and short texts – no longer than 400 characters”, says Bård Jemtland, responsible for the graphic profile of the City of Oslo.

“Oslo is the first municipality in Norway that is explicitly addressing use of dementia-friendly signage in its graphic profile”, he says.



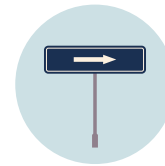
SHOWING THE WAY:

Markers like these help people find their way. The point is that you can always see the next marker.

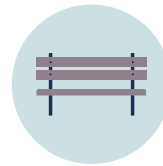
(Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



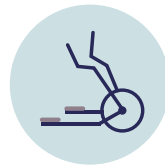
footpath/hiking trail



signage



benches



exercise equipment

Lessons learned

«“The project probably wouldn’t have got off the ground without Bjørg’s proposal, I would never have thought of it on my own.”

“I was struggling to find good ideas about what to write on the signs with local history, and thought I needed help. My meeting with the senior citizen council resolved the impasse.”

“The nursing home has been involved from the start and together we’ve developed both the placement and content of the activity area.”

Mari Bilben



Co-creation

Monday meetings, a series of meetings and an arena for co-creation, part of part of An Age-Friendly District, a collaboration between Ullern District and Ullern Cultural Centre

Use of the local newspaper to elicit input from residents



ACTIVITY AREA: An activity area for everyone was established right behind the nursing home. The choice to establish a pétanque terrain came through close dialogue between the nursing home and Mari Bilben, senior adviser and coordinator of An Age-Friendly District. Here Bilben and Bjørg Duve are trying out the terrain. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



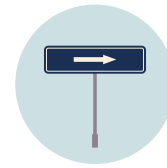
THE WOMAN BEHIND THE NAME: Anne Marie Bjørgo usually never wins anything. But she won big with her name suggestion: Memory Lane. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



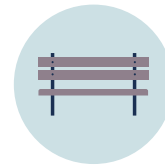
HAPPY CHRISTMAS: Full speed and plenty of fun on weekdays and holidays alike. Town square, activity space, sensory garden and hiking trails make for a lively bustle that raises the spirits of young and old. (Photo: Håvard Dyrø)



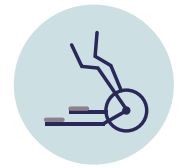
vegetation/plants



signage



benches



exercise equipment



Created a hub for community

Roads, activities and relationships intersect at Frøya Health Square. This generates vitality and exuberance – just as the planners had hoped.

She was prepared, Renate Loktu Sandvik, municipal manager of health and social affairs in Frøya municipality. At the old nursing home, the beds had been washed. Here, at the new one, the municipal manager and her team picked up the baton: made the beds and wheeled them into place at Frøya Health Square, the building they had been working on for so long, ever since the project Tomorrow's Health Care in 2016. Everyone helped out with the move: politicians, employees, next-of-kin and schoolchildren. Ten teams were at work; food and coffee were donated, and by day's end, everything had been moved.

"This was a success from day one, and everyone in the community of Frøya feels ownership, one way or another", says Renate Loktu Sandvik.

The hub

The old nursing home was ten minutes' drive from the centre of town. Frøya Health Square is just ten minutes' walk from it, and is built in a way that links multiple functions together. Facilitating co-localisation in this way, and having so many opportunities and services so close to each other, is great age-friendly development.

"The goal was to create a place and an arena for social activities, a hub for the community. Culture, activity and well-being are central and fundamental elements in the overall care package we will offer our residents. Meaningful activities are important regardless of a person's age", says Loktu Sandvik.

The result generates vitality and exuberance, indoors and out. There's a town square, activity space and a sensory

garden, and on the hiking trails, daycare groups walk to the centre of town, employees walk to work, visitors go to the Health Square, and older people go to the senior centres.

"It's about enjoying life, because the fact that you're old doesn't mean you don't need relationships with other generations: networks are incredibly important for quality of life."

Involvement right from the start

Close involvement of user groups was in place right from the start.

"Indeed, actually from the moment we announced an architectural competition", says Loktu Sandvik, who is convinced that this close involvement is one of the key factors for a successful result.

"Another factor for success is to have both an external and an internal project leader. This has resulted in close and valuable discussions with employees and relatives who know the intended residents extremely well, and who have been very committed. As the external project leader joked: 'You know you're thoroughly involved when you go to the shopping centre and encounter so many ladies who call you by your first name that your wife asks you to explain yourself,'" says municipal manager Loktu Sandvik, laughing.

Parallel planning

Planning the outdoor area in parallel with the building is also essential.

"Often you start working on the outdoor areas only afterwards. Here, our goal was to have lively activity everywhere right away."



→ That goal was reached – and then some. The Health Square has become its own little district.

“This has become a meeting place, not just for those who live at the Health Square, but also for seniors who live at home. We have created an arena that has become more accessible and inclusive.”

It has become so popular that municipal employees from all over Norway come to observe and to learn.

“The interest has been so great that we could use a full-time employee just to show people around!” •

***“This was a success
from day one”***

Renate Loktu Sandvik

Lessons learned

“Often you start working on the outdoor areas only afterwards. Here, our goal was to have lively activity everywhere right away.”

“Involvement right from the start.”

“Having both an external and an internal project leader resulted in close and valuable discussions with employees and relatives who know the intended residents extremely well.”

Renate Loktu Sandvik



Co-creation

Public meetings

• Regular meetings with senior citizens and user councils/interest groups with status reports and feedback on input

• Frequent newsletters and “house meetings” to update all employees
Information leaflets to all Frøya residents, Health Square inhabitants and their relatives

• Separate meetings for residents and relatives

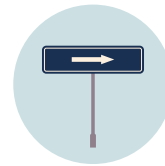
• The project had several sub-projects where users and the senior citizen council, union representatives and employees were represented

• Participation in a feasibility study

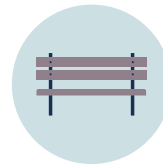




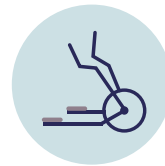
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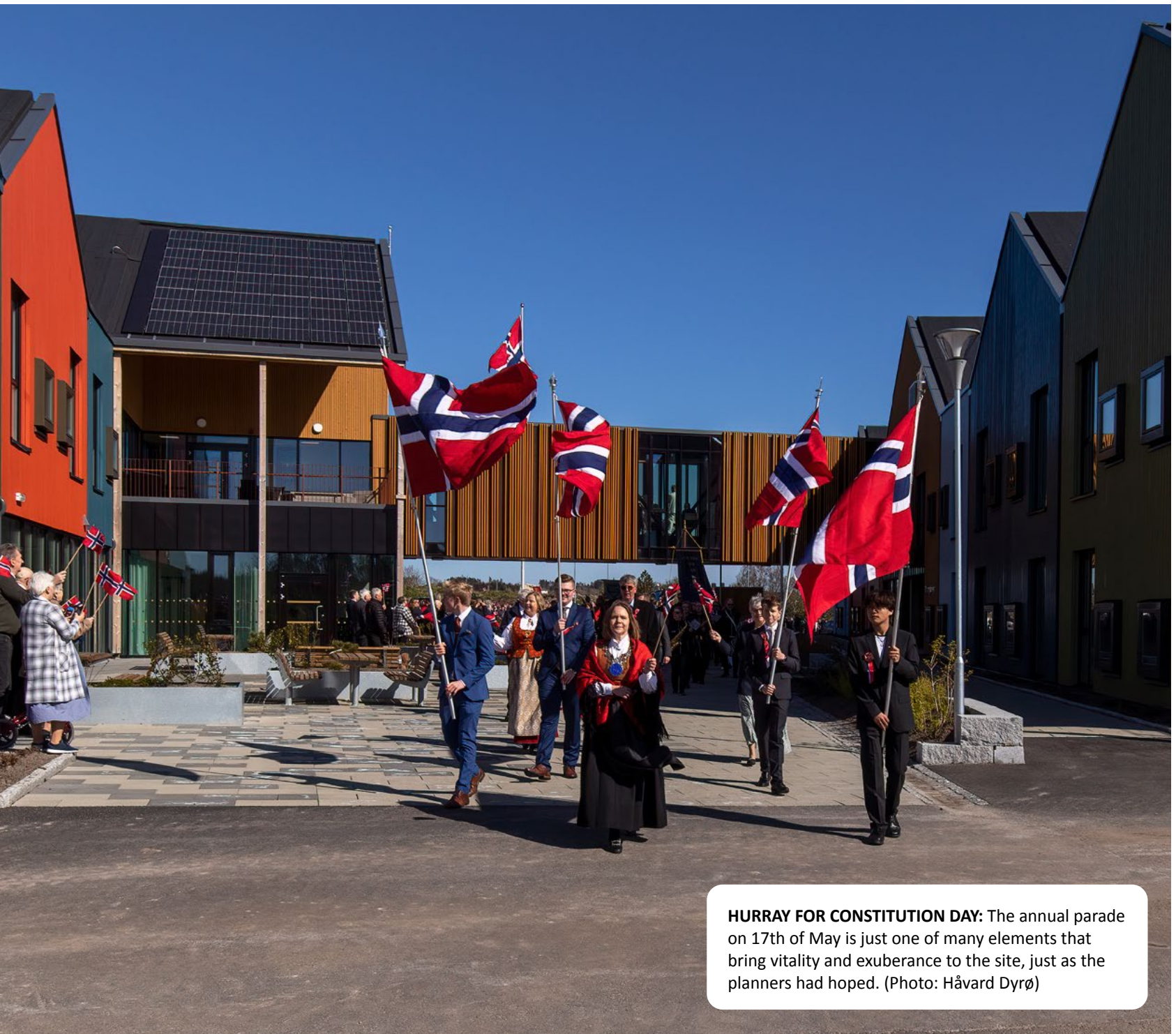
signage



benches



exercise equipment



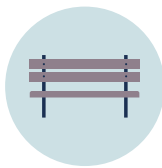
HURRAY FOR CONSTITUTION DAY: The annual parade on 17th of May is just one of many elements that bring vitality and exuberance to the site, just as the planners had hoped. (Photo: Håvard Dyrø)

A QUICK BREAK: There's always time to be sociable in the meadow, where the charming storehouse has become a natural gathering place. Left to right: groundskeeper Terje Bakken, health worker Jo Johnsrud and special needs nurse Rosita Eliassen chatting with regular visitors Ivar Skutle (44) and Stian Myhre Hansen (24). (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)





footpath/hiking trail



benches



vegetation/plants



tables



lean-to shelter



campfire grill



Rosita Eliassen, special needs nurse at Sørvald housing and treatment centre

Hustle and bustle in the meadow

A few simple measures have transformed an unused patch of grass into a place for community and activity all year round. It brings together neighbours, residents and clients at Sørvald housing and treatment centre in Lillestrøm municipality.

