

# arcca

architecture california  
the journal of the american institute of architects  
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Sun City Palace  
Osaka, Japan  
BAR Architects

# Design for Aging

Age, Time, and Difference

The Graying of the Workplace

At Home With Growing Old

Activism and Bridge-Building in California

Inviting Seniors Out

Looking to Europe

archop Revisited

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arcCA, the journal of the American Institute of Architects California Council, is dedicated to exploring ideas, issues, and projects relevant to the practice of architecture in California. arcCA focuses quarterly editions on professional practice, the architect in the community, the AIACC Design Awards, and works/sectors.

# arcCA

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Tim Culvahouse, FAIA, editor

In this issue of **arcCA**, we look at current research and development in design for aging. As Andrew Scharlach, professor of social welfare at UC Berkeley, points out in his introductory essay, California is in for a “silver tsunami” of aging citizens. We’re not alone. Much of the world is experiencing population aging, with studies such as those cited in Andrew Lian, Carolyn Karnovsky and Lauren Zmood’s “The Aging Workplace” indicating that, in many parts of the developed world, a quarter of the population will be older than sixty by the year 2050.

Not only does the increased proportion of seniors require a greater quantity of accommodation; it also, and far more significantly, forces this accommodation from the margins of society into the mainstream. We can no longer treat senior housing and care facilities as separate from the everyday lives of our communities, our eldest citizens out of sight to all but their immediate families and professional caregivers.

Accordingly, a constant theme in this issue is *integration*: in mixed-use developments (“Looking to Europe”), retail environments (“Inviting Seniors Out”), urban communities (“Affordable Senior Housing As an Engine for Urban Revitalization”), and elsewhere. And the needed integration is not simply among use types. It takes in services as well as buildings, social networks as well as spatial ones, innovation as well as memory.

There is nothing about the project shown on the cover that says “Old people live here.” Why should there be? It and many of the buildings featured in this issue are decidedly contemporary, not to short-change stylistically traditional buildings but to make the point that design for aging is not merely a necessity; it is an opportunity. As Joyce Polhamus notes (“Architectural Opportunities in Design for Aging”), “This is one of the only architectural product types that hasn’t evolved much in the last fifty years.” The possibilities for synthetic innovation are enormous, and our hope is to encourage imaginative, generalist architects to dive into the mix, partnering with specialist architects and other experts in medical, accessibility, and regulatory issues to design invigorating, joyful places for our later years. Because they are our later years, not someone else’s.

The focus of this issue is on concrete examples that represent existing and emerging models for building. Yet the issue of designing for aging—of being designers for aging—calls on us to consider other, maybe deeper but certainly more widely diffused questions: questions of empathy and difference, of identity and memory, of dwelling and duration.

## Age and Difference

*The Allman Brothers Band at Fillmore East* (clearly the finest concert album in the history of rock-and-roll) is one of the fond emblems of my youth. One of the boys in the dorm room across the hall from mine during my not-untraumatic sophomore year at boarding school played it constantly, and “In Memory of Elizabeth Reed” offered solace for the tribulated teenager. I was fourteen, and I’m fifty-two now, and in some ways I’ve matured. In others, not so much. But I now recognize something that I couldn’t have predicted then: just how much the fifty-two-year-old me shares the identity of the fourteen-year-old me. At that time, I could not conceive that the fifty-two year olds among my teachers could possibly have had any relation to any fourteen-year-olds who had ever lived.

Adolescence is a time for asserting one’s difference from one’s elders, but it may also represent a deeper characteristic—I would say flaw—of us humans, which is our general tendency to define ourselves by way of differences from others. (*continued on page 14*)





# Contributors



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**Susanne Stadler** is an architect with creative roots in Salzburg, Austria, where she was born and raised. Her office, Stadler Architecture, is based in Oakland. One of her long-term interests is an integrated approach to design for aging. In her research and design, she continues to explore different models of aging both in the US and Europe.



**Jimmy Stamp** is a freelance writer and designer currently enrolled in the M.E.D. program at the Yale School of Architecture. His work has appeared in numerous magazines and websites and he has been publishing the architecture blog *Life Without Buildings* [[lifewithoutbuildings.net](http://lifewithoutbuildings.net)] since 2004. Jimmy may be reached at jimmy@lifewithoutbuildings.net.



**Lauren Zmood** is a member of the Workplace Consulting team at Woods Bagot. She recently completed her Masters in Architecture with first class honors. During her studies and work, Lauren's interest in research and theory led her design projects to explore current and future social, contextual and sustainable elements. She may be reached at lauren.zmood@woodsbagot.com.au


As a licensed architect in California for 59 years and a member of the AIA continuously since 1952, I want to compliment the editor, the author, and the practitioners who contributed to 08.4, "Views from the Inside." For over 30 years, I have been a strong advocate in opposing the licensing of "interior designers" in California. My observations cannot represent all architects nor all interior designers, but, on the whole, the opinions of the interior designers quoted tend to give the impression to the public that interior designers do the "design" and that architects do the "drafting" under their supervision. Unfortunately, this impression is growing worldwide and is a serious threat to the architecture profession and to the public at large.

Interior designers are self-anointed; their education and training do not begin to compare with the requirements to be an architect, and yet they are trying to "play" architect, thereby creating a disservice, because they do not have the training nor legal protection for the public which architects do have. Their belief that there is an "inside" architecture and an "outside" architecture makes no sense in the basic concepts of modernism. Architects believe decoration should be an integral design with the project and not applied.

My observations come down to one conclusion, which is: If one wants to play architect, then go to school, get the proper training, do your internship, and pass the state licensing exam to be an architect, along with the continuing education requirement. It's not that difficult. We don't need "tiered" registration, such as "Architect-Junior Grade." Those who want to practice the vocation of interior designer should do so only under the direct guidance and supervision of an architect.

I hope our profession will be awake to prevent the licensing of interior designers. Interior designers are very dedicated, organized, well funded, and determined, as well as politically connected. If they succeed, architects will be draftsmen for them. Let's be dedicated through the AIA to keep architects from being a "lost profession."

