



OUR FUTURE

SENIORS, SOCIALIZATION, AND HEALTH

by Gloria Levi and Laura Kadawaki

Discussion paper / April 2016

OUR FUTURE: Seniors,
Socialization, and Health

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Edited by Charley Beresford

Graphic design by Nadene
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Hands On Publications

Printed by Marine Printers


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Executive Summary

MUNICIPAL SERVICES TO SENIORS ARE, and will become, increasingly important in providing supports that enable seniors to live within the community. They are usually the first line of defense to maintaining good health. They should be seen as the first link in our continuum of health care.

Our Future: Seniors, Socialization, and Health focuses on surveying and reviewing how effectively municipal seniors' centre programs are meeting the holistic needs of older adults living in the community. Concerns about the rising costs of health care for an aging population frame much of the discussion in the media about the future sustainability of our public health services. There is also a growing consensus that "aging in place" is the most cost-effective and appropriate way of supporting the needs of this population. Seniors and their families have a strong preference for services that support older adults in their own homes as long as it is practical and in the best interests of all family members.

There is a substantial amount of evidence that describes the correlation between degrees of health and social isolation. Socially isolated seniors are more at risk for falls, not eating well, and sedentary behaviour. Isolation is even a predictor of mortality from coronary disease and stroke, and isolated seniors have a four to five times greater risk of hospitalization. Social isolation also affects the psychological and cognitive health of seniors, such as depression and suicide. Ironically, the cause of death of socially isolated seniors is often stated as "failure to thrive."

Although most health services are the responsibility of the provincial government, the need to provide social support systems falls under the aegis of municipalities. Central to the success of a centre is the diversity and breadth of the range of programs being offered. The centres try to answer the basic human needs of physical well-being and include wellness programs such as fitness, nutritional supports, and health promotion. They offer activities that enhance creativity, whether it is painting, writing, quilting or gardening. They stimulate intellectual development through lectures, book clubs, concerts, and travel, and answer the need for a sense of purpose by providing broad opportunities for volunteering.

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There is a substantial amount of evidence that describes the correlation between degrees of health and social isolation. Socially isolated seniors are more at risk for falls, not eating well, and sedentary behaviour.

Funding

Funding to support the continuity of services and the support of successful innovative programs is problematic. There is a great divergence of opinion as to how to fund the programs and who the funders should be. Periodic, insecure grants impact severely on program development and continuity. The need for stable funding is crucial. Nevertheless, despite current inadequate funding, strategic partnerships with a wide-ranging use of community resources have enabled some senior centres to provide rich and innovative programming at a very high level. An important function of programming within the centres themselves — the use of senior volunteers — partly compensates for the shortfall in funding. Volunteer opportunities are eagerly embraced and are essential to the success of much of the programming. However, one needs to recognize that even volunteers are not free and a successful volunteer program requires administration and resources.

Facility Space

The types of centre, and their size, amenities, and location, have an impact on the ability of the centre to offer fitness and sport programs. Facility space often dictates the possibility of programs and expansion of services. Facilities need to be accessible, well designed, and non-institutional. There is no one-size-fits-all model for best practice senior centres.

Client Participation

Most senior centre users are over the age of 70, with the average age of participation ranging from 75 to 85. The high rate of participation by older adults sometimes leads to “age creep” which can boost the stigma of ageism. Baby boomers will likely have different needs and interests than the current population of older adults and centres need to be looking ahead.

Programs

With the mounting cost of our present health care system, there will be an increasing focus, expansion, and funding of community-based health care. Municipalities need to see the role seniors’ programs play within this continuum. These programs play a central role in wellness promotion, including nutrition and nutritional information, fitness and age-appropriate physical activity, social engagement, and opportunities to expand an elder’s sense of purpose in life.

Meal programs and physical activity are the keys to maintaining good health. Provision of nourishing food is perhaps the most popular program offered. Food related programs, including nutrition education and cooking classes, are one of the major reasons for accessing senior centres. Meal programs support wellness, provide socialization, and assist low-income seniors.

Staying physically active is a key component for health. Age-appropriate fitness programs are critical to preventing or delaying the onset of chronic diseases of aging, and reducing the period of disability and dependent living.

Volunteering is a large part of all programs. Programs are run or helped enthusiastically by senior volunteers. Seniors are a population thirsty for the opportunity to share their time, knowledge, experience, skills, and their compassion. Sharing gives meaning to their lives.

We found the breadth, scope, and sophistication of the services provided in the centres we reviewed to be encouraging. The services they provide cover a wide range of human needs, from health and wellness, creativity, knowledge, and vital information, to pure recreation. Diverse programming for a diverse population is central to the success of the multipurpose senior centre. Seniors’ programming within the local community provides a much needed and vital service. They are the first link in our continuum of health care.

With the mounting cost of our present health care system, there will be an increasing focus, expansion, and funding of community-based health care. Municipalities need to see the role seniors’ programs play within this continuum.

Introduction

There is a growing consensus that “aging in place” is the most cost-effective and appropriate way of supporting the needs of our aging population. However, sufficient funding to meet those needs has not been forthcoming.

OVER THE NEXT 15 YEARS, the senior population in Canada will grow rapidly as the large baby boom generation reaches 65 years of age. By the year 2036, close to one quarter of all Canadians will be 65 and over, compared to just over 15 per cent in 2013. By 2045, when the youngest in the baby boom generation reaches 80, close to 40 per cent of the seniors population will be 80 years or older.

Concerns about the rising costs of an aging population frame much of the discussion in the media about the future sustainability of our public health services. Yet a recent report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information found that “the proportion of health spending dedicated to seniors actually held nearly steady at around 45 per cent between 2002 and 2012, even as the percentage of seniors in the population grew from 12.5 per cent to 14.9 per cent. In fact, overall population growth and inflation had a stronger impact on health spending than the aging of the population. At the same time, there is a growing concern among seniors—and younger people with aging parents and grandparents.”¹

Seniors and their families have a strong preference for services that support older adults to live in their own homes as long as it is practical and in the best interests of all family members. There is also a growing consensus that “aging in place” is the most cost-effective and appropriate way of supporting the needs of our aging population. As people age and begin to experience cognitive and physical challenges, they require more support and assistance to remain in their own homes and stay socially engaged. This perspective is shared by the BC Ministry of Health, whose long-term stated policy goal has been to support seniors to remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible.² However, sufficient funding to meet those needs has not been forthcoming.

¹ Marcy Cohen and Joanne Franko, *Living Up to the Promise: Addressing the High Cost of Underfunding and Fragmentation in BC’s Home Support System*, Integrated Care Advocacy Group and BC Health Coalition, May 2015, <http://www.bchealthcoalition.ca/seniors>

² Cohen and Franko, *Ibid.*

More seniors are living longer, healthier lives than at any time in the past, and many older adults are able to retain their independence and social connections well into their 80s. They are able to live independently or with limited assistance. Community supports such as sloped sidewalk corners, accessible transportation, building accessibility, and community seniors programs have been very helpful. Municipal services to seniors are increasingly important in providing supports that enable seniors to live within the community. Senior centres encourage health programs in the community through active living, good nutrition, fitness, and social, recreational, and cognitive (intellectual) activities. They are usually the first line of defense to maintaining good health. They should be seen as the first link in our continuum of health care.

Senior citizens are the most heterogeneous population of any age group and consequently require a diversity of programming. M.P. Pardesani, who has written extensively on senior centres in the United States, noted that “Seniors centers play a critical role on the aging continuum of care by offering a diverse array of recreational, nutritional, health, and social service programs. Multi-purpose senior centres appear to serve the average highest number of participants and play an essential role in assisting a diverse group of older adults to age in a successful and productive manner.”³

Rill and Turner provide an examination of four domains: social, psychological support, physical health, and activities. “Making new friends, belonging to a group, and maintaining friendships at the center were the most important social gains. Participants reported that bereavement support, relaxation, support with a myriad of problems, and improving mental health were the most important psychological gains. Improving physical health, staying physically active and eating healthy meals were expressed as important gains in the physical health domain. Most important in the activities domain were learning new ideas/skills, having fun, having a place to go, and keeping busy.” Pardesani added that meal programs, recreational programs, cost effectiveness, and health promotion were also among the main reasons why seniors accessed senior centres.

