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Planning for an Aging Population: The Sustainability Conundrum

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PLANNING FOR AN AGING POPULATION: THE SUSTAINABILITY CONUNDRUM

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ABSTRACT

By 2030 more than one in four Americans will be 65 years of age or older. What role do city planning academics and practitioners play in planning for the inevitable and increasing aging of society? I examined original research and review articles published in three major planning journals, reviewed the websites of ten Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) accredited planning programs, and evaluated the websites of the American Planning Association's divisions and special interest groups to determine how each demonstrated or portrayed the value and importance of aging issues in planning scholarship, pedagogy, and practice. I found that these key pillars of the profession and discipline of planning give almost no attention to aging issues. I suggest that planners are fairly ignorant about older people and their needs, that there is substantial ageism and sexism in these discussions, and that planners face a conundrum because seniors often make important lifestyle decisions that defy a variety of planners' sustainability objectives. These sweeping socio-demographic changes will not go away, however. Planners therefore must develop an arsenal of tools to help seniors safely and securely live in their communities, continuing to make valuable contributions to their family, friends, and community. If planners do not step up, the aging of society will likely overtake them and make much of what they do irrelevant.

INTRODUCTION

The senior population of the United States has been growing faster than any age cohort for decades; 16.5 percent of the population, or 54 million people, were 65 and older in 2019. Almost 13 million were 80 and above (U.S. Census, 2019). Today, for the first time in history, there are more older people than children in the United States (and in many industrial nations). In 2016 twenty-one states contained multiple counties where more than one-fourth of the total population was over 65 but every US state had multiple counties where seniors constituted between 15 and 25 percent of the population (U.S. Census, 2017). The Census (2020) projects that in less than a decade, by 2030, every baby boomer will have turned 65 and there will be almost 86 million Americans 65 and older, or 22 percent of the total U.S. population.

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These demographic patterns create both multiple opportunities and challenges for city and regional planners and policymakers in substantive areas that range from housing to transportation, from environmental protection to urban design. But it is hard to find much discussion of these demographic changes in the scholarship published in leading planning journals, the curriculum taught in accredited masters planning programs, or the kinds of practice in which most planners engage.

I base these conclusions on three related analyses which structure this article. I first identify the number of original research and review articles that focused directly or indirectly on aging issues published in three major planning journals since their inception: the *Journal of the American Planning Association* (*JAPA)*, the *Journal of Planning Education and Research (JPER),* and the *Journal of Planning Literature (JPL*). Second, I evaluate the websites of ten PAB accredited master's degree programs in planning to determine if, how, and how often they mention aging issues in their background materials, concentrations, course work, and faculty profiles. Third, I assess if and how the websites of the 21 divisions and 7 interest groups of the American Planning Association (APA), the major US organization of practicing planners, address aging issues and concerns. I found that there is remarkably little discussion or even mention of aging issues in any of these pillars of the planning profession.

I attribute the lack of focus on, or even mention of, aging issues, in the community building and design in which planners engage, to three intertwined factors. First, planners know little about the diversity of the older population and especially of the problems which many older people face even if not poor or disabled. Planners, in fact, tend to view seniors as either healthy and active with no need for a special planning focus OR so ill or handicapped that they are the province of geriatricians and social workers. Second, planners often display ageism and sexism in discussing aging issues. And third, the sustainability conundrum—many older people do not live the way planners think they should. Seniors overwhelmingly live in, or move to, low-density places, disdain (and even fear) features of the built environment that planners advocate like mixed land uses and high-density development, increasingly fail to use public transit or other alternatives to driving alone, and plan to drive seemingly forever. All these challenges further interact to reduce the visibility of and support for those academic and practicing planners who do choose to focus on aging issues.

The planning academy and profession cannot hide their heads in the sand in the face of the dramatic trends in aging; all stakeholders in planning must work together to effectively meet the challenges of, and increase the opportunities offered by, an aging society. Scholars who address aging issues should encourage students to engage with these concerns across the curriculum; they should tailor their

research on seniors to mainstream planning journals. The American Planning Association should take a far more proactive role in ensuring that practitioners recognize societal trends and have the tools and experience to respond appropriately to a diverse aging population. Planning as a profession and a discipline must do better or risk becoming irrelevant.

THE AGING "GAP" IN ACADEMIC PLANNING LITERATURE

How much do planning scholars focus on aging issues in planning? A number of researchers have analyzed the prevalence of themes and topics in articles in major planning journals over different time periods; a 2020 article in the *Journal of the American Planning* Association (Fang & Ewing, 2020) summarizes and discusses these studies. No previous researcher, however, has evaluated the extent to which research articles on seniors or aging issues are published in planning journals.

I, therefore, compiled my own list of all original research and review articles focusing directly or indirectly on aging issues published in three major U.S. planning journals back to their inception (the year varies with journal): the *Journal of the American Planning Association* (*JAPA*), the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* (*JPER*), and the *Journal of Planning Literature* (*JPL*). The choice to include these three journals to represent planning scholarship is consistent with other research focused on the relative importance of major planning journals (for example, Stevens, et al, 2019; Fang & Ewing, 2020).

I searched for original research or review articles published online or in print by *JAPA, JPER,* and *JPL* since their inception using three terms: *aging, elderly*, and *senior(s)* utilizing the online search engine provided by the publisher of each journal. I also counted or estimated the total number of articles each journal published from its inception and in specific time periods. I read each article identified by the search engine and removed any that had no link to senior issues (for example because the article addressed aging infrastructure). I then classified the remaining articles into one of three groups: those that focused directly on seniors (65 and older), those that focused indirectly on seniors, and those that only mentioned aging issues in passing but not in the abstract, introduction or concluding section. I include the first and second groups in the summary tables I discuss below; I do not include the third group. (See Appendix I for a more detailed description of my approach.)

How Important are Aging Issues in Planning Scholarship?

Table 1 summarizes the findings of my search of the three planning journals. Articles in the first group, those whose research focused directly on senior issues, are shown in regular typeface, before 1990 and by decade after 1990. The articles

in the second group, those that didn't begin with an aging thesis or topic but did highlight findings about older people, I show in italics.

Table 1 shows that these journals did not publish many research or review articles on aging issues in their entire publication history; *JAPA* only published 19 articles on any aspect of aging in over 80 years. Together, all three journals published only 42 articles that addressed any aging issues, even indirectly, since their inception. The number of articles published on these topics has clearly increased in all three journals since 1990, over a very small pre-1990 base for both *JPER* and *JPL*, showing that they are publishing proportionately more articles addressing aging issues today than in the past.

Table 2 illustrates the major topic of each of the 42 articles on aging issues in the three journals. I identified the substantive topic of each paper from the title, a quick reading, or key words if the articles identified them (the three journals did not provide key words until the 2000's). The leading topics were housing, transportation, and the built environment although their importance varied among the journals. Housing and transportation each individually accounted for roughly 26 percent of all articles on aging published by the three journals since their inception. Almost 24 percent of all articles in the three journals focused on the built environment and urban design issues, while four articles, or roughly 10 percent, addressed senior migration rates.

The substantive focus of the published articles on aging issues varied by journal. Housing topics, for example, accounted for 37 percent of all *JAPA* articles on aging issues but none of *JPL*'s articles. In contrast, 43 percent of JPER's articles on aging topics focused on the built environment and urban design issues while none of *JAPA*'s did.