The Sørvald centre offers daytime activities and has three long-term wards for people with dementia; the housing and environmental service has two staffed activity centres and relief services for children and adults. The meadow is open to all, not just those affiliated with the centre, so people of all ages and all levels of functional ability meet there. For that, they can thank the initiator Rosita Eliassen.

"It began in 2015, when I received a subsidy to raise my own chicks for Easter, and we built a henhouse on the big fallow meadow outside the building. The other units soon joined us and together we thought up new ways to develop the meadow. Our project is in every way a feel-good story", says Eliassen, who works as a special needs nurse at the dementia unit at Sørvald housing and treatment centre.



→ Animals and meeting places

Today, the meadow accommodates both animals and meeting places, as well as a series of events. It is a place for activity and social interaction, for close contact with animals and nature – within safe boundaries.

“The meadow has become a place for intergenerational meetings. A safe little world for everyone. Everything that’s age-friendly and dementia-friendly is also good for our youngsters”, says Eliassen. She adds that local daycare centres and people living in the neighbourhood frequently visit the meadow, which also offers a lean-to shelter and a campfire grill.

Residents participate actively in taking care of the animals and the site itself. Volunteers recently built a fence and a storehouse.

“Their participation is important as co-creation, and also provides plenty of physical activity”, says Eliassen.

Over the years, the centre has applied for funding from several sources and recruited volunteers to continue developing the meadow. Among other things, the County Governor contributed funds to build the storehouse.

No stone unturned

“Now we intend to apply for money to upgrade the gravel path around the meadow to universal design standard by putting down asphalt. At present it isn’t accessible enough”, says Eliassen, and concludes: “If anyone had told me in 2015 what we would have achieved by 2023, I wouldn’t have believed them! Now many of us dream of having piglets in the meadow in summer, so that will be our next project. User co-creation means that the project is constantly evolving and changing – in step with changes in the user groups.” •

Lessons learned

“Everything doesn’t need to be planned in detail on day one.”

“Think outside the box!”

Rosita Eliassen



Co-creation

Initially, a group of relatively young people with dementia and mental health challenges gave input on what activities the meadow could offer

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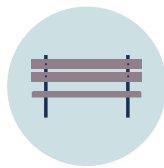
Further development through regular dialogue with residents, old and new

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Today, residents from all units are involved in feeding the animals and tending the meadow



footpath/hiking trail



benches



vegetation/plants



tables



lean-to shelter



campfire grill



ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS: Residents and service users at Sørvald housing and treatment centre contribute to maintenance and animal care at the meadow: 1) and 2) Ivar Skutle (44) and Claes Vangen (64) clear away twigs and leaves. 3) Stian Myhre Hansen (24) checks for eggs in the hens' nesting boxes. 4) Rosita Eliassen helps Claes Vangen fill the bird feeder. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

THEME 3: PARKS AND HIKING TRAILS



Lene Hennum,
architectural engineer
and adviser, Vestfold and
Telemark County Council



co-creation



footpath/hiking trail

Dedicated local enthusiasts

Local engagement, a creative approach and broad collaboration are needed to bring about appropriate solutions.

That is what Lene Hennum believes. For three decades, this architectural engineer has worked within Vestfold and Telemark County Council, where she is an adviser.

“Over these years I’ve had plenty of ups and downs working with soft values – which are pretty hardcore when it comes to making local environments attractive. Some themes generate a lot of fine words and agreements – live your whole life, local environment, local and urban development – but efforts to put them into practice get very little economic support. You have to be creative, otherwise you end up with generic textbook solutions instead of tailor-made local adaptations”, says Hennum.

Tailor-made

Creative tailoring is precisely what the county council has been doing. One example is professional and economic support to establish a universally designed hiking trail over the old railway line – a project that has expanded year by year. It was initiated by a community service group in Neslandsvatn, headed by enthusiast Sigtru Nesland. Good follow-up came from Arne Ettestad in Drangedal municipality and the architecture firm Feste landskap, among others.

“The community service group wanted this hiking trail to become reality, so they raised local involvement, joined with the municipality in contacting the railway line’s owner, BaneNor, and increased the pressure. At the same time, they asked: What can we do ourselves? What if we locals take charge of one part, and leave other parts to the municipality, BaneNor, the County Governor, the Norwegian Environment Agency, and people with various roles in the county council?” recalls Hennum.

Nurturing the spark

She emphasises that in such processes, it is essential that municipalities have “the development gene”, so they don’t say “we’ll check and see” but instead nurture the spark of initiative. The same goes for other authorities that receive inquiries. Can we manage to think practically and chip in on creative planning, implementation, maintenance and operation?

“It goes both ways. It’s complicated for a municipality never to receive feedback from the community. Basically, it’s all about people. There are enthusiasts everywhere, at all levels, from grass-roots all the way up to the national level”, Hennum points out.

Many values

Many stakeholders – community service groups, enthusiasts and politicians – can take part of the credit for the lengthened and increasingly diverse hiking trail, which now runs from Neslandsvatn station to the old station in Kragerø. There’s a simple reason for the county council to invest in universally designed hiking trails close to populated areas:

“That’s where most people live. It’s important to make it easy for people to go on excursions and enjoy outdoor leisure activities where they live, whether they’re walking, using a wheelchair, or riding in a pram. Trails like that provide new, nearby hiking destinations for seniors, schoolchildren and toddlers in daycare. Visitors might combine it with a visit to a café. These investments bring about many good things. They promote public health, are age-friendly, intergenerational, and benefit both individuals and the local community”, says Hennum.

She points out that going out on an excursion can mean a lot in many ways.



→ “We know that more people die of loneliness than in traffic accidents. It’s hard to know what will work against something so complex, but maybe hiking trails like these can spur people to individual activities where they meet other people or simply enjoy nature on their own. Taking that first step out the door is tough for people who are struggling. Little meeting places along a trail are low-hanging fruit. We don’t really know how well it works, but a bench has room for two, as they say. A trail like that can influence both physical, social and mental health”, says Hennum.

Local forces

To achieve something, Hennum believes a good way to start is to organise milieus for professionals and interest groups, at national, regional and community levels – contexts that bring together public and private sectors plus volunteers. At the national level, support for competence networks, planning, protection of outdoor recreation areas, and sports betting charities are important. Regionally, the county council collaborates broadly with the County Governor, the public roads administration, volunteer organisations, senior citizen councils and associations for disabled people to set up municipal competence networks – and with the enthusiasts who effectuate construction of universally designed hiking trails near the city centre. Here we see a culture of sharing.

“Locally, it’s good for the municipality to engage schools and daycare centres, local resources, shopkeepers, clubs and associations. They can be hunting and fishing clubs, women’s groups, history clubs, hiking organisations or scouts. Their participation can involve responsibility, cooperation and implementation. Local cooperative ventures can be established, for instance to apply to charities and foundations for volunteers, whereas the municipality can apply for economic support from national and regional bodies. You have to be creative and think across specialisations, do your best for your own community while still being part of the county. All 23 municipalities in Vestfold and Telemark County have at least one trail near the centre of town that has been assessed for universal design and has improvements planned.”

Touching interactions

She also highlights the emotional impact of the work.

“I’m touched when I think about what municipalities, clubs and organisations achieve, how they work together to accomplish something that’s good for the community. The county council tries to achieve what we can with the tools we have available. When I see the volunteer spirit and the interactions between happy people and their community, when I see how simple measures can have such a positive impact on social development, then I think we can attain goals we might not have considered, and that can’t be measured”, says adviser Lene Hennum at Vestfold and Telemark County Council. ●

Lessons learned

“You have to be creative and think across specialisations, do your best for your own community while still being part of the county.”

“Locally, it’s good for the community to engage schools and daycare centres, local resources, shopkeepers, clubs and associations.”

“It’s essential that municipalities have ‘the development gene’, so they don’t say ‘we’ll check and see’ but instead nurture the spark of initiative.”

Lene Hennum



co-creation



footpath/hiking trail



FULL OF LIFE: The old railway line has become a favourite for many walkers. In some places along the way, the old rails are still visible, which adds an extra dimension to the excursion.
(All photos: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

The hiking trail that grows

Wide, flat and long. These words describe the disused railway line that is now being transformed into an ever-lengthening public footpath.

The project to establish universally designed footpaths close to the centre of town emerged in Telemark in 2012. Wholly in line with national goals for an inclusive society, footpaths in each of the 18 municipalities were assessed and recommendations were made for how they could be improved to become accessible for everyone. The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) has repeatedly supported this regional cooperation.

Until 1989, trains swooshed by on the railway between Neslandsvatn in Drangedal and the town of Kragerø. People replaced trains a few years ago, when the first segment of the footpath opened at Neslandsvatn. In October 2022, the segment between Eskilt and Merkebekk was completed. This made the walking and cycling path a full 5.5 kilometres long.

After negotiations with the railway property manager firm Bane NOR Eiendom, Drangedal municipality took over the railway line, which is a nationally protected recreation area. Funding from the Norwegian Environment Agency, the Savings Bank Foundation DNB, sports betting charities, traffic safety funding from the county council plus municipal efforts ensured that the plans for a footpath became reality. Senior adviser Roger Jensen at the office of the County Governor has this to say:

“The new footpath is fantastic. Close to nature, practical and pleasant. It means a lot for how the place evolves, and serves as a social meeting place offering many different activities to locals and visitors.” ●

Quality of life by the sea

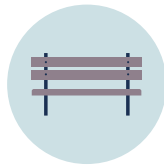
Stord identifies itself as maritime, heart and soul. Access to the seafront is therefore paramount to the age-friendly development of this municipality.

