



# SENIORS' HOUSING UPDATE

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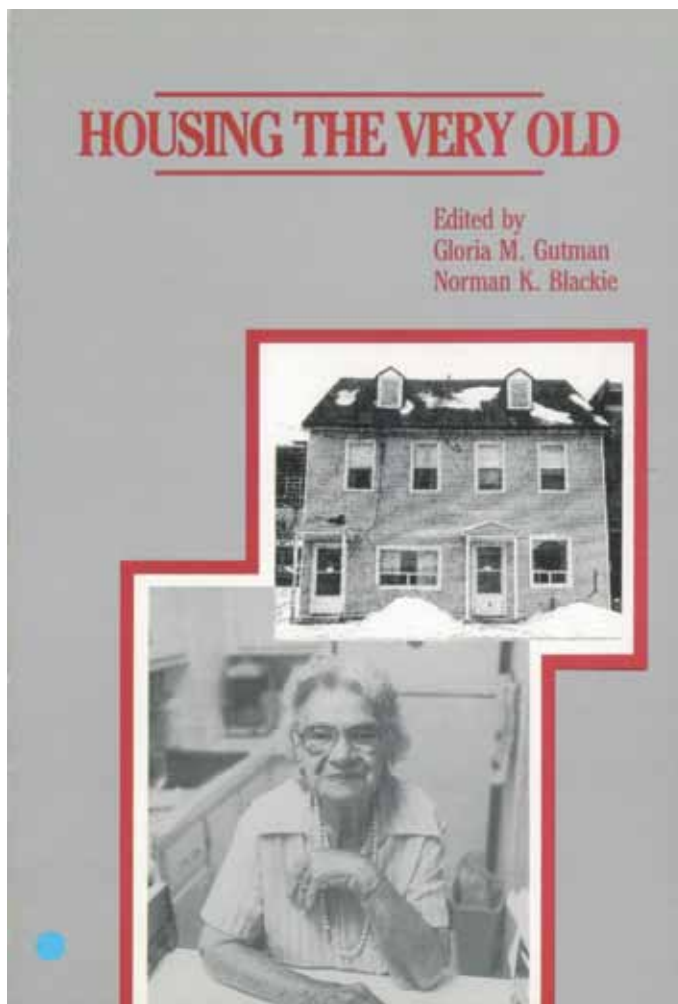
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## TO OUR READERS

The GRC has decided to produce the next several issues of our newsletters, GRCNews and SHUP, in PDF-format only. We have made this decision to test whether our readership will find this Green-initiative all-electronic format acceptable. I welcome your feedback concerning this initiative.  
Raymond G. Adams, Editor/  
GRCNews; SHUP

**URBAN TRANSFORMATION** — For the first time, there are more older adults and seniors than there are teenagers in our population



The front page of this issue of Seniors' Housing Update features the cover from a newly digitized GRC publication from 1988 co-Edited by the GRC's founding Director Dr. Gloria M. Gutman now available online from our GRC website (Please see GRC News v3on2 for a full description of the GRC's digitized publications project!). The topics discussed in "HOUSING THE VERY OLD" reflect those covered in this issue of SHUP, thus highlighting the ongoing nature of many difficult-to-answer matters covered in the field of Gerontology. Ryan Woolrych discusses approaches to urban regeneration, Robert Beringer looks at the role of new technology in supporting seniors and Patrick Simpson describes a new training program for realtors to help them respond to the seniors market for housing.



# The impact of urban transformation on sense of place and well-being amongst older people living in deprived areas

by **Ryan Woolrych**, PhD Candidate (Manchester), GRC Research Fellow in Falls Prevention and Gerontechnology

**M**y PhD explored the impact of urban transformation on experiential understandings of 'sense of place' and 'well-being' amongst older people living within areas of deprivation. The work was underpinned by a visual participatory approach, involving local older residents as co-researchers in documenting and co-analysing their experiences of living within an area of transformation, using photography and video diaries. The motivation for my research emerged from previous funded research where I had worked with tenant and resident associations, community and voluntary organisations and local service providers to evaluate urban development initiatives. I had also undertaken an 18-month placement with a government agency responsible for administering development in the area, providing me with a grounding in urban regeneration (renewal) practice. During this time I had established relationships with local community groups which afforded me greater penetrability into the community and assisted in the recruitment of local residents as participants in the research.

