

isolation and loneliness by creating environments and initiatives that foster social interaction and support the needs of older adults.

This report focuses on play as a novel age-friendly planning initiative and means of supporting the health and wellbeing of older adults. While play is considered essential for children due to the myriad of physical, cognitive, and psychosocial benefits it generates, it is rarely discussed outside of the younger demographic. As such, older populations are often excluded from many of the play-based interventions that are commonly considered in urban planning discourse. This is unfortunate as research shows that play can assist in difficult times of transition like retirement, enhance both mental and physical health, and alleviate loneliness among older adults.

Methodology

This research focuses on Victoria, British Columbia as it is one of Canada's demographically oldest cities. To gain insights about perceptions of older adult play, five semi-structured interviews were conducted with urban planning practitioners and age-friendly specialists currently working in the City of Victoria. Participants were identified through an online search and contacted by email or over the phone. All interviews, with the exception of one that was held virtually, were conducted in person in Victoria between August 16-18th, 2022. The interviews lasted between thirty minutes to an hour and were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. Once the interview transcripts were complete, they were subject to a thematic analysis using NVivo software.

Findings

The study found that practitioners predominately associated play with the younger generation and had limited insight about what play might look like for adolescents and adults. Practitioners perceived older adult play to be more sedate and less physically strenuous than play for children. Throughout the study, there were instances where generalizations and inadvertently ageist comments were made by practitioners about the older adult population.

Practitioners identified two main areas where urban planning and older adult play intersect: the policy framework and urban design. They determined that municipal authorities are responsible for creating the guidelines that establish the importance of older adult play in municipal policy.