Impact of Social Isolation

A 2015 report on BC’s home support system from the Integrated Care Advocacy Group and the BC Health Coalition highlighted the loss of socialization in community health workers’ roles in BC’s home support system. The report, *Living Up to the Promise: Addressing the High Cost of Underfunding and Fragmentation in BC’s Home Support System* was informed by focus group interviews and a wide literature search. The Integrated Care Advocacy Group is a broad-based group of social workers, teachers, health practitioners, and researchers—some who are recently retired and some interested in intergenerational issues—that have extensive experience in health care and social services.

3 Manoj Pardesani, 2010, “Senior Centers: Characteristics of Participants and Nonparticipants” *Activities, Adaptation, and Aging* 43(1):48-70.



Senior centres encourage health programs in the community through active living, good nutrition, fitness, and social, recreational, and cognitive (intellectual) activities.

Molly and her husband were regulars at the multi-purpose seniors centre. Molly's husband, Sam, was very outgoing and often dominated conversations. Molly was timid and tended to be in the shadows. When Sam died, Molly was bereft. Several centre acquaintances encouraged Molly to keep coming. Molly joined a newly formed small choir and discovered she had a beautiful light lyric soprano voice. Soon Molly was given solo parts. She flourished and merged as an interesting attractive personality in her own right, surrounded and affirmed by friends and admirers.

Living Up to the Promise finds that the community health worker's role in British Columbia has become narrower and more task-oriented, with very little flexibility written into care plans.

In the words of a community health worker interviewed for *Living Up to the Promise*, "If something isn't in the care plan, I can't do it, no matter how simple it is. I can't chat or socialize with clients at all, take out the garbage, make toast or a snack."

A registered nurse interviewed for the report said, "Social isolation is thought to be a big reason that older, community living people...come into emergency. They come in simply because they are lonely. Since there is no other obvious diagnosis, the chart will often say: 'Failure to Thrive.'"

Social support is no longer part of community health workers' role, and yet meaningful social connections and social support are huge contributors to seniors' quality of life and overall health.

A National Seniors Council report on seniors' social isolation found a number of risk factors that may contribute to social isolation, including living alone and/or location of residence, no children or contact with family, compromised health status, lacking access to transportation, and low income. Risk factors that seniors have identified include fear, stigma, ageist attitudes, lack of accessible and affordable transportation, lack of affordable and suitable housing and home care options, loss of sense of community, and increasing disabilities.⁴

There is a substantial amount of evidence that describes the relationship between health and social isolation. Socially isolated seniors are more at risk for falls, not eating well, and sedentary behaviour. Social isolation is even a predictor of mortality from coronary disease and stroke, and socially isolated seniors have a four to five times greater risk of hospitalization. Isolation also affects the psychological and cognitive health of seniors, such as depression and suicide.⁵

Ironically, care aides who provide minimal health care to socially isolated seniors in their homes often report the client's extreme loneliness and later discover the stated cause of death to be "failure to thrive."

4 National Seniors Council, *Report on the Social Isolation of Seniors*, October 2014.

5 Ibid.

About the Study

THIS STUDY EXAMINES eight seniors' centres in Metro Vancouver:

- 411 Seniors Centre Society, Vancouver;
- Dogwood Pavilion, Coquitlam;
- Dunbar Community Centre, Vancouver;
- Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, Vancouver;
- Minoru Place Activity Centre, Richmond;
- Seniors' Activity Centre, West Vancouver;
- Silver Harbour Seniors' Activity Centre, North Vancouver; and
- South Granville Seniors Centre, Vancouver.

Selection Criteria

The study sought to examine diverse models in facility design and amenities, stressing the importance of age friendly spaces that are barrier free, and that offer opportunities for social connectivity and engagement. Open, inviting, receptive and appealing, rather than institutional, qualities were considered in selecting the facilities. However, sometimes an outstanding creative, highly intelligent, empathetic leader can overcome the barriers of a difficult physical arrangement.

The eight centres chosen provide an overview of the types of centres offering programs to seniors in Metro Vancouver, but are not a complete or fully representative sample.



The study sought to examine diverse models in facility design and amenities, stressing the importance of age friendly spaces that are barrier free, and that offer opportunities for social connectivity and engagement.

MINORU PLACE ACTIVITY CENTRE, RICHMOND

Methodology

The study designed to gather a comprehensive description of the programs on each site, including: physical description; amenities and equipment; annual budget and funding sources; strategic partnerships; number of employees and volunteers; use by participants; age range of users; scope of programs; and transportation services.

Primary data was collected through written questionnaires. Additional qualitative and quantitative data was also collected through interviews conducted with a staff member involved in seniors programming from each centre. Supplemental data was collected from centre websites, annual reports, brochures, newsletters, and other materials.

Study Limitations and Distinctions

Important distinctions should be made between the different centres reviewed in this study.

Of the eight centres, six were specifically seniors' centres that offer programming aimed at older adults (usually defined as 55+). The sample also included a neighbourhood house and a community centre, both of which offer senior specific programming as well as programming for other ages. At these two centres, it was noted in the interviews that in addition to seniors-specific programming, seniors often utilize programming aimed at the general public.

Another important distinction should be made between the municipal centres (Dogwood Pavilion, Dunbar Community Centre, Minoru Place Activity Centre, Seniors' Activity Centre in West Vancouver) and the non-municipal centres (411 Seniors Centre Society, Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, Silver Harbour Seniors' Activity Centre, and South Granville Seniors Centre).

- The **MUNICIPAL CENTRES** usually are operated jointly by the municipality and the centre's non-profit society/board, with the municipality owning the centre (building). Staff are employees of the municipality and may be shared across multiple sites, though there may also be staff employed by the society. Municipal centres are provided with a budget from the municipality each year, but also may receive funding from other sources. The board/society may also have their own separate funds generated through fundraising, grants, etc.
- **NON-MUNICIPAL CENTRES** are independent centres run by non-profit societies. Despite their independence, non-municipal centres usually have close ties with the municipality they are located in, receive funding from the municipality, and may have an agreement with the municipality for space. However, non-municipal centres receive their funding from the municipality as grants and normally municipal funding makes up a smaller portion of their budget, so they must look for more diversified sources of funding.



Kitsilano is unique in that it is a part of the larger Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC, the umbrella organization under which neighbourhood houses operate. Kitsilano also began the Westside Seniors Hub Initiative to facilitate collaboration with seniors and community partners.

Many of the other centres have informal partnerships with other centres and community organizations. In the case of municipal facilities, as noted above staff might be shared between municipal sites or there may be opportunities for all the programming staff to meet. In the interviews, interest was expressed in more opportunities for collaboration and sharing with other centres.

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KITSILANO NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE
PHOTO COURTESY PROVINCE OF BC/Flickr

Study Findings

General Characteristics

Table 1 sets out a general description of the centres, including location, physical description, staff and volunteers, client participation rates, and the age range of clientele.

TABLE 1: GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF CENTRES		
Staff and volunteers ¹	Client participation ²	Clientele age
411 Seniors Centre Society, Vancouver		
Physical description: Located on the 7th floor of an office/retail building, 4,300 ft ² . Contains thrift shop, meeting rooms, multipurpose room, kitchen, lounge/drop-in space. Temporary location, need to find a long-term home.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees: 5 • Volunteers: 102 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ~80–100 unique individuals visit a week; 1,800 used income tax clinics last year; 1,500+ used information and referral services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average age: ~60–75
Dogwood Pavilion, Coquitlam		
Physical description: One floor. Contains tea garden, cafeteria, snooker room, main hall/stage, lapidary room, woodworking room, lounge, library, five program rooms, and computer lab. Has large parking lot and bus stop right nearby. Located in service area near other municipal facilities.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees: 5 full-time, plus part-time food, reception, and recreation leader staff • Volunteers: ~300 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ~500 people per day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre is for 50+, but majority of members are 65+
Dunbar Community Centre, Vancouver		
Physical description: Three floors, 46,500 ft ² . Multiple activity spaces, gymnasiums, dance studio, darkroom, gemstone room, sauna and whirlpool, fitness centre, and squash courts. Outdoor playground and tennis court.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees: 7 municipal employees + society staff (e.g., cashiers) • Volunteers: ~20 volunteers for seniors programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall seniors program registration: 386 • Drop-in: ~60 • Total fall patrons of seniors programs: ~446 • Seniors also participate in non-senior specific programs at the centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No data available