A HURLY-BURLY OF VOICES: Astrid Halvorsen (81) and Nils Tore Gram Økland (75) own two of the strong local voices that help ensure age-friendly development in Leirvik. Their input is important in a time when older people make up a growing proportion of the population. An age-friendly community allows more people to manage longer without municipal services, helping resolve the demographic challenges of the future. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)





footpath/hiking trail



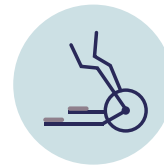
benches



illumination



vegetation/plants



exercise
equipment



tables

“Don’t be a quiet old lady!”

Astrid Halvorsen (81)

The sun shines low over the water and glitters in frost crystals in Leirvik, the main town in rapidly developing Stord municipality. The new housing facilities that is springing up in the city centre is especially attractive to older residents, who after a lifetime as single-home owners want a simpler life in a flat – near the waterfront.

On the newly refurbished, universally designed waterfront promenade, we meet two of them:

“I’m a grouchy old lady”, says Astrid Halvorsen (81).

“No, you’re plain-spoken”, quips Nils Tore Gram Økland (75).

“But we have to be a bit cheeky. We can’t be invisible simply because we’re old”, Halvorsen retorts.

And they both laugh heartily.

Seniors with commitment

Økland can look back on a long career in municipal politics and has represented the senior citizen council in a working group established in 2020, when Stord decided to become an age-friendly community and demand age-friendliness in all development. Halvorsen volunteered to participate in the open dialogue that kick-started the process.

“My husband was disabled and now I’m an old lady myself, so I’m focused on accessibility”, she says, to explain her commitment.

“I became a politician because I wanted to make society better. Now my political involvement targets older people and I’ve become much more aware of what seniors need than when I was an ordinary politician”, says Økland.

“In many ways, the fact that Stord has decided to become an age-friendly community means a shift in culture where planning and implementing policy are concerned”, he continues.

Along with others in the working group, he has helped ensure that age-friendliness is an intrinsic part of Stord’s ambitious strategy for urban spaces.

“Co-creation is the most important factor in reaching the target group”, says public health coordinator Tove Vikanes Agdestein.

She leads the working group, which is comprised of three municipal administrators and four Stord residents, one of whom is on the contact committee for refugees and immigrants.

“That’s another group it’s important to listen to”, says Vikanes Agdestein.

The municipality also works closely with stakeholders in the city centre, such as businesses and developers.

Popular promenade

One of the most important results of the co-creation process so far is a major overhaul of the waterfront promenade, where several new housing complexes now stand overlooking Stord’s historic harbour.

“Many people told us they didn’t think the harbour was accessible enough. They wanted more meeting places and better opportunities to go walking along the quay, where they can experience maritime life”, says Vikanes Agdestein.

One of the challenges was that a lot of the shoreline was privately owned and little of it was universally designed. Today, the promenade has dropped kerbs, orientation lines and conveniently placed benches along the south side of the inlet. It ends at the tiny Onarheim Park at the tip of the breakwater overlooking the entry to the harbour, where Sissel Tolaas’

→ monumental sculpture Stordøra from 2006 now stands. The waterfront promenade and the park are popular for excursions, especially among seniors living in the centre of town. In the summer, exercise equipment is set up which anyone may use.

“Universal design is a prerequisite for an active old age, and to make sure that everyone can make use of the areas we develop”, says Vikanes Agdestein.

Dreaming big

Big plans are in the works for further development of Leirvik harbour. There will be opportunities for commercial activities related to the harbour, such as a new hotel and a new park.

“We dream of extending the promenade to the north side of the harbour inlet and connecting it to the network of hiking

trails that lead away from the centre of town”, says harbour manager Inge Espenes, who has earned praise from the public health coordinator for his personal commitment to making the harbour attractive to more people.

The challenge on the north side is that several of the waterfront properties are privately owned. But Espenes and Vikanes Agdestein are optimists. They are convinced that much can be achieved through continued broad co-creation and dialogue.

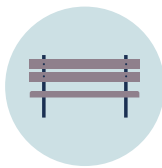
“When we get all parties involved, not only do we receive excellent input, but we also foster goodwill. Our experience is that involvement reduces resistance and conflict, and more people understand the big picture. That’s why it’s so important to spend time on it; the positive payback is enormous”, says Vikanes Agdestein. She takes particular care to involve reticent



THE SEA IN THEIR HEARTS: Harbour manager Inge Espenes is passionate about making the waterfront accessible to the people of Leirvik. He has worked closely with public health coordinator Tove Vikanes Agdestein to renovate the waterfront promenade. “For seniors who have exchanged their house for a flat, their new ‘garden’ is the harbour area in the centre of town”, says Vikanes Agdestein. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



footpath/hiking trail



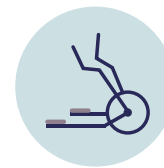
benches



illumination



vegetation/plants



exercise equipment



tables



MEETING PLACE ON THE TOWN SQUARE:

The pleasant new meeting place on the square, with benches and planters, is the result of input from the working group for an age-friendly Stord. (Photo: Stord municipality)

people who don't usually participate in the public debate.

"For example, we had information stands in busy areas – squares, shopping centres, along footpaths", she says, and continues: "If you make a place accessible for children and older people, then you essentially make it accessible for everyone. And that's really the objective of our efforts to establish an age-friendly community."

Activity park for all ages

Another new urban space, one that originated directly from the population's own wish list, is the activity park near Kulturhuset, Leirvik's community centre.

"This is the result of input from young people. We took them seriously and gave them what they wanted: a skatepark", says Vikanes Agdestein.

The skatepark shares space with an outdoor stage and a pétanque terrain, which was requested by the active local pétanque club.

"By doing it this way, we have facilitated intergenerational meetings", says Vikanes Agdestein, and adds that they considered it crucial to place the activity park centrally, where it can also give joy to spectators and rouse their curiosity.



Co-creation

Open process to gather input on strategies and plans



Working group focused on age-friendly development



Open dialogue meeting for all town residents



Broad surveys of seniors in several parts of the municipality



Information stands on squares, at shopping centres and along footpaths



Collaboration with schools and daycare centres



→ Visible older people

“The most important thing we’ve achieved? That older people are now visible”, says Astrid Halvorsen without hesitation.

Nils Tore Gram Økland nods in agreement.

“We’ve been heard. For instance about viewing the waterfront promenade as an artery serving the city centre, and potentially connecting it to nature through universally designed pathways to the surrounding hiking trails. That’s why we have to coordinate our work with all plans for the city centre”, says Økland.

He continues: “I made a presentation about age-friendly communities for the municipal council. I seized the opportunity to suggest that 100,000 NOK be set aside for more benches in the city centre in 2023. And they did that.” ●

1) ACTIVE TO 100: As a former afforestation manager, Arne Knutsen (88) was personally involved in the group that developed a network of trails around Leirvik on Stord. The group was created when public health coordinator Tove Vikanes Agdestein relayed the community’s seniors’ desire for a low-threshold opportunity to go on excursions with others. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

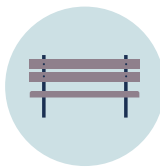
2) ACCESSIBLE TRAILS: From the waterfront in central Leirvik, a network of trails lead out into the beautiful countryside. There is a desire for even more interconnecting trails in the future – universally designed and illuminated. Walkers, left to right: Liv Nordfonn (81), Sissel Bjelland (74), Fredrik Fladmark (91) and Gerda Øen (70). (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

3) ACTIVITY PARK FOR INTERGENERATIONAL MEETINGS: Freezing temperatures don’t stop Stord Pétanque Club members Per Geir Vatna (68), Odd Angeltveit (64) and Øyvind Bjørkås (73) from meeting in the activity park near the community centre. After school, they are often joined by children and teenagers amusing themselves at the skatepark in the background. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

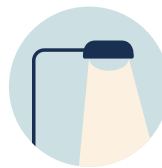




footpath/hiking trail



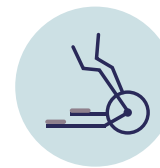
benches



illumination



vegetation/plants



exercise
equipment



tables

Lessons learned

“Find ways to involve the reticent people who don’t usually participate in the public debate. For example, we had information stands in populated areas – squares, shopping centres, along footpaths.”

“Everything becomes easier when age-friendliness and universal design are intrinsic parts of all planning documents and strategies.”

“Being included co-creation processes is valuable in itself – being heard and feeling that one’s opinion matters.”

Tove Vikanes Agdestein

Developing norms for outdoor spaces

Stord municipality has applied to the county council for funding to develop its own norms for outdoor spaces – to be integrated into the land use plan. These norms must take into account everything from legal requirements for universal design, via wishes and needs expressed by residents, to Stord’s unique qualities and local traditions.

“When we build on the qualities and distinctive features Stord possesses, and are attentive to people’s needs and desires, we strengthen our residents’ sense of belonging”, says public health coordinator Tove Agdestein Vikanes.

The norms will serve as guidelines for both municipal and private developers.

“It must be clear what expectations we place on our future outdoor spaces.”



(Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

Took action

This bench is neither new nor universally designed, but it’s better than nothing. Astrid Halvorsen took action when she heard a 91-year-old acquaintance sigh plaintively.

