This is a project about a specific group of people and place: the Chinese elderly in Strathcona, Vancouver. The parameters are cultural, social and physical. It is about a traditional culture at a crossroad with a North American culture, the implications being a critical exchange.

I have proposed a living space that combines the closeness of a private world and the openness of an active and meaningful public face. The design of the housing addresses not only the area's need for elderly housing, but social and architectural perspectives as well. The private housing component is combined with a community (public) part - a daycare - and a semi-public part - the lounge, both of which allows the participation of the residents as well as the community. The lounge is a space for small exhibitions and performances. The semi-private component consists of a dining facility with kitchen, a small reading room (family room), a laundry and a clinic (beauty parlour).

This combination means a dynamic connection of the public and the private faces. Through the use of the community's own design language and ideas from Asian housing and village designs, I have linked together a world of singular intracacies to create a rich sphere - one that will begin an urban repair through a breakdown and restructuring of the integral components of a place and the idiosyncracies of a culture.
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Introduction

A few events that happened in the recent year or two inspired this thesis proposal. I was in a tutorial working on a long-term care centre when my grandmother died. The experience prompted me to think about the issues of aging and institutionalization. Chinese immigration has also become a prominent issue and the housing of Chinese elderly, or elderly in general, was well on its way to receiving critical attention. The opportunity to work for the Chinese Benevolent Society on a survey conducted by the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University on the care giving of Chinese elderly gave me the chance to gain some first hand information from the elderly subjects I interviewed. The visits to the homes in Strathcona alerted me to the problems and needs of that area and its elderly population. It introduced me not only to the social conditions but to the planning, history, urban and architectural characteristics of a unique and rich neighbourhood.

Firstly, I will give an account of the history of the typical Chinese family in China - traditional family relationship and hierarchy, care giving and social interaction, their thoughts and values. The issues are then described in two different settings - Hong Kong and Vancouver where changes to traditional ideas are made.

I have briefly included some biological and psychological theories on aging before discussing the issues of old age - for example, retirement, dementia and self-esteem. These issues show the sometimes very different values and ideas of Canadian and Chinese cultures. What can be taken and incorporated into an architectural and programmatic expression to enhance the mental and social well-being of the Chinese elderly? Issues such as intergenerational approach, integration into the community, independence and the private and the public realms will be explored and translated into an architectural program.

With the first three precedent studies, I investigated into the design and programmatic layouts. The third one was also a study of the possible forms and details and the fourth precedent taken from two villages in China and Greece
addressed the spatial relationship among pathways, buildings and spaces, which can then be translated into a micro scale of the housing project.

The next chapter provides possible design and programmatic solutions to the issues raised previously. These are then extended into the forms and spaces of Strathcona, drawing together the various elements distinct to the area - gradients, gaps, the porch, building profile, balconies, scale, lane vs. street face; colours, passageways and linkages - to develop an essential language of design.

The site in Strathcona gives the project the potential to tap the housing need of the area, to begin an intervention into the quality of the private and public realm of the area and to inform the makeup of a housing which essentially consists of three faces - a main private domain: the housing; a minor public one with its community function and possibly an urban intervention of linkages that connects the residents to the larger community.
Being Old in a Chinese Context

Culture is a design for living... cognitive and precise as well as symbolic and ambiguous... it is less a template than a filter, and, at that, a filter made of elastic fibers and constantly stretched and reshaped by its users.

The essential attribute of a culture is that it provides a vocabulary for the expression of a shared social life. This set of framework enables the location of the mechanisms that shape pathways to old age in a specific social and cultural context.

We could begin by asking ourselves several core questions:

- What is defined as a good life for older people, and by older people in different social and cultural settings?
- How do the characteristics of the social environment, such as residential stability, economy and resources affect their lives?
- How do cultural values and characteristics - for example, family and peer bonds, family arrangements and responsibilities, personal level of dependence and filial piety - mediate the characteristics of the social environment?

This chapter deals specifically with the Chinese culture in its original birthplace - China, and the Chinese culture as it is transplanted in Hong Kong and Vancouver. The first Chinese came to Canada 140 or so years ago. Surviving in a land of a different social and cultural setting means an inevitable modification and mediation of one's own culture. It is an intriguing crossroad where the historical and traditional meet the new. The outcome of this transplantation will be an on-going question for generations to come. We can only pin down, along the road, the essential

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subtleties of a changing culture, and hopefully arrive at a more coherent understanding of the present and future emotional, social and living needs of this group.

The purpose of this chapter is to give an account and analysis of the traditional Chinese culture, to generate an awareness of the existing condition of juxtaposed values and to encourage additional thinking with respect to what is, and is not, known about the Chinese elderly. First it is necessary to understand the history of the culture.

An Historical Account

Imperial China

The elderly have played a central role in Chinese life for thousands of years. During imperial and pre-revolutionary China, the elderly held dominant positions. This had to do with the rigid maintenance of a hierarchical society.

Seniority, rank, power and age were all determinants of a person's position in China before the 1950s. The Chinese family was the cornerstone of social structure. The domestic organization was typically one of an extended family type.

A typical Chinese family functioned within the Generation-Age-Sex hierarchy. Human relationships are "ones of superiority/inferiority . . . there is a water tight chain of relationships which makes clear to whom each owes respect and obedience". The father, grandfather or great-grandfather was to be obeyed and feared, he was on top of the hierarchy in all three categories.

Filial piety was the ultimate social bond. "The aim of emphasis on xiao is the orderly running of the family, and through it, of the state". The birth of a son was a matter of great pride, not only in order to provide for the parents in old age, but also in connection with ancestor worship. The father assumed an almost omnipotent role, and the sons remained in an undivided family. Households with no sons could adopt sons

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3 Ibid, p.293
from poor families who needed the money. It was despicable and unacceptable that the children break away or sever ties with the family. Inheritance was passed along the line of the father-son relationship; furthermore, "any external sign of hostility between father and son would show a lack of corporate spirit' and would be a source of discontent to their benevolent ancestors". Before 1911, filial disrespect was a capital crime.

Traditionally wives play subservient roles to husbands. Patrilocal marriage was the model form of marriage. Women established close emotional ties with her male sons because she was dependent on them to take care of her in old age as well as after she dies. Numerous stories depict filial sons providing for their aged parents.

The Chinese character (filial piety) is a picture of a son kneeling at the foot of the older parent. The son respected, obeyed and provided for his parents with comfort, services and material support. He honoured them by achieving academic and career success. He even provided after their death - he buried and mourned for them and took part in ancestor worship. The Chinese believed in the living observing ritual worship so that the dead would not suffer dreadfully. The dead never ceased to be part of the family.

The family (jia) was an image of a higher order lineage. It was an 'economic unit' and a 'ritual' unit signifying harmony and unity. In rural areas, it was also the primary unit of production as well as a valuable piece of private property.

The elderly, with their wealth of experience and knowledge and values, were the cornerstone of the Chinese family. This is in contrast to a lot of other cultures which tend to value the energy and knowledge of the younger generations more. The elderly made the fundamental decisions about family life and the young demonstrated reverence, respect and often fear.

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The Elderly in Post-Revolutionary China

To understand the structure and fabric of the Chinese society today, we must look at the changing status of the elderly in post-revolutionary China.

Under Mao Zedong's policy, China's power structure in the 1960s was reversed. The peasants and workers became the group to receive the bulk of high quality medical care and other services. Landlords were overthrown and women and young people gained more power. What happened to the elderly who once had such a tight reign in traditional China?

They did not retain as much power and unquestioned authority as they did before, either in the family or the society at large. Nevertheless, they took part in roles that still commanded respect and honour, such as in neighbourhood communities, homes that helped raise children, and health care especially as 'granny brigades' who helped control childbirth to uphold China's one-child policy.

