

Housing Forum

Two housing forums were held with two seniors groups (one Cantonese-speaking and one Mandarin-speaking) on June 16, 2008 and July 8, 2008, with 28 and 20 attendees respectively.

They were asked what barriers/challenges to suitable housing there were, and what solutions we could implement to address these barriers.

The following were their responses:

Barriers/challenges

1. There is only one care centre that provide Chinese language service and Chinese meals.
2. The activities seniors apartment buildings provide are not enough.
3. To live independently costs a lot; rents for private housing are very high.
4. They don't have enough information and don't understand the application procedures.
5. The wait for seniors apartments is way too long.
6. It's felt that some applicants can be able to "jump the queue" through their own methods.
7. Tenants pay 30% of their income is too much; suggest to reduce to 20% or so.
8. Sometimes they are denied an application form. Even if they can obtain an application form, they don't understand the contents (language barrier).
9. It's felt that westerners' applications are more easily approved, but for immigrants from mainland China it's more difficult.
10. Immigrants with less than 10 years residency find it hard to succeed in their applications.
11. They don't understand how many types of seniors housing there are and the application criteria etc.
12. It's found that individual seniors housing's management may set stricter criteria than what they publicized.

Solutions

1. Build more seniors housing.
2. Rent payment should be less than 30% of income.
3. Increase Old Age Security pension and other benefits (federal and Alberta seniors benefits).
4. There should be more facilities (apartment buildings, lodges, care centers etc.) that can provide Chinese language service/Chinese meals.
5. There are 4 or 5 provinces in which senior house owners (aged 65 or above) don't need to pay property taxes until their house is sold or until they pass away, at which time the property taxes are deducted from the sale proceeds or from their estate. Alberta should have the same practice.

6. There should be clear admission criteria, and actual criteria shouldn't be different from what is publicized.
7. Every applicant should be given an application form for him/her to wait for any vacancies. They should not be denied an application form if they meet the publicized criteria.
8. The Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens' Association's outreach department should provide interpretation and other assistance.
9. Most of the attendees agree that the seniors housing forum should be continued and expanded.
10. They think that both TV show and radio show should be used to publicize on information and options.
11. They also favour one stop shop on all facets of process – options, services etc.
12. They would also like the authority to liaise with professionals in the community so that they can provide updated information to consumers.
13. They agree that information should be provided in various languages.
14. They also consider that multi-stakeholder group should be set up to deal with issues in seniors housing – intermediary between seniors and provider.
15. They agree that information should be given to groups on process, procedures, policies etc. in development process, with due consideration being given to the needs of the disabled tenants.
16. They also agree that the authority should provide staffing support and money to non-profit fledgling groups to help them with process.
17. They also opine that the authority should develop an ad-hoc advisory group to act as a bridge, assisting groups and answering their questions re. development of seniors housing.
18. They agree to have seniors participate more in providing support within congregate housing.
19. They also agree to have “buddy” program set up to connect isolated individuals.
20. They opine that seniors housing be built closer to where need resides (both NE and NW).
21. They concur that there should be broader community involvement in seniors housing -- “poppy fund” and “adopt-a-home” by corporation etc.
22. On the Abbeyfield model, they suggest that each tenant should be provided with a kitchen; otherwise tenants would fight for the use of kitchen. The kitchens should be equipped with strong exhaust fans too, which are more suitable for Chinese residents. They consider two tenants maximum should live in the house of this kind.