Table 1
Original Research and Review Articles that Directly or Indirectly Address Aging Issues

YEAR	*JAPA* **2,292 articles (Est)** **Vol 1 = 1935**	*JPER* **998 articles (Est)** **Vol 1 = 1981**	*JPL* **381 articles (Est)** **Vol 1 = 1985**
Before 1990	***6/1***	**2**	**0**
	Frieden, 1960; Notess, 1978 Varady, 1980 Varady & Sutton, 1981 Mayer, 1981; Rosenbloom,1982	Varady, 1984 Howe, 1985	
	Pittinger, 1974		
1990-1999	**2**	**1**	**0**
	Burby & Rohe, 1990 Pollak, 1994	Howe & DeRidder, 1993	
2000-2009	**2**	**0**	***2/2***
	Smith, Rayer & Smith, 2008 Myer & Ryu, 2008		Walter, 2002 Dumbaugh, 2008 *Audirac, 2008*

Table 1
Original Research and Review Articles that Directly or Indirectly Address Aging Issues—continued

2010-2019	***3/1***	***6/3***	***2/2***
	Loukaitou-Sideris et al, 2016	Dumbaugh & Zhang, 2013	Kerr, Rosenberg, & Frank, 2012
	Chen, 2018	Warner, Homsy, & Marken, 2016	Stafford & Baldwin, 2018
	Loukaitou-Sideris, Wachs, & Pinski, 2019	Shirgaoker, 2018	*Renne, Sanchez & Litman, 2011*
		Lee & Tan, 2019	*Stoker et al, 2015*
		Warner & Zhang, 2019	
	Dill, Mohr, & Ma, 2014	Kim & Jin, 2019	
		Myers, 2015	
		Smart & Klein, 2017	
		Anacker & Niedt, 2019	
2020-2021	**4**	**1/1**	**2**
	Merlin et al, 2021	Ba, Steiner, & Ja, 2021	Kan, Forsyth & Molinsky, 2020
	Biglieri, 2021	*Wang. Lee, & Greenlee, 2021*	Li, 2020
	Schouten et al, 2021		
	Li, Hu, & Guo, 2021		

Table 2
Articles Addressing Aging Issues by Topic and Journal

	JAPA	JPER	JPL
Housing	**7**	***3/1***	**0**
	Frieden, 1960	Varady, 1984	
	Varady & Sutton, 1981	Howe, 1985	
	Mayer, 1981	Howe & DeRidder, 1993	
	Burby & Rohe, 1990	*Anacker & Niedt*, 2019	
	Pollak, 1994		
	Smith, Rayer, & Smith, 2008		
	Myers & Ryu, 2008		
Transportation	**5**	***1/1***	***3/1***
	Notess, 1978	Shirgaoker, 2018	Dumbaugh, 2008
	Rosenbloom, 1982	*Smith & Klein, 2017*	Stafford & Baldwin, 2017
	Loukaitou-Sideris, Wachs, & Pinski, 2019		Li, 2020
	Merlin et al, 2021		*Audirac, 2008*
	Schouen et al, 2021		

Table 2
Articles Addressing Aging Issues by Topic and Journal—continued

Design/ Built Environment	**0**	**5/*1***	**2/*2***
		Dumbaugh & Zhang, 2013 Warner, Homesy, & Morkin, 2016 Lee & Tan, 2019 Warner & Zhang, 2019 Bai, Steiner, & Zhai, 2021	Kerr, Rosenberg, Frank, 2012 Kan, Forsyth, Molinsky, 2020
		Wang, Lee, Greenlee, 2021	*Anthony & Dufresne, 2007* *Stoker, et al, 2017*
Migration	**2/*1***	**0**	**1**
	Varady, 1980 Li, Hu, & Guo, 2021		Walters, 2002
	Pittenger, 1974		
Park/Rec Planning	**2/*1***	**0**	**0**
	Loukaitou-Sideris et al, 2016 Chen, 2018		
	Dill, Mohr, & Ma, 2014		

Table 2
Articles Addressing Aging Issues by Topic and Journal—continued

Other	1	2	0
	Biglieri, 2021 (comm.plng/involvement)	Kim & Jin, 2019 (service provision) Myers, 2015- (demography)	

Table 3 has two major objectives; the first is to compare the number of articles on aging issues in each journal to the total number of articles each journal published in two time periods: from the journal's inception to July 2021, and, from 1990 to 2018. The table's second objective is to use the numbers from the second, shorter, time period to compare my findings to those of Fang and Ewing (2020) who evaluated the major themes in articles published in these three planning journals from 1990 to 2018. The table displays percentages so small in context that they are hardly ever seen in published research—stressing again what a tiny share of all articles published by the three planning journals focused on any aspect of aging issues in planning. The table shows that only a little over 2 percent of all articles published by the three journals since their inception addressed aging issues either directly or indirectly—less than 1 percent of *JAPA* articles since inception were about seniors. The share of aging articles in *JAPA* and *JPL* was slightly higher in the period 1990 – 2018 but was lower in *JPER.* While the *JAPA/JPL* trend is promising, articles on aging issues are still not a very large percent of the output of any these journals.

Table 3
Aging Articles as A Percent of Total Articles Published in Planning Journals and by Theme

Total Articles	**JAPA**	**JPER**	**JPL**
▪ From inception to July 2021	2,292	998	381
▪ From 1990 to 2018	607	764	171
Articles on Aging Topics			
▪ From inception to July 2021	19	14	9
▪ From 1990 to 2018	7	6	7
Aging Articles as A Percent of:			
▪ Total Articles from inception to July 2021	0.83 percent	1.40 percent	2.36 percent
▪ Total Articles from 1990 to 2018	1.15 percent	0.79 percent	4.09 percent
Aging Articles as A Percent of: Specific Themes (Fang & Ewing) From 1990 to 2018	**JAPA**	**JPER**	**JPL**
• *Urban Design/Built Environment*	3	2	3
6.96 percent of all articles = 140	2.14 percent	1.43 percent	2.14 percent
• *Housing*	4	2	2
6.93 percent of all articles = 136	2.94 percent	1.43 percent	1.47 percent
• *Transportation*		2	3
6.88 percent of all articles = 101	---	1.98 percent	1.98 percent

The cut-off at 2018 in Table 3, to allow comparison with the Fang and Ewing work, is a bit misleading, because it excludes an important number of articles on aging topics published in the period 2018 through July 2021. *JPER* published six articles and *JAPA* five on aging issues from 2019 through July 2021, a larger share of the total number of aging articles they published and an increase in the share of all articles published in that time period, particularly by *JPER.*

Overall, the calculations in tables 2 and 3 indicate that aging issues have been addressed, directly or indirectly, by only a tiny share of all articles published by these three journals over decades. The discipline of planning, however, covers many substantive topics; perhaps many other significant planning topics each account for only a tiny percentage of all articles published in these journals. Doing a similar numerical assessment of other significant planning topics was beyond my resources. But Fang and Ewing (2020) evaluated the major *themes*—as opposed to substantive issues—in all original research articles published between 1990 and 2018 in *JAPA*, *JPER*, and *JPL.* Their work provides some insight on this question, even though they did not identify aging issues as a theme or a key word.

Fang and Ewing's analysis covered 1,463 original research articles on all substantive topics published in these three planning journals between 1990 and 2018—this is about 5 percent fewer articles than my analysis identified in the same time period. My estimation method may have produced higher numbers, or I may have deliberately included articles which they did not (review articles for example). I do not consider this difference a major problem. Fang and Ewing (2020) identified and ranked—by the number of articles each contained—14 specific themes in the articles they assessed, ranging from *planning process* (1st) to *transportation* (14th), using ten key words to define each theme. The range in the number of articles falling under each of the 14 themes wasn't large; the researchers found that planning process articles accounted for 7.81 percent of all articles published in the three planning journals while transportation articles accounted for 6.88 percent.

Table 3 compares the three major themes of the aging articles I identified to the relevant themes that Fang and Ewing identified. I could only originally "match" 15 of the 20 articles that directly or indirectly addressed aging issues published between 1990 – 2018 in the three planning journals to their themes. I reread the remaining articles and added each article to the Fang and Ewing themes to which I think they were closest. This allowed me to avoid throwing out so many data points in such a small data set. Doing so doesn't appreciably change the outcome.

