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RUNNING HEAD: CONTEXTUAL FACTORS FOR AGING WELL

**Contextual factors for aging well: Creating socially engaging spaces through the use of
deliberative dialogues**

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Conflict of Interest

None

Abstract

Purpose of the study: Home and community engagement are key contextual factors for aging well, particularly for older adults in vulnerable social positions. A community-based participatory action research project conducted in Western Canada examined how to best use the shared amenity spaces in a low-income seniors' apartment complex in order to connect services and programs with tenants and to provide opportunities for service providers and local stakeholders to build upon and create new relationships toward collaboration and service delivery. *Design and Methods:* Pre-move deliberative dialogue workshops (n=4) were conducted with stakeholders (e.g., service providers, developers, and municipal government employees). Workshop participants (n=24) generated ideas and plans on how physical and social environments can contribute to the social engagement of senior tenants. *Results:* Shared dialogue led to community investment and asset sharing by integrating the knowledge and experiences of multiple stakeholder groups into the planning process. This paper highlights how collaborative planning approaches for the effective use of the social environment (e.g., social programming), within the physical environment (e.g., amenity and community spaces), can generate rich and illuminating data for informing enhancements in the social environment of apartment dwelling low-income seniors. Contextual challenges to service provision are discussed, including the need for communication about and coordination of on-site programming, culturally diverse and responsive programming, and long-term funding. *Implications:* Prolonging independent community living with the assistance of support services should be a goal to both delay premature relocation into institutional care and meet the preferences of older adults.

Keywords: Housing, Access to and utilization of services, Home and community based care and services, Qualitative analysis: Thematic analysis

Contextual factors for aging well: Creating socially engaging spaces through the use of deliberative dialogues

The physical and social contexts of aging are important to an individual's ability to age well and have their psychosocial needs met, or conversely, impede one's ability to thrive. In later life, there are a variety of housing options available for seniors, ranging from independent living situations (seniors rent or own their homes), to supportive and assisted living situations (seniors receive minimal to moderate support with activities of daily living), to residential living situations (seniors are provided more significant levels of care). Among seniors with limited income who are situated in marginalized social positions, housing options are scarce, particularly compared to those with purchasing power who can reside in a living situation of their choosing.

In contrast to “service-enriched housing for older persons” (see Pynoos, Liebig, Alley, & Nishita, 2005), independent housing that does not provide on-site support for low-income seniors has been referred to as “unassisted affordable housing” (see Leviten-Reid & Lake, 2016) or “age-segregated services without housing” (see Gibler, 2003). Renters are challenged not only by the affordability of housing, but also by services and supports to enable independent living. This is especially the case in areas where rental costs have increased while incomes remain fixed (Weeks & LeBlanc, 2010).

Research has found that older renters, particularly those in subsidized housing, are disadvantaged for a variety of reasons, including activity limitations (Gibler, 2003), high rates of disability, and limited informal support (Spillman, Biess, & MacDonald, 2012). Seniors who are part of marginalized socioeconomic or cultural groups are often in greater need of supportive environments in order to age well (Park, Han, Kim, & Dunkle, 2015). The lack of informal support alongside minimal affordable formal support options situates low-income seniors, particularly those living with challenging health conditions, at increased risk for nursing home

placement. Intersectoral recommendations have been put forth (World Health Organization, 2016) demanding the provision of safe, accessible, affordable housing with support services on-site to help older renters maintain their health, functioning, and independence thus delaying or avoiding nursing home placement, and reducing health and social care costs (Gibler, 2003; Spillman, Biess, & MacDonald, 2012). Thus, it is critical to determine solutions that support the needs of seniors who are living in affordable rental housing to reduce institutional costs, while enabling older adults to successfully age-in-place.

Home and community engagement are key contextual factors for aging well, particularly for older adults in vulnerable social positions (Erickson, Krout, Ewen, & Robison, 2006). Older people are often housed in settings that do not meet their current place-based needs in terms of amenity space and program and service delivery (Milligan, 2012). As a result, older people increasingly find themselves isolated and marginalized when they move into senior-specific housing that is not fit-for-purpose (Lindley & Wallace, 2015). Affordable housing that integrates services and amenities that address the physical, social, and environmental needs of older people can provide the necessary supports to age-in-place (Petersen & Minnery, 2013).