Old age was the summit of experience. Confucianism continued to underlie the country's ethical and normative systems and remains a powerful cultural force. As Judith Treas points out,

Rooted in a complex system of Confucian family ethics, the supremacy of seniority called for the absolute power of parents over offspring, as evidenced by the socially approved practice of infanticide and by parents' arrangement of children's marriages. Although this hierarchical system of age relationships had its basis in the family, it generalized to all dealings of young and old, master and apprentice. . . In traditional society an individual from childhood to the end of his life was completely immersed in an atmosphere which compelled the observation of filial piety. The lesson of filial piety was carried in nursery stories, in daily exhortations and reprimands, in tales and novels, in textbooks from the first primer to the most profound philosophical discourse, in the numerous "temples of filial sons and chaste women" which studded the land, in dramatized living examples of extremely filial children

"Respecting the old and nurturing the young were socialist ideals that went hand in hand. The source of 'spirit' . . . was the family . . . The elderly grandparents had

5 Sandra Treas, A Chinese Family, University of Toronto, Toronto, 1978, p.34-5
as their greatest source of spirit their grandchildren. Their top priority was equipping their grandchildren with the best advantages the society had to offer, and they derived great purpose and pleasure from doing so.\textsuperscript{6}

The idea of obedience and respect for the elderly perpetuated, despite still in a stoic fashion than in open love and affection. However, there existed a more equitable relationship between the young and the old. Intergenerational love and harmony arose more and more out of true respect rather than authoritarianism. Rarely did Chinese speak of old people as a burden. Families appeared to be very close with bonds of devotion and affection.

\textbf{The Elderly in Modern and Present China}

Without the strong grip of Confucianism, there existed a situation, especially since the 1970s when the young, who matured under the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) must reach a satisfying mode of exchange with their parents, raised under pre-1949 Confucian precepts. Before 1949 the practice of ancestor worship and filial piety were officially endorsed, thus "most citizens over age 40 carry with them vestiges of their childhood training and early religious instruction. Among the middle-aged and the old are many who were taught that the oldest generation merits special treatment as the closest link to the deceased ancestors." \textsuperscript{7}

However, the CCP gave priority to the young, as evidenced by the downplay of the authority of the elderly and the landlords (e.g. in the communes) and the rise of power of the younger generation into leadership positions (e.g. the Red Guards). At the home front, elderly parents began to have a weakened control over their children.


This situation was best portrayed in two settings: the home where conflict most easily arose, and the workplace, where avoidance often occurred.

**A Local Phenomenon**

It was 7 a.m., I looked down a hotel balcony in Beijing across the street to a public park to see people, lots of them elderly, practicing tai-chi. They moved in unison, each person on their own spot. 45 minutes later, they were gone. This happens throughout the country especially in larger cities where bigger groups meet in public parks and courtyards. Some go home afterwards and some (mostly men) go in groups to tea houses for tea and dim sum.

**Teaching the Young: Attitudes Towards the Elderly**

From their preschool days, Chinese children are taught to respect the old. This education reaches deep and shapes predominant stereotypes and general attitudes. Education presents the elderly as physically weak and degenerating and in need of help. "In stories for grade school, the elderly person is given a history of past heroism or suffering that justifies the child’s sympathy and respect... (on the other hand), they are often portrayed as weak, pitiful individuals sadly out of step with the modern, socialist world."

Textbooks often portray a small child fetching a sweater or helping a frail elderly cross the road. This combined image generates a prevailing attitude of sympathy, tolerance and acceptance.

**Living Arrangements**

An ideal Chinese family portrait is one where an elderly couple is surrounded by children and grandchildren. A typical household arrangement is one where an

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8Ibid, p.6-7
elderly couple shares with a married adult son, daughter-in-law and their children. "In fiction and drama, only the extraordinary deviant or the pitiful live alone."  

In 1950, the new marriage law outlawed the traditional custom of arranged marriages, child betrothal and bride price, thus weakening the parental control over marriages of children. Ancestor worship was also suppressed. In 1956, the collectivization of agriculture, commerce and industry, the creation of new jobs in the state sector and the expansion of low-cost primary education all contributed to the weakening of the parent-child solidarity. In cities in China, therefore, more options exist: elderly parents can be living with a married son, daughter or unmarried children. Surveys in both Hong Kong and China, however, still indicate a greater desire for parents to live with a married son.

As described, there has been a gradual shift of the household prototype. Nevertheless, the common definition of household is still identical with the family and lineal descent. Rarely is there a situation where an elderly lives with unrelated friends or roommates.

Table 1  Living Arrangements

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- want to live near to or close by their children.
- want to live with one of their children.
- want to live in a retirement home.
- want to live by themselves or just with their spouse.

Hopes and Fears and Elderly Housing

The extended family is on the decline for various reasons: the limited housing space renders it difficult for workers to house their married children and their families. Present job opportunities makes it possible for young couples to support themselves; and the elderly sometimes prefer to live quieter lives. The increasing nucleation of families is an important trend correlating with economic development. The preference for a living situation upon retirement is shown in the chart.


Generational Interdependence and Relationships

Very few elderly people can imagine leading a solitary life isolated from the younger generations. The notion of reciprocity is critical in the caring of the old and the young. In fact, reciprocity also permeates other levels of personal relationships in a Chinese society.

Elderly are naturally incorporated into the ongoing everyday life of a family. "Parents and children are in constant contact, share most meals, and usually pool incomes into a common household budget. . . When parents and children live separately, children often journey one or more hours each week to visit the parents on their one free day, usually taking a small gift of food. . . the time together is spent sharing household chores or doing family shopping." 10 The urban elderly maintain close ties with the younger generation throughout old age. The notions of reciprocity and interdependence are such integral parts of the Chinese society for the 'good parent' and the "good child" that the elderly does not need to renegotiate a new set of social obligations in old age.

Funerals and Filial Piety

The CCP tries to simplify and downplay ancestor worship and funerals. Compared to ancient funeral rituals, those in modern China are very much simplified. From the Han to the Qing Dynasties, filial children provided as elaborate a funeral as possible which became a critical, public testimony to an individual's moral worth; the intensity of the child's mourning reflected the depth of that person's commitment to Confucian ideals. The children led the funeral procession to the cemetery, beating on their chests, wailing and calling the parents to come back. They held vigils for several days and nights and burned paper money. Qing Ming Festival is the time of the annual

spring pilgrimage to clean ancestral graves. The festival still reaffirms filial piety and family loyalties.

Involvement in the Community

Chinese elderly love the boundaries of home. When an urban elderly retires, he finds few legitimate reasons to leave the house. In the 1960s, clubs were organized in some areas to provide leisure activities and work for some elderly who wanted to break away from the confines of home. "Calisthenic groups and chess clubs were two of the most common recreational activities. Jobs as baby-sitters, telephone messengers, and housekeepers for invalids were typical forms of social service.\(^\text{11}\)

As the home has always been an undisputed centre of daily life, only a minority of the elderly spend more than a few hours away from home each day. They consider the private obligations of household chores and the care of their grandchildren in higher priority and very few, especially elderly women, express interest or motivation in community or political responsibilities.

The Elderly in Hong Kong

Although fairly westernized under the 100 or so years of British rule, Hong Kong is still fundamentally a Chinese society. Here we continue to find remnants of traditional familism, household structure and attitudes towards the elderly.

A Local Phenomenon

There is a time during the day when the elderly are highly visible in Hong Kong - the early morning hours (approximately 6:30 - 8:30 a.m.). A local phenomenon happens in

public parks and hillslopes where they congregate for exercises - tai chi and other stretching activities.

In a research conducted by Jennie Keith, they found that their spot observations carried out at 6:30 a.m. certainly confirm that older people do spend time in interaction with each other. At this hour nearly every park and playground in Hong Kong at any time of the year is occupied by older people, who, following their workouts, gather in groups of two or three for leisurely discussion of matters of mutual interest. 14 hours later no elderly are to be seen in these locations, instead their places have been taken by numerous amorous young couples. Later in the morning, old women, some with a grandchild strapped to their back, go off to the street market to buy fresh vegetables and live chickens and fish for the day's meals while old men congregate in tea houses reading the paper or discussing current events.12

Elderly women consider old age as a time entailing considerable domestic work; elderly men consider old age as a time for relaxation and rest. Nevertheless, most elderly remain solidly ensconced in their families. They live with their adult children, and evenings are spent watching television together. On Sundays the whole family goes out for dim sum. . . On holidays such as Qing Ming ('grave-sweeping' rituals) or the Hungry Ghosts Festival, the elderly, the middle-aged and the young together burn incense, share food, and exchange family news. . . The neglected elder living alone is still regarded as the deviant case. The majority of elderly does not play a role in the public sphere. However, older men, though seldom involved in any organizations, are most likely to be in clan associations, native place associations, or Nationalist Party affiliates. A minority of elderly women participate in the activities of government-supported multi-service centres organized by much younger social workers.13

There is an increasing trend, however, for centres offering activities to the elderly to encourage more positive attitudes and meanings in life.