## DECLINE AND DEPRIVATION

The geographical focus was an area in the North-West of England called 'East Manchester', located to the east of the city of Manchester, governing approximately 1100 hectares and containing a population of just over 60,000 people. Application of the indices of multiple deprivation (IMD, 2004) identified the area as being one of the poorest in the UK, highlighting high unemployment, poor educational attainment, lower life expectancy and higher crime rates when compared with the city and the rest of England and Wales. An historical analysis of the area revealed that decline set in as a result of a contraction in the manufacturing industries in the 1960s,



Figures 1 and 2: Deprivation in East Manchester circa 1980s.

the relics of which are still visible in the cotton mills, gas cooling towers and converted warehouses across the city. East Manchester experienced a 60% employment loss between 1975-1985, whilst by 1999 52 percent of the population were in receipt of benefits and the average house price was six times lower than the rest of the UK. What had previously been the heartland of the city became characterised by derelict wasteland, unoccupied housing and deep-seated apathy (see figure 1 and 2).

## AREA-BASED REGENERATION AND NEW EAST MANCHESTER

The area was targeted for investment when the UK government announced an area-based approach to alleviating poverty in the poorest areas of the country, predicated upon a National Strategy Action Plan where the then Prime Minister Tony Blair outlined a commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal which commented that 'nobody should be disadvantaged by where they live' (SEU, 2001). This vision became broadly aligned to two strands of UK policy that have dictated regeneration practice for more than a decade: (i) Urban Renaissance agenda which has been traditionally design-led, focussing on the physical, aesthetic and economic regeneration of inner city areas (Urban Task Force, 1999, 2005) and (ii) the Neighbourhood Renewal agenda which has focused on tackling social exclusion



and promoting sustainable and cohesive communities (SEU, 1998, 2000).

This policy manifested itself through the establishment of urban renewal programmes across the UK, which were individually overseen by an urban regeneration company (URC) who were tasked with developing a redevelopment framework for the area and overseeing its implementation. The New East Manchester URC was established in 1999, and over the next decade had managerial influence for approximately 350 million pounds (\$560 million CAD) of public and private sector funding. The aim was two-pronged: to attract new businesses into the area, thereby achieving economic revitalisation through local employment and long-term sustainability, alongside investing in transport, housing and community facilities. In achieving this, the aim was to deliver across a broad range of well-being 'floor' targets encompassing a diverse range of thematic areas including: health; education; housing; the environment, crime and safety; and employment. The 2002 Commonwealth Games was to act as the catalyst to the area, during which the physical transformation of the local area was achieved through investment in housing, new sports facilities, parks and green areas and transport networks (see figure 3 and 4).

## PLACE AND WELL-BEING

The focus of the PhD was to determine

the impact of this investment on the sense of place and well-being of local residents living within an area of overwhelming physical transformation and change. Sense of place is a fundamental ontological concept, through which life is lived instrumentally and symbolically (Manzo, 2008). **Sense of place** is defined as “an outcome of interconnected psychological, social and environmental processes in relation to physical places” (DeMigilio and Williams, 2008). Here, in attaching meaning to places, individuals develop a relationship to place which can be understood **psychologically** (through emotional attachment to valued places), **socially** (through places that enable us to establish and sustain social networks) and **environmentally** (access to open spaces, safe communities and housing). Places are thus important to building well-being, through providing the conditions that enable people to experience a sense of happiness and pleasure (**hedonic well-being**), as well as creating the supportive environments for people to personally develop and flourish (**eudaimonic well-being**) (Ryan and Deci, 2001). The physical transformation of places that are meaningful to us have the potential to impact on the relationship we have with our environment, thereby undermining



Figures 3 and 4: New housing development and sports stadia in East Manchester

or strengthening our experiential understandings of sense of place and well-being. This change can have a fundamental impact on older people’s sense of place, a group who are often perceived as being more vulnerable to change and dependent upon place to sustain their sense of belonging. Here, the home, community places and outdoor spaces provide a sense of security and a rich source of social capital upon which they come to depend (Pretty, 2003; Becker, 2003; Cooke, 2007).