Seniors living in affordable rental housing have identified the importance of shared spaces (Leviten-Reid & Lake, 2016) as offering opportunities for social interaction, physical activity, and monitoring of neighbors' safety. For instance, social interactions could include having meals and informal meetings with other tenants, as well as engaging in various hobbies, games, activities, celebrations, and holiday events with other tenants (Fang et al., 2016). Common spaces have also been identified as locations in which community organizations could offer exercise classes and thus help support the health and wellbeing of tenants (Leviten-Reid & Lake, 2016). In this sense, the programming of amenities and services within communal spaces

have the opportunity to bring residents together, creating spaces for social networks and for hosting meaningful activities, as well as acting as a bridge with local community organizations.

This article presents research from one phase of a longitudinal collaborative project in which a seniors' housing society in Western Canada financed an affordable housing development, inclusive of shared indoor and outdoor spaces for senior tenants, partnering with the municipal government and developers, and collaborating with community organizations to explore ways to develop informal services and supports in and around the building (Sixsmith et al., 2017). This offered the opportunity to redirect focus away from the material features of the built environment (often prioritized in housing and planning developments) towards cultivating non-physical, psychosocial supports for tenants. The research team was invited to join the partnership as academic experts to: 1) understand the challenges and opportunities experienced by seniors and service providers; 2) identify facilitators for and barriers to provision of services and supports to seniors; and 3) determine actions needed to better support service providers in serving seniors. To achieve these objectives, a longitudinal community-based participatory research (CBPR) project followed the development of a low-income seniors' apartment complex over 18-months.

Research Setting

Rosewood Gardens (pseudonym used for anonymity) is made up of two 16-story towers, totaling 296 one-bedroom units, inclusive of two units designated for two full-time, live-in, multilingual caretakers. The role of the live-in caretakers is to ensure a safe and secure living environment and to support tenants with building maintenance needs, asserting building bylaws and maintaining safety regulations, but are not mandated to support social programming for

tenants. Rosewood Gardens is located in an urban area within close proximity of transportation and other services and amenities.

The two Rosewood Gardens' towers are connected by centralized community amenity spaces, including a: large multipurpose room (with bar and kitchen area); secured-access boardroom; arts-and-crafts room; games room; and hair salon with manicure/pedicure services. Additional amenity spaces include the entrance lobbies of each tower with sitting areas; a large secured outdoor courtyard landscaped with a walking path and gardens; and courtyard-level lounges (each with a TV, microwave, kitchen sink, chair/furniture) adjacent to the laundry facilities on the second level of each tower. As one representative from the housing society explained:

They're all connected; the two towers are connected with this hallway with centralized hobby room, et cetera, the games room. The idea is that we don't want the tenants of one tower to feel that that is their tower, and Tower 2 is not part of us or vice versa. We wanted them to feel like they can flow easily between one tower and the other. That is basically the concept of the amenities that we have.

There is no amenity fee charged to tenants and no meals or intermediate care are provided to tenants. Stipulations for tenancy in Rosewood Gardens include being low-income, ambulatory, and aged 60+ years. Tenants of Rosewoods Gardens are culturally diverse, reflective of the local community, with approximately 70% of East Asian decent and 30% of European decent.

This study presents findings from an engagement process with the housing society and community stakeholders (e.g., non-profit service providers), which identified how services and supports could be delivered to tenants in a sustainable manner while facilitating inclusion, accessibility and supportive environments. The aims of the current study are to: co-create solutions for the best use the shared amenity spaces in Rosewood Gardens; connect senior services and programs with tenants; and provide opportunities for service providers and local

stakeholders to build upon and develop new relationships toward collaborative and effective service delivery. Other data were also collected from tenants and is presented elsewhere (Fang et al., 2016; Sixsmith et al., 2017).

