

# Sharing Experiences through Photovoice: Older People Experiencing Homelessness Express the Importance of Built and Environmental Features to Age in the Right Place

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# Agenda:



AIRP Project  
Background



Conceptual  
Framework



Photovoice



Themes



Key Take Aways

# What is AIRP?

- Aging in Place (AIP) with the lens of “equity”
- The physical and social environmental context of an older person impacts their ability to age optimally and must match their unique lifestyles and vulnerabilities <sup>1,2</sup>



The ‘right’ set of housing, health, and social supports can enable older people to age in a positive way, including those with limited income and/or chronic complex health conditions. <sup>1,2</sup>

# Objectives of the AIRP Project

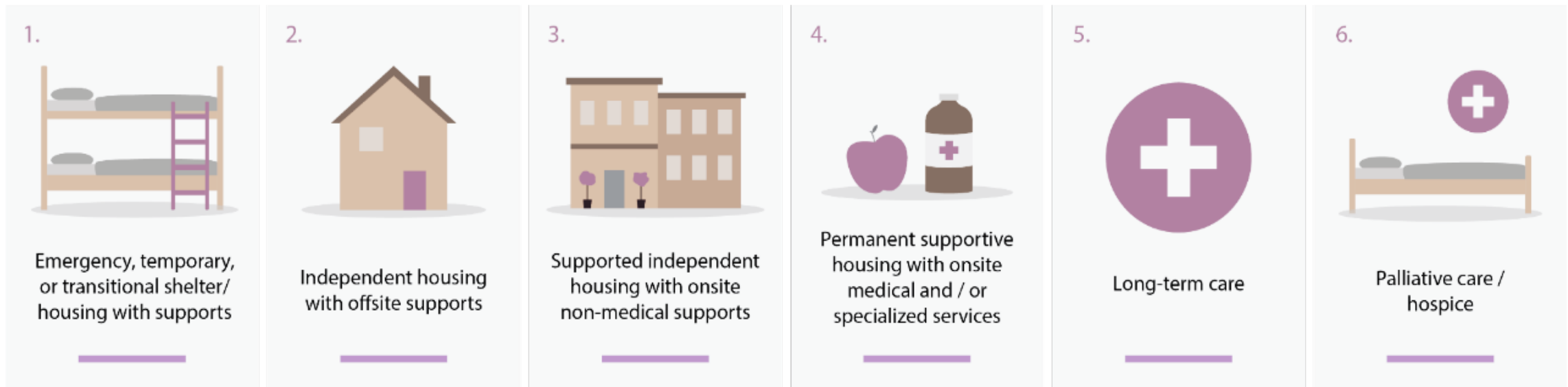
To **evaluate promising practices** for the 'right' aspects of housing & supports for older persons with lived experience of homelessness (OPEH)

To **identify concepts of AIRP** important to OPEH in different types of housing

To **facilitate knowledge mobilization** and increase public awareness of OPEH and their housing options