Table 3 shows that the total number of articles published in *JAPA, JPER,* or *JPL* in this time period accounted for a small share of all articles in each of the Fang and Ewing themes. All three journals published 140 articles between 1990 - 2018 which the researchers felt had an *urban design* theme; my research shows that only 8 of those articles—or just under 6 percent of all articles on urban design—were

directly or indirectly about aging issues. The articles I identify as addressing *housing* and aging themes published by the three journals between 1990 and 2018 constitute under 5 percent of all articles Fang and Ewing identified with a housing theme. Finally, I identified 5 articles on transportation and aging in that time period, published in *JPER* and *JPL,* which constitute under 3 percent of all transportation articles published in the three journals. The bottom line: articles on aging or senior topics did not account for more than a minuscule share of articles under any of these themes in the three journals.

The editors of *JPER* also undertook an analysis that tends to support my conclusions that these journals less frequently published articles on aging issues than on many other planning topics. In 2017, the *JPER* editors divided the just under 1,000 articles which the journal had published since 1981 into two tranches: before 2001 (460 articles) and between 2001 – 2017 (504), they then conducted a word cloud analysis of the **titles** of the articles within each tranche (Andrews, Popper, & Lowrie, 2017). *Elderly* was a 4th level word (out of six levels) in the first time period and did not appear at all in the second time period, leading the editors to note, "To our surprise *elderly* did not...become more prominent (p. 269)." The editors did recognize that they might have come to a different conclusion had they used key words (which the journal did not provide for many years) or perused the actual content of the articles.

The incontestable conclusion is that most of the scholarly work published in these three journals regardless of overarching theme, rarely directly or indirectly addresses any aspect of aging or the needs of older people. Both the *JPER* analysis and Fang and Ewing's work tend to support my conclusion that aging issues are seriously underrepresented in planning research in these journals *in comparison to other planning topics*.

It is, of course, still possible that aging issues are no more underrepresented than are other significant planning topics. And there has been a recent uptick in the number of articles on aging issues in these journals; but while heartening, is still small compared to the number of articles addressing other planning topics in these important planning journals. It is, of course, true that specialty journals less central to planning research and practice, such as *Housing Policy Debate* and the *Transportation Research Record,* have published more articles on aging issues in the same time period than have these planning journals (my unpublished calculations). But my analysis still shows that mainstream scholarly planning journals do not provide readers with much exposure to aging issues in planning.

How Central to Planning Pedagogy are Aging Issues?

Do academic planning programs give any more emphasis to aging issues in their pedagogy than their faculty do in their research published in these major planning journals? There may be a difference between the focus of academics as scholars, on one hand, and their focus as teachers and mentors on the other hand (although the scholarly enterprise is *supposed* to support the pedagogic enterprise). Academics may portray to prospective and current students, as well as interested professionals, the importance of aging issues in a planning education and career even when they either don't conduct research on these issues or publish that work in mainstream planning journals.

To determine if this was so, I reviewed what ten Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) accredited master's programs in planning, and their faculty, actually say or show on their websites about scholarship, pedagogy, or service on any aspects of aging. I did not seek to determine the actual extent of aging content in program classes, concentrations, studios, or research, since that would require greater resources than I had. My major objective was to see how each planning program in my sample demonstrated to visitors on their website the role or value of understanding aging issues in planning pedagogy, practice, or research.

Approach and Methods

I evaluated the websites of ten PAB accredited master's degree planning programs in the United States in the summer of 2021. These ten programs represent roughly 13 percent of all such programs (N=78) (PAB, nd). I chose seven of the programs relatively randomly to achieve some geographic balance. I also deliberately included three university planning programs which I expected to highlight more aging research and courses because some of their faculty have published extensively on aging issues and/or because the university itself is known for significant research efforts in many aging domains (Cornell, Florida State, and UCLA). This approach risks painting a rosier picture of the importance of aging issues in the planning programs in my sample, but it seemed the only way to fairly address the underlying reality. Ultimately, it was eye-opening.

I manually reviewed the websites of the ten different PAB accredited planning programs to see how a program described itself and its mission, its concentrations and courses, and its accomplishments. I also reviewed the faculty profiles of all teaching faculty on the program website including instructors, adjuncts, professors of practice, etc. because I did not want to omit practitioners or others who might be teaching or conducting studios on aging issues. I did not include postdocs or fellows or emeritus professors even though they could be teaching. I assessed whether faculty list aging issues as one of their key interests or specializations (or at all) and/or if the text (or examples) they provide about their

research and service interests mention aging issues. I did not read CVs, but some faculty highlight recent publications in their faculty profile; I looked for any mention of aging issues in those publications they included in their faculty profile. I looked at generic material, news, announcements, etc. that were shown on the website landing page or those of their concentrations, etc. Finally, I used the website search engine to identify any current or archived material on aging topics.

How do Planning Programs Address Aging Issues?

Table 4 displays the results of my assessment of the ten planning programs. It lists both the number of faculty affiliated in some way with each program (as identified on the website) and those faculty who identify aging as one of their specializations or mention a concern with aging issues in their faculty profile, or explicitly list courses taught or research or public service projects they have conducted on aging topics. Some program websites (like Georgia Tech and the University of Washington) list a large number of affiliated faculty in other departments, schools, and colleges across campus and/or many part-time adjuncts, lecturers, professors of practice, etc. Others in contrast (Florida State, for example) appear to only list actual full time program faculty. So, the total number of faculty listed as affiliated with each program in itself does not mean much. The table still highlights how few faculty of the many listed on the program websites address aging issues.

Table 4 also identifies any planning concentration or specializations that mention a concern with aging issues in its introductory text or mission statement as well as any courses whose titles or descriptions indicate a focus on some aspect of aging. It also summarizes what appears if searching on the program website for elderly or aging topics.

The three Universities which I believed might have more discussion of aging issues on their planning program websites—Cornell, Florida State, and UCLA—in fact did, more so than the other seven programs. Two faculty profiles on the Cornell website identify an interest in aging issues, one senior faculty well-known for such work and one adjunct faculty member. Cornell, however, does not mention aging in any of its background materials on the master's program, nor in its mission statement, class titles or descriptions, or explanations of the master's program concentrations. There is nothing current about aging issues on the website but there is archived material about a major project on aging undertaken by two faculty members which comes up only when searching on *aging*.

Table 4
The Extent of Materials on Aging on Ten Planning Program Websites

	Mention Aging Issues			
University	**Faculty N = 294** *aging interests/total*	**Concentrations** *aging interests/total*	**Classes**	**Website Material**
Cornell	2/20	0/4	0	Archived
Florida State	2/12	0/4	0	Archived
UCLA	2/28	1/5	0	Archived
Georgia Tech	0/36	0/6	0	0
University of Colorado, Denver	0/34	no listed concentrations	0	Archived
University of Maryland	0/18	0/4	0	Archived
University of Michigan	0/28	0/9	0	Archived
University of Virginia	0/10	0/8	0	0
University of Washington	0/55	0/6	0	0
Texas A & M	2/53	0/8	0	Archived

Two Florida State faculty profiles list research or publications on aging issues on the program website but neither mentions aging issues as a specialty or focus nor courses taught on aging issues. The Florida State planning website does not mention aging issues in any background materials or its mission statement; none of the concentrations mention aging nor do any of the courses listed on the website. The program website does mention that the planning program is an affiliate of the FSU Center for Accessibility and Safety for an Aging Population.