Staff and volunteers ¹	Client participation ²	Clientele age
Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, Vancouver		
Physical description: Includes main house and seniors resource centre a block away. Seniors centre contains a living room, offices, and kitchen. Main house (two floors) includes a community hall, lower hall, multiple activity/community spaces, social area/lounge, rooftop, garden, seniors room, and daycare. Both main house and resource centre have subsidized seniors housing above them. Finished a redevelopment project in 2014.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees: 12 full-time, 22 part-time staff (2 full-time and 1 part-time at seniors resource centre) • Volunteers: ~40–45 for programs at seniors resource centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ~55 per week use seniors resource centre programs. Seniors also participate through Westside seniors hub initiatives, multiple food programs, seniors programs at the main house, and other programs not specifically aimed at seniors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average age: ~75–85
Minoru Place Activity Centre, Richmond		
Physical description: One floor, 16,700 ft ² . Contains cafeteria, games room, woodworking shop, computer workstations, multi-purpose rooms, offices, and casual seating space. Located in central Richmond near city hall, with various amenities nearby.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees: 7 municipal, 5 society • Volunteers: 202 providing 27,750 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 52,720 member visits (~150 visits per day, plus drop-ins) • Attendance at clubs and groups: 34,669 • 4,844 in registered programs • 16,533 meals served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average age: ~78–80
Seniors' Activity Centre, West Vancouver		
Physical description: One floor, 26,000 ft ² . Contains lobby, offices, multipurpose rooms, cafeteria, coffee bar, AV room, woodworking shop, and multiple activity/recreational rooms. Located in service area near other municipal facilities.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees: 10 municipal employees • Volunteers: 673 providing 52,061 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12,141 participants in registered programs in 2014; 80,852 customers used the Garden Side Cafe; Over 300/week in Keeping Connected programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 55-59: 2% • Age 60-69: 16% • Age 70-79: 36% • Age 80-89: 31% • Age 90+: 7%
Silver Harbour Seniors' Activity Centre, North Vancouver		
Physical description: Two floors, 19,000 ft ² (12,000 ft ² of program space). Contains kitchen, library, boutique, offices, multiple activity/craft rooms, and woodworking room.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees: 4 full-time, 5 part-time • Volunteers: 250+, providing 40,000 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 650+ service moments per day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average age: ~75
South Granville Seniors Centre, Vancouver		
Physical description: One floor, 5,438 ft ² . Contains lobby, offices, kitchen and four rooms.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees: 3 • Volunteers: 250+ providing 10,000+ hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ~80–100 participants per day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 50–59: 4% • Age 60–69: 26% • Age 70–79: 30% • Age 80–89: 24% • Age 90+: 8%
Notes: ¹ Definition of employees varied by centre. Some did not include temporary or part-time staff. Some numbers are approximate. ² Centres used a variety of methods to capture client participation data, and in some cases limited data was available. Some numbers are estimates. Data should not be considered fully representative of client participation. For example, at Kitsilano and Dunbar participation numbers are under-represented due to seniors making use of non-age-specific programs, in addition to the senior-specific ones.		

Funding and Partnerships

Table 2 provides information about the centres' funding and strategic partnerships.

TABLE 2: FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS	
Budget and funding ¹	Partnerships ²
411 Seniors Centre Society, Vancouver	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total budget: \$420,000 Major funders: City of Vancouver, BC government, United Way, Vancity. Sources of funding include the municipality, program fees, fundraising, and government grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partners: Telus, Amica, Vancouver Community Network, Vancouver Public Library, Ministry of Housing and Social Development, HRSDC, Ministry of Public Safety and the Solicitor General, Senior Services Society, Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre, Burnaby Community Connections, First United Church Advocacy Program, St. Paul's Anglican Church Advocacy Program, Kettle Friendship Society, West End Seniors Network, BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support, Seniors Chinese Services Society, Vancouver Co-op Radio, A Helping Hand, QMUNITY Generations, Hydrex, Cosco BC, Naturally Urban Pet Food Delivery, Cyber Seniors Internships/summer students/student volunteers: UBC, Vancouver Community College, Langara College
Dogwood Pavilion, Coquitlam	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget: \$712,000 Funding comes from municipal funds. The Board at the centre also has their own funds from fundraising, grants, other sources. The Board helps pay for renovations/projects and also supports the groups and clubs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program partners: Fraser Health, Alzheimer's Society of BC, University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University
Dunbar Community Centre, Vancouver	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2014 total operating expenses: \$856,137 2014 seniors programs expenses: \$20,860 Association funds are derived from program fees, grants, and fundraising. The Dunbar Community Centre and certain operating expenses, such as various staffing costs, are provided to the association through a joint operating agreement with the Vancouver Parks Board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program partners: VGH Centre for Cardiovascular Health, UBC School of Kinesiology
Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, Vancouver	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Association of Neighbourhood Houses of B.C. in 2015 had total revenue of \$18,235,536 (excess revenue \$391,119) and expenses of \$17,719,754. Association of Neighbourhood Houses of B.C. funds nine locations, including Kitsilano Neighbourhood House (KNH) Major sources of operating revenue, in order of amount are: earned income, provincial government, federal government, United Way, City of Vancouver, other contributions/misc., gaming, donations and fundraising, investment income. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KNH sponsors and community partners include: VCH, Smart Fund, Coast Capital Savings, Marty Popischill, Whole Foods, Maple Leaf Storage, Vancouver Foundation, Vancouver Sun, Vancouver Courier, Vancity, Ace Cycles, Food Bank, Peer Net B.C. Housing has partnered with KNH to offer two subsidized housing projects (Red Oak Place and Linden Tree Place) Westside Seniors Hub Initiative (strategic network for senior-serving organizations to connect, partner and share information and resources) is funded by the Vancouver Foundation

Budget and funding ¹	Partnerships ²
Minoru Place Activity Centre, Richmond	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue: \$221,675; expenses \$251,471 = net expenditure \$23,722 • Funding sources include City of Richmond, program fees (activity programs and cafeteria revenue), grant funding, and fundraising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program partners: Volunteer Richmond volunteers, Richmond Public Library, other community centres in Richmond • Intergenerational projects: Local elementary schools
Seniors' Activity Centre, West Vancouver	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014 total operating budget: \$1,596,187 (net expenditure \$303,527) • Funding sources include District of West Vancouver, program and food services revenue, fundraising (advisory board) and grants • Many of the centre improvements are funded 50/50 by the advisory board and the District of West Vancouver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program partners: Mark Morris Dance Group, Vancouver Coastal Health, Alzheimer's Society • Intergenerational project partners: Collingwood Senior School, Gleneagles Elementary School, Pauline Johnson Elementary School, Surrey Alternative High School • Internships: Langara College • Seniors shuttle bus: Amica, West Vancouver Community Foundation, Kiwanis, Building Connections Fund
Silver Harbour Seniors' Activity Centre, North Vancouver	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual budget 2014/15: ~\$750,000 • City and District of North Vancouver provide core funding totalling one third of budget. PARC Retirement Living provides sponsorship, including funding used for the Silver Harbour website. Funding also provided by organizations/businesses, the Silver Harbour auxiliary, grants, donations, and program fees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional sponsors: HRSDC (New Horizons Grants), Western Economic Diversification Canada, Union of BC Municipalities, PARC Retirement Living, Vancouver Coastal Health, Bank of Montreal, CIBC, CUPE Local 389, Imperial Oil, Living Well Home Care, Preferred Nutrition, Royal Bank, Scotiabank, Telus, North Shore Community Foundation, North Vancouver Host Lions, and Sutherland Foundation • Also regularly works with other organizations on the North Shore to raise issues, plan/develop programs, and spread information
South Granville Seniors Centre, Vancouver	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014/2015 operating fund: \$313,523 • Funding sources: 26% gaming (Community Gaming Grants); 22% City of Vancouver; 17% program revenue; 13% Vancouver Foundation; 9% donations and fundraising. The remaining 13% consists of federal grants (e.g., New Horizons for Seniors Programs), membership fees, interest, and other grants. • The society also received funds from the Dieringer Fund and Hinton Fund (estates) amounting to \$57,172 for 2014/2015. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program partners: Access Probono, Connect Hearing, Marpole Place, Osteoporosis Canada, Pharmasave, Planted Network, Seniors Services Society, West Coast College of Massage Therapy, Westside Food Collaborative • Internship partners: Canada Summer Jobs, Government of Canada, International Language Schools of Canada, Japan Abroad Network Link, JP Canada, Langara School of Social Work, UBC Global Career Foundations Program, VCC Career Awareness Program, Vancouver Community Network
<p>Notes: ¹ Budgetary information is not comparable due to differences in data available, what is included, etc. For example, at municipal facilities municipal staff may not be included in the budget for the centre. The society/board may also have their own separate funds from the centre.</p> <p>² For most centres this not a full listing of partners, and the board/society may also have their own sponsors/fundraising partners not listed. In other cases, for example 411 Seniors Centre Society, some of the centre's long list of partnerships represents more of a network than active strategic partnerships.</p>	

Programs Offered

Programs offered by the eight centres in the study have been categorized into six different types: food and nutrition programs; health and wellness programs; fitness and sport programs; creative programs; educational and information programs; and recreational programs.