The Traditional Reinterpreted

Living Arrangements

Domestic arrangements are similar to what is happening in mainland China, described in the last chapter. Confucius ideals exist, and always will in the back of people's minds. Some of the population from age 60 upwards are still products of "blind marriages". Concubinage was perfectly legal then, allowing men to take a secondary or "little" wife because the first wife could not bear children. It was only in the 1970s when concubinage was abolished in this British colony.

A lot of older people in Hong Kong are from this background. Marriage did not come about as a result of a loving reunion, but an arranged one. Divorce in this group, surprisingly, was rare. Older couples focus their life on the children more than on their relationship with their spouses, and women were expected to remain a widow after her husbands' death. Men were more free to remarry. The older generation sees the children as important assets and expects them to live with and take care of them in their old age.

Hopes and Fears and Elderly Housing

Most Chinese elderly in Hong Kong feel positively about their lives in the colony, their present lives being better than the suppressive ones they led in China.

In general, there is a scarcity of long-term care facilities in Hong Kong. This failure to develop adequate long-term care is due to the government expectation that children will take care of their parents. Unfortunately, because of the growing mentality for decreased interdependence and increased individualism, more young people are less willing to observe the old value of reciprocity. They see the mentality change in the younger generation and they lack an outside support system. In view of the reality, many older people consider it critical for more government support for elderly care homes and facilities.
Generational Interdependence and Relationships

Although familism is still a core value, much of it has been reinterpreted, individualism now plays an important part in the society. Since the last decade or so, there has been a 'loosening of values'. Divorce rates shot up, and the younger generation do not value the institution of marriage as much as their parents or grandparents.

As the children grow older, the parents in the family begin to look forward to being supported and taken care of by their children. Their major fear is that the children will leave home when they have the ability to make a living. One younger woman eloquently summarized this dilemma: People's attitudes towards old age and the elderly will be heavily conditioned by the fact of their age. The mentality of the generations is very different. People 50 and older tend to have fairly traditional views. They see nothing wrong with dependency, and they expect their children to take responsibility for them. People in their 40s have a mixed view, but people in their 30s are quite Westernized, and most people in their 20s are very Westernized. Younger people do not think that dependency is necessarily a good thing. An increasing number of younger married couples buy their own place to live after marriage, which implies an increasing number of empty nesters who face fewer choices of domestic arrangements.

Funerals and Filial Piety

Funeral rites are very much Westernized and simplified. However, the making of paper money and objects are still popular and Qing Ming remains one of the most important and observed festivals.

Involvement in the Community

Older elderly people are much more reluctant than the younger elderly to venture out of the house, though for some, tai-chi exercises and morning dim sum are
still popular. They derive great pleasure from cooking, taking care of their
grandchildren, doing light housework, reading Buddhism books or just chatting with
their maids at home. The trend is for more and more older people in their 60s or even
the 70s to be active in the economic and social scenes.

Migration

The exodus from Hong Kong, especially from the later 1980s, has implications
for both the young and the old. Those whose children had left the city face new
challenges of decreased quality of family care giving. Those who leave, either to join
or to move together with their family, bring with them their whole history,
preconceptions and expectations to a foreign land.

The Elderly in Vancouver

"We cannot cross a bridge until we come to it, but I always like to lay down a
pontoon ahead of time"

Bernard Baruch

We can at least categorize three major groups of Chinese elderly living in the
lower Fraser Valley.

14Alan Lu, A Study of Institutional Arrangements for the Aged in Metropolitan Toronto,
Toronto, 1965, p.43
1) First, second, or third generation Chinese whose grandparents or great-grandparents were among the first to settle in B.C. in the 1860s-1930s. They consider themselves more as Canadians with roots in Canada. This group ranges from age 60 upwards, feels closer to home with Canadian culture and are at times antagonistic to new Chinese immigrants.

2) Chinese who emigrated from mainly Mainland China or Hong Kong. They have been living in B.C. from 20-60 years. The longer they have been here, the more similarities they share with Canadians. The more recent their stay, the more dissimilarities. It is the latter group that is of interest to my thesis. They form the centre of a long chain which unfortunately neither has the power or vision to push or to pull. They exist in a considerably wide cultural gap with their nonlocal or local born children. Within this group there are the elderly who emigrated here sometime after one or more of their children settled here. The children could be married and established, having their own families. This new type of household (some of them could be mixed marriages) is one of increasing individualism where at times the elderly find themselves intruders. The traditional reciprocity factor is not fervently observed and the interdependency within a family is slowly lost.

Some elderly, being in a new and very different land and culture, develop their own coping mechanisms. There is a changing mentality within this group of elderly as well. Some view this with a positive outlook, taking on new challenges and merging with the mainstream society. The majority of this group retain the mentality of old age - the notion of the home as the central hearth of their lives. Nevertheless, more and more are moving out of their children's home to live on their own.

3) New immigrants, from Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore, with a majority from Hong Kong who moved here within the last ten years or so. Apparently, this group has a more intact cultural sense rooted in China. However, as described in the last
section, traditional values have been reinterpreted, especially in Hong Kong, which will be further reinterpreted here in Canada. The popularity of morning stretching exercises and tai-chi is still apparent in town-parks and open spaces. One even takes place every morning at 7 a.m. in Richmond Centre's food court.

We see in this group a majority of multigenerational household practicing interdependency. The concern is that this mentality will, like the second category of longer time Chinese immigrants, erode with time. The clash between East and West, meanwhile, is at a historical point of exchange, but there will bound to be submissions of Chinese culture to the mainstream culture. There is no answer yet as to the outcome of such a submission or exchange. Within ten or twenty years when the group of elderly begin to die out, it will be more difficult to uphold traditional familial ties. There is also a possibility of more people (middle age and younger people) returning to Hong Kong or China to pursue more promising career prospects. One consequence is an increasing number of elderly who will not be living in multigenerational households or who will be out on their own.

The co-existence of traditional Chinese and Western mentality gives a critical message and implication of how things can go for the future elderly - can it be a merge between Western extroversion, independence and a sense of personal achievement and Chinese introversion, interdependence and respect?

In establishing a place for the Chinese elderly in Vancouver, I propose to merge the best of each, the mediator being in a programmatic and architectural expression. The subjective sense of self is defined and expressed not only by one's relationship to other people, but also by one's relationship to a physical setting which structures and defines life.

I admire the notion of the boundaries of home, of the acceptance of life and reality, and the quiet dignity of the Chinese elderly, as even evidenced in the popular
exercise; tai-chi, which stresses the mental aspect rather than strength, is in essence an exercise of the mind. I believe their lives can be enhanced by increasing their personal dignity, sense of achievement and social interaction and responsibility. The provision of security and a personal sense of purpose and contribution in society can significantly combat the fear and reality of losing a substantial support from children.

**The Survey**

"... I'm always here by myself, perhaps you can pay me a visit more often?"

Ling, age 84

I had the opportunity to take part in a research project in August-December 1995, conducted by the Centre of Aging of the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University, funded by the N.H.R.D.P. Health Canada. It is a study of the Chinese elderly in B.C., conducted in survey form through personal interviews. The aim of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of family communication and care giving patterns for the Chinese elderly over age 65 in Vancouver.

The following is part of the questionnaire and the general trend of answers:

- Where were you born? Mainland China
- Which country did you reside in before coming to Canada? Hong Kong
- Who did you live with when you first came? Spouse and children
- Do you speak, write or understand English? Very little
- Do you have a job at the present? No
- Who do you live with?

Over half of the interviewees live on their own. And when asked if they would like to live with their children and grandchildren, answered negatively giving a variety of reasons including: to avoid conflict and fights with children, sons or daughter-in-laws, and grandchildren; preference for a quieter life.
-How often do you see/talk to your children? At least once or twice a week/ more than three times a week.

-Can you see them when you want to? Sometimes

-The above questions used for grandchildren yielded slightly different answers, they see or talk to them less.

-For friends, a majority have less than one or two close friends, and they meet about once a month.

-When you are sick and in need of someone to take care of you, to listen to you or to help you, how many people can you think of who can do this? Who are they? Less than two people. Mostly daughters

-Most elderly over 65 are fairly mobile and need minimal help for daily activities with the exception of heavy household chores.

-Activities: based on outing during the past month:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>No. of times</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>no one to go with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>with family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>no one to go with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>not interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly centres</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“too old”, lack information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs &amp; organizations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“too old”, lack information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bingo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>not interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trips</td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>no one to go with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-Apart from special occasions, how often do you go church or the temple? More than once a week for those who live in Chinatown with nearby Buddhist or Taoist temples.

