

LEE LIMING
PROGRAMME IN
AGEING URBANISM

Recreational Spaces for Older Population¹

Seniors Social Hub

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Evidence shows that staying socially active is crucial to seniors. Social interaction and keeping up with interpersonal relationships help seniors maintain physical and emotional well-being and cognitive function. Potentially, social interaction can reduce risk in heart diseases, some cancers, osteoporosis, depression, Alzheimer's disease and lower blood pressure². Conversely, seniors who are not socially engaged are at risk of isolation, becoming increasingly vulnerable to loneliness, depression, deteriorating physical health, which can lead to premature admission to institutional care or death. In this regard, some cities including Singapore and Vancouver have

¹ This is an evolving database. We will be adding more examples and cases over time.

² Older Adults and the Importance of Social Interaction,

<https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=1&ContentID=4513> accessed 27 August 2015.

begun to develop community hubs for seniors. The underlying idea is that of seniors helping seniors.

Seniors' Hub, Vancouver

Known as Seniors' Hub in Vancouver, the facility is developed in partnership with seniors, engaging older adults in identifying and addressing seniors' issues and needs, acting on priority issues through advocacy, research and senior-led initiatives. Co-created from the ground up, the seniors' hub is driven by and for seniors. The guiding principle is senior participation - seniors are engaged throughout all stages of the development and operation of the hub. In general, the challenge (and success) of establishing a seniors' hub lies with 4 components:

- Component 1 – vision and type – what is the vision for the hub, what type of hub is needed considering the community and its stakeholders – this covers the shared vision, outcomes and activity plans;
- Component 2 – scope and catchment – who will use the hub, what are their needs and goals – this covers the scope of the catchment, the demographics, the community issues, the scale of services and number of activities being provided;
- Component 3 – governing bodies and stakeholders – what are the roles and

responsibilities of the lead agency, community partners and others, who will fund the hub and how do all partners contribute to its sustainability – this covers the governance roles and responsibilities for different components of the hub and appropriate communication to stakeholders, internal and external;

- Component 4 – process evaluation – what evaluation tools will be used, how will hub data be compiled, assessed and reported – evaluation is essential to track the hub's initial development and community impacts.

The seniors' hub brings together seniors from diverse backgrounds to work alongside the agencies and service organisations to provide outreach, support, social activities, games and other stimulating activities for their peers. It paves a way for social innovation to develop a more integrative approach to programming and expanding activities for seniors to come together, be active together. Programmes, usually provided at little or no fee, are designed to help seniors to extend their social network, make new friends and remain connected to their community. They vary from place to place depending on the vision, type, scope and catchment of the hub. The Cap Services Seniors' Hub in North Vancouver, for example, offers activities such as:

- monthly afternoon social activities;
- coffee groups;
- short distance walking groups;
- volunteer tele-friends;
- grocery shopping with Doris;
- small discussion groups;
- volunteer driver services;
- special seasonal events;
- small group outings;
- Friday shuttle to Park Royal.

Transportation is provided where needed; this is found to be particularly beneficial since 90% of participating seniors have physical and/or health problems that restrict their ability to use public transportation. The Cap Services Seniors' Hub also produces a newsletter three times a year to keep its 800-member community abreast with developments and achievements. When considering a seniors hub, the population it serves needs to take a stake in the space.

Whether design, programme or facilities, the nature of the space should ideally be governed by group decision and decided by members of the community. This encourages participation

in placemaking and subsequently, a sense of ownership to the space or programme.

Neighbours' Hub³, Singapore

In Singapore, various ground-up measures are being implemented to keep seniors socially active and to engage them in the development of community programmes and space. One initiative is the City for All Ages Project.⁴ Since 2011, pilot projects – living laboratories – are being test-bedded in various housing precincts. The scope is to identify and test out new ideas – infrastructure and programmes – to help make communities elder-friendly. Recognising the varying profile of seniors and the need to tailor services and programmes to this heterogeneity, project proposals are derived from town audits and surveys of senior residents in respective housing precincts. It is a people-centric approach, working with the individual seniors' needs and working the programmes around meeting those needs while involving a whole-of-government effort. One such ground-up initiative is the Neighbours' Hub@Tampines Ville RC located at the void deck of Blk 842, Tampines Central developed end 2014.