While many programs are offered year round, some are seasonal and most centres update their program guides every few months with new offerings. Programs are often developed based on input from members and the interests of volunteers/instructors. Minoru Place and Dogwood Pavilion have a unique model where a large proportion of their programs consist of member-formed clubs and groups that are offered space and support from the centre/board. Programs at centres are usually run by volunteers or instructors/leaders that are paid from the program fees, but are not counted as staff at the centre. It is worth noting that the majority of programs end up paying for themselves through the collection of program fees. Memberships are available for each of the centres, ranging from \$4 to \$36 per year, allow seniors to access certain programs and services for free or a discounted fee. Most centres also allow drop-ins for their programs and services.

Table 3 sets out the scope of programming at the eight centres.

TABLE 3: SCOPE OF PROGRAMS	
411 Seniors Centre Society, Vancouver	
Food and nutrition:	n/a
Health and wellness:	Dental Screening
Fitness and sport:	Yoga; Chair Yoga; Walking Club
Creative:	Art for Healing (Levels 1 & 2); Woodshop Program for Men
Education/ info:	Book Club; Computer Training; 1-on-1 Tech Help; English Conversation Group; Spanish Class; Brain Games; Tax Clinics; Information and referral services; Various educational workshops
Recreation:	Mah Jong; Card Games; Men's Luncheon; various trips, tours, and special events
Dogwood Pavilion, Coquitlam	
Food and nutrition:	Boulevard Café (Lunch 5 days/week); Tea Garden (Snacks 5 days/week); Chinese Cooking; Intro to Sushi Making
Health and wellness:	Foundations of Mindfulness Level 1; Chronic Pain Self-Management; Aging Brilliantly Series; Stroke Recovery Branch; Canadian Council of the Blind; Tri-Cities Caregivers Support Network; W.H.O. Group (Women Helping Others)
Fitness and sport:	Bocce; Carpet Bowling; Dance Latin & Ballroom; Dragon Boating – Nothin Dragon; Floor Hockey; Hiking – Striders; Hiking – The Cliff Huggers; Lawn Bowling; Snooker; Table Tennis; Tennis; Volleyball; Minds in Motion; Ballroom Intermediate – Couple; Belly Dance Basics 50+; Latin Fun with Kathy; Small Taste of Dance; Western Line (Beginners, Intermediate, Ultimate Advanced); Aging with Strength; Ball Fit; Get Up & Go; Pickleball – Ladies Only; Yoga (Beginner, Intermediate); Yoga – Chair; Yoga – Therapy for Seniors; Bodytoning; Osteofit for Life; Zumba; Yoga Hatha (Beginner, Intermediate); Fitness (Beginners, Advanced); Jointworks; Ab, Back, Glutes & Stretch

<i>Seniors' Activity Centre continued</i>	
Creative:	Crafts; Coquitlam Art Club; Dogwood Songsters – Choir; Drama; Hymn Sing Group; Lapidary Workshops; Lifewriting Group; Painting – Portrait Oil Painting; Painting – Turn Up and Paint; Photography Group; Quilting Sisters; Wood Working; Crafts – Greeting Cards; Crafts – Introduction to Silversmithing; Drawing – Beginners; Drawing – Intermediate; Knitting – Learn to Knit; Knitting – Drop-In; Lapidary Classes – Introductory; Music – Guitar; Music – Ukulele Beginner; Music – Ukulele Lessons – Intermediate; Painting – Chinese; Freestyle Painting; Painting – Exploring Acrylics; Painting – Watercolour; Painting – Watercolour Drop-In; Painting – Workshops with Tammy Pilon; Photography – Digital SLR Cameras; Woodcarving with Bob Graves; Woodcarving – Fantasy House
Education/ info:	Book clubs; Genealogy; Computers – drop-In sessions; various workshops and courses on iPads, smartphones, computer use, etc.; Spanish Conversational (Beginner, Beginner Continued, Intermediate, Intermediate Continued, Advanced); Astrology; Stonehenge's Mysterious Stones; Poetry – Adventures in Verse; Religion, Secularism, and Social Well-Being; Philosophers Cafe; Lawyer Consultation; Peer-to-Peer Assistance
Recreation:	Bingo; Casual Drop-In Bridge; Bridge (Casual, Duplicate, and Social); Canasta; Chess; Cribbage; Dominoes – Mexican Train; Mahjong; Poker; Puzzle Corner; Scrabble Club; Whist; Special Events Committee; Bridge – Gentle Intermediate; Cards – Learn to Play Poker; Nintendo Wii Sports and Xbox Games; Red Hat Society; Roamers RV Club; Rose Society; Friendship Circle; Garden Club; Travel Club; Various trips, tours and special events
Dunbar Community Centre, Vancouver	
Food and nutrition:	n/a
Health and wellness:	Happy Feet Foot Care; Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS); Health Drop-In; Grief Recovery Program; OCD/Anxiety Support Group; Senior Peer Counselling Training
Fitness and sport:	Happy Hearts Alliance; Changing Aging; Fit over 50; Osteofit 1; Osteofit for Life; Joint Works Arthritis; Steady feet; Therapeutic weight training; Line Dancing (Levels 1, 2, and 3); Hatha Yoga (Beginner and Intermediate); Chair Yoga; Beginner/ Intermediate Badminton; Table Tennis; Dunbar Walks!; Tai Chi (Beginner, Intermediate/Advanced)
Creative:	Sing-A-Long Nights; Private Voice with Szu-Wen; Dunbar Choir; Private Piano Lessons; Karaoke Fun & Dancing Too!; Jewelry Making; Repair Café
Education/ info:	Current Events Forum; Spanish Lessons; Spanish Conversation; Armchair Traveller Education Sessions
Recreation:	Chicago Style Bridge; Mah Jongg; Trips & Tours (e.g., Salt Spring Tuesday Market); Energizers Social Group (Speaker sessions)
Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, Vancouver	
Food and nutrition:	Bake and Save Cooking Group; The Stone Soup Stitchers Intergenerational Cooking Group & Sewing Group; Passport to Food & Fun; Westside Community Food Markets; Seniors Drop-In
Health and wellness:	Kitsilano Better at Home; Seniors Links Program; Seniors Peer Support Programs (Friendship & Support Circle, Mirror on My Life, and Coping with Aging)
Fitness and sport:	Osteofit for Life; Healthy Living Program (weekly walking & snack group)
Creative:	Knitting Circle; Seniors Art Program
Education/ info:	Kits House Seniors Resource Centre; Steeves Manor Resource Centre; Seniors Advisory Group; Tax clinics; 1-on-1 Computer Tutorials; Various educational workshops
Recreation:	Various trips, tours and special events