-On an average day, how many people do you conduct meaningful conversations with? Less than one. Exceptions are those who go to the temples in Chinatown, meeting their fellow believers.

-From what sources do you know about community news? Radio, T.V., rarely from friends and family.
-How often do you go to Chinatown?
Those living there go almost every day. Those who live in other parts of town go once or twice a week.

-In the past six months, how often do you exercise?
Once a day - mostly short walks, tai chi and other stretching exercises in the morning.

-In the past six months, when you feel sick, who do you see? What kind of medicine do you take?
In order of priority: Western doctors and medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, temple or church, Chinese doctor. Most see Chinese doctors as less effective than their Western counterparts.

-Do you take part in the activities of any of the various Chinese organizations? If no, why?
No. No friends to go with; too old.

21-Do you take part in the activities of any of the Western organizations?
No. Know very little English, cannot communicate.

An interesting point to note is that when asked about their satisfaction about life - health, mental well being, activities, living arrangements, financial situation, family, responsibilities, jobs, friends - on a 5-point scale from very dissatisfied to very satisfied, the consistent answer is 4 - fairly satisfied. The same phenomenon goes with the questions on the Loneliness scale. They generally seem to ignore or downplay the lack of companionship and meaningful communication, grouping their feelings into 'fairly satisfied'.

Perhaps it is this point that I want to challenge. Why are they 'satisfied' even when in other people's eyes they seem to lack a critical social dimension and support network in their lives? In the Chinese mentality, there has always been the notion of fate accepting. In a typical case, however, fate accepting does not mean taking active control of one's life by looking for viable alternative lifestyles, it means a quiet acceptance of the changes that are happening around, acknowledging the situation with a calm defiance. To many, the Buddhist temple is an important place where one can seek the solitude and quietness so critical in their coping behaviour. I believe,
however, that the elderly do yearn for a connection, they want to reach out as much as younger people do; and I believe there is a largely untapped dimension that can provide them with this mutual support and reciprocation with the young.

Kalish and Moriwaki observed an ideological dilemma of Chinese elderly: On the one hand, they recognized and at least to some extent accepted the values of their adopted homeland that being a burden to children is bad, that having the privacy and independence of one's own home is good, that the education of grandchildren should not be sacrificed for the care of grandparents. On the other hand, they recall their earlier learning that the older person is entitled not only to financial support, but to personal care and virtual devotion.\(^{15}\)

During the personal interviews with the elderly, I tried to pay closer attention to the small snips of conversation that tell me so much more about their unsaid need for recognition, respect, activities and work. The following are some of these conversations:

Tang Ku: Everyday after I come home from some morning exercises downstairs at the park, I would go back to sleep again. I always feel tired and there is nothing else I can do. Sure I listen to the radio, but I can only listen for so long; after lunch I would sleep again.

Mei Chun: No, I don't know of the Strathcona Community Centre nearby. But anyway, I'm old, what can I do there? I'm too old, they won't want me.

Hei Fung: I don't think I understand my grandchildren anymore. They don't even speak my language. I can't even be a loving grandma for them though I'd love to babysit them once in a while. And I don't seem to get along with my Canadian born son-in-law.

Tang: I can stay home, I'm okay, what can I do out there? Are there actually volunteer jobs that need old people like me? No, I don't think so.

Cheng Lan: I'd rather live by myself, you know, my children, they all have their own families, I don't want to burden them and be a source of argument for them.

I do tai chi in a nearby park with some other elderly, but after that, I don't really talk to them; I just go home.

Tang Ku: I don't really have any close friends, maybe my daughter, she can help me out when I need it. But I mean, I'm not young anymore, I can't go out and start meeting people. I can stay home, it's okay. I'm used to it.

Ling: My daughter would call and we would go out for lunch maybe once or twice every couple of weeks. You know, they're grown-ups, they have their own family, own life, I cannot ask them to do anymore for me. It's okay, I can live with that. . . I'm always here by myself, perhaps you can pay me a visit more often. . . ?
A home for the aged, like an ideal city, must put the highest concerns of man at the centre of all its activities, must unite the scattered fragments of the human personality and turn artificially dismembered men into complete human beings. Lewis Mumford

**Precedent Studies**

Precedent studies of the long-term care and housing projects are conducted for a greater understanding of the issues pertinent to designing for the elderly. Essential features were distilled to establish examples of both positive and negative conditions, and what is working and what is not. The two village studies can provide the project with design possibilities in its layout, planning, details and linkages. Three projects and two villages will be looked at:

- South Granville Park Lodge
- Crofton Manor
- Mao Dan Housing
- Gwellin and Kea

**Senior’s Care Homes**

**Project:** South Granville Park Lodge

1645 West 14th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.

The primary focus of South Granville Park Lodge is in the participation and care of its residents. From its inception in 1970, the words care, comfort, dignity and respect have become synonymous with the lodge. The active participation of staff, volunteers, residents and families and friends make possible the facilities, programs and activities which show a true adherence to their motto. These ideas and intentions are slightly lost in the architectural expression however: the 5-storey semi V-shaped structure holds functions in a practical and inflexible manner. The dining room is perhaps the brightest south-facing room. The second storey is largely for Alzheimer patients. All

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rooms open either to the North or South. The rigid functional spaces almost dictate the residents' daily routes and do little to promote chance encounters. Socialization is done mostly in the dining room and by the elevator doors; the entrance lounge is too small and dark to foster a positive atmosphere. The small North facing concrete outdoor court is too shady and secluded to encourage use.

Observations:

A. Main entrance hall - a few comfy chairs for the elderly to sit and be close to main actions, visitors (new faces), the receptionists, whom they often engage in conversations with, the elevators, and the space which residents pass through to go the dining room, the East wing with the amenity rooms, and to their own rooms.

B. Huge sign board with timetable on hallway wall next to dining area and near main entrance - clear indication of daily recreation schedule gives a sense of importance and pride to the participation in activities. Huge emphasis is placed on recreation which includes e.g.: fitness, church service, bingo, mental aerobics, walk-a-block, life writing, outdoor trip, music, birthday parties, weight - training, crafts, outdoor golf, movie, balloon volleyball (a newly invented popular game).

C. Lighting - orientation towards south results in good natural lighting in the dining room, crafts room, and the common room on each floor. Entrance hall is darker as a result of a large overhang above front door.

D. Decor - gentle pastel coloured walls and furnishings. Some older furniture and wallpaper are not as well co-ordinated and contributes negatively to a open and lively space.

E. Long double-loaded corridors - relief introduced by a common lounge at the mid point of the corridor on each floor.

F. Residents allowed to decorate and personalize own rooms, by bringing own furniture, artworks, etc.

G. Building close to major arterials - Granville Street and Broadway, residents feel integrated into the community.

H. Outdoor space - garden path that leads to a concrete floor north-facing outdoor space - not very sunny and pleasant.
I. Resident participation is encouraged, e.g. two ladies do the planting for the lodge.

J. A dining room provided off of the main one that can be partitioned for private family dinners/gatherings.
Project: Crofton Manor,
West 41st Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.

Crofton Manor is situated on a 400,000 ft² lot which allows the design to be in desirable 1 - 2 storey units, about 20 flanking 3 sides of a courtyard. Unfortunately, convenience dictated the configuration of the rooms which run down seemingly endless double-loaded corridors. Chance encounters are promoted by the small seating areas at the beginning and end of a corridor. The use of materials and the layout reflects a quality of grandeur which I believe in a way formalizes the social existence - like a private club. Spaces are interconnected by floor to ceiling windows, giving the space an open and cheerful atmosphere.

Observations:
A. Main entrance hall bright and spacious. Comfy lounge chairs.

B. Each suite on the ground level has access to an exterior courtyard with room for personal gardening. This allows for the personalization of exterior space.

C. Effort has been made to decorate the walls with historically appropriate cultural icons. This helps give meaning to the place.

D. Central outdoor space for each cluster of rooms designed to be attractive in summer and winter. The chairs have cushions on them in the warmer months.

E. The main dining hall is a clean, well-lighted place with elegant detailing and a lighting plan which takes advantage of reflected daylight and bounced incandescent light. The place is soothing in effect.

F. Double loaded corridors are seemingly endless, flanking the courtyards on all sides. This could result in resident disorientation and fatigue.

G. Hallway intersections are daylit with skylights with carpet patterns boldly coloured and varied. This helps orient residents. It also provide intimate corners for small groups.