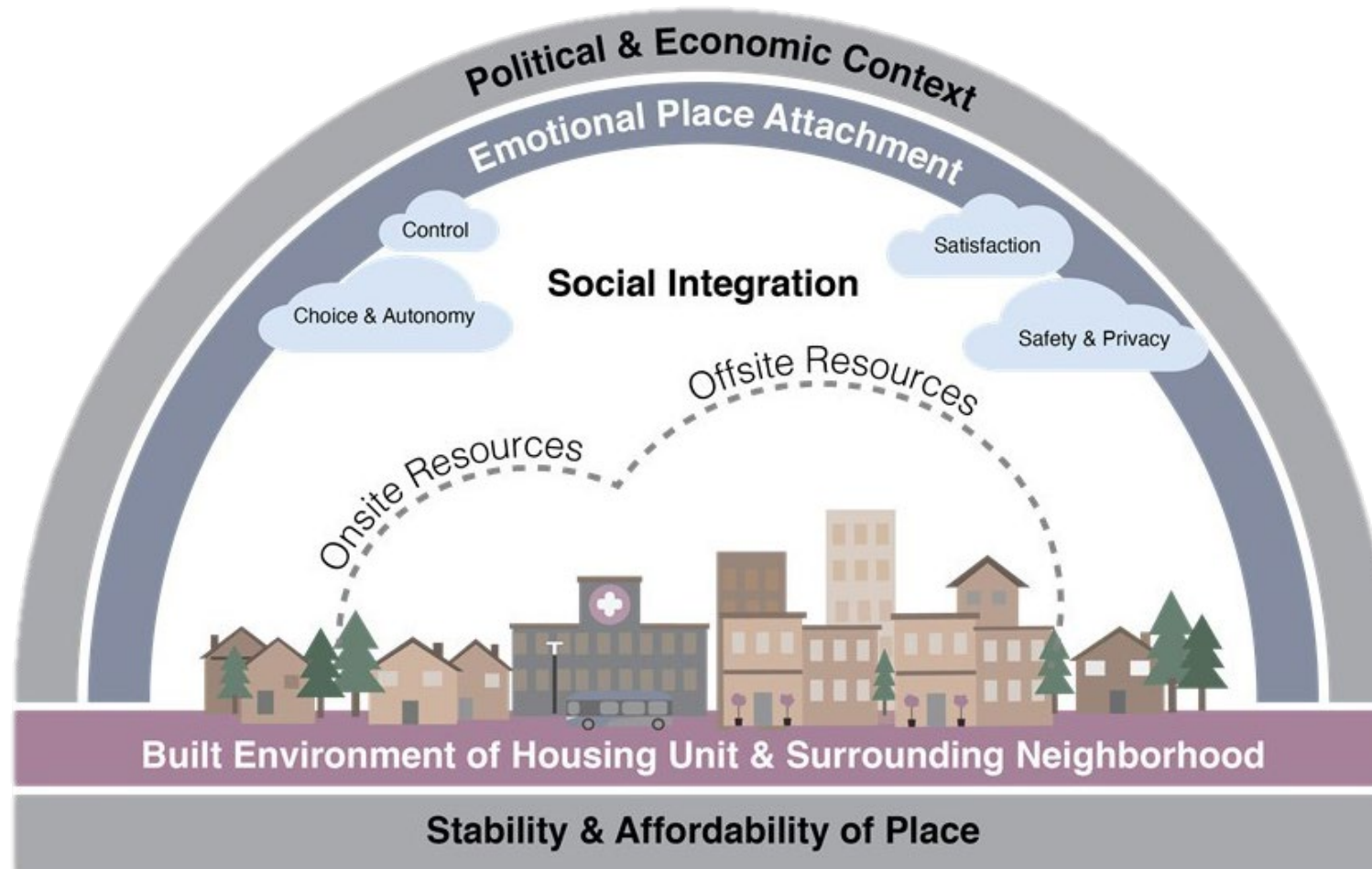
To **improve the housing + support options** for OPEH to meet their unique and complex health and social needs

# Promising Practices Across the Housing Continuum



(Canham, Walsh, Humphries, Nixon, & Burns, 2022)<sup>3</sup>

# AIRP Conceptual Framework



# AIRP-VABE Partnership & Partners

- Simon Fraser University (**Vancouver**), McGill University (**Montreal**), University of Calgary (**Calgary**), and University of Utah
  - Social Work, Gerontology, Architecture, Health Sciences, Medicine, Psychology, and Community & Public Affairs
- Partnerships with organizations are city-specific
- **5-year project** – Funded through **CMHC\*** and **SSHRC\***  
**Partnership Grant**



# Core Partnerships – Vancouver



Seniors  
Services  
Society



WHOLE  
WAY  
HOUSE



Providence  
Health Care



Brightside



THE  
BLOOM GROUP



# Methods: Data Collection Tools

Aging in the  
Right Place



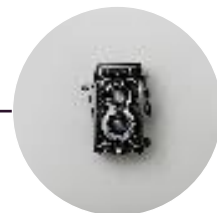
Document review



Environmental audit



Provider interviews



Participant photovoice  
interviews

# Photovoice as Digital Story-telling



Photovoice <sup>6,7</sup> is used as a **community-engaged research strategy** to document life stories and reflect on the relationship between housing and aging of OPEH

Record of barriers and facilitators within housing and neighbourhood contexts as it relates to AIRP



Photographs used to frame environmental aspects of life stories



Promoting critical dialogue and reflection on OPEH's journey towards AIRP

- ❖ Participants took photos that represent the story of *aging in the right place* for them. It helped them to visually illustrate aspects of their life as they transition towards permanent housing