Two senior UCLA faculty (of 38 total faculty listed) mention a concern with aging populations in their faculty profiles—but only in a long list of other sub-sets of the population that engage their interest. Another senior UCLA faculty member who has published extensively—and recently—on aging issues does *not* mention aging issues or interests, or their publications on aging, in their faculty profile. UCLA does not mention aging issues in its program description or mission statement. The text of one of the five individual concentrations, Transportation Policy and Planning, does briefly mention older people:

> Transportation access significantly affects quality of life, and differences in opportunities between rich and poor, men and women, young and old, and people of different racial, ethnic, and social origins (UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, nd).

None of the course titles listed on the UCLA program website give any indication that they cover aging concerns in planning. The website does contain substantial archived material on aging research and studios that the faculty have conducted—these descriptions would not be visible to anyone not searching for them, however.

None of the other planning programs in my sample had even that level of material or text on aging issues. Two faculty at Texas A & M mention interest in aging populations in their statements but not in their list of specializations; both do so as an example of their work on disadvantaged or vulnerable populations. One faculty member at the University of Maryland expresses a research interest in the transportation needs of an aging society. None of the faculty at Georgia Tech, the University of Colorado, Denver, the University of Maryland, the University of Michigan, the University of Virginia, or the University of Washington report in their faculty profiles a focus or interest in, or any publications or research projects on, aging issues. These ten programs together had faculty profiles for 294 people; the 8 faculty who mentioned something about aging issues on their faculty profile constitute only a tiny percent of that number: 2.7 percent.

None of the ten planning programs offered any courses that had aging, seniors, or elderly in their title or description; nine of the ten did not give any examples of aging issues in any of their concentrations or specializations or

emphasis areas. None of these programs discussed aging issues in their current background materials or their mission statements, nor in lists of core values or program hallmarks (if they had such text).

None of the ten programs had any *current* information on previous or noteworthy aging projects or classes or research awards on their landing pages or attached to program content; to the extent such material existed, the website managers had archived it, often badly. More recent projects or awards, etc. (on other topics) seem to push earlier accomplishments off the active website pages. A planning studio on aging mentioned prominently on the Cornell program landing page in early summer 2021, for example, was gone by July 2021—but retrievable by searching on the site. Seven of the ten programs have some archived materials about student theses or other projects or studios that addressed aging issues, but that information is only available by using the program website's search function. Some searches, however, were not very productive or brought up not well organized or explanatory material about previous aging projects with links that were often broken.

The UCLA and University of Maryland websites archive the most organized material on previous aging research or service work. The University of Michigan website provides some information on older planning projects or studios on aging issues when searching using the on-line search program. The UC Denver search engine did not limit itself to planning program specific materials; it identified a few projects related to aging issues conducted across campus or cooperatively that appeared to involve planning student theses (although most links were broken). A search for aging or elderly issues on the Texas A&M website brought up one student thesis.

My approach might have led to my results of course; program websites are notoriously hard to keep current, especially if faculty don't actively cooperate or consider it important to update their brief profiles. Some faculty have only rudimentary or dated profiles on the program website or direct people to their CVs. The titles of individual classes don't always—or perhaps often—explain all the issues and topics those classes address. My sample may not represent what a visitor might see about aging issues on the websites of the other 68 PAB accredited masters planning programs. But the actual amount of aging content in courses and research projects is not the issue—the question I asked is what these programs portray to visitors to their site about the role and value of aging issues in planning education, research, or practice.

I conclude that these ten programs simply don't give the impression that aging issues or concerns are important or a significant planning concern. A student who already knew they had an interest in aging issues might find some course or project specific material on these sites by searching on the terms *aging* or *elderly*—

but nothing organized, compelling, or useful would come up on most of the program websites. Prospective students and community professionals viewing the sites who knew little about aging issues in planning wouldn't learn a lot more.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AGING ISSUES IN PLANNING PRACTICE

How do practitioners and planning professionals view aging issues? Do they see a value to focus on aging issues in their practice, in spite of the fact that these concerns are not highlighted in planning scholarship and planning (as I measure it here)? To answer this question, I evaluated the website of the American Planning Association (APA). The APA is the leading professional planning organization in the United States; it claims 40,000 members in 90 countries, with 47 state or bi-state chapters. Its website notes that, "APA exists to elevate and unite a diverse planning profession as it helps communities, their leaders and residents anticipate and meet the needs of a changing world" (www.planning.org).

APA has 21 divisions and 7 interest groups, most structured around a substantive topic or theme. The 21 divisions range from those focused on hazard mitigation to those centered on housing and community development, from those concerned with planning and law to those addressing transportation planning. Among the 21 divisions, however, are four that are oriented around identity groups: Latinos and Planning, LGBTQ and Planning, Planning and the Black Community, and Women and Planning. There is no division focused on aging issues or aging people, although aging issues might fit into many of the 21 divisions (www.planning.org.divisions/).

APA's seven interest groups also center on a combination of substance and identity. The substantive interest groups are arts and planning, healthy communities collaborative, public schools, smart cities, and water and planning. The identity groups are Tribal and Indigenous Planning, and Underserved Populations. There is no interest group that explicitly addresses aging issues or concerns. Again, such concerns could fall under many of the other substantive topics addressed by these interest groups.

I perused the mission statement (if there was one) and the basic description of the interests and activities of each of the divisions and interest groups as described on their websites as of July 15, 2021, looking for any mention or discussion of aging issues. Some of the websites were very basic and lacked mission statements; others were more detailed. None, however, mentioned *aging, elderly*, or *seniors* in any of the materials they did present (including the Underserved Populations interest group). This does not prove, of course, that they had no activities that had an aging component—but it does mean they aren't telling anyone on their website if they do.

It is inescapable that visitors to these websites would be hard pressed to see any links between the main focus of each division or group and any aging issues even if they exist. Failing to identify any connections to aging issues in practice suggests that not enough (or perhaps any) of the 40,000 APA members are sufficiently invested in planning for aging populations to raise the visibility of these concerns where appropriate in these substantive divisions and interest groups—or to undergo the process to form a separate division or interest group on aging issues. None of the materials I examined on the APA website indicate that aging issues are even a minor practice concern in planning.

IGNORING AND MISUNDERSTANDING PATTERNS OF AGING

There seems to be little overt interest among most planning students, academics, and practitioners in understanding or responding to the diverse needs of an aging population. I suggest that planners writ large may lack interest or enthusiasm for addressing the issues of an aging society due to an inter-connected set of misunderstandings, ageism and sexism, and concern (and more) at how little many older people fit sustainability frameworks or seem likely to do so in the future. I briefly highlight these issues individually below although they overlap substantially.

Do older people "deserve" planners' attention?

Planners who focus on social justice issues or address concerns in communities of color may underestimate the extent to which older people face a range of problems and barriers even if they are not poor or physically disabled—and even if they remain in the paid labor force. First, there is growing diversity among the older population and important questions of intersectionality in myriad ways. The racial and ethnic makeup of the older population has changed in part as people who came to the US as immigrants have aged. In 2016, almost 23 percent of the U.S. population 65 and older were African-American, Hispanic (of any race), Asian, Pacific Islander, American or Alaskan Indian, or mixed race (U.S. Census, 2018). Those over 80 were indeed substantially more likely to be white and non-Hispanic but those 65-74 were more diverse than the total senior population—almost one in four were not white non-Hispanics—foretelling the relatively immediate future.

There are likely to be important ethnic and racial differences in the needs, preferences, and constraints of older people in the United States which planners should recognize—because there are such differences among younger people. A growing body of research, for example, shows differences in how people under 65 from different racial and ethnic backgrounds view a variety of planning issues from housing to transportation, sometimes independent of income (Park et al, 2009; Kirouac-Fram, 2012; Golub, Marcantonio, & Sanchez, 2012; Smart, 2015; Klein &

Smart, 2017). Hispanics, for example, often carpool at rates much higher than comparable non-Hispanic whites and other ethnic groups (Cline, Sparks, & Eschbach, 2018; Matsuo, 2020).