Minoru Place Activity Centre, Richmond	
Food and nutrition:	Cafeteria (lunch 6 days/week, dinner 1 day/week); Catering Services
Health and wellness:	Parkinson's Support Group; Diabetic Support Group; Wellness Clinic; Hearing Clinics; Wellness Connections
Fitness and sport:	Bicycle Club; Ballroom Dance; Chinese Line Dancing; Line Dancing (Beginner, Intermediate); Ballroom Dance; Tap Dancing; Balance and Falls Prevention; Core and Cardio; Fit and Functional; Jazzercise; Joint Moves; Osteofit – Level 1; Sit and Be Fit; Steadyfeet; Strength and Stretch; Total Body Conditioning; Walking Club; Hatha Style Yoga; Yin Yang Yoga; Zumba; Tai Chi; Drop-In Table Tennis
Creative:	Happy Chorus; Amateur Writers Group; Photography Club; Musical Interludes; Red Leaf Multicultural Arts; Artist Workshop; Glee Club; Kingsland Calligraphy; Chinese Calligraphy; Peking Opera; Ukulele Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced; Chinese Brush Painting; Watercolour Painting; Knitting Busy Fingers Group; Woodcarving Club; Woodworking Club
Education/ info:	Spanish Instruction Group; Spanish (Beginner, Intermediate); Computer Assist Group; Technology Tips and Tricks; Various educational workshops
Recreation:	Bridge (Contract, Duplicate); Crib; Whist; Poker; Carpet Bowling; Mah Jong; Scrabble; Movie Matinee; Billiards club; Canasta; Chinese Seniors Circle Group; Euchre; Friday Night Live; Spanish Social Club; Various trips, tours and special events
Seniors' Activity Centre, West Vancouver	
Food and nutrition:	Garden Side Cafe (lunch 7 days/week, dinner 2 days/week); Cooking for Men
Health and wellness:	Eye Deal; Sound Advice; Keeping Connected (Series of 16 programs)
Fitness and sport:	Line Dance (Levels 1, 2, and 3); Scottish Country Dance Beginner and Intermediate; Dance for Parkinson's; Yoga Beginner; Yoga Chair; Yoga Hatha; Tai Chi (Levels 1, 2 and 3); Tai Chi Qi Kong Exercise; Tai Chi Sword Applications; Keep on Moving; Chairbics – Gentle Stretch and Strength; Chairbics – Strength; 20/20/20 Strength Training; Balance & Gait for the Fit; Building Bones and Balance; Cardio (Mild, Advanced, and Advanced Plus); Early Morning Energizer; Fit Fellas Advanced; Minds in Motion; Exercising Your Brain; Saturday Stretch; Strength & Stretch; Stay Fit for Men; OsteoFit; Better Balance with Surefeet; Stretching for the Fit; Zumba® Gold; Table Tennis; Hikers; Ramblers; Monday Cycling; Thursday Cycling; Norwest Cycling Club; Cross Country Skiing / Snowshoeing; Walking Club; Pole Walking
Creative:	Heritage Choir; Keynotes Choir; Dundarave Players; Jazz Jam Session; Recorders (Intermediate and Advanced); Ukuleles (Beginners and Intermediate); Swing Music Concert; Dressmaking Studio; Knitting; Quilting Bee; Quilting Studio Time; Quilting Workshop; Wednesday Craft Group; Woodworking – Beginners; Furniture Repair & Refinishing; Woodworking – Ladies; Woodcarving; Woodturning; Working on Your Own Small Projects – Open Workshop; Calligraphy; Drawing; Painting on Glass; Studio Class; Studio Time with Friends; Acrylics; Paint & Sketch for Travel Workshop; Still Life; Watercolour Beginners/Advanced Beginners; Photography Club; Stained Glass Beginners/Advanced Beginners; Stained Glass – Studio Time; Creative Expressions Activity Program; Creative Writing; Creative Writing – Writers Circle
Education/ info:	French Conversation (Intermediate, Social Intermediate); Italian Beginners for Travelling; Spanish for Beginners – Part 1 and 2; Spanish Intermediate 3; Spanish Conversation (Intermediate and Advanced); Spanish Conversation – Social; Writing not Blogging; Ageless Mind; Book Lovers; Book Club; Discussion – Hot Topics – International Current Affairs; Computer Club; Flight Simulation; Various workshops and courses on iPads, iPhone, computer use, etc.

<i>Seniors' Activity Centre continued</i>	
Recreation:	Snooker/Billiards; Snooker Beginner Basic Skills; Bridge Social; Canasta Club; Coffee Talk; Coronation Street Chat Group; Cribbage; Mah Jong; Movies; Poker Club; W.V. Rummy Club; Scrabble; West Van GoGos [Grandmothers]; Bridge Duplicate; Bridge Supervised Play and Lessons – At GECC; Bridge Basics (I, II, III); Bridge Intermediate I; Bridge Topics/Supervised Play; Stamp Club; Garden Club; Various trips, tours and special events
Silver Harbour Seniors' Activity Centre, North Vancouver	
Food and nutrition:	Cafeteria (lunch 5 days/week)
Health and wellness:	Fingernail Care
Fitness and sport:	Chair Yoga; Daytime Dance; Get Up & Go; Jointmasters; Jointworks; Line Dancing; Osteofit 1 & 2; Osteofit for Life; Scottish Country Dancing; Table Tennis; Tai Chi; Yoga; Keep Well; Minds in Motion
Creative:	Choir; Bazaar Group; Craft Workshops; Creative Crafts; Dressmaking; Knit and Crochet Volunteers; Knitting Instruction; Oil Painting; Open Painting Studio; Paper Tole; Pottery; Quilting; Seniors Acting Up; Silk Painting; Stained Glass; Tapestry Weaving; Watercolour Painting; Weaving; Whittling and Woodcarving; Woodworking Shop
Education/ info:	Book Club; Computer Q & A Sessions; Computer for Beginners, Intermediates; Introduction to iPad; Digital Storytelling Program; Computer Club; Current Conversations; Mandarin Conversation; Spanish for Beginners; Spanish III; Spanish for Travelers; Income Tax Preparation; Legal Advice and Referral Clinic; Various workshops and Information sessions
Recreation:	Snooker; Bingo; Bridge (Social, Low-Key, Supervised and Duplicate); Bridge Lessons; Chess; Chinese Seniors Group; Cribbage; Farsi Seniors Group; Whist; Dinner Dances; Various trips, tours and special events
South Granville Seniors Centre, Vancouver	
Food and nutrition:	Food Hot Lunch (3 days/week); Curbside Fresh; Community Kitchen
Health and wellness:	Gentle Hand & Foot Care; Hair Care; Hearing Clinic; Massage Therapy; Mindfulness; Wellness Clinic
Fitness and sport:	Gentle Yoga; Nordic Walking; Osteo-Arthritis Fit; Stretch and Strength; Tai Chi
Creative:	Spontaneous Art Studio; Creative Writing; Musical Appreciation; Amaryllis Singing Group; Knitting Group; Opera Appreciation
Education/ info:	Brain Gym; Computer & Tech Lessons; Introduction to Spanish; Book Club; Spanish Information and Referral Program; Information & Referrals – Peer Support Program; Legal Clinics with Access Pro-Bono; Representation Agreements Consultation
Recreation:	Bingo; Bridge Club; French Conversation Group; Mahjong Club; Mustard Seeds; Spanish Seniors Program; Various trips, tours and special events

A brief summary of each type of programming is set out below. A select few innovative programs are described in more detail.

Food and Nutrition Programs

Unlike the other centres, Dunbar and 411 Seniors lack full service kitchens and do not offer any food and nutrition programs. West Vancouver, Silver Harbour, Minoru Place, and Dogwood Pavilion all have cafeterias that offer lunch, ranging from five to seven days per week. South Granville and Kitsilano have smaller scale kitchens that offer lunch from one to three days per week. Only West Vancouver (two days a week) and Minoru Place (one day a week) offer dinner service. Minoru Place also has catering services available for hire.

Food services were mentioned in the interviews as being one of the most popular programs for seniors, and also an important source of revenue for the centres. South Granville, Kitsilano, West Vancouver, and Dogwood Pavilion also offer additional food programs focused on teaching cooking (e.g., Passport to Food & Fun). South Granville and Kitsilano have seasonal food markets available to provide fresh food to seniors.

Innovative programs:

- **CURBSIDE FRESH** and **WESTSIDE COMMUNITY FOOD MARKETS**: Both South Granville and Kitsilano are located in areas in Vancouver known as “food deserts” where affordable and nutritious food is hard to obtain. As a result, they both offer innovative seasonal food market programs. At South Granville, the Curbside Fresh program is offered in partnership with the Greater Vancouver Food Bank. At Kitsilano, the Westside Community Food Market, offered in partnership with the Society Promoting Environmental Conservation (SPEC), brings a variety of local food vendors to the area.

Health and Wellness Programs

All of the centres offer health and wellness programs, and health and wellness appears to be an area where centres are particularly innovative. Programs are provided in areas such as personal care (e.g., hair care, foot care), self-care (e.g., massages, mindfulness), health check-ups (e.g., dental screening, hearing clinic), educational/support groups (e.g., diabetic support group, grief recovery program), and service programs (e.g., Seniors Links Program, Better at Home). These programs show that centres can play an important role in helping to maintain the health and wellness of seniors, either through programs directly addressing health and wellness or those that indirectly address it (e.g., food programs, fitness). Minoru Place has a seniors wellness coordinator responsible not only for wellness programs at Minoru Place, but also at the other community centres offering programs to seniors in Richmond. Kitsilano is unique in that it offers home support services to seniors through the Seniors Links Program and Better at Home. West Vancouver has the largest wellness portfolio through its Keeping Connected programs.