# Methods: Photovoice Interviews Temporary Housing Program – (THP)

Photovoice: A community-engaged research strategy

Semi-structured interview  
on life-course

Interview focused on  
photographs

11  
Participants

2-3  
Sessions

45-to-60-minute  
sessions

In-person

# Sample of Participants in THP – Seniors Service Society (SSS)

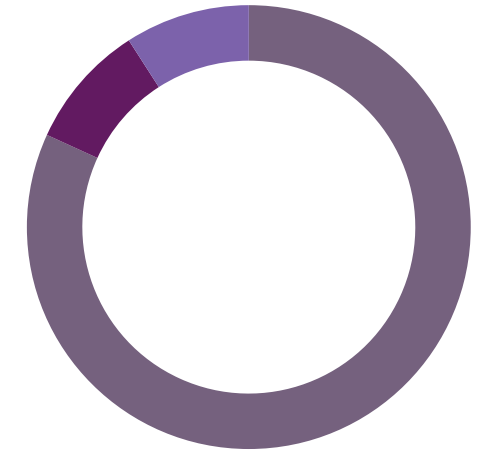
## Demographics

# of participants  
(n=11)

Female (n=6)  
Male (n=5)

Age range: 58-75  
years old

Ethnicity: 9 Caucasian,  
1 Iranian, 1 Filipino



■ Caucasian ■ Iranian ■ Filipino



55% Female and 45% Male

# Themes related to the environment



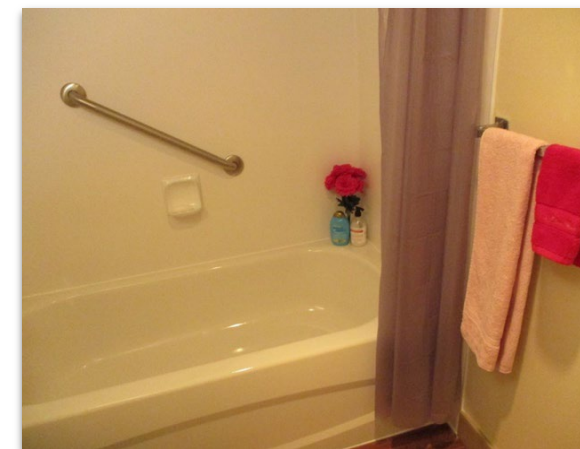
Proximity to Offsite  
Amenities and Services/  
Access and Engagement  
with Nature



Access to Onsite Services  
in the THP

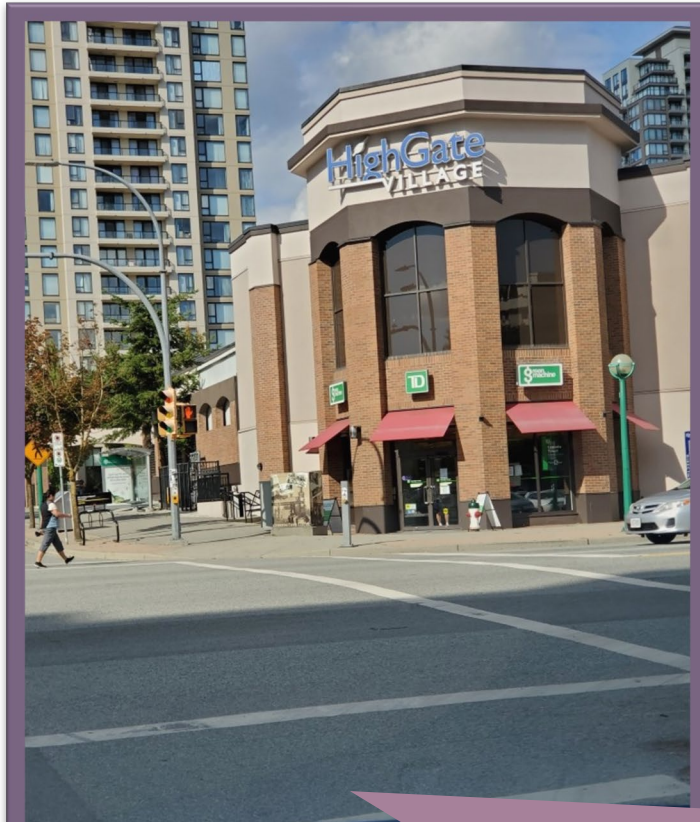


Having Independence and  
Control in Daily Actions /  
Personalization of Spaces



Safety & Accessibility Features  
of the Built Environment

# Proximity to Offsite Amenities and Services



I just took the bus. It is essential to have a bus to get on. So, people can leave if they don't have a car, and they can actually get on with a walker, because I do. ...it's important to have transportation... it's freedom to roam" V1-C3.