**William Krisel, AIA-E**  
Los Angeles



By the middle of this century, the state's overall population will have grown by about 37%, but the population 65 and over will have grown by 150%; by that time, there are expected to be more Californians age 65 or older than children under the age of 18. Moreover, the fastest growing segment of the population will be persons ages 85 and over, who will have grown by a whopping 250% by mid-century.

## Design for an Aging California

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Andrew Scharlach, Ph.D.

The Golden State is beginning to show its age, graying a bit as the Baby Boomers of the 1960s begin to enter their "golden years." A state known for its "youth culture" now faces the challenge of adapting to an aging population. Already, one in every nine Californians is age 65 or older, and that will increase to one in five within the next 25 years. By the middle of this century, the state's overall population will have grown by about 37%, but the population 65 and over will have grown by 150%; by that time, there are expected to be more Californians age 65 or older than children under the age of 18. Moreover, the fastest growing segment of the population will be persons ages 85 and over, who will have grown by a whopping 250% by mid-century.

California's elderly also are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Within the next 30 years, the majority of California seniors will be Latino, African American, Asian, or Pacific Islanders, with Latino, Asian, and Pacific Island elderly growing at approximately four times the pace of White non-Hispanics.

The aging of the population is being felt especially by California's more rural cities and counties. Already, nearly one-fifth of the populations of Lake, Inyo, and Tuolumne counties are age 65 or older, and nearly one-half of the populations of Calaveras, Trinity, and Plumas counties are age 50 or older.

Yet, there is little evidence that California's built environment is prepared for this "silver tsunami." Indeed, most of California's houses, neighborhoods, and communities are ill suited for aging bodies and minds. Housing stock seems designed for Peter Pan—someone who will never grow old. Land-use policies and zoning regulations isolate older adults from the services they need. In a state where driving is iconic of independence and freedom, it is not surprising that most streets and transportation systems seem designed to promote "the safety, convenience, and comfort of motor vehicles"—as the U.S. Department of Transportation puts it—rather than assuring that everyone, especially the least mobile among us, can get where they want to go when they want and need to do so. Automobiles are essential for virtually everything—whether getting to the store, seeing a doctor, or visiting friends. "Big-box" stores and giant malls require a substantial amount of walking and negotiating passageways not designed for an older body moving at slow speeds. Seldom does one find even a bench to sit on, let alone a quiet place for friends and neighbors to gather. Even ADA accommodations are designed primarily for younger disabled adults using self-propelled wheelchairs, rather than slow-moving older persons with multiple chronic impairments.

Design for an aging California requires that we view the built environment through eyes that may be older than our own. What do most older adults want? Simply put, they want to reside in private spaces that support their physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual well-being, and they want to be able to get to public spaces that do the same.

Like others, they want the option of continuing to live in their familiar homes and apartments, rather than being forced to move simply because they are experiencing the expectable personal changes that come with age. They also want to have the option of staying in familiar neighborhoods and communities, rather than having to relocate and thereby lose the social capital that has accrued over a lifetime of social interactions and interpersonal connections.

#### **What are the characteristics of "aging-friendly" design?**

"Aging-friendly" design incorporates physical, social, and technological infrastructures to enhance older adults' ability to respond to five basic challenges of later life:

- To *continue* those activities and relationships that have previously been meaningful;
- To *compensate* for age-related disabilities that limit one's capacity for physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual fulfillment;
- To have opportunities for *connection* and meaningful interpersonal relationships;

- To make meaningful *contributions* to the well-being of others;
- To have opportunities for *challenging*, enlivening, growth-producing experiences.

In an "aging-friendly" community, services and programs exist to assure that older adults' basic health and service needs are met, housing stock and transportation infrastructure enable individuals to overcome potential barriers to independent mobility and social interaction, and there are ample opportunities for older adults to develop new sources of fulfillment, productive engagement, and social interaction.

In recent years, a movement of sorts has begun to emerge, a growing recognition that our cities and towns need to become more "aging-friendly." In California, a number of communities are developing innovative initiatives to prepare for the aging of their citizens, designed to transform local communities to be "good places to grow old," whether through carefully-designed new development, rehabilitation of existing housing stock, zoning changes designed to integrate commercial and residential land use, integrated transportation systems, or centralized planning efforts that include multiple stakeholders including senior citizens themselves. Assisting them are information and assistance from a growing number of important resources such as AARP, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the California Center for Civic Partnerships, and the Creating Aging-Friendly Communities website, [www.agingfriendly.org](http://www.agingfriendly.org).

This issue of *arcCA* is an important next step in helping to design a future for California that reflects the needs of all of us, young and old alike. ●





# Age, Difference, and Time

(continued from page 5)

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Tim Culvahouse, FAIA

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... I was chatting with a younger colleague recently about an idea I had for an online service that would help you plan an architectural tour for your vacation. He thought it interesting but said it illustrated a difference between our generations: his generation would just start out on the vacation without planning ahead. I suggested that this wasn't a generational difference, it was an age difference: when I was twenty-three, I didn't plan my itinerary, either. There's been a lot of talk lately about generational differences—what Gen Xers want out of their work life, as compared with Boomers—and we even had an issue of *arcCA* on “The ‘90s Generation,” but I'm skeptical.

We like to assign categorical differences between ourselves and others, perhaps because they appear to absolve us. It is extraordinary to me—this is a confession—how instantaneously I identify a difference between myself and the idiot who cuts me off at the intersection. Skin and hair color are among the easier differences to grasp, but any difference will do; if I can't spot a visible one, “idiot” will have

to suffice. I'm an equal opportunity bigot when it comes to distancing myself from someone who's done something I would like to think I not only *wouldn't* do, but *couldn't* do—because I'm *essentially not like* that person. And being *not like* some miscreant is simpler than being virtuous myself. It's easier to define oneself by what one is not.

“Look where you're going, *old man!* (I'm glad I'm not like you.)”

But I am like him and at the same time like the fourteen-year-old enjoying Duane Allman's guitar. I'm like the person I've been and the person I will be, more than not. I'm not some other category of person altogether, nor are they.