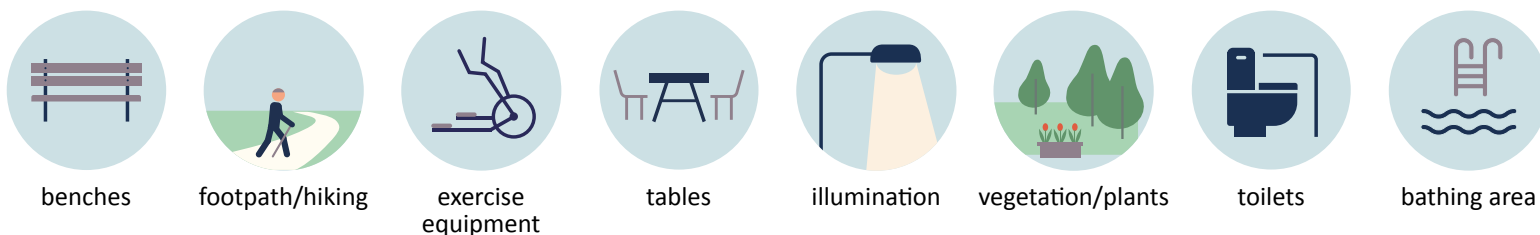
“She said to me, ‘Imagine if we could have a bench here.’ There are about 50 flats across the street, including care homes. For some people it’s a long walk from home to the shops, unless they can take a break”, says Halvorsen.

She contacted administrators at the community centre, and an old bench was retrieved from storage. Astrid continues her campaign to get the municipality to install a proper universally designed bench. It’s important to scrutinise the benches that have already been installed, to see if they can be made more accessible, or replaced with universally designed age-friendly benches.

“Little things like that mean so much”, says Halvorsen.



NO COINCIDENCE: After visiting other activity parks, the senior citizen council chose this exercise setup. It has self-explanatory equipment that invites people to use their muscles. Here we see Eli Valleraunet in the foreground. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



New life grows on old fields

Midtsandtangen used to be farmland. During World War II it housed defence facilities. Now it has been transformed into a lush public recreation site.

Calling this 15 hectare tract of land lush is no exaggeration. With its many apple, pear and plum trees, red currant and raspberry bushes, herbs and other edible plants – 4500 in all – Midtsandtangen is in fact the biggest kitchen garden in Trøndelag.

Pilot project

In 2005, the property was declared a nationally protected recreation area. Simultaneously, it became part of a pilot project about accessibility for disabled people, aiming to offer them better opportunities for outdoor recreation. The pilot project was done in collaboration between the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management, Malvik municipality, Trondheim's regional outdoor council, and Sør-Trøndelag county council and County Governor, and culminated in a competition inviting suggestions on how to redesign and use the old military base.

Plenty to choose from

At present, the age-friendly and universally designed area offers paths, a beach, a tidal basin, a café, benches, a sanitary facility, signage, rest areas with barbecue grills – and an outdoor gym, included at the recommendation of the senior citizen council. The politicians agreed and set aside 500,000 NOK. And now senior citizen council member Brit Aune stands admiring the result.

"This is absolutely fantastic. This is health promotion for everyone from zero to a hundred years old", she says. She and her friends Bente Nilsson, Eli Valleraunet and Kari Haagestad are

delighted about the outdoor gym and the rest of the recreation area.

"Everyone can get here because it's so accessible", they agree.

Municipality employees are also accessible. There is frequent and constructive communication between the municipality and the senior citizen council.

"The municipality is obliged to ensure that, but here it really works", expresses the group of friends.



THREE FIT WOMEN: The outdoor gym encourages activity year-round. From the left Bente Nilsson, Kari Haagenstad and Eli Valleraunet. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



Co-creation

Outdoor gym initiative from the senior citizen council

•
Senior citizen council organised site visits at other activity parks

•
Collaboration with senior citizen council, Malvik's culture department, physiotherapists and occupational therapists on the municipal everyday coping support team to select the best exercise equipment



BROAD EXPANSE: Midsandtangen covers 15 hectares. Under the pergola, benches on a wooden platform offer a cosy place to rest. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

→ Easier with illumination

The outdoor gym is encircled by streetlights, which also line the universally designed footpath – all 1500 metres of it. Most of the streetlights were in place in 2019, and the rest were set up in connection with the inauguration of the outdoor gym in 2021.

“That means the area can be used by more people year-round, because many feel safer walking where it is illuminated”, says Marit Hammer, cultural adviser at Malvik's recreation and culture department.

Protection means obligations

She is happy that the government sets aside protected recreation areas.

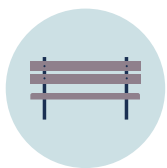
“It's great that areas can be protected in this way; it guarantees that the area can be used like this for 40 years, regardless of who is on the municipal council. Plenty of proposals

have suggested using this tract of land in other ways. State protection also means that the municipality has an obligation to make it available to everyone. When this work began in the mid 2000s, the term age-friendly wasn't part of our vocabulary; we talked more about universal design. But demographic trends have redirected our focus towards making the community age-friendly as well.”

“Our mantra is that if you facilitate for older people, you facilitate for everyone. If it's easy to get around with a walking aid, it's easy to push a pram too”, says Hammer.

The outdoor gym has self-instructing equipment for an entire range of exercises. The municipality also intends to offer group instruction from a physiotherapist.

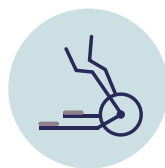
“That can make it easier to get started. Besides, it's a great way to meet people. An outdoor gym is good for both physical and mental health”, says Marit Hammer. ●



benches



footpath/hiking

exercise
equipment

tables



illumination



vegetation/plants



toilets



bathing area



1

1) WIDE AND WELL LIT: The difference between grass and asphalt provides contrast. The pavement is suitable for both wheelchairs and prams, offering opportunities for others who enjoy a walk. Seen here, left to right, are senior citizen council member Brit Aune, Bente Nilsson, Eli Valleranet, cultural adviser Marit Hammer and Kari Haagenstad. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

2) SIMPLE STEPS FOR SIMPLER STEPS: Walking on a well illuminated path gives a completely different experience. "Lighting in the park makes it easier for people to use the path year-round", says Marit Hammer. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



2

Lessons learned

"A single group or individual can't accomplish it; one department working alone can't get it done. Close cooperation between the senior citizen council, culture department staffers and the people at municipal operations was key to this project."
"People don't do something because the municipality tells them to, but because they themselves want to. That's the hallmark of voluntary work."

"Malvik is a relatively small place with good contact between voluntary forces and municipal officials. That can shorten the distance from idea to result."

Marit Hammer



HAPPY HIKING NEAR HOME:

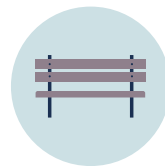
Vegard Alfsen and Per Kristian Fodstad have done a lot of hiking together in Norway and abroad. At home in Sarpsborg they have an elevated walkway close by. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



footpath/hiking trail



toilets



benches



tables



lean-to shelter

The hovering hiking trail

They've been friends for more than 50 years and hiked together in Norway and abroad. Now, even though Vegard's vision is quite poor, he can hike with confidence at Bryggestien – the Dock Walk – along the banks of Glomma.

His right eye has 40% vision, his left can only distinguish light from darkness – and he has a prosthetic ankle. This is reality for Vegard Alfsen from Sarpsborg.

"My eyesight has been poor for many years and has gotten even worse over the past year and a half, but I'm used to it", says 83-year-old Vegard.

Now he and Per Kristian Fodstad stand at the ready on Bryggestien in Sarpsborg. This wide wooden elevated walkway starts at Glengshølen, snaking its way along the shoreline of one of Glomma's backwaters. The third member of the party, Aage Rishøi (83), pulls into the parking area. He is chairman and Per Kristian is secretary of the volunteer group Tur- og Lysløypa i Sarpsborgmarka (TLS), which promotes local hiking trails and illuminated jogging circuits. In cooperation with Sarpsborg municipality, TLS got Bryggestien built just a short and sufficiently flat walk from the parking area.

Room for rest

The walkway is universally designed, with many benches, and ends near four lean-to shelters, tables, campfire grills and an accessible toilet. It is also linked to a 40-kilometre network of trails. TLS arranges two volunteer days every week, owns two cars and a lot of equipment to maintain trails and resting areas. They are skilled at writing applications and securing funding from foundations and other sources, such as local sponsors.

"We're like a small business where everyone works for free."

Henrik Høst leads construction projects in Sarpsborg municipality, and is grateful for the close collaboration.

"It's alpha and omega. They're a driving force and incredibly good to collaborate with", says Høst.

He believes that this group, consisting of many older people, is important both for its members and others.

Unique atmosphere

"They constitute a unique environment, with a strong sense of belonging, and contribute enormously to projects that benefit everyone in Sarpsborg. A volunteer group like that isn't something you can ordain politically. The dedication has to come from within", says Høst.

He believes that involvement and responsibility are key to success.

"If you want to succeed, you have to talk to people about plans that affect them. They must feel ownership and freedom to do things."

The municipal plan of action for 2022–2025 states:

"In order to create age-friendly communities, the municipality must work across sectors, collaborate with private enterprise and facilitate co-creation, so activities and measures evolve in line with what our residents need."

The late Bjørn Steinar Syversen at the culture department was the main driving force behind Bryggestien.



CHAIRPERSON: 83-year-old Aage Rishøi chairs the board of the volunteer group Tur- og Lysløypa i Sarpsborgmarka (TLS). The group is like a small business where everyone works for free. The building in the background houses the group's equipment.
(Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

→ “The target group was young people, older people, non-disabled and disabled; the trail was intended for everyone. It’s gratifying that it is always so full of visitors”, says Henning Høst.

The first phase of the trail was completed in 2016 and was about 400 metres long. Another 500-metre segment was added in 2019. Project initiator Syvertsen saw it completed just before he died.

Gets out every day

Vegard Alfsen takes walks several times a week.

“Walking in places where there are other people around feels extra secure”, says Vegard. And plenty of people walk on Bryggestien. He waves and greets people left and right, even on an ordinary Thursday morning.

“I like to walk fast, I don’t stroll, even though my ankle slows me down a bit. I used to run the illuminated jogging circuit several times a week. My running days are over. Now I’m glad I can walk.” ●

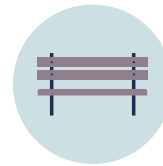




footpath/hiking trail



toilets



benches



tables



lean-to shelter



“Walking in places where there are other people around feels extra secure.”

Vegard Alfsen (83)

Lessons learned

“If you want to succeed, you have to talk to people about plans that affect them. They must feel ownership and freedom to do things.”