### **PARTICIPATORY VISUAL APPROACH**

A participatory visual approach was chosen as the methodological framework. This helped situate the research in the daily lives of local residents, providing them with a sense of control and agency in the research process. Moreover, the visual offered an alternative ‘lens’ through which to document the experiential reality of local residents living within an area of deprivation. The application of visual methods has gained increasing credence amongst ethnographers in recent years as advances in technology have brought about the consideration of new methods within which to bring meaning and context to a research problem (Banks, 2001; Pink, 2001). Whilst the application of this research methodology is limited amongst older groups, the visual have been used amongst other vulnerable groups to derive understandings of place and belonging (Young, 2001; Radley et al, 2005). I recruited a total of 12 local residents over the age of 65 to participate in the research. They were sampled from diverse geographical areas of East Manchester, with differing length of tenures in the local area and mixed housing ownership. All participants were trained in the use of digital cameras and photography prior to commencement of the study and were provided with the freedom to document their experiences living within an area of regeneration. Following data collection, workshops were held with the older people to elicit meaning from the data collected and to arrive at co-constructed understandings of the visual material. The experiences of each

participant were written up as in-depth case studies providing perspectives of their experiences of the regeneration.

### **HOME, RE-HOUSING AND ROOT SHOCK**

The experiences of the participants revealed that processes of urban regeneration can impact significantly on notions of place and well-being amongst older residents. Older people were found to be deeply rooted to their local environments, such that physical regeneration can challenge the emotional attachments that they have with places, resulting in a profound sense of loss if this change is not sensitively managed in their lives. The home was seen as a locus of sentiment for older people, providing them with a strong sense of emotional attachment and representing a fundamental component of their identity. Often that particular home had prevailed in the family for generations, and acted as a source of shared memories and life events through which they constructed a sense of ‘self through place’.

The regeneration in East Manchester imposed a process of housing market renewal which involved demolishing existing housing and the construction of new housing stock. As a result, a number of existing residents were displaced, being re-housed in other areas of the city. This brought about a profound sense of loss amongst those that were forced to give up their homes, challenging their psychological well-being and resulting in feelings of despair, anguish and fear. This is what Fullilove (2003) termed ‘root shock’, a traumatic stress reaction to the loss of place. For older residents, many of whom chose to remain in the community, the loss of local people deprived them of a source of social capital. Participants reported individuals on the streets who would undertake household chores for them, assist them with shopping, and collect medications. The loss of local people deprived older people of a vital source of care and support through which they had come to depend. Similarly, there were local characters within the community (so called ‘community champions’) who were responsible for bringing the community together,



Figures 5 and 6: Local resident attempts to retain their homes.

looking out for others and providing an authoritarian voice in the local area. The loss of such individuals deprived the local community of an anchor to rely upon.

These challenges to local resident's sense of place through the home often provoked an embittered reaction from local residents who felt that their sense of place was being challenged. Figure 5 shows the response of one resident who organised collective action to prevent the razing of homes within an area of East Manchester. Figure 6 reveals the story of one participant who, alongside her neighbour, formed a stoic attempt to remain in the neighbourhood despite compulsory purchase orders being placed on their property. Housing market renewal processes represent a 10 year vision for some areas, a drawn-out process through which older people experience growing frustration.

### 'THIRD PLACES' AS COMMUNITY HUBS

Community places also imbued a sense of place and well-being within older people. Those community places included the local cafe, community centre and post office and formed what Oldenburg (1989) referred to as **third places** (in contrast to the **first** and **second places** of home and work) which nourish social well-being. For older people, community hubs were an environment where they could escape from the isolating presence of the home, as well as for developing and sustaining social networks. Such community places represented an important aspect of the

everyday life of local residents, and a fundamental component of their daily routine. These 'community hubs' were often housed within old buildings which, whilst uninviting from the outside (see figure 7), were of significant social value on the inside (see figure 8). This building was subsequently razed three months after the pictures were taken and an example of action taken to regenerate areas without first mapping the social importance of such places to older people within the community.

Residents documented the development of new infrastructure within the local communities, identifying integrated health centres and community places. Yet for older residents, who had little involvement in their design, the places were perceived as sterile and subsequently remained un-used by the local community. Residents also identified little attempt by the regeneration company to re-engage the community with these new places through a process of shared 'place building' that encourages local use. As a result, local resident's experienced a sense of disorientation resulting from the loss of meaningful places that are familiar to them, replaced by standardised landscapes which older residents no longer recognised.