## Time

While it may at times be difficult to resist thinking of people as categorically different, it is at least a readily understood problem. It intersects, with heightened intensity when we design for aging, with another, much less simple problem: how to comprehend time in architecture.

In *All the King's Men*, Robert Penn Warren's narrator remarks, “Time is nothing to a hog, or to History, either.” It is something only to people. Awareness of “time past and passing and to come” is our unique burden, and it is as much a well of anxiety as of opportunity.

Buildings are among the most long-lasting things we make, and philosopher and architectural historian Karsten Harries has written compellingly of the yearning for immortality that underlies monumental architecture—perhaps all architecture. For us mortals—beings who not only die, but know we die—there is comfort in endurance.

Yet duration is fraught with difficulties. The practical ones can be overcome with better sealants. The conceptual ones are tougher. While people in general value the continuity of old buildings, we suffer the professional hazard of abstracting historic structures as references and artifacts, rather than ongoing places of life.

We seek the new, insisting that buildings appear “of their time.” But how long is “our time”? And when did it begin? How much of the newness we produce is formed of positive discoveries and beneficent syntheses, and how much is the anxious assertion of not-oldness?

Our search for the ever new may not always be our most gracious offering to people who have dwelt a long time in the already existing world. What is the best relationship between making an architecture of

the moment and understanding people who are older than us? Can we understand their moments as our moments?

What, in fact, do we mean by “dwelling”? Heidegger aside, to dwell on something means to consider it at length—for a long time; and to dwell in a place has similar implications. (Staying in a motel for the weekend is not *dwelling*.)

How does time reside in architecture? (Perhaps the greatest failure of American postmodernism was its insistence on irony, which has a far shorter effective time span than do buildings.)

How does time reside in the mind of the architect? (The thought-time of the pencil, for example, compared with that of Revit?)

In the experience of practice? (Colin St John Wilson referred to his design of the new British Library, begun in the 1960s and completed in 1997, as his “Thirty Years War.”)

Of construction? (Surely the time-sense of the mason is distinct from that of the steelworker.)

These questions offer grist for the mill, if little guidance. I hope my starting point, at least, is clear: my love of *The Allman Brothers Band at Fillmore East* is not nostalgia; it is as much a part of my current identity as is my iPhone. I am somewhere between young and old—as are we all—and there are times when the gulfs between these ages and mine seem unbridgeable. I would that architecture were more often thought of as a bridge between ages—a continuer, not a segmenter, of time. ●





# Architectural Opportunities in Design for Aging

Kenneth Caldwell Interviews Joyce Polhamus, AIA



## **Laguna Honda Hospital Replacement, San Francisco, 2009**

**Architect:** Anshen+Allen Architects and Stantec Architects,  
Laguna Honda Hospital Joint Venture Architects

**Owner/Developer:** City and County of San Francisco

**Images:** Courtesy Anshen+Allen

Unusual in housing for seniors, the remodeled and expanded Laguna Honda provides five different room types to accommodate aging-in-place. Private and semi-private bedrooms—each capable of being fitted with a small kitchenette—are clustered into “households” of 15 residents sharing a living room and a dining room. Households are grouped into “neighborhoods” of 60 residents each per floor. The renovation and replacement project includes 30 acute care beds, acute general rehabilitation, and a 750-bed skilled nursing facility. A new, modernist central esplanade links residence buildings to administrative offices and contains an aviary, cafeteria library, pool, and wellness and community center. Sustainable design strategies include high-performance windows and insulation, water-conserving air conditioning systems, and large operable windows for natural ventilation and light. More landscaping is being added to the extensive public outdoor space; ten therapeutic gardens provide opportunities for respite.

*Joyce Polhamus, AIA, LEED, is a vice president and director of SmithGroup's Senior Living Practice in San Francisco. With over twenty years of experience, she has led the architecture, planning, and design process for assisted living, skilled nursing, dementia care, wellness, and ambulatory care facilities. She is a director of the AIA's Design for Aging Knowledge Community and a member of the American Society on Aging, the Society for the Advancement of Gerontological Environments, the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA), the California Assisted Living Association, and Aging Services of California.*

**arcCA:** This area of architecture, senior living, has negative connotations for a lot of people, including architects.

**Joyce Polhamus:** It could be associated with bad memories of having to put a parent or a grandparent into a nursing home. Yet, there is incredible potential in the project type, and I want to encourage more architects to pay attention to it. It is a growing area, because our overall population is aging, and we need thoughtful architects contributing their ideas. The care providers are already focused and committed to offering a high quality of life.

**arcCA:** What is a recent example?

**Polhamus:** Florida Presbyterian Homes wants to develop a unit that is flexible enough so that residents who need memory-care services or a secure environment and those who need assisted living can be accommodated together. The idea comes from the commitment to serve more people, including couples with differing needs, and to keep people together regardless of a resident's level of need.





**Belltown Senior Apartments, Seattle, Washington, 2003**

**Architect:** Weinstein A|U Architects and Urban Designers LLC,  
Seattle, Washington

**Owner/Developer:** Senior Services of Seattle/King County,  
Seattle, Washington

**Photography:** Lara Swimmer

A few blocks from Pike Place Market in downtown Seattle, the eight-story Belltown Senior Apartments offers 25 studio and one-bedroom rental apartments for seniors earning 40 percent or less of the area median income. The emphasis is on interaction. The first three floors house Senior Services of Seattle/King County, which provides a range of social services. Meeting, multipurpose, and interview rooms occupy the street level to encourage walk-in clients and pedestrian activity, while the second and third floors house offices and a health and wellness center. Floors four through eight step back to buffer the residential floors from the condominium tower across the alley, while creating an accessible landscaped terrace at the fourth floor that includes a community garden. Common rooms on each residential floor face the street. Metal sunscreens control solar heat gain; extensive glazing lets natural light penetrate deep into office floors.