Henrik Høst



Co-creation

Initiative from local residents

•
Dialogue and collaboration
between the municipality and
clubs/volunteer groups



SOCIAL AND HEALTHY: “This is precisely the type of neighbourhood we want: a place for companionship, where people look after one another and do enjoyable things together”, says the public health coordinator about this bathing group’s activities. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



Signe Hordvei, public health coordinator in Notodden



Cold water and warm companionship

Indoors it is warm, just a few steps from the cold water. What used to be an industrial district is now a universally designed promenade by the water – one that this group of bathers visits as often as possible.

Nearly every morning at eight, the bathrobe brigade stands ready. The waterfront friends go from their respective flats into the lift, out the front entrance, past the zebra crossing, continue straight towards the water, down the long ramp and over to the bathing ladder. Just a few minutes' walk and they have arrived. They are ready.

Once, the site was dominated by northern Europe's biggest ironworks. Large parts of the area between the city and the water were reserved for heavy industry, closed off behind fences and gates, accessible only to employees, off limits for everyone else in Notodden.

"I suspect few residents were aware that the town was so close to the water and had such a long shoreline", says Signe Hordvei, public health coordinator in Notodden.

In 1987, the iron factory was demolished.

"That left us with a fine view and an empty space. Years passed. In 2015, the same year Notodden joined Unesco's World Heritage List as part of the Rjukan–Notodden Industrial Heritage Site, our planning sped up a bit", says Hordvei.

The goal has been to make good interconnections in the area, between housing, the cultural centre, outdoor areas and meeting places – while preserving the town's industrial history.

"The old industrial district was a fantastic area and it was to be opened up for people. The question was how. Extensive co-creation processes gave us the answers", says public health coordinator Hordvei.

A long wish list

The solution had to satisfy many wishes and needs: tie the town together, be open and inviting, be universally designed and accessible, offer possibilities for people to organise their own activities, have good meeting places, stimulate encounters across generations, and harmonise with historic industrial aesthetics.

The hiking club, youth council, and children ranging in age from kindergarten to upper secondary school were involved. A workshop for politicians and businesspeople, including landscape architects and professional urban developers, decided on a people's path.



BATHROBE BRIGADE: No eyebrows are raised when these outdoor bathers walk the short distance to the water. The block of flats where they live is seen in the background, and the cultural centre is to the right. Left to right: Else Kolsrud, Anne Marit and Ove Arnoldsen, and Torild Lund Hellebrette. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann/Felix Features)



IMPORTANT COMPANIONSHIP: Else Kolsrud (right) lost her husband a few years ago. “Life would have been much harder without this companionship”, she says. Anne Marit Arnoldsen (left) moved back to Notodden two years ago and hasn’t missed her old house a single day. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann/Felix Features)

“Broad involvement right from the start was truly important for the result. Not making decisions too early in the process is also important. One should start with an open mind rather than bringing in ready-made ideas. Here the project took form gradually – a waterfront for everyone. We’re not finished yet, segments of shoreline are still inaccessible, but we’re working on it and can already see the effects”, says the public health coordinator.

She emphasises that an age-friendly community is a good place for all generations.

“It’s also important not to have too many age-specific activities. Instead, meeting places, activity sites, and the way our history is presented are all age-independent, so they aren’t perceived as exclusionary. For example, if you make a playground for three-year-olds, you’ll attract them and their parents, but scarcely teenagers and older people. Ideally, you create a vibrant, engaging environment that feels welcoming to everyone. Where three-year-olds climb on carved rocks, teenagers can hang out, and seniors can rest”, says Hordvei, and points out that they have achieved this in Notodden.

“This area contains a lot of what characterises an age-friendly community. The land use changes related to this project will in all likelihood shift the centre of town towards the waterfront. The shift will have major impact on the town. That makes it especially important that the waterfront area is well planned and universally designed for increased use”, says Hordvei.

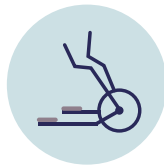
And it is indeed being used. For instance by the bathrobe brigade.

Good companionship

The brigade has gathered at the home of Ove (79) and Anne Marit Arnoldsen (71). Both Torild Lund Hellebrette (79) and Else Kolsrud (81) live near enough to walk here in slippers. The group members bathe frequently year-round, provided coronaviruses and UTIs leave them alone.



footpath/hiking trail



exercise equipment



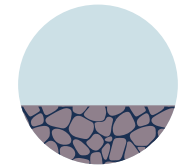
bathing area



assessment



illumination



surface/pavement



“This outdoor bathing thing may be all my fault”, laughs Anne Marit, who is originally from Notodden.

The Arnoldsens moved back here from Kragerø two years ago.

“In Kragerø, we swam every day.”

They brought that habit back to Notodden, where they found like-minded people. When they discovered that Notodden lacked a proper bathing ladder, they contacted the mayor. Two weeks later, the ladder was in place.

“I’m actually from Nord Østerdalen”, says Else Kolsrud.

“There, if you want to bathe, you must start early, almost as soon as the ice breaks up. I’m a bit scared of deep water – I’m mostly a river bather – so here I stay close to the ladder and don’t dare bathe alone”, she explains.

“We agreed that nobody bathes alone here”, says Torild Lund Hellebrekke.

But doing something together is precisely the point.

“There’s a good sense of cohesion in our block of flats. We laugh a lot”, says Torild, and tells of impromptu shrimp feasts, white elephant gift exchanges, Friday gatherings with a bite to eat, bocchia tournaments – and bathing.

“I couldn’t manage my situation very well without my fabulous neighbours”, says Else, who lost her husband a few years ago.

“And we haven’t missed Kragerø one bit”, say the Arnoldsens.

Better health

Torild’s husband worked in the industrial area for many years.

“All the jobs that disappeared when everything shut down is one thing. What they’ve achieved on the industrial site is another. It used to be completely closed off: fences, walls, barges in the water. Now it’s become such a pleasant place, both for bathing and for getting out and about. Being able to walk many kilometres on a path along the water is priceless”, she says.

Everyone in the bathrobe brigade enjoys excursions.

“It’s good for your health. And so much fun! I meet people to talk to”, says Else Kolsrud.

Lessons learned

«“Broad involvement right from the start was truly important for the result.”

“One should start with an open mind rather than bringing in ready-made ideas.”

Signe Hordvei



Co-creation

Workshop for politicians and business-people, led by landscape architects and professional urban developers



Municipality employees, including the World Heritage coordinator, met with daycare centres, schools, volunteer groups, land owners, condominium associations, the youth council, the University of South-Eastern Norway, and the Norwegian Industrial Workers Museum



“It’s the social stuff that keeps us going.”

Torild Lund Hellebrekke

→ “I don’t walk as much as I used to, because I’ve had two hip operations and one in my knee”, says Anne Marit Arnoldsen.

“But still, you’re much more fit now that you’ve moved here. You used to live a bit out of the way. Here you don’t have time to think about aches and pains”, muses Torild Lund Hellebrekke.

“Yes, the neurologist was really impressed, and said my fitness was much better now than half a year ago.”

Torild adds, “Doing things together, meeting people out walking, sometimes it’s so much fun you just bubble over. It’s the social stuff that keeps us going.”

Icy cold

The other three nod in agreement. Soon they will be ready for today’s dip. Ove reaches for the floating thermometer at the water’s edge.

“No”, yelp the women, “we don’t want to know how cold it is.”

It’s time, make up your mind, get straight in, don’t hesitate, breathe deep. It’s frightfully cold. Denying it would be lying, but it’s said to be healthy. Besides, the astonishing warmth you feel afterwards can’t be achieved in any other way.

“People tell me I’m completely mad”, says Torild Lund Hellebrekke.

“And I tell them: ‘Yes, I hear that all the time!’”

PS: Wondering how cold the water was? Five degrees in the water and five in the air. ●



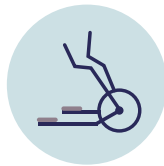
SHORT DISTANCE: From her balcony, Anne Marit Arnoldsen can see the lake she bathes in as often as she can all year round. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



FULLY IN CONTROL: Ove Arnoldsen checks the temperature. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



footpath/hiking trail



exercise equipment



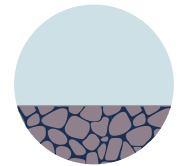
bathing area



assessment



illumination



surface/pavement



How Notodden is preparing for the future

Notodden used to be dominated by heavy industry. Now investment in the future dominates. Much has happened since the ironworks closed down; the factory was later demolished in 1987. The focus has been on creating an open, friendly, accessible town for young and old.

This is already in place:

- Public transportation terminal – buses and trains
- Accessible housing
- Grocery store, hairdresser and wine and spirits retailer
- Book & Blues Building (cultural centre)
- Informal meeting places for all ages in and around the Book & Blues Building
- Upper secondary school close by
- Business park with historic and listed buildings plus new industries
- Marina
- Town beach
- Industrial promenade

And this is in the works:

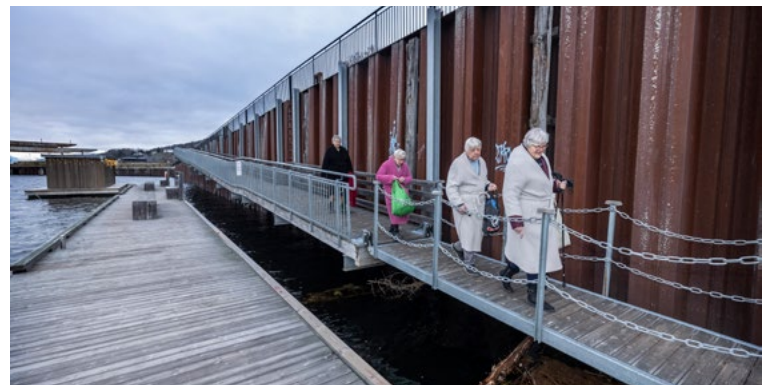
- Further development of the industrial promenade
- Along the promenade:
 - Information about the world heritage site, land marks, and Notodden's history
 - Accessible exercise equipment
 - Seating and small meeting places
- Artwork/Installation: "The Tree"
- Skatepark/activity park adjacent to the industrial promenade
- Development of housing

Mapped universal design

Notodden municipality engaged a consulting firm to do a mapping of the universal design on the promenade. Every metre of the promenade was examined by an entire delegation that included representatives from the Norwegian Association of Disabled, municipal employees and the consulting firm. The mapping resulted in suggestions for improvements such as different pavement, orientation lines, distinct edging, crossings, illumination, improved slope and more places to rest.