Employment status among older people is changing in ways that interact with economic, gender, and racial/ethnic differences. Labor force participation among older people has been increasing steadily over the last four decades—and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects it will increase substantially by the end of the decade. In 2020, almost 27 percent of all people 65+, and almost 9 percent of those 75+, were in the civilian labor force. These figures differ by sex; roughly 32 percent of men but only 22 percent of women 65+ were in the labor force in 2020. BLS projects, however, that roughly *one-third* of all those 65+ will be in the labor force in 2030—36 percent of men and 28 percent of women 65+ (BLS, nd). These trends differ markedly from the overall decline in labor force participation among people under 65.

Many older people stay in the labor force because they lack adequate retirement income and savings. Blumenberg et al (2019) make a compelling case that transportation resources, particularly having a car, are crucial to older people, particularly low-income people, remaining in the paid labor force, an issue rarely addressed by most researchers concerned with the travel needs of older people. In spite of increasing labor force participation, the 2020-21 pandemic has impacted older workers much harder than those younger. Almost 13 percent of workers over 65 lost their jobs after February 2020, leading to a 7.5 percent unemployment rate for older Americans, higher than for any other age group (US BLS, 2020).

Poverty is an issue for many older people although senior poverty rates have been falling over the last five decades and have been lower than for children since the 1990's. In 2019, just under 9 percent of all seniors in the US experienced poverty. The absolute number of older people who are poor, however, hasn't changed much in decades—4.9 million seniors lived below the poverty level in 2018, roughly the same number as in 1966 (when the poverty rate among those 65+ was 28.5 percent) (US Congressional Research Service, 2021, pp. 4-5). The oldest seniors, those over 80, are the most likely to experience poverty because,

> …they are more vulnerable to income risks because they are more likely to have lower or no earnings (as they phase out of the labor force), exhaust existing retirement resources, have reduced purchasing power in certain defined benefit pensions, and incur higher medical expenses (Congressional Research Service, 2021, pp. 6-7).

There is also great variability in income among seniors by race and ethnicity. The Administration for Community Living (2017) found that average incomes among African American elders were substantially below those of

comparable white non-Hispanics. Households headed by African American seniors reported a median income of $43,554 in 2016; the comparable amount for all older household was $58,559, or 34.5 percent higher. In 2019 the poverty rate for non-Hispanic white seniors was 6.8 percent but that rate for African Americans 65 and older was more than double: 18.0 percent. The poverty rate for Hispanic elders of any race was only slightly lower—17.1 percent. Asian-American elders had a poverty rate of 9.3 percent (CCRS, 2021).

A 2013 report from the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) points out, however, that seniors just above the poverty level are also at great risk; they can easily fall below that line, because it is largely the income support of Social Security and other social programs which keeps them out of poverty. Changes in those benefits, such as at the death of a spouse, can plunge them into poverty. The EPI found that one-fourth of all US seniors who are not characterized as poor, only live between the federal poverty line and double that amount. They note:

> This is an economically precarious group of Americans. Modest income levels leave them dangerously vulnerable to changes in federal social programs, even though they are not classified as being in poverty (EPI, 2013, p. 6).

A growing senior population is concomitant with the feminization of aging—the percentage of women in the 65+ population increases substantially for every year after 65. In 2019 there were almost six million more women than men 65 and older in the US—29.1 million women vs 23.3 million men (US Administration for Community Living, 2020)—a gap likely to grow as women continue to live longer than men. Women with assets and income that initially put them above the poverty level, however, have less recourse if they suffer economic setbacks than comparable men, often because they have limited private pensions. The Congressional Research Service (2021) reports that at every age above 65 women are far more likely to be poor than are men of the same age; 9.7 percent of women but only 5.9 percent of men 70 – 74 lived below the poverty line in 2018. The gap was much bigger among the oldest people; 13 percent of women and 7.6 percent of men 80 and older lived in poverty.

Overall, large segments of the older population of the U.S. live precariously close to the poverty line. The Pension Rights Center (2021), an advocacy group, reported that only one in five seniors had any income from earnings; the rest relied entirely on social security, private pensions, and asset income. Most, get little income from anything other than social security; the median income of all individuals 65+ who had no earnings in 2018 was $22,005 with little variation by age cohort. Older people, especially those who have left the work force, have little recourse when they experience economic setbacks or confront unusual expenses;

in many cases they face different kinds of problems than younger disadvantaged people.

Clearly there are a large number of senior planning issues, from housing to transportation, that planners motivated by concerns about equity and social justice can help address with their research and practice. Students or practicing planners who want to focus their professional efforts and energy on issues of intersectionality, equity, and social justice will find multiple aging and planning questions to address.

What Do We Really Know About an Age-friendly Community?

It is also important for planners to recognize that seniors without "traditional" disadvantages like poverty, may have some emotional, physical, and financial constraints and needs that differentiate them from younger people—even if, or perhaps especially if, they live independently in their communities. A pernicious misunderstanding is that seniors are either active, alert, and healthy, living well in the community needing no special attention from planners, OR they are disabled and cannot live independently. In reality, few older people go over a cliff one day, abruptly ceasing to be able-bodied and healthy, suddenly requiring institutional care. Most older people exist somewhere in between the extremes of that spectrum, many experiencing physical and medical issues which mildly impair their ability to live independently in the community, but which may worsen over time. Seniors may even go back and forth along that spectrum as they suffer an illness, a stroke or heart attack for example, and then recover.

In 2016 the US Census reported that 26 million people over 65 (or almost 59 percent of all seniors) had some disability, but only 29 percent of those with a disability had a severe disability. Disability rates were higher among those 75 and older; 70.5 percent reported a disability but less than a fourth of them had a severe disability (U.S. Census, 2018). In short, the majority of seniors either have no disability or a less than severe one—but many still require supportive communities to live well (Bonaccorsi et al, 2020). The services, facilities, and modifications that make a community livable for seniors with mild impairments, especially as they age and/or move back and forth on a health and ability spectrum, are not immutable and many solutions are clearly within the purview of planners.

There is a huge literature on what makes neighborhoods and communities walkable or pleasant or supportive to residents; Li (2020) provides a comprehensive assessment of the research base on the impact on older people's well-being and mobility of different built environment and community characteristics. I cannot possibly address that body of work here, but I do briefly focus on elements that sometimes are missing from research on the built environment, elements which are crucial to many seniors. Many older people are concerned about ***safety*** (falls or

crashes), ***personal security*** (crime or harassment), and ***predictability*** (no surprises or unexpected events) in the environment, perhaps more than they are about the design elements on which most widely advocated or used walkability metrics focus.

Older people are notoriously fearful of falling which substantially impacts their desire and ability to move about in their communities (Lavedan et al, 2018; Schoene et al, 2019) Their fear is realistic; falls are the seventh leading cause of death and a major cause of serious disability among older Americans (Burns & Kakara, 2018). The CDC reports that roughly 33 million older adults fall annually; more than 9 percent of those falls result in death (CDC, nd). They estimate that by 2030 the 73 million Americans over 65 will incur over 52 million falls leading to 12 million senior deaths *yearly.* It is true that many of these falls are inside homes or care facilities; we lack good data on falls by older people in public spaces and while walking in the community (Rod et al, 2021). There is some evidence, however, that the soaring rate of pedestrian crashes among seniors (NHTSA, 2020), particularly men, are in fact falls occasioned by rough, broken, poorly maintained, or missing sidewalks as well as the interaction of older pedestrians with cars turning right at intersections (Kim & Ulfarsson, 2019) (even as planners champion multiple intersections as a hallmark of walkable neighborhoods). These are clearly issues which planners can and should address (Duim, Lebrao, & Antunes, 2017; Kim, 2019; Stafford & Baldwin, 2018).