Design and Methods

For this longitudinal project, a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach was undertaken, recognizing the need for public participation and acknowledging that expert knowledge within communities can be mobilized to generate new understandings of innovative, sustainable, and inclusive community development. In line with CBPR principles, this project originated through consultation with key members of the housing society and municipal government. Representation from these organizations was foundational for decision-making and determining the direction of research throughout all stages of the study. As CBPR promotes the joint integration and transfer of expertise, inclusive participation, shared decision-making power, and data ownership across all partners (Minkler, 2004; Viswanathan et al., 2004), stakeholders were included from the outset of this research to ensure a transdisciplinary perspective (Boger et al., 2016) and advance cross-sectoral working.

Prior to tenants moving into Rosewood Gardens (tenants moved into the first tower March 2015; and the second tower August 2015), deliberative dialogue workshops were conducted with community and professional stakeholders. Deliberative dialogue is a method of discussion, unique from other forms of public discourse such as debating, negotiating, ideas mapping, and generating consensus (Kingston, 2005). It is aimed at creating a platform which purposefully invites diverse perspectives for generating collective thought toward potential solutions for a common purpose (Kingston, 2005). In research, deliberative dialogue provides an integrated framework for concurrently generating and analyzing data, engaging participants, and

synthesizing evidence (Plamondon, Bottorff, & Cole, 2015). By capturing and integrating knowledge and experiences of multiple stakeholder groups, this method provides the opportunity to translate research into policy and practice through community investment and asset sharing. Participants worked together to generate ideas and future directions for creating supportive home and socially engaging environments at Rosewood Gardens focusing specifically on: the effective use of shared amenity spaces; identifying and mobilizing local resources and partnerships; bringing in senior-specific programming; and informing tenants of local resources.

Participants

Individuals were purposively recruited from a list of local service providers and existing project collaborators. Potential participants were invited to deliberative dialogue workshops by email if they were identified as having delivered senior-specific services in the local community or if they were a project collaborator. Inviting key stakeholders “to the table” to exchange ideas and to discuss opportunities, needs, and constraints for unassisted affordable seniors’ housing has been recommended as necessary for co-creating sustainable solutions (Polk, 2015; Leviten-Reid & Lake, 2016). In total, 24 participants attended the dialogue workshops, including community and professional stakeholders (e.g., service providers, developers, and municipal government employees), with representation from the housing society, the building property management group, and the municipal government at each workshop. All participants provided informed consent and permission to be audio recorded; and no one was provided compensation for participation. Ethics approval was obtained from Simon Fraser University’s Institutional Review Board and participant names have been removed to protect identities.

Data Collection

To accommodate the demanding schedules of participants, four deliberative dialogue workshops were conducted over a two-week period (one at the beginning and another at the end

of the week); each lasting approximately 2 hours. Participants were asked to describe their understandings of how physical and social environments can contribute to the social engagement of senior tenants. Some example questions were: What are the different types of needs/aspirations of older adults for which they need services? What are your needs as service providers? What services and programs are available for older tenants (both by going out to the local community and being brought into Rosewood Gardens)? Open-ended responses were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim; transcripts were de-identified to ensure confidentiality and entered into the NVivo qualitative software program (QSR, 2012) where data were coded and managed.

Data Analyses

Two qualitative researchers independently conducted thematic analysis of the deliberative dialogue data to identify emergent themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2002). Analysis began with a read-through of each transcript for general and potential meanings. An initial coding structure was created, based on low-level/descriptive coding that resulted from coding units of text as themes by labeling with a word or phrase closely related to the participant's account (Boyatzis, 1998). Through an iterative process of reading and rereading the text, codes were subject to constant comparative analysis to further refine the interpretation and definition of themes, the coding structure, and the patterns and relationships across codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boeije, 2002). The result was a detailed coding structure agreed upon by both researchers. Initial findings were presented during community advisory meetings and confirmed with participants for accuracy.

Results

Participants discussed ways in which tenants could utilize the amenity space and bring in tailored services and programs. Dialogue data were organized into two overarching categories: 1) opportunities for social interaction and wellness programming; and 2) contextual challenges to service provision.