H. General openness of the interior due to strong visual connection between most major rooms through windows.
Senior's/Co-op Housing
Project: Mao Dan Seniors' Co-op Housing
Keefer Street, Vancouver, B.C.

Mao Dan Housing is a social housing project in Strathcona. I chose this project for its
intriguing layout, its open spaces and connecting pathways. Each "house" contains
several units, each with its own private entrance through a common pathway that runs
between two "houses".

There are visual connections to the street from the pathways and a private (gated)
physical connection as well.

Planting along the pathways heighten a sense of privacy.

The two storey "houses" and certain details, for example, the wooden fences and street
lamps create a nice sense of scale.

A common path runs through the centre of the project with a public open space and a
kid's sandpit, benches and a laundry.

It is visually penetrating with the view passages and the main pathway linking Keefer
and Pender, yet each unit can still maintain a high degree of privacy through planting
and layout.
I have taken Gwei Lin, a region in Western China, and Kea, an inland of Greece for their unique planning that I find intriguing and informing to the design of the project. Some elements are broken down to a similar language of design used for Strathcona. Although these are hill towns, my purpose is to transfer the macro to a micro scale - the site of the housing project. The ideas are not for the Strathcona community because the makeup of the landscape is essentially different. They, however, are used to provide design possibilities and to inform the project's spatial layout and its visual and physical conditions.

Gwei Lin is a hilly region where the arrangement and planning of villages - their houses and roads - follow a natural order of the slopes. Houses comfortably exist on the slopes and valleys with pathways and roads interwoven in between, following the shape of the land and the change in grades. Kea is a similar maze of pathways and slopes where footpaths interweave the hilly area of Loulis.
A planning following a natural order result in unique views through gaps between buildings. These spaces or gaps take on unique shapes themselves according to the gradient of the land and the everchanging heights of the buildings. The configuration of these houses and the intermittent spaces create intriguing spatial intervention which link and define a hierarchy of spaces. The eaves of roofs touch each other and balconies and bridges span a gap.

The pathways that interweave signify a linkage and interaction from one end to the other, a dialogue between houses, and an anticipation of what is yet to come. On these pathways and in between gaps exist the elements that signify movement, division and joining. It is a transition point merging the public and private realms. The success of such vibrant connections is the facilitation of pedestrian intersection throughout the village. Entrances, steps, balconies and bridges all belong to this spatial existence; so do the natural elements: trees, cobbled paths, water and people which enliven the space with: movement, silence, sounds and colour.
Houses and pathways maintain a constant dialogue. One element can flow into another without imposing itself on it. The height of the houses in Gweilin are higher or seem to loom higher on stilts and columns which are part of the architectural language of China. In Kea, the building base mainly attaches itself to the ground plane. Yet a path can be negotiating itself with the base of a building; or a balcony of another house up a few steps; or the roof of another still further up. The relationship is a highly fluid one.
Cluster of houses, Greece

Village layout, China

Passage and courtyards and open spaces, China
Social Gerontology

There has always been an unfortunate trend about the perception of elderly people. They are seen as a homogeneous group with needs different from the rest of the population. This perception led to social policies that are essentially ageist in approach, holding an assumption that the elderly is a distinct and isolated social group. This chapter attempts to give an account of social gerontology from a biological and psychological viewpoint.

Biological Perspective

Aging implies deterioration and decline. Strehler (1962) proposed four criterion of aging: it is universal, progressive, intrinsic and degenerative.

There is a wide variety of biological theories of aging:

The Wear and Tear Theory is one of the oldest theories which states that the body is like a machine, the parts wear out after prolonged vigorous use and is irreversible. The Declining Energy Theory dates back to the Middle Ages. Each individual has a fixed amount of vitality, which declines and finally disappears bringing about old age and death.

The Collagen Theory postulates that connective tissues increase stiffness with age and tissues containing collagen loses elasticity, decreasing energy and mobility.

The Error Theory and Mutation Theory suggest that potential errors that occur in the course of cell division are mutations, incorrect DNA, RNA transcription and cross linkages which can bring about a progressive loss of function.

The Immune Theory postulates that the human immune system begins to decline in effectiveness after the age of 40 and speeds up as age increases, thereby rendering a person more vulnerable to diseases.
While many of these theories are intriguing, none have been successfully proven at this time. Perhaps bringing this problem to a social and psychological standpoint would aid in a better understanding of the complex interplay between the physical and psychosocial aspects of a person's health.

**Psychosocial Aspects of Illness**

The physical and psychosocial aspects are two inseparable subjects when dealing with older people's or anybody's health.

**The Disengagement Theory** states that "aging involves an inevitable withdrawal or disengagement, resulting in decreased interaction between the aging person and others in the social milieu." 17

'Life space' refers to "the area of the world, community, neighbourhood, and home which the individual considers his or her environment. . . which begins to shrink as they become less mobile". 18 The theory's proponents believe that this process is both adaptive and inevitable. The assumptions, however, tend to generalize and the outlook somewhat bleak. It seems to suggest a certain pessimism, that an elderly's disengagement from society is inevitable. This generality seems to negate the various different personality factors that are likely to come into play. It also assumes a rather passive role in the possibility of improving or raising the standard of the social or personal life of the elderly.

**The Activity Theory** is in direct opposition to the Disengagement Theory. It "assumes that the relationship between the social system and the personality system remains fairly stable as an individual passes from the status of middle age to that of old age. . . it emphasizes the stability of personality-system orientations". 19 This theory

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17ibid, p.29  
18ibid, p.30  
19ibid, p.34
maintains that successful aging should involve the maintenance of activities and attitudes of middle aged people. Disengagement does occur, but it is an involuntary process which is imposed upon the elderly as a result of health and other psychosocial problems which are further worsened by a lack of social encouragement.

**Developmental Theories**

**Inferiority Theory**

Inferiority is a prime motivation in human beings. This thought is relevant to gerontology in that inferiority is the decrease of self-esteem - a common phenomenon among the elderly as a result of for example, loss of job, loss of status, health and beauty. As also suggested in the Disengagement Theory, major changes can lead to diminished contact with friends and family members. This is a rejection attitude motivated by the fear of inferiority. This theory offers a positive and constructive approach to aging, suggesting assistance to develop a wider interest and to cultivate a sense of belonging for the elderly.

**Life-Span Developmental Theory**

"The task of the last stage of life, old age... is to attain ego integrity, an assured sense of meaning and order in one's life and in the universe, as against despair and disgust... In order to understand people in late life it is necessary to see them in the context of their whole life history with the problems both successfully and unsuccessfully resolved from earlier periods in life".\(^\text{20}\) The theory also recognizes the relationship between an individual and his/her environment, and gives considerable implications to the interdependence of generations - the mingling of the young and the old - as a vital connection.

Issues on Growing Old

Changes that older people are called upon to make require drastic breaks from long established patterns of living in which there have been deep emotional investments. Retirement, economic changes, widowhood, alterations in family constellation, numerous signals that the body and mind are not functioning as well as they previously did, physical illness, and the increasing sense of personal finitude have all been considered within a stress perspective. "These conditions... are the filters through which investigators examine what it means to grow old, as well as what is necessary to age successfully".\(^{21}\) What are these changes, experiences and adjustments?

Thinking, Remembering, Forgetting

Numerous studies have been done to look at age and memory. It is found that younger subjects tend to remember facts, older subjects tend to remember themes and principles. Special instructions to improve memory improved the elderly's score considerably. Strategy, hence, is an important tool. What is affected most is short-term memory capacity. Older people tend to forget about things that happened an hour ago but keep remote memory intact.

Dementia

This condition goes beyond memory failure. The clinical psychologist Chris Cilleard defined dementia as loss of self, "the onslaught the demented person faces eventually takes away the basis for a sense of personal integrity".\(^{22}\) It affects his ability to maintain inter-personal relationships. A demented person, however, may remember the past better than the present. The disabilities can be divided into physical, social and mental disabilities. "Physical disability covers such things as difficulty in bathing, dressing, walking and using the toilet. Mental disability includes forgetfulness,.....