Older people are also afraid of being harassed or attacked while out of their homes (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2006; Ceccato & Bamzar, 2016; Hansimaier, Peter, & Kaiser, 2018); these fears are often independent of actual crime rates. Yet senior perceptions of community disorder and threat of crime substantially impacts the extent of their physical activity and their mobility within their community. Activities don't actually have to be criminal to worry older people; groups of boisterous teenagers or cyclists on the sidewalk can frighten them.

Loukaitou-Sideris et al (2016) found that seniors living in a low-income inner-city neighborhood were intimidated in their use of a nearby park by the poor condition of sidewalks traveling to the park, various signs of drug use, heavy traffic, and groups of young people in the park. Loukaitou-Sideris, et al (2019) found that low-income seniors who lived in the inner city faced multiple problems in their neighborhood in spite of having many elements of the built environment which planners routinely advocate, such as short walking distances, mixed land uses, and frequent bus service. They note that seniors also experienced poorly maintained infrastructure, the presence of homeless people whose behavior could be erratic and thus frightening, crime, and heavy traffic. The researchers suggest that common neighborhood audit tools which rely on aggregate data sources are insufficient to understand the challenges that neighborhoods pose to older people—challenges which are or can be the purview of planners.

Kan, et al (2020) reviewed neighborhood audit tools used to measure aspects of the built environment for older people. The authors suggested that audit tools should be improved to address the needs of less-than-robust older people and incorporate techniques that would allow evaluators to experience the built environment in the same ways that older people do. Stafford and Baldwin (2018) highlight the same messages,

> Failing to capture diversity in ages and abilities in current walkable neighborhood research has potentially resulted in data-informed practices and guidelines that perpetuate the exclusion of spatially marginalized groups...mainstream walkability research is based on the assumed able-body walker, and seldom reflects diversity in how people may move, occupy, and inhabit space differently (p. 25).

It is also crucial for planners to understand the differences in the housing options available to older people and the ways in which planners can and should work with them—and learn from them. First, most seniors do not live in care facilities such as nursing homes or assisted living or continuing care facilities—although I am often confronted by students, faculty, and practitioners who think that all senior housing options are in fact institutionalized care. There are actually several types of formal housing options for active seniors *in the community* which are designed to address some of their safety and security concerns. Age-restricted or 55+ communities provide seniors with ways to overcome the gaps and challenges they face while continuing to live independently in their communities.

It's instructive for planners to examine the model of age-restricted, 55+, or retirement communities, which are growing in importance. Del Webb developed the original concept, Sun City, in 1960, first in Tucson and then nationally. Other companies have also entered that market. Also called active retirement communities, generally no one younger than 55 (sometimes older) is allowed to live there. Residents do not (at least initially) need any kind of medical care or physical accommodations in their homes. Many age-restricted communities are in the South and Southwest, although they are moving into "four season" markets. Older people often seek these communities, which are almost always built at the ***edges*** of urban areas, because they want to live in safe and secure communities, without the need to interact with crowds of people, heavy traffic, social disarray, crime, or strangers. Most lack any commercial or retail facilities, except perhaps at the margins (55places, nd).

Schnure and Venkatesh (2015) report that over time more seniors have become interested in age-restricted communities: "The move to senior housing has become, for many older Americans, a choice of lifestyle rather than a move based on medical needs." These researchers predict a surging demand for housing in such communities. McHugh and Larson-Keagy (2005) report that residents of age-

restricted communities often talk about living in "an idyllic haven" (p.245). McHugh (2007) also describes discussions among Arizona Sun City residents that stressed the sense of "splendid isolation" and the absence of children as being thematic of their living experience.

Those comments are likely to set many planners' teeth on edge but there is much to learn from these communities about how to make real neighborhoods responsive to the needs and fears of older people. Age restricted communities often provide very high-level pedestrian and cycling facilities, for example, although they rarely allow any commercial or retail developments within the community or at cycling or walking distance. My recent interviews in Sun City in Georgetown (TX), a distant but rapidly growing suburb of Austin, found that many residents were active daily walkers on the community's wide, ubiquitous, accessible, and well-maintained sidewalks with limited intersections. They still did all errands and shopping by driving to nearby strip malls and shopping centers. They were not at all interested in having commercial facilities inside the community which they felt would bring the inconvenience and even dangers they chose to move away from. Many residents told me that they felt safe but not isolated in that kind of community, because they could drive to anything in the larger megaregion which attracted them.

Clearly many of these age-restricted housing options offer seniors across the age and health spectrum a range of community features they seek and increasingly need, including safe, secure, and well-maintained pedestrian facilities, green and open spaces, recreational areas. and short but manageable distances to a range of retail, commercial, and medical opportunities in the areas in which they live. These communities suggest an important model for planners to consider to meet the needs of the growing number of seniors, either instead of the dense, grid based multi-intersection model planners promote now or somehow in conjunction with that model. It is telling that the small percent of older people who do move after reaching 65 generally move away from dense communities to suburban enclaves (see the discussion below)—even if not formal retirement communities--which offer them a greater sense of safety and security, even if living there requires those seniors to continue to drive.

Ageism and Sexism

Ageism in a number of "helping" professions is a serious problem; the planning profession is unlikely to be an exception. Studies show that ageism reduces the level and quality of multiple services which seniors are provided: in healthcare (Band-Winterstein, 2013; Chrisler, Barney, & Palatino, 2106), nursing (Kagen & Melendez-Torres, 2015; Dobbs et al, 2016), gerontological counseling (Fullen, 2018), social work (Even-Zohar & Wenrer, 2020), speech-language therapy (Heape, et al, 2020), and the treatment of Covid patients (Ehni &

Wahl, 2020). Ashley (2021) finds that social egalitarians who reject many forms of discrimination have no trouble with ageism—they harbor more prejudice toward and show less advocacy for older people. Several researchers (Chrisler, Barneym & Palantino, 2106) link ageism to sexism; Chonody (2015) argues, in fact, that sexism causes ageism, because the majority of older people are women, increasingly as each cohort ages. The researchers cited generally note the lack of research on the existence, extent, and role of ageism, and related sexism, in their professions or disciplines.

Ageism in these professions causes real harm. Nelson (2019) argues that "ageism has been demonstrated to have real, significant health consequences for older people" (p. 1066). Allen (2016) argues that repeated exposure to ageism has the same cumulative effect on body deterioration, premature aging, and associated health problems as does racial and ethnic health disparities.

Ageism and sexism play out in other ways in the medical profession. There is a shortage of geriatricians—physicians who address the health needs of older people—in spite of multiple funded internship programs which end up with unfilled slots, as the New York Times reported (2020). It appears that medical students and young doctors are not encouraged to choose to specialize in geriatrics. Bagri and Tiberius (2010) conducted multiple interviews with medical students and found that they were discouraged from entering geriatrics by the futility of care, depressed by the decline and death of their patients, concerned by the low prestige of the field, and found communicating with older patients to be enjoyable but time consuming. Raj et al (2021) also conducted in-depth interviews with medical students and found that they too felt unsupported and misunderstood by their peers and mentors if they mentioned an interest in pursuing a geriatric specialization.

I see a parallel in the planning profession and academy, even if the direct harm to seniors is less or perhaps just less obvious. I can only offer anecdotal evidence over a long career of the substantial amount of ageism I have encountered in many relevant discussions of aging issues in planning. Students, for example, have told me that older people are part of the affordable housing crisis because they stay in homes too big for their needs, slowing the natural movement of housing markets. Older homeowners, in fact, are often characterized as "over-housed" and castigated for refusing to move thus limiting ownership opportunities for younger people (Saunders & Feins, 1985; Howell, 1985: Pelizon & Weber, 2009).