Opportunities for social interaction and wellness

Participants described several opportunities for social interaction and wellness programming both within the shared amenity spaces at Rosewood Garden and in the surrounding community. By understanding what community supports were available, the amenity spaces could be used for socialization and wellness programs unavailable elsewhere in the area.

On-site opportunities. According to participants from the housing society, the purpose of including amenity spaces in Rosewood Gardens was to create places for tenants to engage in self-organized activities and for service providers to offer on-site programs and activities that could enhance tenant wellness. One participant interested in seeing programs delivered in Rosewood Gardens stated, “What we want to do and what the City has asked us to do, is to be aware of the wellness of the tenants that we have in there...” This participant elaborated on the goal of encouraging social interaction among tenants:

We wanted to be able to provide services, activities, other sorts of opportunities within the complex, not only to help reduce the burden on the City facilities and other facilities around it, but also to build a sense of community within the complex, so that they didn't always have to go out for these other activities, and we get more of a mixing of the tenants and just more social interaction...

A key design feature conducive for the social programming at Rosewood Gardens was reported to be the purposeful location of shared spaces between the two towers and variety in amenity spaces:

That area is accessible from both towers, so we're hoping that there'll be some intermingling between them, because we would expect that the two towers will be two different communities for the most part. We're trying to encourage more interaction between them.

Additionally, lounge areas located outside the 2nd floor laundry rooms in each of the towers were intentionally designed to enhance social interactions between tenants:

The reason we did that was so that while you are doing your laundry, you have a place to go. You don't have to go back to your suite. What we are striving to do is to get the tenants to intermingle. ... This is basically the City's concern from a wellness point of view. They want to get people out of their suites, not locked away as quite often happens.

Participants identified potential services and programs that could be delivered individually to tenants in their suites as well as to larger groups in the amenity spaces at Rosewood Gardens. Individual services included: housekeeping, meal delivery, transportation to appointments or the store, home visits, home care, and translation services. Programs and activities suggested for the shared amenity spaces included: blood pressure or glucose clinics; seminars on practical life skills; education on fraud and scams that target seniors; hearing health, aids, and tests; opportunities to stay active in mind and body; opportunities to connect and engage with one other; and financial/estate planning and funeral planning. One participant suggested having regular monthly health days, or information fairs, during which different service organizations from the community could set up tables to provide tenants with health- and wellness-related information:

[Tenants] could come down, get a cup of coffee and sort of see what's available in the community, to try and build that connection and then maybe get them out to different programs and services to make sure their needs are being met.

Informal services were also suggested, which would be no cost and generated by tenants, such as neighborly check-ins (or doorknob card check-ins) or a lending library (with books, videos, puzzles) in the two lounge spaces. Notably, services offered to seniors would fluctuate according to changing needs: "As people's needs change, we've kind of changed with those needs..." As well, as one participant reported, it is important to not assume what tenants may want or need:

What I'm hearing around the table is that there is interest in making sure that people have access to information about fall prevention, about healthy aging-in-place, about community supports, about transitions to other living arrangements should they need them, and again I think we need to be careful that we don't presuppose that we know what the tenants want.

Participants described the importance of overcoming limitations of the built environment and reaching seniors who may be isolated in their apartments. A participant from the housing society described the design of Rosewood Gardens: "A typical floor plan has 10 units surrounding a central service core and elevators. This small number of units per floor, in a high-rise configuration reduces the opportunity for interaction between residents in the building." This participant continued to report a need:

...to try to overcome that design limitation by doing other things in the building that would pull [tenants] out of their units and into other parts of the building and give them other things to do. ...Seniors are going to be healthier if they have more interaction, if they have friends. People can monitor each other in terms of how they're doing health-wise and any other situations that are going on in their life.

Thus, being able to get into buildings where people live offers socially isolated seniors more opportunity to engage and learn about available community programs.

Community-based opportunities. Beyond having services and programming brought on-site, participants discussed the close proximity of Rosewood Gardens to other senior-specific programming in the surrounding area. A participant from the housing society stated, "If our tenants want something that we haven't provided, there is the senior center just down the street...or availability all within a close proximity." As well, participants identified the need for tenants to make use of services already available in various locations throughout the community.