3 We acknowledge Vanessa Yong, Deputy Director (Active Ageing), Ageing Planning Office, Ministry of Health, Singapore, for facilitating our visit to Neighbours' Hub on 21 August 2015 and sharing her experiences and ideas with us.

4 Even though Singapore is not part of World Health Organisation Global Age-friendly Cities project, it has

initiated a City for All Ages (CFAA) Project under its Ministry of Health. CFAA heads and consolidates cross-agency efforts in the development of urban solutions for ageing in Singapore. CFAA has been supporting and funding ground-up initiatives for more elder-friendly features in public housing towns.

The former senior citizens' corner has been transformed into a neighbour's hub following feedback and input from residents. The space has been repainted, decorated with wall motifs and provided with moveable chairs (a contrast from the usual nailed-to-ground chairs in public housing void deck) and CCTV. A weekly news reading/sharing session brings together seniors (especially those with little education, those who do not or cannot read) from the community and journalists from the national Chinese newspaper, *Lian He Zao Bao*, to a lively discussion of current affairs and journalists' first-hand accounts. The activity is popular and well attended; about 20-30 people per session. Seniors have been reported to become more sociable and self-motivated as the sessions progressed, building new friendships in the neighbourhood.

Building upon the growing interest and participation in Neighbours' Hub, other activities have been added, e.g. a mobile library through a partnership with the National Library Board to bring library loan services to the residents and a community kitchen (under construction). With the development of the community kitchen, seniors can gather, prepare, cook and enjoy meals together, especially those that reside alone. Unlike meals-on-wheels, where food is delivered to the individuals and they then eat in seclusion at home, the community kitchen would draw

residents out into a communal setting during meal times.



Photo Credit: Cheong Sue Wei



Photo Credit: Cheong Sue Wei

Box 1: Examples of Other projects with City for All Ages (CFAA)

Bedok

Sunflower Residents Committee (RC) champions the promotion of health in its neighbourhood and has introduced various yearlong health-related services for its senior residents. By bringing health advisors to their doorstep (e.g. Nurse@RC programme), seniors can easily seek and receive health consultation and check-ups. Gym equipment has also been introduced in the RC.

Marine Parade

The initiatives implemented include: retrofitting 545 seniors' homes with elder-friendly fixtures and fittings (e.g. grab bars, slip-resistant tiles in bathrooms, wheelchair ramps), more elder friendly fitness corners, larger block numbering, levelled void deck and longer 'green man time' for traffic light crossings. In addition, Goodlife! focused on active ageing and well-being of seniors has set up shop at a senior activity centre to help seniors. The senior activity centre has become a one-stop shop for referral and counselling services, elderly-related information, wellness activities and a befriending network for seniors living alone. It has partnered with the Agency for Integrated Care to raise residents' awareness and knowledge on dementia and depression and provide a support network for sufferers and caregivers. A community kitchen and news sharing sessions have also been implemented in this community.

Whampoa

Community for Successful Ageing (ComSA@Whampoa) has been set up by Tsao Foundation, NTUC Eldercare and community leaders as a pilot project focused on addressing the health and wellbeing needs of seniors in an integrated manner. It seeks to mobilise community resources available to support seniors' continuing healthcare and personal growth, to address isolation, loneliness and boredom. Its activities include community-based primary healthcare including care management, team-managed, person-centred care, a mobile clinic in the residents' committee centre, elder empowerment and training, multi-party partnerships and engagement with seniors and volunteers.

Source: Capilano Community Services Seniors' Hub, <http://capservices.ca/Society> accessed 1 September 2015; Older Adults and the Importance of Social Interaction, <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=1&ContentID=4513> accessed 27 August 2015; Community Engagement and Connection, <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/seniors/health-safety/active-aging/community-engagement-and-connection> accessed 27 August 2015; Ministry of Health (n.d.) Creating Senior-Friendly Communities; Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports (2011) City for all ages project to develop urban solutions for ageing, http://www.news.gov.sg/public/sgpc/en/media_releases/agencies/mcys/press_release/P-20110302-1/AttachmentPar/0/file/city%20for%20all%20ages%20media%20release%20UPLOAD%20version.pdf accessed 31 August 2015.