I have also heard students, practitioners, and academics say things about older people that would not be tolerated if said about any other group in society. In 2015, I conducted a studio on how to plan airports for older people (in different or additional ways to making them ADA accessible) in response to a national student design competition sponsored by the Airport Cooperative Research Program (we won second place). A planner at an airport in one of the ten largest U.S. cities told

my students that airports were busy dangerous places and if older people weren't willing to travel in wheelchairs they shouldn't travel at all. The planner insisted that it was not possible to otherwise address the specifics of older travelers' needs (e.g. better wayfinding, places along a route to sit, assistance with hand luggage). Several students had no trouble in asking why airports *should* be more friendly to older travelers just because they didn't want to travel in wheelchairs. Yet some airports, like Las Vegas and San Antonio, do provide specific services for older people who don't want to be treated as having a disability or use resources that people with serious disabilities need.

I also believe that planners' reluctance or lack of interest in addressing the needs of older people is related to sexism. The lack of research on all women's and older women's travel needs, for example, has been well-documented for decades in the proceedings of sequential Transportation Research Board (TRB) conferences on women's travel issues (Rosenbloom, Babiano, & Nixon, 2020). Most of the interesting work on older people and older women's travel is being done abroad, not in the U.S.

The Sustainability Conundrum

I suspect that many students and practicing planners are annoyed or even angered by the reluctance of seniors to embrace sustainable lifestyles, to live in dense urban areas, and to forgo most auto travel. It's a problem for many planners that seniors (and pre-seniors, those 55+) largely live in low density places now with few alternatives to the private car. Census data show that roughly three-quarters of U.S. seniors—and a higher number of those who drive—do live in lower density or rural areas where they lived or moved as younger members of the work force. Older people in the U.S. are largely aging in place and want to continue doing so, as multiple studies show (Forsyth & Molinsky, 2020; Li, 2020) even though Forsyth & Molinsky (2021) argue that aging in place can mean different things to different seniors, including simply staying out of institutionalized care. The data show, however, that few seniors move (roughly 3 percent in any year) and when they do move, two seniors move "out" to lower density areas for every one senior who moves "in" to what the US Census calls a ***principal city*** (unpublished data, U.S. Census, 2108).

The Census data can be misleading, however, undercounting the extent of senior moves to lower density neighborhoods, because they base their categories on jurisdictional boundaries and not on density (or other metrics). Many principal cities—from Orlando to Phoenix, from Houston to Atlanta—are not dense urban areas like New York City or Boston. Many principal cities, in fact, are themselves extremely low density except in the very core (if at all). Seniors can be living in traditional suburban developments 15 – 20 miles from downtown Houston or Atlanta, for example, but still be within the boundaries of those principal cities.

Data from the National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), in contrast, which used the proprietary Claritas system to compute the density at which people live, show that only 13 percent of the U.S. population 65 and older lived at what Claritas defines as "urban density" (Rosenbloom, n.d.). In short, it is likely that in excess of 75 percent of all U.S seniors live in relatively low density suburban and rural areas and show little interest in changing that.

Given where they live it is not surprising that most seniors continue to drive and rarely use alternatives to a private vehicle. In 2019 more people 65 – 69 had drivers licenses than did any cohort under the age of 50; 96.2 percent of all people 65 – 69 had a license that year, 96.2 percent of men and 90.3 percent of women. Almost eight of ten people over the age of 85 had a driver's license in 2019 as well. Public transit use by seniors, meanwhile, has been dropping for decades; nationally seniors made only about 2 percent of all their trips using any mode of public transportation in 2017 (FHWA, 2018). Several studies using 2017 NHTS data found that barely 2 percent of all the trips by seniors were made with TNCs (Lyft and Uber for example), taxis, or ADA and community paratransit ***combined*** (Jaio, Bischak, & Hyden, 2020; Jiao & Want, 2021). The Pew Research Center (2018) found that in 2018 only 17 percent of Americans 50 years old and above ever used a ride-hailing service, substantially less than the 43 percent of people 30–49 who said they used these services.

Seniors concomitantly show very little inclination to stop driving or even to consider doing so. Most research shows that few older drivers plan for driving cessation, possibly because they are aware of how limited their options are (Rudman & Friedland, 2006: Friedman & Rudman, 2009; Rosenbloom & Herbel, 2009; Vivoda et al (2021)). Scott and Tulloch (2021) surveyed a group of drivers from 18 – 85 years of age, asking how likely it was that they would lose the ability to drive and if they had identified the life changes they would experience if they had to cease driving. Older people were far more aware of the impact on their lives of driving cessation. Older drivers, however, did not engage in any more planning for driving cessation than did younger, less aware, people. Older drivers were also far less willing to say that they would move their homes to be closer to public transit or shopping and recreational opportunities to accommodate their eventual inability to drive safely.

Piatkowski (2020), in a similar vein, surveyed drivers now tasked with chauffeuring older and younger family members. He asked if the respondents would be willing to consider moving to more accessible neighborhoods as *they* aged so they wouldn't need to burden family or friends with meeting their travel needs when they couldn't drive. He found that the older the respondent the *less* likely they were to consider moving to a more accessible place to avoid being a chauffeuring burden to others.

A New England University Transportation Center study (2019) reinforces these findings. The researchers surveyed a number of older drivers asking respondents the age at which drivers *usually* give up driving, when people *should* give up driving, and when they thought **they** *would* give up driving. There were sharp differences between when older people thought others *should* stop driving and when they planned to give up driving—if at all. Over half of the older drivers thought they would be driving in their 80's, 4 percent in their 90's. Most respondents thought they themselves would stop driving, if at all, at a much older age than people "usually" or "should" stop driving.

Overall, most seniors are not living their lives as most planners probably hope—expect?—they would. It is possible that planners don't—and even won't—focus much attention on the needs of older people because most seniors who have the option, consistently choose to stay in or move to low density places where it's very difficult to use alternative, and more sustainable, modes of transportation. When these seniors suffer substantial declines in their quality of life because they can no longer drive, access needed services, or keep up their oversized homes, it's possible that some planners think: "They made their bed, let them lie in it."

The truth, of course, is that we all make decisions based at least in part on the choices we are offered. Planners have the skills to develop ways to offer other, more sustainable community-based life choices for seniors in employment, housing, transportation, recreation, access to healthcare, green space, and social interaction. They could do so in part by retrofitting suburban communities (Rosenbloom, 2009), instead of either refusing to engage with these issues at all or hoping (in vain) that many seniors can and will move to higher density, multi-use neighborhoods and take up cycling.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

The nation's population of older adults has been growing rapidly, fueled by the aging of the so-called baby boomers—the population of those 65 and older grew by more than a third between 2010 and 2020, and by over 3 percent from just 2018 to 2019 (US Census, 2020). The median age of the population has been increasing rapidly as a result; almost two-thirds of all U.S. counties in the country had a median age between 40 and 49.9 years, almost 7 percent of all U.S. counties had a median age in excess of 50 years. These sweeping socio-demographic trends have profound implications for every aspect of our society, and for many of the issues that planners address. If planners continue to fail to recognize and respond to these trends, they will not go away; not addressing the multiple planning implications of a rapidly aging society is a blueprint for disaster.

Yet it is fair to conclude that aging issues in planning are given short shrift by scholars, academic departments, and practicing planners. The corpus of

scholarship on aging issues in arguably the three most important journals in planning over at least 40 years, the viewable material on planning department websites, and the online descriptions of APA's many divisions and interest groups, do not reveal a discipline or profession with any great interest in planning communities and services to meet the needs of an aging population. What appears—or more accurately doesn't appear—in these journals and on these websites may confuse both potential and current planners about the centrality of aging issues in planning, the kind of education and training they can and should experience in a planning program to meet diverse senior needs, and the professional work on aging issues that they could, or should, address as practicing planners.