As one service provider stated:

There are people already doing a lot of things that we've brought up here that the folks living there will need. The big thing will be the balance: Do we want to move some of it in there so they don't have to come out; or is it finding the ones that are isolated in there and using resources that are around the table to get them to come to already existing programs that are close to them?

Services and programs identified by participants as available to seniors in the community included free access to Internet and computers, as well as low-cost technology training courses; self-care workshops and seminars around healthy aging, prevention, and coping with age-related changes; cooking classes; legal advice; financial planning; assistance with taxes and applications for subsidized housing and disability or old age benefits; advocacy; and counseling and support services for people with substance use or addictive behaviors. Participants suggested that if a single staff person at the different organizations could be dedicated to tenants of Rosewood Gardens, the tenants would have a 'go-to' person for helping with their various needs, easing the navigation challenges often experienced when accessing social supports. One service provider explained the need for multiple organizations to collaborate toward supporting seniors' independence: "It takes a network of service providers and public service providers in order to maintain that independence."

Contextual challenges to service provision

Participants discussed contextual challenges to service provision, including the need for communication about and coordination of on-site programming, culturally diverse and responsive services and programming, and long-term funding.

Key to the provision of social programming in Rosewood Gardens, participants noted that tenants need to be informed of the different service and program options. Though a challenge, participants reported on potential solutions. For instance, one participant suggested that representatives come on-site to present information on opportunities in the area.

Announcements (in both Chinese and English) were a reported need, either via e-mail from the property manager or posted on notice boards in the lobby and elevators of each tower.

Potentially, the housing society should develop a resource guide for their tenants. Understanding the communication needs of tenants and the best way for the different parties to communicate

into the 21st century was noted as important. Participants identified a variety of communication methods, including suggestion boxes, an assigned tenant steward from each floor, or online communication tools (e.g., email and website posts).

Participants emphasized the need for program coordination in Rosewood Gardens, either by an individual (e.g., a paid employee or unpaid volunteer) or a group (e.g., a tenants' committee). Though there is an on-site building manager and two caretakers employed by the housing society, program coordination is not part of their job description. As one service provider cautioned, however, "Most people may be coming [to Rosewood Gardens] assuming it is independent living, and they don't want to be treated like...they have a recreational programmer or all that kind of stuff; that's not of interest to them." While participants suggested that a program coordinator could be valuable, this might not be of interest to all tenants. Instead, tenants may want to lead the program coordination themselves, as one participant stated:

[There is] a huge pool of talent within the building itself, people who actually live there. They're not just looking for somebody else to do something for them; they're quite capable of doing something for themselves and for their neighbors.

Having sustainable service coordination and communication was also identified as a challenge in the context of not-for-profit service delivery. With competing time demands, providers reported often being over-stretched. Participants expressed the need for contact information of key personnel responsible for management and operations of Rosewood Gardens to enable the development and implementation of programs and activities in the shared amenity spaces. Moreover, participants reported a need for coordination between management of Rosewood Gardens and community service providers to serve seniors with complex health issues:

It's probably a bit naïve to think that there won't be issues of mental health or addictions or different care needs that are going to come up and where services from outside are going to need to come in. And so that's where there'll have to be some collaboration. I know for myself, some of the outreach work that I've done, there's been times when I'm

concerned about one of my clients inside, they're not answering their phone, they're not answering their door. So to be able to call a manager and say, "Can you let me in or go knock yourself, or however that works, because I'm concerned about this person," without having to go get the police involved to come and break that door. There needs to be sort of that collaboration between the actual building and whoever's managing it, and our agencies.

Further, participants expressed that policies surrounding space usage should be established to determine which organizations and service providers are eligible to host programs, activities, and events in the shared amenity spaces. For example, participants suggested that some organizations may use the amenity space as a business opportunity to market products and services to tenants. As such, organizations and providers should be vetted to ensure appropriateness and tenant safety.