"The problems along the promenade are relatively manageable, but the topography poses challenges related to accessing the promenade from the upper parts of the town", says public health coordinator Signe Hordvei, and adds that although some issues remain unsolved, many of the improvements have already been made.

"Pavement, distinct edging along parts of the promenade, and more benches are in place. The lighting is also better now, though a few things still need to be done."



OPEN AT LAST: For many years this site was part of an industrial district that was closed to the public. Now it is open, with ramps and docks for winter bathers and others. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

From car park to park

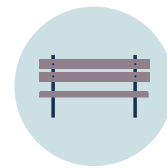
The desire is to turn a desolate car park into a lively meeting place. The trick is to get the populace involved in the planning – using coffee cups and QR codes, among other things.



Lina Marie Ørnehaug,
land use planner, Section of
Planning and Development,
Askøy municipality



footpath/hiking trail



benches



tables



vegetation/plants



LACKED PLACES TO MEET: When the municipality arranged a walkability audit for seniors, it emerged that many seniors were missing meeting places. (Photo: Dag Folkestad)

COFFEE FOR

CONTACT: Handing out free coffee was one method the municipality used to come in contact with citizens. Each cup carried a QR code linked to a questionnaire about the park. Lina Marie Ørnehaug (left) and Veronika Skiftesvik Natås, head of the housing assistance unit in Askøy municipality. (Photo: Solveig Marie Wiik)



Early one morning they got set up on Kleppestø quay, the docking site of the fast boat to Bergen. The thermoses were full of freshly brewed coffee and towers of paper cups stood nearby. Lina Marie Ørnehaug, land use planner at the Section of Planning and Development, and her colleagues in Askøy municipality had a plan.

They had already worked like mad with the pop-up park. Borrowed equipment for various activities, hung up pennants, distributed chairs, tables and a sofa where 10–15 cars usually stand, off to one side of the main car park. In this way they could demonstrate an alternative use for a section that was conveniently located but essentially used only for parking.

Something in return

“There are more than 500 parking spaces here. If the municipality removes a community asset such as 10–12 of them, they must be replaced by something that benefits everyone and adds much-needed vitality to the centre of town. But without concrete examples, it’s hard to envision alternatives. That’s why we put together this pop-up park, and we hoped to reach as many as possible”, says project leader Lina Marie Ørnehaug.

“In two hours we handed out 200 cups of coffee. Each cup carried a QR code linked to a questionnaire that asked: ‘What would you like this park to contain?’ People were so engaged! In three hours we got 150 responses.”

Several variants

The coffee cups were just one way of communicating with people.

“Whenever you’re engaged in co-creation, you need to ask yourself: Why, with whom, and how? Why co-creation? With whom? In what way? Will a questionnaire survey answer our questions? Or do we need more dialogue in the form of brainstorming, interviews and other forms of co-creation such as broad surveys of children and older people, where the participants are more active?”

→ After rush hour, a class of eighth year students came to the pop-up park. They were served breakfast – along with a sheet of questions aimed at eliciting answers to the question: How can we construct a park that is fun and welcoming for everyone?

“They walked around in groups. Then, all together, we summarised their answers”, says Ørnehaug.

The same afternoon, 35 individuals from the business sector and volunteer organisations descended on the municipal board room to discuss the same topic.

“Our focus is on creating an inclusive community. So the dialogue has to go both ways. This person concentrates on older people, that person on youngsters; some want as much activity as possible, others prefer a park landscape with benches, flowerbeds and trees. The municipality’s task is to

balance these interests based on the project’s initial focus”, says project leader Ørnehaug.

Previous knowledge

Prior to the pop-up stunt, Askøy municipality already knew a bit about the desires of inhabitants young and old. The stunt was a way to move things along.

“We’d done a broad survey of older people. There, we learned that many felt a need for more meeting places. We had also done a joint workshop with the senior citizen council and the youth community council. It turned out that they had a lot in common: neither the seniors nor the young people knew what to do with their leisure time.”

“Several said that they wanted places where they could organise their own activities, although that didn’t necessarily mean the same place. The need for transportation was also similar. Without a car, it isn’t easy getting around in Askøy. The young people don’t have a driving licence yet, the older people may have stopped driving, and public transport doesn’t run as frequently on weekends. It was rather nice seeing them sit there and discover that they had the same problems”, says the project leader.

Forward momentum

The stunt was set in motion in anticipation of a new plan for the city centre.

“The development of Kleppestø has dragged on for years. The municipality wanted to show forward momentum, give community residents something tangible along the way – such as a temporary meeting place. We applied for and received 370,000 NOK from Vestland County Council for this project. That money was used for the stunt itself, Christmas tree lights and benches, among other things. Shortly after the benches were set out in summer 2022, people started taking their lunches and children there. The meeting place is already being used incredibly often.” ●

Lessons learned

“Use the co-creation process to establish mutual dialogue between the municipality and its residents. Take the time to inform and to collect input”

“It can be good to give people an idea of what we might achieve. Something that spurs creativity. Without the pop-up park I don’t think we would have had such a great response”

“Create tangible results as soon as possible. Then people can see that something is happening. We set out benches shortly after our co-creation work; they were one of several requests from the populace”

Lina Marie Ørnehaug



Co-creation

Walkability audit for seniors

Workshop with senior citizen council
and youth community council

On-site pop-up park

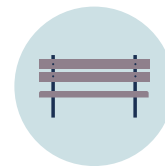
Questionnaire survey via QR code on
coffee cups

Inspection by eighth-year students.

Questionnaire to the class
Meeting with businesses and volunteer
organisations



footpath/hiking trail



benches



tables



vegetation/plants



1

1) CREATED A MEETING PLACE:

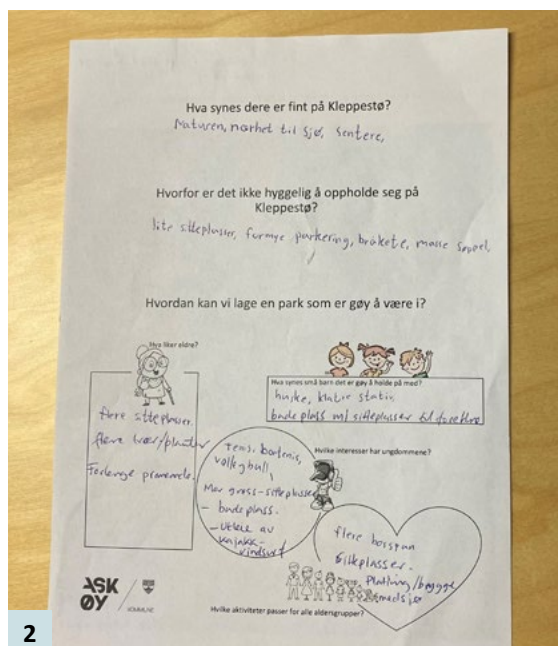
Parking spots for cars were replaced by tables, benches and flowerpots, creating a meeting place for old people, young people, and everyone in between. (Photo: Lina Marie Ørnehaug)

2) YOUNG PEOPLE'S WISHES:

Enthusiastic school children had many suggestions and a long wish list for the site. (Photo: Lina Marie Ørnehaug)

3) FUN AND GAMES:

Games encourage activity and outdoor togetherness, free of charge. (Photo: Lina Marie Ørnehaug)



2



3

Easing the hardest first step – place amenities within reach

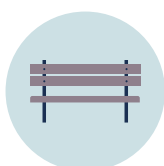
Simple things often mean the most: knowing there will be a bench to rest on and a toilet when the need arises can be all it takes to make people feel secure enough to go for a walk.

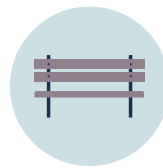
A bench is a meeting place – a place for rest, reflection and socialising. And even for a bit of exercise, if there are pedals in front of it. Adding a poster or a plaque with facts, a poem or a bit of history can pique curiosity and give people a reason to visit the bench.

Many measures can be costly and time-consuming. Benches are a good example of how great an impact a cheap, low-threshold measure can have. They let more people feel secure as they walk, run errands or chat with a friend, and can create engagement and meeting places while more elaborate measures are being developed. ●

“We’ve seen in social media how several municipalities have invited their inhabitants to suggest where benches should be placed. Inspection rounds with older people and municipal employees can also yield input on where benches would be welcome, maybe also what types of benches. Input rather like proposals from political benches.”

Anne Berit Rafoss
The Centre for an Age-Friendly Norway





benches



tables



toilets



handrails/railings



HIKING COMPANIONS: The Melshei hiking area outside Sandnes offers several seating areas along the way. Odd Andersen, Thorleif Larsen and Sigurd Holm Sirevåg are frequent users of this popular trail. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

What makes a bench age-friendly?

An age-friendly bench must be easily accessible from the path or road. It must be designed so it is easy to sit down on and get up from:

Seat at least 45 cm from the ground



Has armrests



Offers good back support



The seat is horizontal, not sloped



Ideally has open space between seat and ground



Space for wheelchair, pram etc adjacent to the bench



Turning circle in front of the bench, at least 150 cm diameter



Surrounded by desirable features – sun, a view, activities etc



The ground surface is firm and even, with no more than 2% slope



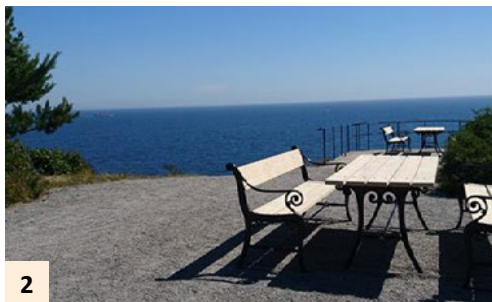
→ Sarpsborg



1

1) A PLACE TO REST: Along the whole of Bryggestien in Sarpsborg, benches and tables are easily accessible for wheel-chairs. The trail ends in an area with four lean-to shelters, tables, campfire grills and an accessible toilet. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

Bamble



2

2) VIEW FROM THE FORT: With a new universally designed trail and a rest area with splendid benches, anyone can get to the peak of Tangen quickly and enjoy the fabulous view.