Innovative programs:

- **PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS:** The Seniors Peer Support Programs are a series of three support programs (Friendship & Support Circle, A Mirror on My Life, and Coping with Aging) offered at Kitsilano. The programs are aimed at seniors at risk of isolation and loneliness. The programs are the result of a partnership between Kitsilano and Peer Net BC. All of the facilitators for these programs are trained seniors, and the programs are created with input from the facilitators and senior clientele at Kitsilano.
- **HEALTH DROP-IN:** Dunbar provides a health drop-in service for seniors every Thursday run by retired nurse volunteers. Seniors can ask health questions, have their blood pressure checked, and find out about services and programs.
- **WELLNESS CLINIC:** Wellness clinics are offered to adults 55+ at Minoru Place and seven other community centres in Richmond. The clinics use health professional volunteers to provide blood pressure checks, pharmacy consultations, and health passport record books. The clinics also offer education and information on health, wellness, and health services. There is also the opportunity to book holistic wellness services such as reflexology or massage.
- **WELLNESS CONNECTIONS:** Wellness Connections is an outreach program offered by Minoru Place for frail or isolated seniors. The program is offered twice a week and includes transportation, programs, and lunch.
- **CHRONIC PAIN SELF-MANAGEMENT PROGRAM:** The Chronic Pain Self-Management Program is a weekly program offered by Dogwood Pavilion to support people living with chronic conditions. The program was developed by the University of Victoria Centre on Aging.
- **STROKE RECOVERY BRANCH:** Dogwood Pavilion also hosts and coordinates a branch of the Stroke Recovery Association. The Stroke Recovery Branch provides support and activities for those recovering from a stroke and their caregivers. Activities include speech therapy, outings, exercise, and social activities.
- **TRI-CITIES CAREGIVER SUPPORT NETWORK:** The Tri-Cities Caregiver Support Network Group meets twice a month at Dogwood. The group provides support to caregivers and also helps them to access resources. The group is a support group for caregivers in Coquitlam and also the surrounding cities.
- **SENIORS LINKS PROGRAM** and **BETTER AT HOME:** Kitsilano currently operates two programs to help provide home support services to seniors and support them to live independently. The Seniors Links Program is offered through a partnership between Kitsilano, Vancouver Coastal Health, and local colleges/ universities. The program connects students to do inexpensive help around the house (e.g., shopping, pet care, laundry) for seniors. Students are paid minimum wage (currently \$10.45/hour) for a minimum of two hours. Better at Home is offered through a partnership with the United Way. Trained volunteers provide



Food services were mentioned in the interviews as being one of the most popular programs for seniors, and also an important source of revenue for the centres.

seniors with transportation services, grocery shopping assistance, and visits. Light housekeeping can also be provided by contractors. Over the previous year, volunteers provided seniors with 75 home visits, 132 rides to medical appointments, and 85 grocery-shopping trips.

- **LINKS:** LINKS is a program offered by volunteers to seniors at Silver Harbour and West Vancouver. This program is offered to isolated seniors or seniors who are facing challenges in social participation (e.g., illness, loss of a loved one). A volunteer is matched with a senior to help provide them with transportation and support their involvement in programs (e.g., program options and registration, initial participation). The volunteer assists with participation until the individual feels confident to do so on their own.
- **KEEPING CONNECTED:** Keeping Connected is an innovative series of programs offered by West Vancouver to support seniors to live independently in the community. Keeping Connected programs are designed for seniors who are becoming less physically or cognitively able, or have suffered some sort of loss which has been a barrier to their participation in programs. Transportation to the programs are provided, and reminder phone calls or one-on-one support can be provided as well. Currently 16 programs are offered each week: Current Conversations Groups, Active Games, Music in the Living Room at Hollyburn House Rivera, Men's Club, Ladies Social Club, Mall Walking: One-on-One Support, Caregiver Support Group, Chair Exercise Classes, Stepping Out Bus Trips, Music Sing-a-longs, Walking Club, Creative Expressions Art Programs, Properties Hub Social Gathering, Lecture Series, and Special Parties and Celebrations. The programs are run by part-time leaders and volunteers, and strategic partnerships and fundraising assist in supporting these programs. In particular, Keeping Connected has a close partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health, which offers training to Keeping Connected staff and volunteers, makes referrals to the program, and helps to integrate challenging seniors by attending the programs with them. The total budget for Keeping Connected in 2014 was \$140,919. The majority of this funding came from grants and fundraising, and not program fees, as the centre made a conscious decision to subsidize these programs. In 2014, over 300 seniors participated weekly in the program. Silver Harbour has now adopted one of the Keeping Connected programs (Current Conversations) to run at its centre.

Fitness and Sport Programs

All of the centres offer fitness and sport programs. While some of the most commonly offered programs are yoga, osteofit, tai chi, walking, and dancing, programs are not confined to what typically might be thought of as “seniors fitness programs,” with offerings also including cycling, belly dancing, and dragon boat racing. Many centres offer targeted fitness programs designed especially for individuals with specific health conditions or abilities. For example, there are programs designed for individuals with cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's diseases, or mobility impairments. Some centres are also trying to incorporate

social and wellness components into their programs. West Vancouver offers the most extensive fitness and sport programs, with over 40 programs available. Many of the centres try to accommodate different levels of fitness and ability. For example, West Vancouver offers a hiking group with trails ranging from 8 to 14 km in length, and also a less strenuous “Ramblers” group with trails of 8 to 10 km. Another example is yoga, with many facilities offering chair yoga for older adults with limited mobility.

Innovative programs:

- **FIT FELLAS:** Fit Fellas is a volunteer-run fitness program for men 55+ at the Seniors Activity Centre in West Vancouver. The program includes a social component with optional social events offered throughout the year. Fit Fellas was developed over 20 years ago and over 45 per cent of members have been involved in the program for over 10 years. The successfulness of Fit Fellas has inspired a UBC research team to adapt the program and trial it at three YMCA locations as the GOAL Trial.
- **CHANGING AGING** and **FIT OVER 50:** Changing Aging and Fit Over 50 are both programs offered by Dunbar in partnership with the UBC School of Kinesiology. Changing Aging is designed for adults 65+ and focuses on strength, flexibility, and cardiovascular health. Fit Over 50 is for adults 50+ and focuses on joint mobility and stability. Both programs also include blood pressure monitoring and personal training consultations.
- **MINDS IN MOTION:** Minds in Motion is a fitness and social program developed by the Alzheimer’s Society for individuals in the early stages of memory loss. Participants attend the program with a caregiver, family member, or friend. Silver Harbour, West Vancouver, and Dogwood Pavilion offer the Minds in Motion program.
- **KEEP WELL:** The Keep Well program offered at Silver Harbour includes an exercise class followed by health and wellness advice that includes blood pressure checks, massage, and nutrition and medication education.



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Creative Programs

All of the centres offer some creative programs, focusing primarily on music, crafts, art, and writing. Crafts and other items created through creative programs are often sold by the centres in holiday fairs and bazaars to raise funds for the centre and programs. Woodworking programs are seen as an important opportunity to engage men, and West Vancouver, Silver Harbour, Minoru Place, and Dogwood Pavilion all have their own wood shops. 411 Seniors does not have a wood shop, but was able to offer a woodworking program for men by partnering with another community organization. Minoru Place also offers several creative programs focused specifically on Chinese cultural activities (e.g., Peking Opera) to appeal to their large Chinese population.

Jack was a retired forest ranger who had lived a semi-isolated. Away from nature and his beloved woods, life had become bleak. Over the passing years, many of his few friends had died or were in nursing homes. The daughter of an old friend urged him to join a creative writing course at the seniors centre. With much trepidation and some misgivings, Jack decided to try it out. Six months later, writing had become Jack's passion. Short stories poured out of him. Some were published in magazine. It put a spring in Jack's step and a smile on his face.