\(^{21}\)Lieberman and Tobin, *Old Age*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, p.3
disorientation, impairments of speech or understanding and being unable to recognize familiar people. Social disability includes verbal abuse, aggression, hoarding things, degraded habits and wandering.\textsuperscript{23}

Aging people should know that their lives are not mounting and expanding but that there are inexorable inner processes that enforce the contraction of life. For a young person, it is almost a sin, or at least a danger to be too preoccupied with himself; but for the aging person it is a duty and a necessity to devote serious attention to himself. After having lavished its light upon the world, the sun withdraws its rays in order to illuminate itself

\begin{flushright}
Carl Jung
\end{flushright}

Self-Esteem
For a healthy personality, one holds a positive self-concept. Although a person’s level of self-esteem depends on his/her life history, an elderly person is, nonetheless, so much more self-conscious of his/her aging body and physical appearance and lowered status.

Intergenerational Family Relationships
In a North American norm, a typical family reaches a turning point as the children become adult and begin to leave home. A young couple establishes their own home, possibly situated quite a distance from their parents and raise their children with minimum input from the grandparents. Although some elderly people look forward to this freedom, studies found that extended family interaction enhances the support and satisfaction of the older members. Unfortunately, the time when three or even two generations living under the same roof is almost quite gone.

Widowhood

The transition to widowhood can be a tough time. There are sex differences, however, in the coping ability and social relationship patterns during widowhood. Evidence indicates survivorship adaptation is more difficult for males. Females tend to have more people in their networks and hence, more support from these multiplex relationships. Widowers receive qualitatively and quantitatively less social support, yet more tend to remarry than widows. This causes loneliness and increases the need for care on the part of the aged female group and indirectly contributes a universal phenomenon - a higher percentage of female living in institutions.

Loneliness

"Aging itself carries emotional problems especially in our culture which glorifies vigour and youth. The older person is often isolated socially, feels neglected and is insecure, anxious, and depressed." 24

Withdrawal has more serious consequences for those with few interests. It renders them particularly vulnerable mental illness or breakdown as a result of loneliness, frustration and isolation.

Employment

Our society is essentially a youth-oriented and work-oriented society, one in which success and prestige are intimately bound up with our capacity to gain and to hold a job, and to earn good money. The sudden loss of these satisfactions, and even more so, the loss of a sense of purpose which idleness frequently involves, can be almost traumatic in effect and often becomes the cause of mental illness.

Each of the issues discussed is related to one another. We can point out some emerging traits, a majority of which has become stereotypes for the elderly:

1. Feeling of inadequacy
2. Feeling of rejection
3. Feeling of depression, self-pity
4. Anxiety, worry
5. Emotional sensitivity
6. Boredom, restlessness, passivity
7. Negativism
8. Guilt feelings
9. Narrowing of interests
10. Social withdrawal
11. Rigidity, difficulty in adjusting to new conditions

Not everyone at 65 (or 75) is aged. They are human beings who naturally and rightfully still crave for the same needs as any other person. They have an even more urgent need to feel useful and wanted because so many aspects of their life is uncontrollable.

The major needs are generally grouped into five categories:

1. The need for recreation
2. The need for companionship
3. The need for 'employment', work, useful activity
4. The need for recognition, being needed
5. The need for medical and nursing services

People may, regardless of the degree of previous satisfaction they experienced, need to find in their later years some meaningful activities or relationship that compensate for whatever old age has required of them. Any type of activity, if it brings a sense of self-respect, recognition, and accomplishment, can be fulfilling.

Margaret Kennedy concluded in her study on recreation for the aged that "creative and productive experience in a variety of recreational is one way for old people to find happiness and insuring the well-being of themselves and others".

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Mental and physical health are promoted when they can retain active membership in the life of the community. All too often residents of many institutions with beautiful lawns and pleasant seating facilities carry their chairs around to the uninviting front of the building to watch the traffic and the activities of the city pass by.

The table shows a survey rating the sources and percentages of high and low morale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCES OF HIGH MORALE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE REPORTING THIS FACTOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment and diversions</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socializing</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive activity</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical comfort (other than health)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial security</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility and movement</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, stamina, survival</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCES OF LOW MORALE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE REPORTING THIS FACTOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependency (financial or physical)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical discomfort or sensory loss</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness, bereavement, loss of nurturance</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom, inactivity, immobility, confinement</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental discomfort or loss</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of prestige or respect</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of dying</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3 Sources of Morale
I don't see any difference between designing the outside of a building and designing the inside. As soon as you step onto a site a building should begin to enclose you. This is, at best, a sequence of events where the sense of enclosure becomes more and more as you enter the building. But as you get into the building there should be a variation of inside and outside.

A. Kurting²⁶

**Point of View**

The creation of this brave new climate for the elderly is in essence a creation of the space which hold the people and the programs. For a space which merely purport to house is a failed space. The physical setting structures and defines life. My intention is to create a congregate housing whereby the elderly not only share common facilities, have access to a private unit, congregate in a larger public space or a small niche and dine in a common room or in the privacy of their own homes, they are also linked to an immediate public sphere where thy can mix with others.

Residents will have a place they call 'home' as well as 'workplace'. The two functions are physically merged yet functionally separate in that the private, semi-private and public spheres are well defined. It is a place where the society can directly use the wisdom and participation of the old. They are not the passive recipients of services administered by a patronizing public, but givers of services as well.

"Aging In Place" is a recent trend in which housing design is based on more informal care where the elderly remain in their homes to avoid disorientation and displacement. AIP has become a priority for CMHC's Housing Policy guidelines. However, the negative side of AIP is the heavy emphasis on the medical component, making home really part of an intermediate or long term care 'hospital'.

²⁶Alan Lu, *A Study of Institutional Arrangement for the Aged in Metropolitan Toronto*, Toronto, p.51
I have chosen a smaller scale development for two reasons: to encourage more group interaction and to provide a possibility of establishing a prototype for other communities. I consider these principles inherent in the design: intimacy, variety, scale, choices, interaction. Each one will be further informed by the needs and concerns of the users.

The design for apartments and houses for ordinary people has catchwords such as 'amenities', 'views', 'green outdoor space' and a sense of 'intimacy' or 'grandeur'. Why should such principles stop short of housing for the older population? If anything, they should be even more promoted. We are dealing with a group whose needs and sensitivity are particular and delicate.

Architecture is in a large part about people. In reality it is derived from psychology and sociology. The patronizing architectural profession at times wants to survive within their own rules and esoteric aims and means. Sadly enough, this has resulted in numerous built spaces calling out "big A" Architecture with empty goals. Our landscape is filled with buildings designed for public use yet fail in reality because they are conceived without the human body in mind. Architecture should always be about the connection of one human soul to another and to the space itself. It has a burden to stimulate and educate about the relationship of the body with the surrounding, with other users of the same space, and with the individual. Architecture is not about alienation, it is a tool for movement and attachment, variety and choice, and these issues are so pertinent to the design of housing for the elderly.
Meeting of Cultures in Design

The myth frequently used to justify the fact that elderly members of minority groups do not receive the quantity and quality of services they would seem to deserve is that the typical minority group family is considered to be more extended than a typical Western family. This extended family is seen as such a strong support for its elderly that governmental services are rendered less necessary.

In Vancouver, as described in the previous chapter, the Chinese family, though still embedded in a traditional familism, is facing a potential erosion and reinvention. The merge and exchange of the West and the East are to forge a change in mentality in the future generations of Chinese Canadians.

I will explore the pertinent issues and match possible solutions in terms of design, amenity provision and programming.

Design Criteria and Programming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues:</th>
<th>Solution:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integration into community,</td>
<td>Existing Community Centre - proximity to it and linkage through urban design, passageways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition, Activities,</td>
<td>A small community space component can serve as: gathering place for family members and friends; and for the younger generation for seminars, or other special functions; the library grocery, daycare - where the elderly can work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful work,</td>
<td>This component is functionally separate from the housing: the public vs. the private realms - linked by semi-private pathways, yet possess a public face on the street for other users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence, Purpose,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mix generations, Collaborating intergenerational exchange of knowledge and support.

Community, Provides a stimulating engagement and a sense of purpose and encourages more community responsibility - a mutual exchange relationship.

Focus May also provide income for the development and perhaps an opportunity for part-time employment for the residents.

A focus and a location for sociability among older peers who might otherwise be isolated in modern urban settings

Young and old, A daycare for the care of 0 - 6 year olds, where the elderly can:

Pleasure, Stimulation, derive the pleasure from taking care of their own or other's children.

Interdependence, Provides another chance for family meetings when parents can drop off or pick up their kids.

Connection to past, Site location is at a fairly busy corner where cars and people can provide the stimulation and connection to community, e.g. during the morning and afternoon when school starts and finish.