“We’ve set up several new benches, so people can rest when walking the long stretches through the forest to the peak”, says Maria Rebekka Nilsen, welfare adviser in Bamble municipality.

“We chose benches with armrests

that people could use for support when getting up”, she adds.

Four benches have also been placed at the peak. They aren’t bolted to the ground; that turned out to be unnecessary. At the request of local inhabitants, even more benches will be set up along the path to the lookout point.

“We were accompanied by a person in a motorised wheelchair during our inspection round with the occupational therapy service, and that was useful. After the area was completed, I’ve met several people who drive through the forest to the lookout point. This area is often used by people of all ages and is incredibly popular”, says Nilsen.

Attractive, durable wrought iron fences ensure safety.

“We used more fences than planned because the path was laid out to minimise its environmental footprint, which resulted in somewhat steeper slopes beside the path”, explains Nilsen. (Photo: Bamble municipality)

Oslo



3

3) ACTIVE ON THE BENCH: Benches can also be used for physical activity if they are fitted with pedals, as seen here at Seniorhuset on Pastor Fangensvei in Oslo. A good workout for the circulation! (Photo: Heidi Karsrud Nordal)



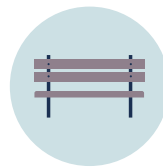
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4) CAN TAKE PUNISHMENT: Out in the wilds it is important that benches can handle wind and weather, like this one in Sognsvann recreational area in Oslo. (Photo: Anne Berit Rafoss)



5

5) ACTIVE REST: Along Memory Lane in Oslo’s Ullern district, there are benches with pedals that offer low-threshold physical activity – ingeniously simple and effective. There are also pedals for wheelchair users along the path. (Photo: Bjørg Duve and Mari Bilben / Ullern district)



benches



tables



toilets



handrails/railings



Langesund



6) COVERED BENCHES: The benches by the sea in Langesund provide shelter from weather and wind. They can also be good for use in areas that get lots of snow in the winter. (Photo: Anne Berit Rafoss)

Hol



7) WINTER BENCHES: “These age-friendly winter benches were set up after input from residents”, says project manager Siren Rasmussen Bjordal in Hol municipality.

They stand at Geilojordet, an idyllic cluster of old houses from the 18th and 19th centuries. A gem in the centre of Geilo. The area is used a lot in spring and summer, but the benches were previously always moved indoors in the winter. Now the municipality has made benches that tolerate winter. (Photo: Hol municipality)

Mandal



8) DOUBLE BENCHES: In central Mandal, two-sided benches invite people to rest and chat during their shopping trip or their stroll through town. Most municipalities have benches in the town centre. They aren’t always age-friendly or universally designed, but that could be addressed next time they are upgraded or replaced. Benches that lack armrests can be retrofitted. (Photo: Anne Berit Rafoss)

Drangedal



9) ALL SHAPES AND SIZES: Benches can be many things and take many forms. This double bench at Neslandsvatn overlooks views on both sides and offers possibilities for a bit of physical activity. (Photo: Anne Berit Rafoss)

Gøteborg



10) SWEDISH-SPEAKING BENCHES:

“Take a seat here if you think it would be nice to talk with someone”, read the signs on these universally designed benches in Gothenburg. They even suggest topics for conversation. There are 17 of these benches in the town. The one in this picture stands in Slottsskogen, one of Gothenburg’s largest parks. (Photo: Sofia Tillman)





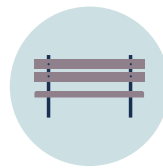
Good advice
For more good advice,
check out the KS brochure
“Public buildings – universal design,
assessment, tips and advice”
(in Norwegian).



What characterises an age-friendly accessible toilet?

Lack of access to public toilets is a crucial limitation on many old people’s ability to get around with confidence outdoors.
Public toilets in recreation areas, parks and near bathing areas should be universally designed.

- Step-free access
- Horizontal space in front of entryways
- Door 1 m wide with diagonal handle on the inside
- Possibly an automatic door opener with switch
- Low, bevelled threshold maximum 2.5 cm – or none at all
- Contrast between door and wall
- Turning circle 1.6 m diameter in front of toilet and washbasin recommended
- Ensure 90 cm passageway between washbasin and toilet
- 90 cm free space on both sides of toilet
- Toilet seat height 50 cm
- Moveable armrests mounted on the toilet or wall behind. Vertical distance between toilet seat and armrest 23 cm
- Toilet paper mounted on armrest
- Washbasin height 80 cm from floor
- Tall mirror over the wash basin. Users must be able to see themselves sitting or standing
- Good illumination (solar panels can make this possible outdoors). A transition space between daylight and a windowless room can help prevent falls
- Changing tables should be established in the public toilet. Some accessible toilets should also have a changing table for adults
- External sign placed on the wall beside the entryway, with colour contrasting from the background. Preferably a pictogram. Size should be adjusted to reading distance



benches



tables



toilets



handrails/railings

Halden



ADAPTED FOR ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR:

The new toilet at Ystehedeneset in Halden municipality demonstrates that it is not always enough simply to adhere to building code requirements.

“When we inspected the site beforehand, we realised we ought to have a toilet well suited for the motorised wheelchairs many use outdoors in rough terrain. Therefore this toilet has a turning circle diameter of 160 cm, not 150 cm, which is the minimum requirement”, says occupational therapist Bente Bjørk in Halden municipality.

The toilet’s lights run on solar panels, and there is an extra sign beside the door, on the side with the handle.

“We have installed door stops that ensure maximum illumination on the door. That’s important because otherwise it can be difficult getting hold of the door”, says



Bjørk, and adds that there is a diagonal handle on the inside of the door.

The toilet is positioned with its doors towards the car park, making it easy to see that it is a toilet.

In the photo above, Bente Bjørk is testing the degree of lightness with an NCS Lightness Meter.

“We compare the background, the brown of the wall, with the grey scale in the circles. Under each circle is a number. We also check the doors in the same way, and get a number. The difference between the two numbers is the contrast”, Bjørk explains.

The colours of the wall and the door are different, but the dark/light contrast is not great. It will improve over time, as the wall turns grey and grows lighter.

(Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

Oslo



YOUNG AND OLD: Sognsvann recreation area in Oslo has many facilities, resulting in the place being used by people of all ages and functional capacities. The toilets are well adapted, with good signage and accessibility. (Photo: Anne Berit Rafoss)

Sarpsborg



AT ONE WITH NATURE: It means a lot to many hikers that the universally designed Bryggestien in Sarpsborg ends at a fine resting area with an accessible toilet, clad in materials designed to make it blend into the natural environment that surrounds it.

(Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

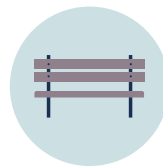
Distinctive toilets

A public, universally designed accessible toilet can also be an architectural marvel. These toilets are good examples.

Gildeskål



A RESTROOM WITH A VIEW: When nature calls, what could be better than an accessible toilet in the midst of nature? “Norway has opened the world’s most beautiful public toilet”: this is what foreign media wrote about the toilet at the rest area along the coastal highway in Gildeskål municipality in Nordland. (Photo: Steinar Skaar / Norwegian Public Roads Administration)



benches



tables



toilets



handrails/railings



“Norway has opened the world’s most beautiful public toilet”

Foreign media describing the toilet
at the rest area along the coastal highway
in Gildeskål municipality

Voss



LETTING NATURE IN: A universally designed path allows everyone to feel the tremendous power of Skjervsfossen. The waterfall is one of the most spectacular natural attractions near Voss. Here you can even enjoy nature from inside the accessible toilet at the top of the falls! (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

Sognefjellet



TIP-TOP ALPINE TOILET: Instead of ending up as a demolition project, the old toilet facility at Oscarshaug on Sognefjell mountain has been refurbished from top to toe. The new facility adheres to accessibility standards, with an automatic door opener, low threshold, low washbasin, and a strong signal colour on the door. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



Do not forget handrails!

In rough terrain and on slopes,
handrails can greatly improve
accessibility and safety.



Meeting places add quality of life

Many old people live alone. Having a public place to meet others and socialise enhances both quality of life and mental health – and is crucial for an age-friendly community. A good meeting place facilitates activity, rest and togetherness.



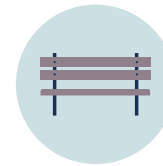
FELLOWSHIP AND ACTIVITY: Excursion leader Gerda Øen (70) in the Norwegian Trekking Association's hiking group "Active to 100" is all smiles at the Christmas gathering on this fine day in December. Beside her, Fredrik Fladmark (91) thinks it is great to feel fellowship with the group. As a widower, he is alone most of the week. And with a universally designed hiking trail to a great lean-to shelter with a camp-fire grill, it is no problem for the fit 91-year-old to get out for a walk. "I'm delighted to participate in this", says Fladmark. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



fishing spot



bathing area



benches



campfire grill



lean-to shelter

Sandnes



REST & COMPANIONSHIP: Sandnes municipality has recently upgraded one of its most centrally located and popular hiking trails – the approximately two kilometre long Melshei circuit. In addition to making the trail universally designed and adding illumination, the Melshei circuit now also has three pleasant new resting areas.

The new benches offer easy access: there is no need to raise one's leg to sit down, and wheelchairs can roll right up close. At one of the three rest areas, the tables are roofed over; another area has a lean-to shelter.

"It doesn't take much to lower the thresh-

old and make it easier for older people to get out for a walk. A bench to rest on along the way can be enough", says Audun Laugaland, adviser at Sandnes municipality's outdoor recreation department.

