

The Planning and Development of Green Public Places in Urban South Africa: A Child-Friendly Approach

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Abstract : The impact that urban green spaces have on sustainability and quality of life is phenomenal. This is also true for the local South African environment. However, in reality green spaces in urban environments are decreasing due to growing populations, increasing urbanization and development pressure. This further impacts on the provision of child-friendly spaces, a concept that is already limited in local context. Child-friendly spaces are described as environments in which people (children) feel intimately connected to, influencing the physical, social, emotional, and ecological health of individuals and communities. The benefits of providing such spaces for the youth are well documented in literature. This research therefore aimed to investigate the concept of child-friendly spaces and its applicability to the South African planning context, in order to guide the planning of such spaces for future communities and use. Child-friendly spaces in the urban environment of the city of Durban, was used as local case study, along with two international case studies namely Mullerpiers public playground in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and Kadidjiny Park in Melville, Australia. The aim was to determine how these spaces were planned and developed and to identify tools that were used to accomplish the goal of providing successful child-friendly green spaces within urban areas. The need and significance of planning for such spaces was portrayed within the international case studies. It is confirmed that minimal provision is made for green space planning within the South African context, when there is reflected on the international examples. As a result international examples and disciplines of providing child-friendly green spaces should direct planning guidelines within local context. The research concluded that child-friendly green spaces have a positive impact on the urban environment and assist in a child's development and interaction with the natural environment. Regrettably, the planning of these child-friendly spaces is not given priority within current spatial plans, despite the proven benefits of such.

Keywords : built environment, child-friendly spaces, green spaces, public places, urban area

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