The projects illustrated here are examples of contemporary design approaches to senior living. Avoiding an institutional feel, these residences, which range from luxury to affordable, provide attractive environments that are flexible and enduring. They represent various approaches to organizing space, but all feature high-quality materials, extensive incorporation of daylight, and responsiveness and connection to their urban context.

**arcCA:** Talk about your optimism. Why have you embraced this sector of the market? Is it because you see that there's so much room for improvement?

**Polhamus:** We're on the cusp of an enormous change. This is one of the only architectural product types that hasn't evolved much in the last fifty years. The care providers/operators themselves are making their own changes. We should be partnering with them to facilitate the changes through the built environment and to create a variety of architectural styles for users. The consumer/users are typically need-driven and often have to settle for the environment the care providers have. Why can't we help by making the architectural environment one more attraction and option for the consumer resident?

The care providers have initiated a "cultural change" movement that is going back to household models and neighborhoods with "cottage-style" living, where everybody lives and dines together in groups of nine to twelve. That's not the right living model for everybody, but it has been proven effective. For many, it sparks the desire to "live" within a home, rather than being cared for in a bed.

At the beginning when this industry was starting, it was based on medical models. It was very restrictive—what you can do, what you can't do. Many in the architectural profession didn't get involved, because it was so prescribed. But it doesn't have to be. For example, there was this idea that you can't put windows at the ends of the corridors because it creates glare. But people prefer daylight to mark their journey down a hallway. If done properly, it can be a huge benefit.

**arcCA:** Can you explain the basic types of senior housing?

**Polhamus:** At one end of the needs scale, there is independent living. Seniors in this category don't need constant care and are able to enjoy recreational and social activities with other seniors, family, and friends. Then there is assisted living, in which a wide variety of programs to assist and supervise residents are paired with the activities of daily living. Memory care is often served in this setting. Skilled nursing facilities are designed for seniors who need care around the clock. Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC) combine all of the aspects I just mentioned into one mega-facility, providing all realms of care.

**arcCA:** These are all very distinct categories, though?

**Polhamus:** Yes. Code requirements are different for a skilled nursing facility as opposed to independent living. Materials in skilled nursing tend to lean toward those found in the healthcare sector. Recently, we have seen those materials advance in aesthetics and function, making it easier to blur the line between constant and independent care.

The trend has been to make the interior décor "home-like." But "home-like" is different



**Parkview Terraces, San Francisco, 2008**

**Architects:** Kwan Henmi Architecture (architect), Fougeron Architecture (consulting architect)

**Owner/Developer:** A.F. Evans and Chinatown Community Development Center

**Photography:** Rien van Rijthoven

Occupying a prominent intersection near San Francisco's Civic Center, Parkview Terraces is designed to fit into the context of new housing and office buildings while maximizing natural light. The building consists of a six-story tower on a three-story base, with large outdoor terraces providing views to the parks across the street. The north and south façades reinterpret San Francisco's traditional bay windows in a contemporary style with angled fenestration. Although units are small, floor-to-ceiling glass gives them a spacious feel. Post-tensioned concrete floor slabs jut out from the exterior at intervals of one and two stories in order to provide visual interest at low cost. Parkview Terraces provides 101 units of affordable housing for seniors—57 studios, 44 one-bedroom units.

for everyone. The real opportunity is to go beyond the décor and make the architecture characteristic of residential design by providing a variety of styles, like in our own homes, with detail and interest.

**arcCA:** Which of the facilities is seeing the most change or the potential for it?

**Polhamus:** Skilled nursing “facilities.” They shouldn't be “facilities,” but places where people who are frail and ill continue to live. The household model is really trying to address that and deinstitutionalize the skilled nursing aspect of senior living care. This is where architects can assist in bringing the most benefit.

**arcCA:** Interestingly enough, we have seen some award-winning design with subsidized independent living.

**Polhamus:** Locally, I think we have a lot of innovative architects working in the affordable multi-family housing arena, and it's not much of a stretch for them to do work for seniors, especially with independent living.

**arcCA:** And why don't more of them go beyond independent living into the other forms of senior housing?

**Polhamus:** Then you have to start thinking about a building type that can serve a wide variety of people, and you get closer to a medical model.

We tend to build four- or five-story apartment buildings for most independent living units, but people don't fit neatly in those categories. People want more choice.

I think the more-independent-living environments fall back on the models that have worked in the past, as they are often driven by financing and marketing. The banks want to know that the developer has this mix of one-bedroom units, two-bedroom units, two-bedroom units with a den. The demographics drive the product type, and focus groups influence the size and amenities. The price point's got to be this, and you've got to offer these amenities; there's basically a *pro forma*.

This is fine for senior housing and independent living for the middle-class market that goes there as a lifestyle choice. But there is still a market—and a need—for people who are looking for more services further down the line. There are limited residential options architecturally when housing is combined with services.

**arcCA:** Is this changing some?

**Polhamus:** Yes. We (SmithGroup) are working with Life Care Services on a project in Roseville.



**Saban Center for Health and Wellness, Woodland Hills, 2007**

**Architect:** SmithGroup

**Owner/Developer:** Motion Picture Television Fund

**Photography:** top, © Canfield; center and bottom, © Wakely

At its Wasserman Campus in Woodland Hills, the Motion Picture & Television Fund provides independent and assisted living and memory care to entertainment industry retirees and spouses. The Saban Center for Health and Wellness provides a variety of fitness programs and therapies to the campus's residents. Located at the main campus entrance between two assisted living buildings to encourage social mixing, the facility incorporates curving shapes reminiscent of old Hollywood movie studios, its contemporary design reflecting the architectural style of other buildings on campus. Materials such as stone, slate, and wood, as well as extensive use of natural lighting and views of the surrounding landscape, draw on the healing power of nature.

They are committed to making their development a place that people want to go to, not a place to avoid.

There is also no reason that housing for seniors can't be a visible and desirable part of the neighborhood fabric. Often, CCRC developments are like the corporate office park with the big cafeteria. This is one of the opportunities for architects. They can shift the consciousness about the design of these buildings into creating places that generate interest from surrounding communities, rather than looking like modified hospital/hotels.