Mix generations

Independence, The 'home' is an important place for the Chinese elderly. It is important that the scheme provide them with the:

Privacy vs communal,
The Individual, opportunity to retreat into the privacy and safety of their personal territory and the opportunity to live independently.

Specialization vs flexibility, The units/apartments will be distinct yet linked to the communal facilities.

Interdependence, Filial obligation can be further encouraged by the opportunity for members of the families to move in for a short period in the larger units with an extra bedroom.

Connection The collective vs the individual. Public vs private.

Privacy, Participation, Residents own 'backyards' where they can grow their own plants. Outdoor landscaping can also be taken care of by residents.

Purpose, The outdoors, Hobby

Chinatown, Features, I will be adopting a "pattern language" for the design of the project. Observations made in Chinatown and Strathcona are recorded in sketches and pictures. Essential features are picked out to inform the materials and forms of a rich and varied architecture taken from this community.

Pattern Language, I am hoping to get inspirations from the haphazard and complex juxtaposition of building forms (old and new), unique street and lane conditions, the life process; the smells, colours, heights, gaps, lights; the patterns, gestures - the language that inhabit every street and corner.
The intention is to let the spirit of the city take form in a smaller scale, to bring back home what is familiar to the residents and to evoke a sense of the culture in the design.

**Interaction, Socialization,**
Encourage social contacts and behaviour out of natural traffic and functional use of spaces.

**Scale, Variety,**
The design emphasis is on both the larger scale common spaces and the smaller scale common and private spaces: i.e. entrance, lounge, circulation routes, so that they are not merely about circulation but of chance encounters and opportunities for socialization.

**Circulation, Encounters**

**Mobility, hearing, visual impairments**
Provide textile surfaces and avoid slippery surfaces areas: e.g. doors. Avoid single steps and slippery surfaces, glare and window and door handles that require turning.
The colour of switches, doors and signs should make them easily distinguishable.
Special design for bathrooms and rooms. Alarm and communication systems.

**Connection,**
A lounge that allows views out to the main entrance for arrival of visitors or cars, to serve as a popular space to observe the comings and goings.

**People watching,**
Provide discreet rather than obvious viewing.
Orienting spaces so that residents can get views onto street.

Orientation, Passages,

"Everyday it seems to take a little longer to walk back to my room. It must be old age."
Avoid corridor settings - which contribute to more confusion and disorientation where residents feel out of touch with surroundings
Distances are critical. Environment should allow residents to move around without the anxiety of getting lost or confused.
Views out from circulation areas help orientate.

Personalization, Memory,

Residents are allowed to furnish own rooms with own furniture.
The creation of e.g. a tactile element to heighten familiarity or memory of space.

Variety,

Provide a rich and varied environment - a variety of individual or small group seating areas (sub-areas) rather than one large room.

Independence,

Small grocery, small kitchen in each residence for residents to buy and cook their own meal.

Accomplishment,

On the other hand,

Self-sufficiency,

They can choose to eat in a common dining area.
Simulation of ordinary life

The "Main Street" provides amenities available only to the residents. It consists of: beauty parlour, dining area, small reading room, laundry and care centre. The grocery store and the daycare are part of the main street but also possess a public face - they form the community component.

Health, Exercise

Outdoor space allows different types of walking loops for a variety of distances and difficulty. Variety, flexibility, choice. Social interaction, nature. Space for group exercise. Landscaping, furnishing. Easy access, comfort, safety.
The Language of Design - Strathcona/Chinatown

A piece of architecture is not only a building, it can be a city, or a window sill. A building is composed of different entities that inform the whole, on a macro scale the entities of a city/community can also be gathered to inform a certain built form. A building is never isolated from its surroundings. I gathered observations and formed a few points of conversation, asking questions along the way, in the hope of generating more ideas and questions to the reality. For some, I do not possess a definite answer, and a lot of them do not have a definite answer, for that matter. But I do hope to grasp a certain essence of the bits and pieces to build generative ideas for reinterpretation into the design.

A systematic breakdown of the area will identify the essential components that form an integral yet complex private and public experience. I propose to reinvent or restructure the parts into a whole. At the same time, the parts can also inform the public realm that will eventually be an urban intervention linking the housing to the existing Strathcona Community Centre. Strathcona is a rich community that suffers a lack of coherence. Bringing the community together requires a revitalization and repair of an urban fabric that can render itself a delightful private realm and a vibrant and usable public realm.
The porch is integral to the spirit of this community, it forms an important sense of neighbourhood. Big full-front ones with fat turn posts, or covered porches that barely hold two people, or in row housing, pockets of porches tucked deep into doorways. Porches have the ability to pull residents from their homes on warm nights, and join people together.

Should one attempt to humanize the failures of modernism in housing projects that speak of individuation, sub-group definition and neighbourly interaction?

Is the current revival of traditional architectural features and nostalgic urban form a reaction to the absence of comfort and increasing bleakness?

What can the physical spaces be anchored in that will create a sense of intimacy and comfort?
Gradients

A couple of streets are re-graded long ago, leaving the bottom portion of houses well below street level. They require short overpasses to get to the front doors. This gradient has created a vertical dimension that draws the eye to a subterranean zone. Does the vertical dimension speak of comfort or discomfort? Does it welcome or push away? How does it negotiate the bystander on the pavement or the user at the bottom floor?

In contrast, some houses are set above grade. Both of these can reach as much as 8-10 feet.

Row housing on Hawk Street, Vancouver

Gradedrop, Strathcona,
What does a keyhole tell you? It is a gap that offers a sliver of view so precious and elusive because it could be a short captured moment suspended in physical time or space. That is the exact reason why we derive pleasure from peeping through hole and cracks in walls. It is a moment we, and no one else, captured. This dimension between the limited boundaries of the opening forms a connection, a special opportunity amongst so many mundane others.
Roof Profile  Strathcona is a neighbourhood of triangular-topped houses that stand like rows of tall picket fences. We see a lot of steep pitched roofs, in older or even newer houses which attempts to keep the language of the area. Church steeples dot the streetscape.

The Balcony  There is the row housing with 3’X4’ balconies; the infill housing with a tiny 2x3’ balcony nestled on the second floor; the ones that repeats itself endlessly in row housing. Like a porch, a balcony can evoke a sense of comfort, refuge and protection.

For many spaces, the railings of a balcony defines the outermost boundary. How do we create this boundary in an experiential way? How do we inhabit this space to give it a meaningful definition?
**Streets, Lanes**  It is not a car-friendly place. Driving through Strathcona means encountering a frustrating maze of dead ends and no-through streets. These streets, however, can end in green spaces - delightfully paved corners and niches with benches and shade. They have created a third dimension to the street grids in the public realm - a dimension of prospect and refuge where one can pause for a brief moment to sense our own personal history and reconnect with the public history on the street. Perhaps it is this pause on a bench, underneath a tree, that we can reorientate ourselves in space and time - a quiet moment when cars and people speed by and we observe, suspended in time.

Perhaps it is these dead end streets and haven-like green spaces that created a sense of safety and refuge in this community, despite the often raucous East Hastings Street just a few blocks away.

**Street Scale**  A majority of streets in Strathcona are slightly too wide in a context of intimately-scaled houses. They can hardly be described as cozy although some are pulled closer by an arcade of trees. However, there is one street which seems to combine a few great moments that makes the scale and dimensions feel right - Hawks Avenue is considered by many to be the most wonderful street in the whole city. The street width is a nice proportion to the 2-storey row housing flanking one side and an intimate green space on the other.
Is the feeling of security created by the width of the street, the row housing or the park? Or a combination of the three? Is street length a factor?

What are the features that interlock the elements above and below? Perhaps it is the drop of gradient and the short overpass linking the sidewalk to the front porch? Or the intimate scale of the porches and balconies themselves? Or the bamboo plants that fill the gap? Or the colour palette of deep red and green?

**Relationship of** How do buildings meet the ground? What is the dialogue between

**Houses to** these two edges? What are the height and widths?

**Street** What part of the building meets the ground plane? Depending on the grade change, it could be the ground floor, second floor or the roof.
Elements

A house is a typology of entities. Each is in resonance with the rest. These entities can be defined as a sub-set within a larger whole. In dealing with one entity, it is easy to lose sight of the whole. It is critical to maintain a dialogue and reciprocal influence between the whole and the part.