"...That's the biggest piece, I think, for me is to be able to go shopping and get the things I need and not have to wait for delivery or have to wait for [someone] to get it for me. I could just get on my scooter and go get it myself. ...It means independence and there is nothing else to that." V1-C4

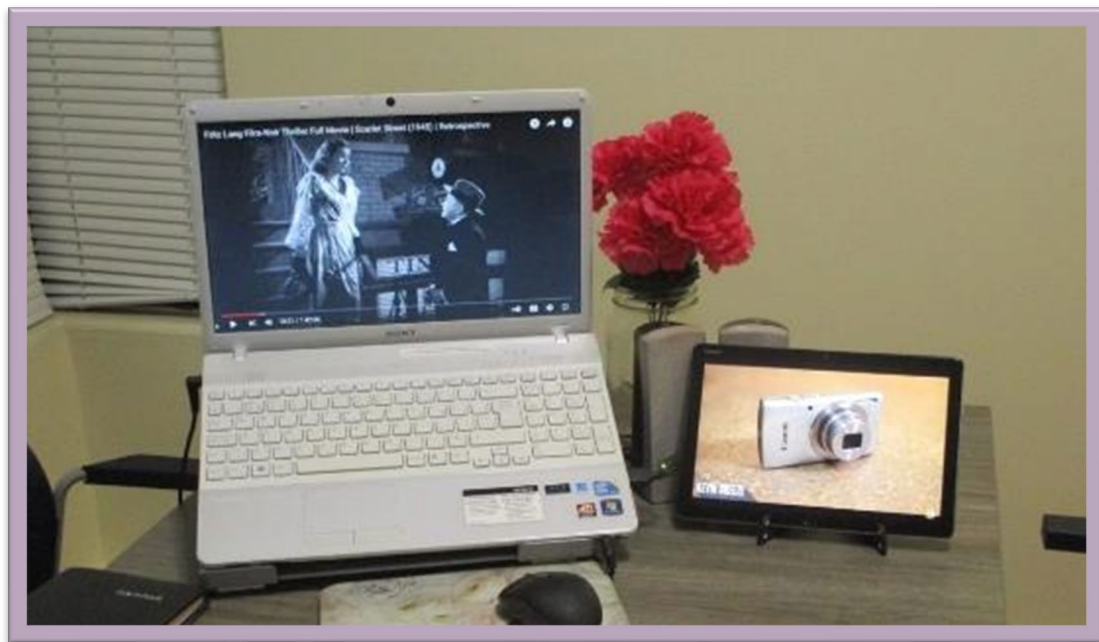
# Access and Engagement with Nature/Outdoor Spaces

“It is really, such a well laid out place, whoever did it initially. There are trees, there are flowers. It is nice to see, you know, the flowers just kept coming up in different colours, in different places.”<sup>v1-c6</sup>

“I just think it is nice to have a gazebo. And it is nice to have a place for people to meet and chat. You know, there are seats all over – or all the way around. So, people can chat. Especially that people can’t come together in the community room [*because of the pandemic*] It kind of became a place for people to hang out.”<sup>v1-c3</sup>



# Access to Onsite Supports in the THP



“Okay, this is in the temporary apartment, it's allowed me to have access to my own computer and then I was also given the tablet...They allow me to connect with the world and when you're going through trauma and you're homeless and things like that, you lose connection with a lot of people, you know, you can lose friends.” V1-C5

“Because I’m temporary, I’m not staying. So, it would be silly to start something up and I’d never, you know, reap the rewards from it.” *(in reference to the community garden)* V1-C3





# Having Independence & Control in Daily Actions/ Personalization of Space



It's the sense of independence of course, when you can supply your own meals, cook your own food... For example, I made sauerkraut ...you know that's good for your health, so you can have more control over your health and more control over your life and the sense of independence. VPP1-C5



“I just figured it is nice to know that somebody actually cared about, you know, making it look nice. It is not just functional; it is going to look nice. And I think that's the takeaway of all this.”  
 VPP1-C3

# Safety and Accessibility Features of the Built Environment



The good things about it is that everything is so accessible ...they provided the grab bars ...it is important because there's a danger to slip, that happened to me already before in my own place where there's no grab bars... the balancing is one of the things that are problematic as I age...this place is secured right now, for my needs. V1 C9



“...you just want to have a sense of safety, because... if you are scared every time, ... it really messes you up a little bit in your mind... so when you have that security there - you know the lighting, the key fobs, and just people around the area... I think that sense of security is so vital, especially for seniors...” V1 C6

# Key Take Aways

Photovoice provides an opportunity for OPEH to tell the stories of their lived environments through pictures

Findings offer insights on the environmental barriers and facilitators to AIRP for diverse groups of OPEH

Findings from the photovoice can help inform program practices of the different types of housing for OPEH

# References

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Thank You!



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