

Briefing Note #5: Housing / Home for Older Adults

Campus of Wellness and Care Demonstration Project (CWCDP) at Shepherd's Care Kensington Village

INTRODUCTION

Kensington Village independent residents have identified the importance of having a safe, affordable living environment and a social support network in place as they age. Briefing Note # 3 identified the way the CWCDP is working to provide opportunities for social interaction, friendships, and support in order to create a home-like environment for residents. This briefing note will focus on examples from research and the real world of the importance of safe, secure, affordable housing that is also perceived as residents' homes.

Most older adults want to live in their own homes, with or without help, for as long as possible. By keeping home environments safe and secure and people healthy and active, citizens can maintain their independence and remain at home successfully as they age. According to a report by the Canadian Medical Association, 63% of Canadians selected home and community care to support independence in older adults as a top health priority (Dobbins, 2017). Currently 92% of Canadians over the age of 65 live in the community with less than 8% in long term care or health care facilities (Statistics Canada, 2014).



CONTEXT



CONCEPT OF HOME

The words *house* and *home* are almost synonymous when used to describe a place of living or a dwelling, but a *house* is primarily used to mean a physical structure and a *home* has deeper psychological and emotional meaning. The academic literature on the concept of home is limited but Tipple and Speak (2004) noted the absolute importance to human beings of the idea and comfort of home. This concept is of particular importance to older adults as they transition from their family or lifelong community homes to housing offering support and care (Streader, 2011). In the absence of a sense of home, people have a loss of internal locus of control, vulnerability to physical and mental illness, lack of supports and social isolation (Morris and Strong, 2004, Trossman, 2016).

AGING IN PLACE RESEARCH

Supporting independent seniors to live in community settings is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that is impacted by housing, health services, community supports and age-friendly communities (Dupuis-Blanchard, Gould, Gibbons, Simard, Ethier et Villalon, 2015). In her definition of aging in place (based on what seniors have said), Dr. Dupuis-Blanchard of the Université de Moncton in New Brunswick, notes two factors that determine a senior's success in living independently:

- The *ability* of a person to stay with or without help in the community; and
- The *choice* to be secure and to be in control of the residence of their choice.

Dr. Dupuis-Blanchard's research identifies potential challenges facing service providers of aging in place housing options including:

- Reluctance of older adults to let strangers provide care and services;
- Difficulty in accepting help as this may be perceived as a loss of independence and control;
- Past negative experiences of self or others known to them; and
- Concern regarding out of pocket expenses and costs associated with programs and services.

Her work in this area further identifies the importance of:

- *Individual success factors* including positive attitudes, perception of good health, housing that meets their needs and adequate income and education; and
- *Community success factors* including access to public transportation, presence of personal support networks, age-friendly communities and access to appropriate health and social services and programs.

CHANGING THE WAY WE THINK OF AGING

Tim Carpenter is the founder of EngAGE, a nonprofit group in the United States that “changes aging and the way people think about aging by transforming senior apartment communities into vibrant centers of learning, wellness and creativity.”¹ He is one of the 2016 *Influencers in Aging* by Next Avenue sharing the stage with others who continue to push beyond traditional boundaries and change our cultural notions of what it means to grow older.

“If I could change one thing about aging in America, I would make it required in all senior housing that life-enhancing programs like ours are offered, ones that change people’s lives, improve their health and create a stronger sense of community and purpose. This would create increased independence, health and longevity, improved happiness and sense of self-efficacy to battle ageism and a connection to other generations through multigenerational programming and events in community.”²

Tim views housing for senior adults as more than shelter, but as communities of people with the potential to grow, thrive, and contribute their talents and experience to society. He imagined a new system of senior housing built first and foremost on respect and appreciation for the interests and preferences of each individual tenant. Based on this vision, he created a new model of affordable housing that fosters successful aging and promotes physical and mental health. Today, EngAGE programs reduce the number of seniors requiring higher levels of care by 25 percent. His organization is transforming aging for low and moderate-income seniors living in affordable apartment communities, into a new beginning.

OUR EXPERIENCE

Kensington Village (KV) was a purpose built campus (1998) to achieve a vision. At the time, it was the only true age-in-place community for older adults in Western Canada.



KV offers a range of housing and support for older adults in the northwest sector of Edmonton, Alberta including rental apartments, condominium apartments and bungalows, supportive living suites, dementia cottages and long term care rooms. Independent residents can receive home care services when needed, and the option to purchase services such as meals, laundry, housekeeping and hairdressing are available. Activities are available on site at low to no fees and open to all residents regardless of living option. Residents are encouraged to contribute to the community (such as volunteering to help plant and maintain community gardens, provide input and feedback on campus issues, etc.) whereby strengthening the sense of community and home.

Municipal services such as curb-side transportation and walkable streets help to enhance community success factors.

¹ <https://engagedaging.org/>

² *2016 Influencers in Aging*; Retrieved from: <http://www.nextavenue.org/showcase/influencers-aging-2016/>

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SUMMARY

Supporting older adults to age in their place of choice depends on having access to appropriate services when and where they need them and an environment that supports the individual on multiple levels. The Campus of Wellness and Care Demonstration Project is one example of how this can be successful.



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