Another challenge noted by participants was the need for culturally diverse and responsive services and programming. Within the community in which Rosewood Gardens is situated, there is a large Chinese population, and having services and programs offered in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English was reported to be an important component toward generating culturally responsive service delivery. One notable service gap was that free English language classes were only available for people living in the area for less than 5 years, though many seniors have lived in Canada for 10 to 20 years, yet still have limited English language skills. Service providers who speak a variety of languages are needed at various access points, both within Rosewood Gardens and in the wider community.

A final challenge noted by participants was the need for long-term funding. As an unassisted independent living residence for low-income seniors, financial challenges for establishing on-site social programming were reported by the housing society. It was anticipated by one participant that low or no cost programs could be introduced into the shared amenity spaces to support tenants:

Because of the nature of the rents, keeping them low, we cannot fund the cost of programs...it's our hope that...we can attract people to come in and put programs on for our tenants whether it's yoga...whatever games they want to play, or whatever.

A representative from the housing society stipulated that their role and responsibility within Rosewood Gardens is that of landlord and as such, it is important that sustainable funding is acquired to employ an individual to coordinate on-site programmatic development:

If someone came forth and said, “we will fund a coordinator” then we [housing society] would give consideration to it. And that coordinator could arrange all these things that you’re talking about. But that is not our job; we are a landlord trying to do the best we can for a particular group of people who are seniors.

Indeed, for the housing society, one of their primary goals for participating in the research process was to determine ways of acquiring funding for a staff program director since building management and maintenance personnel do not have time to undertake the task of program coordination.

Discussion

Provision of services and supports for low-income seniors in unassisted housing has been identified as imperative for both individual wellbeing and operationally within government structures (Redfoot & Kochera, 2005; Pynoos et al., 2005). With encouragement from the municipal government, the housing society that manages Rosewood Gardens identified the need for services in and around this development. Through a series of deliberative dialogues, the present study identified opportunities for enhancing social interaction and wellness programming in the shared amenity spaces, bringing in community-based supports, and addressing contextual challenges to service provision. By grounding this work in experiences identified through a participatory process, the current research has immediate application for Rosewood Gardens (Fang et al., 2017). Though context-specific, findings can also inform the development of future low-income service-housing collaborations to serve low-income, independent seniors.

Collaborative planning for the effective use of the social environment (e.g., social programming) within the physical environment (e.g., amenity and neighborhood spaces) can generate rich and illuminating data for informing enhancements in the social environment of apartment dwelling low-income seniors.

Research on seniors' living situations largely acknowledges the importance of the built environment in enabling or disabling aging well, and as a result, home modification initiatives have been popular (Rosso, Auchincloss, & Michael, 2011). However, initiatives to address the psychosocial needs of community-living seniors, including enhanced social connectedness, remain sparse. Research has explored how the physical environment supports or impedes the ability to age-in-place often driven by a model of person-environment congruence that compares a person's physical and mental capacity against environmental demands and how these impact on a person's ability to perform activities of daily living (Iwarsson, 2005). While this approach has been useful, less attention has been given to the experiential dimension and the way older adults develop a sense of home, community, identity, and belonging.

Aligned with participants' reports, Stone (2013) argues the importance of having service coordinators available to senior tenants in multi-unit rental properties as a mechanism to efficiently organize, deliver, and purchase affordable services. Supporting seniors through the organization and provision of services and supports can lead to healthcare cost savings. Furthermore, appointing a service coordinator in rental buildings can increase efficiency and affordability of services that enable senior tenants to remain independent (Gibler, 2003; Pynoos et al., 2005; Redfoot & Kochera, 2005; Stone, 2013). Importantly, findings from the present study offer support for the idea that older tenants are able to self-organize and create a democratized body to act in a service coordination capacity. The prospect of leading governance roles in building committees, with opportunities to participate in decision-making, has been

identified as an interest of older adults (Leviten-Reid & Lake, 2016). Thus, services are not simply provided to seniors, but seniors should be acknowledged as active participants in creating and acquiring activities, services, and support. This form of empowerment enables older adults to not only become and remain engaged through positive contributions to their communities, but more importantly, it serves to enhance their quality of life (Alley et al., 2007).