Innovative programs:

- **ART FOR HEALING:** Art for Healing is an art therapy group at 411 Seniors for women who have suffered a loss. The program provides an opportunity for creative expression and as well as social support. The program was so successful the first time it was offered, that 411 Seniors created a level 2 program so the women involved could continue on with the program in the same group.
- **CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS ACTIVITY PROGRAM:** The Creative Expressions Activity Program offered by West Vancouver is an art program designed for seniors with dementia (family and caregivers are also welcome to attend). The program is offered in partnership with Dr. Dalia Gottlieb-Tanaka from the University of British Columbia.

Educational and Information Programs

All of the centres offer some educational and information programs. Popular programs include language classes, book clubs, computer/technology lessons, and educational sessions/workshops.

All of the centres offer at least one computer program (and several centres offer multiple programs), demonstrating the high demand for computer and technology programming. Language lessons are also popular, with seven of the eight centres offering language courses, Spanish being the most popular. Information and referral programs are also offered by 411 Seniors, Dogwood Pavilion, Kitsilano, and South Granville, providing seniors with information on a number of different topics, such as housing, health, or retirement benefits. Through partnerships with legal organizations/lawyers, Dogwood Pavilion, Silver Harbour, and South Granville offer legal advice and referral programs with licensed lawyers. Income tax preparation programs are offered for low-income seniors by Silver Harbour, 411 Seniors, and Kitsilano. In the interviews, the proper filing of income taxes was emphasized as being essential to low-income seniors as this can determine whether seniors receive benefits such as the Guaranteed Income Supplement. In addition to educational and

information programs, most centres also offer workshops, lectures, and educational sessions. For example, Dogwood offers primarily free talks and workshops once or twice per week on topics such as living free from pain, make-up and skin care for women 50+, travel, and older adult home safety.

Innovative programs:

- **DISCUSSION: HOT TOPICS – INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS:** This very popular discussion group offered at West Vancouver discusses current international affairs. A volunteer who is a former Canadian ambassador runs the group.
- **PHILOSOPHER'S CAFE:** At Dogwood Pavilion a monthly Philosopher's Cafe is offered in partnership with Simon Fraser University. Moderated by an SFU professor, the sessions give participants a chance to discuss challenging questions such as wars, the future of robotics, and a national pharmacare plan.
- **INFORMATION AND REFERRAL:** Four of the centres offer information and referral services to seniors. Kitsilano provides this service through its Kits House Seniors Resource Centre, which is separate from the main house and open four days a week. It also operates an information and referral service at nearby Steeves Manor. South Granville operates information and referral programs in both Spanish (one day a week) and English (one day a week). 411 Seniors has information and referral services available five days a week, and can offer service in Punjabi, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Swedish, and Dutch. This is one of 411 Seniors services that low-income seniors from the Downtown Eastside commonly use. Dogwood Pavilion provides peer-to-peer assistance by appointment for assistance with filling out forms such as OAS or CPP.
- **REPRESENTATION AGREEMENTS CONSULTATION:** In addition to its information and referral service and legal clinics, South Granville also offers representation agreements consultation. This program allows seniors to meet with a trained volunteer to learn how to plan for end-of-life care.



All of the centres offer some recreational programs in the form of regular programs, special events, or trips and outings. Bingo, cards (particularly Bridge), mah jong, movies/television, and social and conversation groups are all popular programs.

Recreational Programs

All of the centres offer some recreational programs in the form of regular programs, special events, or trips and outings. Bingo, cards (particularly Bridge), mah jong, movies/television, and social and conversation groups are all popular programs. Special events such as social dances and holiday meals are also offered. The scope of outings and trips varies from outings to local stores and attractions to trips to Salt Spring Island or the United States. West Vancouver has taken the innovative step in its program guide of developing a set of symbols to show the accessibility of their outings and trips (e.g., accessible for people with wheelchairs, accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired).

Innovative programs:

- **SPANISH SENIORS PROGRAM:** South Granville offers a weekly program for Spanish-speaking seniors that provides opportunities for socialization and to connect to the community. The program offers a variety of activities, such as games, outings, exercise, and education.
- **FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE:** Minoru Place offers special activities on Friday nights for seniors through its Friday Night Live program. Activities include games, karaoke, and special performances. On Friday nights the cafeteria at Minoru Place also offers dinner service that complements the program, as clients can have dinner at the centre and then attend the Friday Night Live.

Transportation

Three of the centres (Minoru Place, Silver Harbour, and West Vancouver) have buses available to assist seniors to get to the centre and attend programs, and also to access other community services. For a select few programs aimed at isolated or



At Silver Harbour the “Seniors Go” bus runs three days a week, operating in different areas each day.

PHOTO COURTESY
SILVER HARBOUR

vulnerable individuals at these centres, transportation is specifically offered as a part of the program (e.g., Wellness Connection, Sit and Be Fit, Keeping Connected). Each centre also provides bus service several days a week that follows a community route including the centre that also stops at other community resources (e.g., shopping, pharmacy). Minoru Place’s Community Leisure Transportation Program, which runs two days a week in Richmond, also provides services to other community members who might have transportation barriers, and the buses can be rented by community groups.

At Silver Harbour the “Seniors Go” bus runs three days a week, operating in different areas each day. West Vancouver has a “Seniors Shuttle” bus that runs four days a week on various routes, plus by request on Thursday. All of these bus services are free of charge, though small donations are appreciated.

IN ADDITION TO THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES LISTED ABOVE, there also are innovations offered by the centres that do not fit into the above categories, but are worth mentioning. For example, Silver Harbour offers members a small library and a boutique and clothes closet where gently used items can be purchased. At South Granville, seniors can request to be put on a weekly call list and someone from the centre will call to check up on them. 411 Seniors are collaborating with UBC and Pianos on the Street on an intergenerational piano project where seniors, UBC students, and immigrant/refugee youth will work together to paint a piano. At West Vancouver, a partnership with a local high school resulted in a book being created with profiles of seniors written by students. At Dogwood Pavilion, volunteer hosts greet guests, take guests on tours, and run orientation sessions. These are just some examples of the ways these centres provide services and create community beyond standard programming.

Discussion

THE MAIN FACILITATOR to growth and expansion identified in the interviews was the centres' supporters. All of the centres were appreciative of their supporters, including their funders, partners, members, and volunteers. Municipalities were identified as important funders and partners. The members of the centres also play important roles through their involvement as board/committee members, fundraisers, and volunteers.

Funding

Funding is a major issue for potential growth and expansion. The successful future of multi-purpose senior centers relies heavily on their ability to be sustainable. The centres that receive municipal funding as part of their budget find it easier to plan and to build programs with continuity. Centres that receive municipal funds as grants find they are expending much more time and energy in ensuring adequate funding and are less able to ensure continuity of programming and less able to do long-term planning. It was mentioned by staff that funders often only want to provide grants for new projects and programs and it is difficult to sustain successful programs after the grant money has run out. It has also become an increasingly competitive process for organizations.

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Strategic Partnerships

Strategic partnerships have added significant value to seniors' programs. Centres have learned to cooperate and collaborate with businesses, schools, universities, faith communities, civic organizations, provincial government departments, internships, intergenerational partners, and other service providers. These collaborations have enabled the centres to develop innovative and diverse program opportunities, resource sharing, and the ability to offer a broad range of innovative programs and services at a very high level. (See description of innovative programs on pages 22 to 28.)

My 85-year-old aunt said to me, “I ran the kitchen at the centre for 15 years. Now that I have pancreatic cancer, it’s hard for me to be there every day. But I get up every morning and try to get there because I know they need me. You see, I feel good because I know I’m still useful and needed. Thank God for the centre. They’ve been like family for me.”

Health and wellness programs appear to be a programming area where strategic partnerships are key to providing many of the programs. Partnerships with health authorities, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and health professionals/retired health professionals are used to support these programs. These programs are increasingly filling roles that might have previously been considered the responsibility of the health authorities.

Volunteers

The other component that compensates for funding shortfalls is volunteerism.

Volunteers are key to the centres, and fill many roles -- from receptionists and cooks, to program and special event volunteers. Several of the centres have over 100 volunteers. Minoru Place, for example, calculated that in 2014/2015 its volunteers provided approximately 27,750 hours, a value of \$290,000, when factored at BC.’s minimum wage of \$10.45 per hour.

