

Weaving a Holistic Landscape Architecture and Occupational Therapy Web

text by
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Before starting to write this article, I wondered how many research articles had been published that explicitly explore an interprofessional relationship between landscape design and occupational therapy. As an occupational therapist with a strong background in human development, my curiosity comes from many years of consulting with landscape architects and designers to create therapeutic and healing outdoor spaces for people across the life course. In my work I have long recognized (and promoted) that occupational therapists and landscape designers share common perceptions on how user-centered design can benefit the people and communities they serve. But, because we are differently trained, and learn diverse theories, terminology, and measurement tools, I believe that shared knowledge is not readily apparent to either the landscape design or occupational therapy community. Hence communication is limited. Yet, there is good reason to recognize that the synergy between the professions warrants further formal exploration for why including occupational therapy on landscape projects to enhance the usability of outdoor spaces is a valuable and beneficial idea.

Why occupational therapy? Whether it is knowledge on how the body and mind function due to various disabling conditions and diseases, or the roles and occupations that people attribute as meaningful and purposeful parts of their daily lives, occupational therapists can and do communicate and advocate for the needs of users in the environments in which they live and function (Wagenfeld et al., 2017). These unique skills prepare occupational therapists to contribute to outdoor space design in ways that are both holistic and grounded in evidence (Amiri et al., 2017). One portal of our contribution is through consideration of the complex relationship between the client [an individual, group, or population], the activity and use of space [occupation], and the environment in which the activity takes place (AOTA, 2022). We are trained to understand the importance of a good fit between the person and environment, and occupation (use of the space) and can use what we know to effectively partner with landscape design teams to create outdoor environments that enable users of these spaces to do what they desire and need to do, all the while promoting health and well-being (Ainsworth & de Jonge, 2014; Canadian