### PLACE APPROPRIATION AND OWNERSHIP

For local residents, it was the ways in which public spaces were procured and controlled which brought about a feeling that used spaces was being taken away from them. Older people had a strong sense of territoriality and ownership of space (resulting from prolonged attachment to place over time), which were seen as compromised by processes of regeneration. A lack of older people's involvement in the design of new places created a sense of place alienation amongst older residents which prevented the regeneration from leaving a sustainable legacy through resident-led involvement. Yet processes of regeneration had the potential to be supportive and sympathetic to notions of sense of place amongst older people. Those successful attempts at regeneration were often a result of



Figures 7 and 8: A Community Hub for local residents.

transferring ownership to older people and local residents within the local community, whilst providing formal support and funding where necessary. The community garden scheme was evidence of successful partnership-working between the professional and resident community, which provided spaces to local residents to utilize and manage. This resulted in a heightened sense of collective ownership amongst local residents, who felt a greater sense of control in the design and maintenance of space. It is through this process that a stronger sense of place developed amongst older people, and also the opportunity for more successful community participation and engagement. Figures 9 and 10 demonstrate a successful community garden in operation.

### INVOLVING OLDER PEOPLE AS 'PLACE MAKERS'

The findings from my doctoral research suggest that older people's sense of place agenda needs to be closely incorporated into attempts at re-designing urban areas. A place-making agenda is required that engages older people in the design and implementation of regeneration initiatives. Older people that are

involved in initiatives to improve the area are more likely to adopt spaces as their own, and sustain them in the long-term. This is important given the short-term nature of funding initiatives and the need to encourage local ownership and upkeep of urban space beyond the longevity of a single urban development programme. Transformation is about positive change, not only for attracting new residents into an area, but in achieving a social mix where both older and younger generations feel that homes and community places are environments which support a sense of familiarity and belonging. Whilst regeneration and positive transformation is encouraged, this needs to be paralleled with the social transformation of communities, such that existing residents retain a sense of familiarity with their surroundings and whereby new residents are attracted by vibrant, welcoming communities in which they have an emotional investment. Older and vulnerable groups are not against progressive change, rather they feel challenged when they no longer feel they have a valued role in the place-making process, and often feel disillusioned and disenchanting when environments come to resemble standardised landscapes which are not reflective of the community. Importantly, older people want to make a contribution to the places within which they live, assuming an active and positive contribution as 'place makers' within their local community. This requires involving older people (and other local residents) through inclusive decision-making at the local level, whilst using urban regeneration professionals as a source of formal support and investment as a lever for change.



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

**Ryan Woolrych** (whom the GRC welcomed in our last edition of GRC News (v.30n.1) as our new Research Fellow, from the UK where he was a Research Associate with RIHSC (Research Institute for Health and Social Change) in Manchester) has over six years experience of working as a researcher developing expertise in the theoretical areas of '**place and well-being**' and applying these concepts to understanding the experiences of marginalised and excluded groups. This article details Ryan's UK-based work in an area of research that has been frequently featured in SHUP illustrating how potentially 'universal' these issues are:

- Chaudhury, H., & Sarte, A. (2007). Does where we live and who our neighbours are make a difference in how physically active we are? *Seniors' Housing Update*, 16(2).
- Hwang, E. (2006). This is my home: The story of older Korean immigrants. *Seniors Housing Update*, 25(2), 1-4, 8.
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Figures 9 and 10: A Community garden before and after

## RECENTLY COMPLETED THESES & PROJECTS

Robert Savage (2010). *An exploration of the needs and concerns of potential ambient assisted living users within the context of the meaning of home*. M.A. Project, Department of Gerontology (Supervisor: A. Sixsmith).

The purpose of this study was to explore the potential affect that Ambient Assisted Living technologies may have upon users within the context of the meaning of home. A qualitative approach was employed and semi-structured interviews were held with

potential users. Findings revealed that an Ambient Assisted Living system would have little effect upon six of the seven meaning of home categories identified in this study. It was found however, that an Ambient Assisted Living system had the potential to affect behavioural freedom within the home space. Additional themes that emerged from this study were concerned with the importance of family, who benefitted most from the system and the nature of trade-off in older adults' decision-making processes. It was concluded

that future research should be directed towards developing Ambient Assisted Living systems as part of a broader holistic paradigm designed to assist older adults with aging-in-place.