The inter-relationship and identity of each part - How do we find the relevant pieces and “wholes”? Perhaps through formal decomposition (the circles and cubes)? Through material differentiation (the steel, the wood)? Through archetypal mapping (Porches, doors, windows)?

Front Yard

The base and front of a building- its ground floor plane, is without doubt the most important urban element of a facade. It constitutes the transition from the pavement/ground to the lawn and to the entrance/porch. Throughout the community, we see relatively thin strips of lawn that lead to similarly thin porches which barely fit a lawn chair. At times, the lawn gives way to a small overpass spanning a drop of level before landing on the porch. I find this scale giving a sense of intimacy, security and tightness that well defines the public, semi-private and private realms.
Colours

Vivid splashes of colours dot the neighbourhood. They are mostly different variations of red, green, blue and yellow, reminiscent of the traditional colours of Chinese architecture.

Row Houses

Old and renovated row housing are seen scattered about the area. They create a unique long and narrow form, stretching along the street. Anchored at each doorway is a small flight of steps, some landing right at the door, others through a small raised porch.
Materials

Front vs Back  The change in grade from street to lane gives a different and interesting treatment to the front and back of a house. One is often surprised when a ‘bungalow’ ‘turns into’ a three storey dwelling when viewed from the backlane.

Gradedrop, Strathcona
Patterns and Rhythms

What is the footprint of the streets? Are there emerging patterns? Often there are larger 3 - 4 storey structures at the corner lots and single family dwellings in between.

Passageways

Pathways are only found in open public spaces - parks and playgrounds. There are no passages from streets to lanes (e.g. examples found in downtown and West End Vancouver) that facilitate pedestrian traffic and visual linkages.

Passageways, Strathcona
Edges

Fences, railings, low shrubs, gates, paths; Thickness, height, width
- feeling of privacy or openness.

Scale

Contrasting sense of scale - tiny entrances, narrow spaces, small front yards, long back yards.
The civilization creates more problems for aging than it has yet solved. It is very probable that within our highly complex civilization there lie all around us untapped potentials for aging that may be discovered and fitted into our times. Here is a frontier that invites new pioneering. Let us not forget that our society and our community can and probably will, create before long, a brave new climate in which to grow old.

Leo W. Simmons

Breaking Down and Restructuring

This project combines two cultures and two places and tries to come to a possible solution. This crossroad can result in a contradictory stance and the project might be the beginning of a solution. The contradictions are brought in to create a dynamic space, one that departs from the generic term "cleary housing", is against the institutionalism and the dependency for the creation of a prototype of a new 'type' of housing and comunity space.
Site Analysis

The History

The district of Strathcona is one of the oldest and most culturally diverse areas of the city. It is surrounded by other diverse areas such as Chinatown, Gastown and Downtown Eastside/Oppenheimer. Strathcona was developed as one of the first residential areas serving the growing commercial districts in these districts.

In the 1880s, wealthy businessmen settled in the area in wood-framed single family dwellings and then later in turn-of-the-century Victorian houses. Street design consisted of narrow bands of setbacks of front yards between the street and the mostly narrow porches. In contrast, backyards were long and backlanes were narrow. After 1910, the businessmen were gradually replaced by working class and mostly European immigrants. Chinese immigrants who were confined in Chinatown, did not arrive in great numbers until after World War II, as immigration rules were eased. By the late 1960s there developed a kind of mutually supportive symbiosis between Chinatown, Strathcona and the various levels of the Canadian society. In the redevelopment of Strathcona and the successful fight against the freeway proposal, the Chinese had been mobilized into an unprecedented display of shared purpose. The community is close-knit where people (then largely from the same region in China) could still enjoy some of the familiar conveniences and practices of China.

Strathcona remains an area of predominantly lower income working class Chinese living in debt-free self owned single family dwellings. These tend to consist of larger extended families of 3 or 4 generations where the parents work in Chinatown or other parts of the city; the young children go to nearby Lord Strathcona School and the grandparents are often seen taking them to and from school.

Before the 1970s, the demography consist of a larger number of elderly men occupying rooming accommodations and low rental public housing. In the 1980s, there was a growing awareness and action towards the increasing need for elderly
housing. Housing projects like Mao Dan Co-op and the high-rise on Campbell Street house a large population of Chinese elderly. The latter project is a 10-storey high-rise with 200-400 sq.ft rooms. There is no opportunity for private gardens, inviting communal spaces, and the in between space between private and public realm.

The process of site analysis involves understanding the human values and locational needs of the elderly, and at the same time, understanding the distinct contextual characteristics of the site location. The criteria includes:

Elderly Needs
The Community/Region
The Neighbourhood
The site

Elderly Needs
1. Physical and psychological security
2. Topography they can negotiate and the distances they can walk.
3. Belong/Be part of the community. Housing should not be isolated, socially and physically.
4. Freedom to participate in community affairs.
5. Autonomy and independence - need convenient services
6. Proximity to public transportation

The Community/Region
1. Should contain services directly related to the elderly. Strathcona is a predominantly Asian district close to Chinatown offering a full range of relevant services.
2. Strathcona is a mixed community that allows opportunities for community involvement and other amenities including: library, museum, churches, temples, social
services, historical societies (e.g. tongs), community park system, medical facilities, schools, community centres, restaurants, hotels, corner stores, grocery stores.

The Neighbourhood
1. Here we can define physical edges.
2. The neighbourhood contains a heavy residential component, and a mix of commercial/community services: e.g. temples, bookstores, churches, community centres, schools, medium - high density housing.
   It can also be defined as an urban neighbourhood - an older residential area adjacent to a business district (Chinatown).
3. Some key concerns:
   Security / crime rate
   Pollution - noise, air and visual
   Precedent for residential living
   Public transport
   Topography
   Walkway system
   Traffic

The Site
1. Existing fabric and land use determinants
2. Adjacency
3. Density

Factors Influencing Site Selection
Corner of Heatley Street and Keefer Street, Vancouver, B.C.

Public links are little in the area. A linkage from street to lane or street to street partly through the site can be explored.
Standing on the sloped Strathcona School playground looking down to the site offers an interesting view angle.

Slope / grade change of the site opens up some interesting design possibilities.

Site gives unobstructed view towards south to Mclean Park and to the West to Lord Strathcona School playground. This southwest exposure provides abundant natural light to site and the potential for pleasant outdoor spaces.

Grocery stores, restaurants, meat/poultry and herbal medicine stores are approximately two blocks away from site.

The Strathcona Community Centre on block west of the site on Keefer provides services and activities for young people and the elderly. It consists of recreational rooms where different activities take place - e.g. esl classes and seminars. A portable daycare provides afterschool care and daycare for 3-4 year olds. There is also an adjacent children's library.

A small Chinese library is 1 1/2 blocks away from the site on Pender Street, however, it is usually visited by male users.

The adjacent 4 storey apartment dwelling on Pender and Heatley allows the design to go up to a certain height for the community functions; and allows the design to contain a dynamic relationship the low housing.

A corner lot allows the design to address both Heatley St. and Keefer St.

A possible pathway can be considered, as an extension and connection from the McLean Park pathway and the possible creation of a green island.

Presence of school children and other people on the playground and the park across from the site provide stimulation and interest.

**Building Site Analysis**

The site slopes slightly towards the east on Keefer and the lane.

From the sidewalk on Keefer and Heatley, the grade drops 5 - 51/2 feet to the site; this increases to 81/2 - 91/2 feet approximate 200 feet east of Keefer.

The site also slopes slightly towards the North on Heatley.

From the sidewalk on Heatley, the grade drops 10 - 12 feet to the site.
The Program

**Residential component:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Sq ft</th>
<th>Total (sq ft)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38 units</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 1-bed</td>
<td>522/416</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 bedsit</td>
<td>365</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 guest suites</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>15,062</td>
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**"Main Street"**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Sq ft</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small reading room</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen and upgrade dining</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinic/beauty parlour - nurses and therapists</td>
<td>180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washrooms</td>
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**Group activities / common space**

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<td>2,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lounges</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodworking room</td>
<td>224</td>
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**Support Services**

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<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
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**Community Component**

<table>
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<tbody>
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<td>Daycare</td>
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</table>

**Total**

2,1081
Elevation - Keefer Street
Heatley Avenue
Bibliography


Lu, Alan, *A Study of institutional Arrangements for the Aged in Metropolitan Toronto*, University of Toronto, 1965.


Wilson, Mary E., Family Caregiving to the Elderly in the Chinese Community, University of British Columbia, Canada, 1989.