**arcCA:** Where would you want to go?

**Polhamus:** Personally? I want to move into an upscale, modern high-rise building downtown. I want expanded concierge services in the middle of the city that would support a range of my everyday living needs. That's different from the options offered out there right now. But I suspect I am not alone.

The consumer base is growing, and they want all kinds of options and styles. We are working with the Sisters of Carmelite on an assisted living project. Because of the recession, we were able to hire a talented architect experienced in high-end hospitality and residential design. He has brought a new energy to our design team and another dimension and style. That's an example of the change I am talking about.

**arcCA:** The recent downturn may mean troubles ahead. Some people won't have hundreds of thousands of dollars to buy into retirement communities or be able to pay over five thousand dollars a month to live in assisted living. How is the market going to accommodate this?

**Polhamus:** For some time, there has been a range of product types in the senior-living industry. As I mentioned, some of the best projects have been in affordable senior housing. It's the middle class where we might see some changes in the way services are delivered. For example, people may live in apartments and select from a menu of services. Part of the problem is that people are paying for services they don't need. Why can't we separate the housing from the operations and bring more services to the client, *a la carte*? Let's just offer services as people need them.

**arcCA:** Where are we going to find these models?

**Polhamus:** We may find them in social service providers like San Francisco-based On Lok ([www.onlok.org](http://www.onlok.org)). Seniors are offered all kinds of services, adult daycare or medical, but they continue to live independently in their own apartments and are picked up in vans. In some cases, there might be a medically trained person onsite to help people with medications while they remain in their own homes. They use services as they need them.





Sun City Palace Takarazuka, Osaka, Japan, 2006

Architect: BAR Architects

Owner/Developer: Half Century More

Photography: ©Steve Hall/Hedrich Blessing

(See cover photo, also.)

Nestled into a hillside and reached by a private lane that passes through mature trees, Sun City Palace's 285 independent living units are organized around five landscaped courtyards of different sizes, proportions, and designs, which help with wayfinding and provide the public spaces with garden views. Residential units are arranged along single-loaded corridors; all have southeast or southwest views to maximize daylight, and half have views overlooking Osaka. Interiors blend east and west, with warm wood, light-colored stone, woven raffia, and decorative glass, as well as non-institutional furnishings and fixtures. Amenities include a wellness and rehabilitation center, a wide range of dining spaces, men's and women's traditional Japanese baths, massage rooms, and an indoor swimming pool. A large multipurpose hall hosts performances and subdivides for meetings and banquets.

**arcCA:** So you're suggesting that the economic downturn will push us to find new ways of delivering services?

**Polhamus:** Or adapt existing methods for new audiences.

**arcCA:** What about style? There has been a prevalence of Cape Cod, it seems.

**Polhamus:** To think that there is one style that older people want is condescending. When we designed different phases of Stark Villa for the Motion Picture Television Fund in Southern California, they wanted something contemporary. In West Los Angeles, we also brought a different, contemporary style to a skilled nursing facility for the Veterans Health Administration. There's room to bring different styles in. Consumers want variety.

**arcCA:** What about the smaller complexes? What's the architectural challenge there?

**Polhamus:** These complexes cluster houses with everything in a single story and a big, spread-out footprint. They end up looking like a giant ranch house, and they're not architecturally interesting. But they could be. They don't have to look like suburban houses.

**arcCA:** So you have more flexibility with large institutions?

**Polhamus:** Sometimes, yes. The Veterans Health Administration, for example, puts a lot of resources into research. They are focused on state-of-the-art care. Their image isn't one of an oversized house. And yet they are sensitive to making the campus not feel like an institution.

**arcCA:** And we're not just talking about being medically state-of-the-art. We're talking about the living patterns and social patterns?

**Polhamus:** The connections to the outdoors, the sequencing of spaces, the social interaction. In the future there is going to be a lot more dialogue among the operators, because these baby boomers are going to continue to be a demanding and vocal demographic. ●





# Looking to Europe

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Dorit Fromm, AIA

California is not alone in needing more housing alternatives for aging. Europe, with nine of the ten fastest aging countries (Japan is tenth), is projected to have a staggering, one-in-three citizens over the age of 65 by 2050. California, while not aging at the European pace, expects one-in-five over age 65 by 2050.

This profound change has implications not only for housing and services, but also for society as a whole, particularly in urban settings. New alternatives need to address generational issues, affordability, and allocation of diminishing resources.

The senior housing market has produced a variety of options, yet they are rarely coordinated, are geared to the high-end of the market, and often require moving from one type of housing to another and away from neighborhoods where deep roots have grown. Growing old at home can be isolating—and difficult in housing not adapted for disabilities. Retirement villages, with broad, green lawns and sports and entertainment offerings, do not often address the needs of the later, frailer years. Continuing Care Retirement Communities provide a continuum of care, but at a cost the majority of Californians cannot afford.

European housing experiments provide new models that address affordability, resident satisfaction, and community. Their premise is that housing need not separate the elderly from society. Instead, the focus is on strengthening communities by supporting aging in place, fostering connections to the wider community, and engaging residents in informal networks for friendship and mutual help.

## Neighborhood Centers

One of the more popular ideas is to untie housing from services. No need to have them under the same roof; services can come to the home or be available at a nearby center. Swedish municipalities provide home help that includes accident prevention assistance, such as changing a hard-to-

Leo Polak House, Amsterdam, Claus en Kaan. Photography by Woonzorg. Forget contextual fit. The Leo Polak House makes a big, colorful statement at the end of a residential street, announcing its role as the area's care center and neighborhood hot spot.



reach light bulb. Swedish government studies show the cost of staying at home to be half that of institutional housing.

In Germany, where 20% of the population is over 65, multi-generational neighborhood centers—“mehrgenerationenhäuser”—combine some of the services of a senior center, health clinic, pre-school, and youth group. In the Friedrichstadt neighborhood of East Berlin, the non-profit Miteinander, renting the ground floor of a housing development, offers exercise and sports, an annual health week with guest speakers and medical testing, monthly breakfast health talks, and even a club for those who are “90 years active” and older. Anyone in the neighborhood can go for advice, drop off clothes to get washed or small household items to be fixed for a nominal fee, sign up for intergenerational excursions, and receive health information.