*[Editor's Note: Please see the executive summary of Robert's project below. His project is available as a full-text PDF on our Department website: [http://www.sfu.ca/gerontology/program\\_info\\_more\\_info/theses/](http://www.sfu.ca/gerontology/program_info_more_info/theses/)). Robert has changed his last name since the publication of his project from Savage to Beringer]*



### An Exploration of the Needs and Concerns of Potential Ambient Assisted Living Users within the Context of the Meaning of Home: Executive Summary

by Robert Beringer, MA Gerontology

Since my teenage years, I have been fascinated by the fact that while one older adult may experience the stereotypical view of aging as a period of decline, another may be living an absolutely vibrant life. This led me to years of study in the fields of gerontology and kinesiology. As a student I became involved in a number of research projects where I had the opportunity to speak with and interview many older adults. Almost universally, the older adults I spoke with possessed a desire to remain in their homes and age-in-place. Interestingly, by the time of my entry into graduate school, both academics and the business community were researching and developing technological systems to help individuals reach these goals. One such academic, my graduate supervisor Dr. Andrew Sixsmith, suggested to me that much of the technological development was being performed from what he has coined a "technology-push" and that little research had been conducted on how such technologies will eventually impact the end-user.

The factors mentioned led me to develop my M.A. project concerned with An exploration of the needs and

concerns of potential ambient assisted living users within the context of the meaning of home. An Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) system may be defined simply as a combination of stand-alone assistive devices, smart home innovations, and telehealth technology. Many systems under development involve passive monitoring of older individuals in their homes using multi-sensor data acquisition technology. A review of the literature suggested that many older adults would "accept" such potentially invasive technologies, if they were able to help them remain in their homes. This acceptance however, has come from research stemming from the technology-push paradigm. One of the problems of such research is that AAL technology is both very impressive and novel, and gaining positive feedback from research participants is not difficult to obtain. To overcome this problem, my project employed a different "lens" to acquire feedback from research participants. Specifically, in-depth interviews were conducted with older adults to first develop an understanding of what the intimate space of the home meant to them. This was followed by

having the participants view a short film *Imagine: The Future of Aging* (kindly provided for use in this project by CAST, the Center for Aging Services Technologies in Washington DC), which depicts an AAL environment. After the film, the interviews continued and data was gathered on both the participants impressions of the technologies displayed in the film, as well as the potential impact such technologies may have upon what "home" meant to them. In many ways, the research replicated and further validated the acceptance model as older adults were willing to trade-off privacy with having technologies available to them that would help them age-in-place. By further probing the meaning of home, participants described not only whether or not they would accept AAL, but the potential for such a system to affect their behavior. Participants envisioned a number of less than positive scenarios: that the person and home would always need to be neat and clean in order to videoconference; that in-home vital signs monitoring could cause stress; that cognitive function monitoring could lead to performance stress and take the enjoyment out of the activity being

## SFU GERO-GRAD CAREERS - A GLANCE



*EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a new feature in our newsletters where we will be highlighting the success of our Gerontology graduates.*

Our first of these is Robert Beringer who graduated from the Master of Arts program in 2010. Robert has established his own consulting company as described below (The abstract and executive summary of Robert's MA Project are elsewhere in this issue of SHUP):

Vibrant Living and Lifestyle Systems was incorporated in March 2011. The business is currently developing two income streams. The first of these is concerned with aging research design, implementation, and results. The goal in this realm is to partner with academics and organizations, and to participate in

*Continued from page 6*

monitored; and that excessive monitoring could remind one of the deficits they are experiencing in their lives. These findings suggest that future research should be directed towards not only asking potential users if they would accept the system, but rather probe the effect such technologies may have upon the user. The findings of this study suggest that AAL could in fact act as a stimulus to cause individuals to behave differently in their own homes.

It is my hope that this research will contribute to the development of an AAL system that is both technologically sound and user-friendly. I would like to thank Dr. Andrew Sixsmith, Dr. Andrew Wister, and the Gerontology Research Centre at Simon Fraser University for making this project a reality.

research that makes an impact in our communities. At present, Vibrant Living and Lifestyle Systems is developing six new workshops for the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia (COSCO). The new workshops cover a wide range of topics such as staying fit at home; technology and aging; and what to do when it's time to stop driving. These topics draw from both the material that form the content of my M.A. project and from the breadth of gerontology knowledge acquired during my studies at SFU. It is exciting to be involved with COSCO in this project because their existing workshops, many developed by fellow student Mike Campo and me while studying at SFU, have reached over 5000

older adults in BC.

The second income stream will commence in the spring of 2012 when I will be taking individual clients who wish to engage in "personal training with an eye towards healthy aging". Vibrant clients can expect an extensive health assessment, personalized exercise prescription, and counseling. The counseling will ensure that the mind follows the body and that positive habits become a way of life, or simply, a part of one's Vibrant Lifestyle.