Participants identified the potential for older tenants to become socially isolated in Rosewoods Gardens as a result of the built environment (i.e., architecturally through the 16-story tower design), which has been recognized (Bramley & Power, 2009; Helleman & Wassenberg, 2004). The negative impact of social isolation on older adults has been widely acknowledged (Cacioppo & Hawkey, 2003) and initiatives to reduce isolation in order to promote health and wellbeing are on the rise (Findlay, 2003). Meanwhile, the development of socially inclusive amenity spaces within a comfortable and known setting (i.e., Rosewood Gardens) provides the opportunity for service providers to better engage with socially isolated tenants who may be unlikely to seek community services off-site. Social connection through the affordance of common areas in affordable housing has been identified as an opportunity to reduce isolation among tenants (Leviten-Reid & Lake, 2016).

In addition to identifying and introducing services and programs into Rosewood Gardens, encouraging tenants to engage in social activities in the community was an important goal. As such, on-site services can be augmented by community-based services (Stone, 2013). Previous research has highlighted the importance of access to affordable transportation to provide older renters better access to community services, such as family doctors or shopping facilities. Though it is not a mandate of independent housing management to offer transportation services to tenants, arranging this kind of service (at low or no cost) with the municipal government would serve to improve the quality of life of senior tenants (Leviten-Reid & Lake, 2016). Having

accessible opportunities for social engagement and having housing linked with, or in close proximity to, amenities, services, and social activities can enable independence in later life (Alley et al., 2007).

Challenges to service provision identified by participants included the need for communication about and coordination of on-site programming, culturally diverse and responsive services and programming, and sustainable financial support. The need for culturally responsive services is reflected in previous research, which has also identified how poor language skills can limit social inclusivity, reducing a sense of acceptance by older adult members of minority groups in Canada (Weeks & LeBlanc, 2010).

One limitation to deliberative dialogues is that these are a series of ‘dialogues’, emphasizing the *exchange* of ideas with less prioritizing on the *execution* of actionable items. For instance, a central challenge identified by participants was the lack of financial resources to ensure the implementation and sustainability of on-site services and supports. Though solutions (e.g., developing a voluntary tenants’ board and fundraising to hire a program coordinator) were offered, there were no commitments made to follow-through. Instead, the onus was placed on the researchers to put these actions into place, which was neither feasible nor appropriate. Hence, what would further enhance this method is the appendage of an ‘accountability’ feature where civil servants ‘pledge’ (McCoy et al., 2002) to carry out an action at the end of the deliberative dialogue. A second limitation was that workshop participants did not include tenants of Rosewood Gardens, though this was an intentional decision made in collaboration with the housing society for this stage of the research. In other phases of this longitudinal research, tenants have been engaged in place-making research (see Fang et al., 2016; Sixsmith et al., 2017). The engagement of local service providers and other community members with vested interest in seniors’ wellbeing led to community investment and asset sharing through a shared

platform that enabled the generation and integration of knowledge and experiences of multiple stakeholder groups into the planning process. Key successful features of deliberative dialogues, which informed recommendations and solutions included bringing together diverse voices, establishing a common purpose at the outset of each dialogue, and having realistic expectations for what ‘real-world’ (Boger et al., 2016) solutions ‘should’ resemble.

Conclusion

The value of supporting low-income senior tenants of multi-unit properties should not be understated. As affirmed by participants, affordable rental housing is intended for tenants who can independently live in these settings; and when this is no longer possible, they are often forced to move to a more supportive location. In corroborating the notion that low-income seniors can do well in supported living contexts, when compared to older adults living in private homes, residents of senior housing have reported higher quality housing and neighborhood safety; as well, low-income older adults in senior housing reported better self-rated health compared to low-income older adults in private home residents. Because low-income seniors are more limited in their options, it is up to government and social service organizations to provide services in the least restrictive and most supported housing and social environment. Prolonging independent community living with the assistance of support services should be a goal to both delay premature relocation into institutional care and meet the preferences of older adults.

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