I suggest that the lack of interest, or perhaps enthusiasm, for addressing aging issues is a predicable response to an intertwined combination of circumstances—academics and professional planners misunderstand a number of facets of how seniors live in their communities, there is ageism and sexism about aging issues, and prospective and current planners are put off by the unsustainable choices seniors seemingly willingly make, to "trap" themselves in inaccessible suburbs, driving long after they should cease to.

These factors create a vicious cycle which feeds on itself, creating yet more barriers to the profession, the academy, or individual planners fully responding to the diverse needs of older people. The most important barrier might be that planners dealing with aging issues are not respected for making those choices and receive little to no recognition for their accomplishments. I see no evidence that either planning schools or the profession, as a whole, provide much support or encouragement to students and professionals who seek to address the needs of older people.

I can only hope that planners will find the desire and then the knowledge to develop and maintain communities that really meet older people's needs in all their diversity. This in turn may result in seniors living well longer and independently, so they can continue to lead productive, healthy, active lives in which they contribute to their communities as workers, grandparents and foster parents, and volunteers. Academia and the profession need to act to raise the prestige of planning for older people, attracting more planners to a well-defined specialty in planning for aging communities. To do so, planning scholars and professionals must reorient academic and professional programs to produce more planners interested in and attuned to the diversity of the needs of the elderly as well as having realistic assessments of how to achieve sustainability for aging and intergenerational communities. The massive demographic shifts we are experiencing will not disappear; planners must act now to understand and effectively respond to these shifts, so the discipline and profession are not swept away in their wake.

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APPENDIX I – METHODS AND APPROACH: IDENTIFYING ARTICLES ON AGING AND DETERMINING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN *JAPA, JPER,* AND *JPL* FROM THEIR INCEPTION TO JULY 1, 2021.

I searched for original research or review articles published online or in print by *JAPA, JPER,* and *JPL* using three terms: *aging, elderly*, and *senior(s)* utilizing the online search engine provided by the publisher of each journal. These searches also produced articles with variants of these terms such as *age* for *aging* and *elder(s)* for *elderly*. I used a slightly different procedure for *JAPA* which began publishing planning research in 1935, as the *Journal of the American Institute of Certified Planners* (the current name was adopted in 1978). The *JAICP a*rticles published from 1935 to the late 1950's now online, however, are merely (badly) scanned versions of the original articles and not interactive PDFs. I was unable to definitely determine that the publisher's online search engine could actually search the older articles. So, I read and counted all articles in all issues of *JAICP* myself from 1935 to 1959—the publisher's search engine produced a 1960 article on aging, so I felt confident in the search engine after that date.

Between 100 and 400 individual publications came up for each search in each journal; I then removed book reviews, editorials, commentaries, perspectives, and discussion pieces. This was easier said than done; the publishers of *JAPA* and *JPER* categorized articles in multiple ways over the decades. A number of articles characterized as research or original research were in fact opinion pieces or commentaries or the short introduction to a special issue or special section of the journal. Sometimes they were reports from an officer or committee of AICP/APA or ACSP. I therefor briefly perused each article to determine if it fit my inclusion criteria, regardless of how the publishers categorized that article. I excluded any article that I believed did not fit my selection criteria.

I was surprised to find that many of the remaining research and review articles did not have any of the three terms (or variants) in their title or key words (although the journals did not provide key words in the publications well into the first decade of the 21st century; JAPA began providing key words in each article in 2007 for example). I then carefully read the abstract, introduction, and concluding section(s) of each article to see if and how it directly or indirectly addressed planning for older people or for their specific substantive needs such as housing or transportation (I did not further use text-mining software as suggested by Fang & Ewing, 2020). A large number of the research or review articles identified by the publisher's search engine had nothing to do with people 65 and older. Sometimes the search engine keyed on the word *age* or *aging* when it referred to younger people or infrastructure or housing conditions or the phrase "age of…". I could not discern, in other cases, why the publishers' search engines produced the remainder

of the articles since they did not discuss subjects related to *aging*, *elderly*, or *senior(s)*.

I classified the substantially smaller number of articles that did address the needs of an aging population in three ways. The first group are those articles that directly focus on the specific needs of older people from the onset, alone or in contrast to those younger, OR whose *major* research findings focus on older people even if the authors did not originally structure their research to study the elderly. The second group are those articles that report findings for or about older people in the abstract or introduction or concluding section, without privileging those findings. Anacker & Niedt's (2019) *JPER* article on accessory housing units, for example, mentions the possibility of the use of such units by older people. The third group—the largest—contains those articles that mention findings by age only in passing, without raising them in the abstract, introduction, or concluding sections. I include the first and second groups in the summary tables below; I do not include the third group.

Assigning an article to any of the three groups is not always clear cut and represents a judgement call which others may dispute. The difference between any of the groups was sometimes my assessment of the degree of emphasis of aging issues rather than substantive differences. I also may have omitted articles that provide elevation on major aging issues because a) those articles did not come up in my search for the three terms, and/or, b) the authors did not themselves raise or stress their relevant findings on aging issues because it wasn't their focus. Fang and Ewing (2020) suggest that manual approaches, such as the one I used, are subject to confirmation bias. I believe I countered that tendency by including any articles over which I had a doubt, at least in the second group. Ultimately the numbers were so small it didn't make a difference.

I also counted or estimated the *total number* of original research and review articles published by these journals on any topic since their inception through July 1, 2021. I calculated the total number of original research and review articles, however, using different methods for each of the three journals. I used a combination of methods for *JAPA,* the oldest of the three planning journals. I felt compelled to read all published *JAICP* articles through 1959 to identify those that addressed aging (as described above) and I also counted the number of total original research articles by hand as well. I then counted the number of original research articles in the first issue of every volume in each decade from 1950 through July 1, 2021, averaged that number by decade, and imputed the average number of articles in the first issue of every volume in a decade to all the other issues in every volume in that decade.

I took advantage of the work of *JPER*'s editors who counted the number of articles from the journal's inception through the third issue of 2017 (Andrews,

Popper, & Lowrie, 2017). I then used the same method I had with *JAPA* to estimate the number of original research and review articles from 2017 through July 1, 2021 and summed the two numbers.

I estimated the number of original research and review articles in *JPL* (including CPL bibliographic essays) by counting the actual number in the first issue of each volume in a decade. I then averaged the number of first issue articles in each decade and imputed that number to the remaining issues in each volume by decade. *JPL* has published the smallest number of articles of all three planning journals since its inception, largely because most issues had only two articles until very recently when the page count was expanded.

I am confident that my research in *JAICP* from 1935 to 1959 and the publishers' search engines for all three journals identified all subject-relevant articles available online by July 2021. I know my method missed an accurate count of the ***total*** number of articles that each journal published because they all published articles online not assigned to a volume and issue. This isn't a serious concern for *JAPA* or *JPL* but is for *JPER*. *JPER* has put a large number of accepted articles online that have not been assigned to a volume or issue (but are clearly searchable). (One aging article *JPER* put online in January 2019 had not been assigned to a volume or issue by July 1, 2021.) So, I am undercounting the total number of articles that *JPER* has published since inception and in a given time period perhaps seriously—but again I am not undercounting the number of *JPER* articles on aging issues. The result of not including articles published only online is to make aging articles in all three journals, but particularly *JPER,* appear to be a larger share of total articles than they are—but given how few aging articles there are in total were this is not a serious problem. It decreases the percentage of aging articles of a share of all articles published but those percentages are already so low as calculated, that lowering them still further would only strengthen my existing conclusions (i.e., increasing the denominator of the fraction only lowers the percentage calculated).