Seniors are a unique population. They see their volunteer participation in fundraising as their responsibility. Many take ownership of the programs and are frugal with the use of resources, looking for ways to cover the costs of programming. A large part of all programs are run or helped enthusiastically by senior volunteers. This is a population thirsty for the opportunity to share their time, knowledge, experience, skills, and their compassion. Volunteer opportunities are eagerly embraced and are an essential aspect of all multi-purpose senior centres. Volunteering gives meaning to seniors’ lives and provides opportunities for enhanced social connections, meaningful work, increased enjoyment and self-esteem.

Space

It is clear that there is no one-size-fits-all model for best practice senior centres. For example, West Vancouver has ideal space and liberal funding and consequently runs a very rich and diverse program. However, South Granville, which is located in the basement of a large church, has learned to adapt to cramped quarters including several small windowless rooms. In spite of the handicaps of the physical space, it has many vibrant culturally relevant programs due to sensitive, dedicated staff. Nevertheless, there is a correlation between program, facility space, resources, participant needs and desires.

Of the eight centres, five (411 Seniors, Minoru Place, Silver Harbour South Granville, and West Vancouver) expressed they were considering or planning for a potential new space.

Construction on the Minoru Complex in Richmond, scheduled to complete in 2017, will include the seniors centre, an aquatic centre, fitness centre, team sport rooms, food and beverage facilities, multi-use rooms, and outdoor plazas. The four other centres are in various stages of considering, searching, or planning for a potential new space. Of the three other centres, one was currently in the process of undergoing renovations (Dunbar), one had recently completed a major redevelopment project (Kitsilano), and one had undergone an expansion eight years ago (Dogwood).

The primary reason centres were searching for new space was because of the need for more space to meet the needs of their growing clientele. Age of the facility, need for repairs, and the desire for better amenities were also factors prompting the centres to look for new space.

Client Participation

As noted in Table 1 on page 14, the centres use a variety of methods to capture client participation data, and in some cases limited data was available or numbers are under-represented due to seniors' participation in non-senior-specific programming at the same centre. Overall, the high rate of participation by older adults is encouraging.

Specific breakdowns of the age range of the clientele were not available at most centres, but it appears from data available that younger seniors (55 to 65) generally make less use of the senior centres in this study. Most senior centre users are over the age of 70, with the average age range of participation 75 to 85.

The majority of the clientele at the centres are currently women, so attempting to develop more programs that engage male clients is a challenge many of the centres are addressing.

Centres are increasingly dealing with clients who are physically frail, have disabilities, or suffer from mild cognitive impairments. In response, several of the centres have begun to develop programs to meet the needs of these clients and allow them to remain involved with the centre. In some cases these programs take almost an adult day centre role. Catering to the diverse needs of the seniors' population is a challenge to which centres are adapting.

Diverse and Changing Clientele

The changing nature of clientele was seen as a challenge to which centres are working to adapt. The senior population is a very heterogeneous group, so there is a need for a wide variety of programs to meet their needs.

For example, at Dogwood members can range in age from 50 to 100 and thus require a wide range of programs. Programs that tend to appeal to younger seniors (e.g., physical activities, wellness programs, travel) differ from those that appeal to older seniors (e.g., bingo, crafts). It was perceived that the baby boomers will likely have different needs and interests than the current population of seniors, which the centres will need to meet. Ongoing research into the needs of changing clientele will be required.

Most of the centres have developed programs specific to certain ethnic or language groups within their region.

Programs

When analyzing the programs offered by the different centres, it is important to acknowledge some key differences. For example, Dunbar and Kitsilano serve clients of all ages: these younger adult programs can provide a transition point to senior programs. South Granville and 411 Seniors are significantly smaller than the other centres, which impacts their ability to offer a wide range of programs. Both 411 Seniors and Kitsilano Neighbourhood's programs are mostly oriented around providing service and resources to seniors.

As journalist Kim Pemberton wrote recently in the *Vancouver Sun* (Feb. 14, 2016), "The (Health) Ministry ...places a strong focus on improving *community* and primary care [emphasis added]." Increasing health care costs will dictate this direction. Seniors' programs in the community play a central role in wellness promotion, including nutrition and nutritional information, fitness and age-appropriate physical activity, social engagement, and opportunities to expand their sense of purpose in life. Municipalities need to see the role seniors programs play within this continuum.

Meal programs and physical activity are the keys to maintaining good health. One of the major reasons that seniors accessed the centres in this study were meal programs. They are perhaps the most popular program offered, including nutrition education and cooking classes. They support wellness, socialization, and assists low-income seniors.

Staying physically active is another key component. Fitness is critical to preventing or delaying the onset of chronic diseases of aging, and reducing the period of disability and dependent living. Many seniors feel frail because they are frail. They have become too weak, too stiff, and too unsteady to live without fear of falling. Providing a variety of fitness programs that are well attended has an immense economic and societal benefit. It is important to note that limitations in the types of centre, size, amenities, and location have an impact on the ability of the centre to offer fitness and sport programs.

Openness to receive communication and feedback from its members, and the staff's ability to sense and verify the needs of their diverse clientele has led to many successful programs. Diverse programming is central to the success of the multipurpose senior centre.

The breadth and scope of the services provided by the centres in this study is encouraging. They cover the human needs for creativity, knowledge, vital information, and pure recreation. There is a great thirst for increased knowledge, be it foreign languages, literature, culture, or history. The liberating of the creative impulse in older adults has led to rewarding results. Providing information and referral in an increasingly technological world has empowered elders. These innovative programs far exceed the popular understanding of recreational services for elders. They represent a truly holistic approach to health promotion.

Transportation

Finally, it is important to note the central and critical role of transportation in providing access and participation to seniors programs. In general, adequate public transportation has been identified as a major obstacle to access to services and connection to community and is often a significant barrier to participation. Because this service is the most expensive to maintain, only the three largest and most developed multi-purpose senior centres currently have their own transportation services.

Conclusion

THIS REPORT PROVIDES MUNICIPAL LEADERS with a framework as to goals and objectives of municipally funded seniors' programs and to highlight the vital role they play in the lives of seniors.

Although most services that deal with health are the responsibility of the provincial government, the need to provide networks of social support systems falls under the aegis of municipalities. Municipalities fully or partially fund seniors programs in community centres, multi-purpose senior centres, neighbourhood houses, and cross cultural senior centres. It is clear that there is no one best model. The changing composition of the senior population reflects the diverse needs of a diverse clientele. Our society needs to address challenges related to the service needs of this population of seniors. We need to address the large age range spanning two generations from 60 to 100-plus years, seniors with widely varying degrees of mental and physical disabilities, ageist stereotypes and ethnic, cultural, and linguistic barriers.

Future special attention will need to examine unique needs and desires by age, ethnicity, and gender of older adults, particularly given the increasing diversity of the population, and the baby boomers who are approaching retirement. Future senior populations may look very different than the present senior population. Centre administrations must thoroughly examine what users and non-users perceive as barriers to participation, and the role that the centre could and should play in the greater community

Tomorrow's seniors may have different expectations and needs than those that have shaped the current system. People are living longer, working longer, living with chronic diseases longer. How will we attract baby boomers and "younger seniors"? How should we re-invent the image of senior centers and reposition them as community focal points? Perhaps centres similar to our neighbourhood houses and community centres, which are intergenerational, may be more attractive to the upcoming younger senior population. Will health promotion play a central play in the future? How to address the issues of age segregation/ multigenerational focus?

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A serious dialogue needs to occur between the provincial and municipal governments acknowledging their mutual responsibilities and provision of funding in a cooperative and collaborative manner.

Central to the success of a centre is the diversity and breadth of the range of programs being offered. Program developers must address the demographic diversity of its participant pool, scheduling, and socialization, while being flexible to the changing needs of the population. They must answer the basic human needs of physical well-being such as wellness programs involving fitness, nutritional supports, and health promotion. They should offer activities that: enhance creativity, whether it is painting, writing, quilting, gardening, etc.; stimulate intellectual development through lectures, book clubs, concerts, and travel; answer the need for sense of purpose by providing broad opportunities for volunteering; and offer a variety of purely popular recreational programs such as bingo, bridge, mah jong, etc. With advancing disability, they may also offer services to shut in isolated members.

Senior centres, neighbourhood houses, and community centres have a significant role to play in holistic health promotion. They offer a wide-ranging diversity of programming and services that enable seniors to continue to live independently in the community and “age in place.” Community is important.

A serious dialogue needs to occur between the provincial and municipal governments acknowledging their mutual responsibilities and provision of funding in a cooperative and collaborative manner.



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