"That's why we invest heavily in benches and tables, day-trip huts and lean-to shelters. They even become excursion destinations in their own right, enticing people of all ages to go out walking", he adds.

Friends Sigurd Holm Sirevåg, Thorleif Larsen and Odd Andersen are among them. They meet at Melshei every Monday and Wednesday.

"I started this hiking club when I retired

25 years ago", says Holm Sirevåg, a fit 92-year-old.

He is happy that there are now more universally designed tracks in the area.

"You see, once a week I'm also accompanied on the hike by three women who use walking aids. The biggest problem is fitting all those walking aids into the car", he grins.

The group of friends are pleased with the new roofed-over tables and the lean-to shelter, which attract many hikers.

"We're rarely alone here", say the three friends. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

Drangedal



ALL IN ONE: 1) On the shore of lake Neslandsvatn, near bathing and fishing areas, there is a splendid cabin. Here, people can change into bathing suits, use the toilets, take a break and enjoy the view, and barbecue. 2) The area adjacent to the hiking trails also opens up for activities, fun and games. A covered campfire grill makes it possible to get together and barbecue, regardless of the weather.
(Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

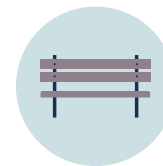




fishing spot



bathing area



benches



campfire grill



lean-to shelter



Alta



BARBECUE IN THE SQUARE: In the middle of the square in central Alta, they have set up a campfire grill. It stands right next to the skating rink, and is used both as an outdoor studio when the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation covers the dog-sledding competition Finnmarksløpet, and as a meeting place for young and old.

“This is truly low-threshold. All you need to do is to head for the centre of town and take a seat here”, says public health coordinator Gjermund Pleyum Wik.

In summer, the slate-covered site is used for play and chess; in recent winters it has been furnished this way, and it gets more elaborate for each winter. Children, parents and grandparents come here, according to the public health coordinator. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

Stord



MEETING PLACE AT THE LEAN-TO SHELTER: Along the universally designed hiking trails that wind their way outward across Stord from the municipality’s main town Leirvik, several lean-to shelters have been erected.

“The shelters really help people take that difficult first step out the door. They are destinations in their own right, and a meeting place”, says Gerda Øen (70), excursion leader for the Stord-Fitjar hiking group “Active to 100”. On this brisk December day, the group is meeting for the last time before Christmas and the aim of the excursion is to enjoy rice porridge and pleasant company. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)

Ørsta



CHATTY BENCH: With funding from the County Governor, Ørsta municipality has developed a “Chatty bench” as an extension of becoming a “Chattercup municipality”. The idea behind both bench and cup is that anyone sitting on the Chatty bench (or holding a specially designed Chattercup) would welcome a bit of a chat with others. Many of the benches were built thanks to “Småjobbsentralen”, a municipal body that arranges short-term summer jobs for young people during school holidays. In this photo, left to right, we see Dag Håvard Aukrust, Kamilla Eikrem Lannerholm and Bjørn Inge Engeset. (Photo: Ørsta municipality)

Hammerfest



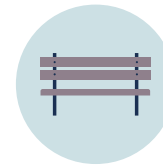
THE EGG ATOP STORFJELLET: Shelters for day-trippers stimulate excursions! They are excursion goals in and of themselves, but also contribute to safety by offering shelter from the elements. This image shows “The Egg”, a cabin at the top of Storfjellet in Hammerfest. It was built with the help of volunteers from the Norwegian Trekking Association. The cabin has been upgraded to have universally designed access, in collaboration with the Norwegian Association of Disabled, Hammerfest region. (Photo: Tor Even Mathisen)



fishing spot



bathing area



benches



campfire grill



lean-to shelter



Sandnes



THE SISTER CABIN AT GANDSFJORDEN: This cabin for day-trippers at Dalsvågen in Sandnes municipality is not on a universally designed hiking trail, but is only a 20 minute walk along an easy path from the car park at Dale – and it is frequently used by the municipality’s older inhabitants. It was built in 2021 and the first of 23 new day-trip cabins set up by 2022 in every municipality in Rogaland county.

“It is a great pleasure to be able to offer Sandnes residents a cabin they can visit whenever they want. The very best thing about day-trip cabins is that they help lower the threshold for getting out for a walk”, said project leader Audun Laugaland when the cabin was opened. He is an adviser at the outdoor recreation department in Sandnes municipality. The day-trip cabins have a common design and measure 15 square metres indoors. They have solar panels and lights that are triggered by movement inside or outside the cabin. They also contain a small wood-burning stove, and firewood is available. (Photo: Sandnes municipality)



Meeting place at an idyllic beach

Just ten minutes from central Halden, at the end of a charming forest road, the bathing area Ystehedeneset appears. The site is old; the upgrade is new.

Car park with accessible parking spots, accessible toilet, bathing ramp, yellow marker buoys, bathing raft, bathing ladder, barbecue, rest areas and a universally designed footpath – the upgrade is substantial.

Andreas Christoffer Folmer (19) is one of those who are delighted to finally be able to visit the popular site that locals of all ages flock to, especially in summer.

“It’s ever so much better than before. Then it was, simply put, impassable, and that was too bad because it’s a great place that many like to visit”, says the 19-year-old.

Folmer was on the team of inhabitants who participated when Halden municipality was developing plans to upgrade the popular meeting place.

Now he rolls effortlessly on the broad path; he appreciates the extra-long table that allows him to get right up close, and he enjoys bathing with his friends.

Today he is here with Bente Synnøve Bjørk and Stine Lerhol from Halden municipality, occupational therapist and quality adviser in the technical department, respectively, who led the work.

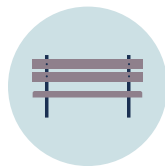
“It’s all about breaking through barriers, integrating in a way that feels natural and prevents exclusion”, they summarise.

When the Norwegian Mapping Authority announced funding for assessment of recreational areas, they formed a broad group and discussed which areas were most relevant. Parts of the project also received funding from the Norwegian Environment Agency, because Ystehedeneset is part of a nationally protected outdoor recreation area. •





bathing area



benches



footpath/hiking trail



tables



toilets



RIGHT UP CLOSE: The picnic table was made at Halden Prison and is extra long on the side, so Andreas Christoffer Folmer can get right up close. The photo also shows Bente Synnøve Bjørk and Stine Lerhol, from Halden municipality. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann/Felix Features)



BATHING RAMP: The new bathing ramp makes it easy to get into and out of the water for a refreshing dip. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann/Felix Features)



NEW FOOTPATH: Thanks to the new, universally designed footpath, everyone on wheels can now go for walks and visit the popular meeting place at Ystehedeneset. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann/Felix Features)

Useful resources

There are several free tools, easily available to everyone who works with age-friendly communities and universal design.



Handbook for Age-Friendly Communities

KS, in partnership with municipalities and other organisations, has prepared a handbook for age-friendly communities, including a roadmap for the process and organisation.

Order from ordre@lupro.no

Digital edition: www.ks.no/fagomrader/velferd/aldersvennlige-lokalsamfunn/handbok-i-aldersvennlige-lokalsamfunn/



Handbook for Age-Friendly Development

The National Association for Norwegian Architects has developed a handbook for age-friendly development with many good examples and useful information on how to plan age-friendly communities. (Not available in English.)

arkitektforbundet.no/om-nal/bylivsenteret/aktuelt/2022/oppdatert-handbok-i-aldersvennlig-stedsutvikling/



Photo: Fredrik Naumann/Felix Features

Walking routes close to the city centre

In Vestfold and Telemark county, many municipalities have worked purposefully and in a cross-disciplinary fashion to develop hiking trails for all. The goal is that every municipality shall have at least one universally designed trail near the centre of each town. The mapping process and the various measures that have already been taken are a rich source of inspiration for other counties/municipalities working with trails. Read more about how the work is done on the Vestfold and Telemark County website

www.vtfk.no/meny/tjenester/plan/by-og-stedsutvikling/universell-utforming/
(Website in Norwegian with English version available via Google Translate at top of page)

Tips for funding

Buudir: Funding for universal design

•

National protection of recreation areas
from the Norwegian Environment

•

Agency

•

Subsidies from County Governors
and counties

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Subsidies for accessibility mapping from
the Norwegian Mapping Authority

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Various foundations

Tilskuddsportalen (Subsidy portal)

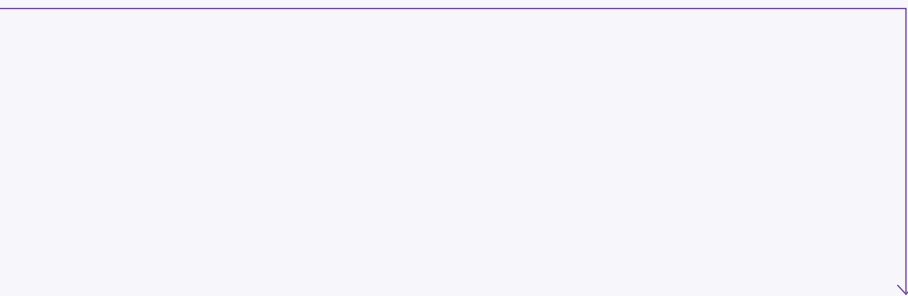
<https://tilskuddsportalen.no>

(English version available)

Check out and search through existing
municipal projects and initiatives – not
just those in your own department.
Think of ways to reuse good ideas and
strategies and to share the cost with
local businesses and organisations.



WARM AND DRY: A pergola protects against both wind and rain at Midtnestangen recreation area in Malvik municipality. The area is nationally protected for outdoor recreation. Seated, left to right: Eli Valleraunet, Kari Haagenstad, Bente Nilsson and Brit Aune. (Photo: Fredrik Naumann / Felix Features)



Universal design

+

co-creation

+

local knowledge

=

**An age-friendly
community**

***“What is necessary for some,
is often good for everyone.
This means that an age-friendly Norway
is also a society where everyone can
participate on equal terms, regardless of
functional ability and age.”***

Anne Berit Rafoss, project manager
The Centre for an Age-Friendly Norway

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