In the U.S., aging residents of Boston’s Beacon Hill, reluctant to leave the neighborhood, formed a nonprofit organization similar to a hotel’s concierge service. For a yearly fee, members call out for the same variety of services, from nursing care to transportation, that high-cost life care facilities deliver. Other cities are following suit; Avenidas in Palo Alto is based on the Beacon Hill Village model.

#### Intergenerational living

Vienna is known for its social housing for working class families. Less well known are recent experiments that mix housing types, ownership and rentals, and ages. Franziska

Ullmann designed the master plan for a new district in west Vienna, located next to 1970s-era high rises housing 10,000 people, who, Ullmann explains, “drive into large garages and take an elevator to their apartment without walking outdoors, so that their lives are lived inside.” She conceived the new district as the opposite—creating a community, integrating shopping, housing, and work.

Im der Wiesen Generation Housing, designed by Ullmann and Peter Ebner and owned by a private developer, embodies many of these concepts and serves as a neighborhood focal point. On the ground level are shops and an assisted living office. Aging residents and neighbors can contract for services, from bi-weekly to daily and even hourly help, and obtain health information and exercise classes. The building contains medical offices and a variety of housing types: thirty handicapped-accessible units for seniors with low windows, so a resident confined to bed can look out; twelve mini-lofts for young people, in which fold-away beds tuck under kitchen platforms; six family maisonettes; and thirty-nine apartments.

In the U.S., the Taube Koret Campus for Jewish Life, in Palo Alto, includes senior housing and care for a variety of incomes and multi family housing, as well as early childhood education, teen programs, fitness center, cultural arts facility, offices, and a restaurant. Designed by Steinberg Architects, it will open in late 2009.

#### Senior Cohousing

Senior cohousing typically begins with a core

group of potential residents deciding among themselves on a community vision—the type of housing, activities, and shared common spaces. They agree to give each other a hand, providing a ride or bringing dinner for an ill resident; help is voluntary and informal, not a replacement for nursing or long-term care.

The model grew out of the intergenerational cohousing movement that began in northern Europe, with developments appearing in the early 1970s. Cohousing typically has 15 to 40 households, each with a complete unit, including kitchen. Often the units are 5 to 15% smaller than average, with cost savings going toward common amenities—dining hall, meeting space, library, laundry, workshop, guest-rooms, offices.

Senior cohousing provides both the privacy of your own home and supportive and caring neighbors. Most communities organize a variety of activities, from gardening to several-day outings. In Fardknappen, Sweden, residents belong to cooking groups and provide an evening meal five days a week, while in other developments residents meet once a week for coffee and cake. Of the nearly 100 cohousing communities in the U.S., only three are exclusively for seniors, although more are in development.

#### Urban villages

Multi-generational housing “villages” are growing in popularity in Northern European countries. They differ from cohousing in sharing some common amenities with the outside



opposite page: In der Wiesen, Vienna, Franziska Ullmann and Peter Ebner. Photography by Marherita Spiluttini and Ullmann-Ebner. Shops and a provider of assisted care services are located on the ground floor, above are medical offices and a mix of housing.

this page: Taube Koret Campus for Jewish Life, Palo Alto. Image courtesy of Steinberg Architects. The guiding design principles were supporting a rich mix of uses and encouraging interaction between generations. Diversity of housing, a community and cultural center, and eight “outdoor rooms” for gathering create a multi-generational village.

community, and they often have a larger number of residents; similarities include a variety of common spaces and resident involvement in development, design, and day-to-day management.

The bright orange façade and winding windows of Vienna’s Miss Sargfabrik housing announce an innovative development that mixes a variety of households, live-work spaces and common facilities. Miss is the second phase of a project started in the 1980s when a group came together because of their dissatisfaction with the market’s expensive single-family housing. They created a nonprofit, and their first building, Sargfabrik, located on the site of Austria’s largest coffin factory, opened with 73 units (for 110 adults and over 40 kids and teens), kindergarten, library, café, common gardens and playground, meeting hall and lecture space, and sauna and swimming pool. Many of these amenities are available to the community for a fee. The second phase opened in 2000 with 39 units (3 for the disabled), 5 home offices, and one shared unit for up to 8 young people. Common facilities include a kitchen, library, clubroom, and the architect’s (BKK-3) office.

In southern Germany, the St. Anna Foundation created an intergenerational model that combines housing with common facilities that are, in part, a neighborhood center. The residential mix is two-thirds 60 years of age and older, one-third below 60. Ground-floor common space is overseen by a social worker; this “activator” helps residents organize activities

from child-care to a catered lunch, provides advice and health information, organizes resident meetings, and is well versed in mediation. The surrounding community can participate in events and can rent common spaces for a small fee. When the first development opened in 1994, critics felt that professionals, not neighbors, should be looking after older, frailer residents. To their surprise, the scheme worked well. Since then, 25 similar developments, ranging from 13 to 80 units, have been built. With a total of 800 units and well over a decade’s track record, they have proven their success.

#### Nursing Homes / Assisted Care

Of the many structures conceived to house the elderly, surely nursing homes have received the fewest accolades. A 2003 AARP survey of Americans over 50 with disabilities found that just 1% considered a nursing home a good choice should they need more care. A number of alternatives have appeared.

In Amsterdam, architects Claus en Kaan have renovated an old-style nursing home, with four to six beds per room, into part of an integrated “care center,” adding extensive new construction. The Leo Polak House integrates nursing and health care with apartments for independent seniors, those needing assisted care, the physically disabled, and those with dementia, plus a care hotel and hospice. The ground floor is open to both resident and neighborhood use and includes a gym, physical therapy, computer and library room, restaur-

ant, small market, and beauty shop. Although a large institution, smaller, six-person households for those with dementia provide more personal care.