To keep abreast of what's new with the company please visit the website at: [www.vibrantonsaltspring.ca](http://www.vibrantonsaltspring.ca)  
Robert Beringer is CEO of Vibrant Living and Lifestyle Systems Inc., and lives on Salt Spring Island in British Columbia.



**The GRC welcomes** Visiting Scholar, **Dr. Sookyoung Lee.**

**Dr. Lee** (Sook) specializes in the areas of 'Environmental Design of Elder Care Facilities' and 'Residential Design for Dementia.' Sook received her doctorate in Housing Environmental Design from the University of Yonsei, Seoul, in 1998 after completing her thesis on the "Korean Elderly Needs on Planned Housing." From 1999-2002, she worked as a Research Associate in the Institute of Millennium Environmental Design and Research

at the University of Yonsei and was appointed lecturer in the Department of Housing Environment at the University of Dongkuk, Seoul. From 2003 to 2010, Sook was a visiting researcher in the Research Center of Design & Health in Stockholm, Sweden where she was the Principal Investigator on several research projects on the effect of the physical environment to the health of old people with dementia. She came to the Department of Gerontology at Simon Fraser University to carry on her international cooperative research project 'Experimental Study on Therapeutic Environmental Design for Dementia Care: The Group Home as a Small-Scale Approach' with Dr. Chaudhury, Associate Professor, SFU Department of Gerontology.

### SELECTED RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Lee, S.Y. (2011). Welfare and therapeutic environment for the elderly in Sweden. Seoul: Korea Academic Information Press.
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# COMMUNITIES SLOWLY ADAPTING TO CHANGING POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

by **Patrick Simpson** (Executive Director, The SAFERhome Society)



Patrick Simpson (L) and Andrew Sixsmith (R)

**T**he awareness around senior's issues has become a more familiar topic for everyone. Businesses, local governments and even universities are now becoming very proactive at changing their environments to be inclusive to a larger and more diverse cross section of our community.

For the first time, there are more older adults and seniors than there are teenagers in our population. Naturally, with aging comes reduced agility, mobility and sensory capabilities. As a result, one of the fastest growing segments of our society is the community of older adults and seniors with disabilities. Interestingly, this group is also very much in denial that they have physical challenges. Stats Canada forecasts that 48% of all Canadians will be over the age of 65 by the year 2032.

Recognizing the need to encourage the transfer of tangible solutions and knowledge to housing professionals, a new training program "The REALTOR®'s Role in Encouraging Age-Friendly Cities" was developed.

This program was the result of a close collaboration among 3 parties, SFU's Gerontology Department, Canadian Barrier Free Design Inc. and the SAFERhome Standards Society. This new universal housing training program demonstrates how the research that SFU and others have gathered can be shared directly with the community through the inclusion of real estate industry professionals. The integrated SAFERhome program was chosen because it is the only measurable universal main marketing housing

program currently available.

The SAFERhome model delivers an effective home or work support environment for the steadily aging population and workforce. Through discreet design and the application of universal design techniques, home safety can be a beautiful and simple cost-effective construction option. Universal design incorporates some of the hottest new design trends available in the housing market today. The excitement around universal design is that it does not just focus on one user group, rather, it caters to a multitude of user groups who benefit from ergonomically designed features. These features create a safer, more comfortable environment for seniors, families with children, and anyone with a permanent or temporary injury (e.g., sports related injuries).

Training REALTOR®s to be better informed and to raise the awareness of the specific issues around aging can only have a direct positive impact on the real estate marketplace. The REALTOR® can be a more effective and competent professional to the building and buying marketplace by enabling positive change that will benefit the purchaser, the developer and all members of the community. This shared knowledge includes the utilization of the SFU-supplied HOOP program (a tool developed in the UK to help seniors systematically identify their housing needs). REALTOR®s will be able to share this evaluation tool kit with their clients to establish and clarify if their current and future residence is meeting/will

meet their real needs.

Planning for the future needs of an aging population requires the involvement of an educated and aware multitude of stakeholders. Through continued collaboration with SFU, this training program can be further expanded into the community through the direct involvement of occupational therapists, health care professionals, architects, interior designers and others.

*SAFERhome Standards Society is a non-profit organization, public interest organization, advocating a safer home environment and a better standard of living for all people through its certified building standards. [www.saferhomesociety.com](http://www.saferhomesociety.com)*



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