The small household model is proliferating as an alternative to nursing homes. In Bremen, Germany, twenty-one different “villages” for the aging can be found across the city. One such village, Haus Hutching, includes a variety of housing and services, plus a pre-school and teen after-school support. A building for dementia patients houses four small households, each with twelve residents. The households have a large eating/dining/parlor room, where staff cooks meals in an open kitchen and residents eat together. Each resident has a private bedroom and bath.

In the U.S., the Green House concept, developed by Dr. Bill Thomas, who earlier had advocated the “Eden Alternative” of greening and enlivening nursing homes, has a similar, resident-centered, home-like environment for ten residents. A strong emphasis is placed on fitting into the neighborhood context, so that there is no difference in appearance between a Green House and surrounding neighborhood homes.

#### The Social Fabric

Taking care of the elderly is about creating a meaningful day-to-day life—not just for the many of us who will require more care, but as part of a larger social fabric. These are some of the promising models that explore such integration. ●





public / private



private workspace



repository of home



significant entry door



- 1 Porch Area
- 2 Significant Entry Door
- 3 Foyer: Opportunities for kitchen, wardrobe / closet
- 4 Privacy within the room: Opportunities for closet, work area, guest sofa, dressing area
- 5 Bath: Toilet and Shower
- 6 Opportunities for a wash stand
- 7 Living Room and Sleeping Room
- 8 Wainscot with deep ledge: Opportunities for flexible wiring and decorating
- 9 French Door: Railing turns the area inside the room into a balcony

Carrying home with you - an example

# At Home With Growing Old:

Carrying Home With You

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Susanne Stadler

My landlady was in her early eighties when, as an architecture student, I rented her downstairs in-law unit. It was perfect synergy. We became close friends and came to look after each other. She participated in my parties, and I listened to her stories about the Maybecks, the Boyntons, and the Lincoln Brigade. My friendship with her inspired my Master of Architecture thesis, “At Home With Growing Old,” and continues to inspire my research and professional work.

Growing old at home is the preferred solution for many who consider anything else as “giving up.” Yet moving at old age, too often dreaded and depressing, has the potential to become a source of renewal by what I will call “carrying home with you.”

Moving to a place where we feel helpless, need care, and have little or no opportunity for personal expression can easily induce a feeling of being homeless, because home not only shelters us but also supports our sense of self and expresses our identity to others. How can we support the dignity of self where institutional concerns battle with the desire for a more personal and humanistic setting?

## **The Purposeful Home**

There is a beauty in the order of a place that has a specific purpose: a craftsman’s workshop, a farmhouse kitchen, even a laundry. This beauty is derived not from the drama of design but from serving a purpose and the order it instills. A home for growing old becomes such a workshop. Its purpose is to give us the opportunity to stay engaged and useful, to enable us to remain part of our community, to give us confidence when our abilities and strengths decline, to let the world come to us, to be able to retreat when tired, and to be recognized as who we are. Many senior residences or assisted living facilities aspire in their mission statement to do these things, but nevertheless one often feels a lack of purpose. All too often, a pretended order based on the look of things supplants a purposeful order generated by actual use.

When we are old, daily routines gain in importance. For many people, the continuing responsibility for taking care of a home is a meaningful source of independence. It is a matter of pride and is closely connected to taking care of oneself.

A purposeful home can derive its order from connectivity to a community. This can be an actual physical connectivity or a spiritual one. My mother's senior residence in Salzburg, Austria, is in the middle of town. On the first floor is one of the most popular Salzburg Cafés. Residents have a card key that allows them direct access from their lobby into the café, where they can linger, eat cake, and watch activity. As another example, the Quakers have developed senior residences through their non-profit organization, the Kendal Corporation. These homes, in their physical and social design, express the values of their spiritual principles and give another layer of meaning to their community.

Ultimately, though, it is our private space, our room, our apartment and its relation to the building as a whole that has to fulfill the purpose of being the essence of our home.

#### **Down Sizing Home—The Room as the Repository of Home**

The sense of home comes from a sense of permanence and territoriality supported by the personalization of space and the richness of details and materials. I am currently working on a residential hospice for the Zen Hospice Project in San Francisco. Here, the sense of

home is primary, and the challenge is to slip the functions of care giving into the folds of the existing details. Yet in most cases the priorities are reversed: the "design" mandate is to serve the efficiency of care giving and maintenance, rather than the spirit of home.

It is at this time of old age, when change is so physically and mentally part of our daily lives, that we need home most. Our body undergoes changes that affect our spatial experience and independence. We spend more time at home. Our privacy is compromised with the need for assistance in daily living. Often, for financial reasons and ease of maintenance, the size of our home gets much smaller. Home, to retain its power, has to fit like a glove.

This fit can be achieved by designing unique spaces for different needs (a costly endeavor) or by designing uniform spaces with a degree of customization in mind. This personalization of space can embrace such simple decisions as how much kitchen is really needed and the selection of furniture from the old home that will fit the new one. Rooms have to be designed with opportunities in mind. Standard features, such as the bathroom, need a fresh look. The width of an entry area, the placement of a door, all become meaningful in a small space.

When we are old, daily routines gain in importance. For many people, the continuing responsibility for taking care of a home is a meaningful source of independence. It is a matter of pride and is closely connected to taking care of oneself. Design can support independence in performing the tasks of home keeping, such as meal preparation, cleaning, laundry, and personal hygiene. Discovering the right height and organization of built-in storage for easy retrieval of memories or items of daily life can become an important design challenge. A chair rail deep enough to hold mementos and photographs allows for redecorating without help from somebody else. The sink can become a beautiful piece of furniture in the room, accessible without opening a door, giving square footage from the bathroom back to the room.

Spatial strategies need support from material intelligence. Materials should be used true to their characteristics and mindful of what they signify. Where a material is used is important. A material such as plastic laminate, used in the right place for the right reason, is appropriate. Used with a wood print, it speaks of the priority of maintenance only. Investing in home means using materials that fit the purpose of home. A beautiful wood door, for





Mixed Use Project:  
Senior Living, Sports  
Arena, and Shops, St.  
Jacob's Park, Basel,  
Switzerland, Architects:  
Herzog and deMeuron.  
Photo ©Euro 2008 SA.

example, says permanence and gives value to whatever is behind it.

The identity of home in these situations arises not from the envelope of the building, but from the definitions of public and private realms and their thresholds. In assisted living situations, this threshold is lower. Spending time with my mother, I became aware that she has lost the ability to invite people to visit, and thus some of her privacy. Friends drop in when they can make time, not when she calls them. Care givers also have a daily routine that does not always coincide with her schedule. Our sense of territory should be indulged to counterbalance the control we lose when we need help. The more strongly somebody can claim a room and the stronger the articulation of the threshold between the outside of the room, the corridor, and the inside, the more it signals privacy and invites a different attitude from visitors. The careful articulation of the entry door can make the corridor seem like an outside space, a space “abroad.”

#### At Home and Abroad

When we grow old the world must come to us. There should be opportunity for us to go “abroad” into the world without much ado. Many American cities make this difficult, since

they often lack density. Yet there are solutions. My favorite one is an ideal building typology that I presented in my thesis, a new mixed-use, civic building type in which libraries, schools, and theatres are combined with housing for the elderly. Imagine the expanded world of the elderly person who has direct access to the San Francisco Public Library, whose kitchen window looks out onto the stacks? The civic component is important. Inhabitants can share in the pride, the identity attached to a civic building. One might have said earlier in life, in a metaphorical way, “I live at the library.” Now, one can say it literally.

There are precedents. At the beginning of the period we call modernism, hospitals, such as the Psychiatric Hospital in Vienna, by Otto Wagner, were designed as buildings of civic pride. And there are contemporary examples, such as St. Jacob's Park in Basel, by Herzog and deMeuron, combining such functions as a sports arena, shops, and a residence for the elderly. Others mix functions without placing them inside a single building, like the Quaker residence developed by The Kendal Corporation, which has established a close and collegial relationship with nearby Dartmouth University. There is certainly now the potential for an assisted living home to become a standard,

civic feature of a neighborhood, as important as the local school or library in keeping people connected across generations.

#### Home, a Collaboration

Design for functional and emotional needs as we grow old necessitates knowledge and attitudes that go beyond the expertise we typically expect from architects. There is a need for collaboration with other disciplines that serve the same population. An interdisciplinary network of professionals—care giver, psychiatrist, gerontologist, occupational therapist, architect, and lighting designer—can come together to provide for more individualized, nonstandard solutions to our housing needs as we age.

Design solutions for “carrying home with you” are detail oriented, not too complicated to realize, and often unglamorous, but essential to the true spirit of domesticity that defines “home.” They deserve our attention, time, and funds. ●





# Affordable Senior Housing as an Engine for Urban Revitalization

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Michael Malinowski, AIA

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Housing is essential to urban revitalization. This is particularly true for development in “challenge areas”—areas where projects are designed to challenge the *status quo* and lead to new patterns of use and livability. In recent years, senior affordable housing has played an increasing role in strategies for city shaping. Looking at some of the factors that contribute to success of affordable senior urban projects points to new opportunities for architects, planners, and developers interested in the rebirth of our cities.

## Growing Demand

Considering the increasing population of 55+ people and the low rents in affordable senior developments, it’s no wonder that Sharon Christen of Mercy Housing Inc., which specializes in affordable housing, including urban housing developments, reports, “We never have problems finding tenants for our units.”

Bolstering the incentive of below market rents is a demand for walkable urban living. Christopher Leinberger, University of Michigan professor and partner of Arcadia Land Company, points out that people today have about a 50/50 preference split between what he terms the only two types of development: “drivable suburban” and “walkable urban.” With 85% of new buildings in the last 45 years having been of the drivable suburban type, there is a pent-up demand for new walkable urban housing. With transit access and nearby services, shopping, and amenities, transportation drops from a typical 25% of annual household expense down to 9% or less. With a significant number of 55+ people already living in urban settings seeking more affordable accommodations, while being comfortable and familiar with both the positives and negatives of city living, the size of the potential market becomes apparent.

## Parkview Terraces, San Francisco, 2008

**Architects:** Kwan Henmi and Fougeron Architecture

**Developer:** AF Evans

**Public Partners:** Chinatown Community Development Center,  
San Francisco Redevelopment Agency

**Photographer:** Rien Van Rijthoven

The ground floor includes community spaces, counseling, health services, and a hair salon in a site adjacent to a public park. Forty-seven units are wheelchair accessible.



### **Globe Mills, Sacramento, 2008**

**Architect:** Applied Architecture Inc.

**Developer:** GMA Investors (Cyrus Youssefi and Dr. Skip Rosenbloom)

**Public Partners:** City of Sacramento, Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, HUD brownfield grant program, Alkali Flat Project Area Tax Increment funds, 9% tax credits

**Photographer:** Cathy Kelly

Once an icon of thriving industry, the hundred year old Globe Mill site deteriorated so significantly after it closed in the late 1960s that it became an icon of a different sort as the city's most blighted property. Located in Alkali Flat (Sacramento's oldest neighborhood) and adjacent to the downtown core, it stood for forty years abandoned and ravaged by decay, vandals, and finally a series of fires that led to calls for demolition. This "smart growth TOD" saved an important historic industrial complex through adaptive reuse—including integration of the six-story concrete silos into the completed construction. It mixes income and ages as well as use, with new construction senior units, historic adaptive reuse lofts, and neighborhood-oriented commercial. Additional public benefits included brownfield toxic clean up, installation of storm sewer service to the block, fire protection access to adjacent industrial uses, and street improvements. Since the start of this project, adjacent former industrial sites of similar size have begun development, inspired in some measure by the success of the thriving residential community at the Globe Mills.

### **Urban Activation**

People engaged in shopping, walking, dining, and recreating *activate* urban areas. Activated areas feel safer, encouraging more activation—a positive cycle leading toward thriving and desirable neighborhoods. High density housing for active seniors can help jumpstart urban activation—but only with design approaches that engage their surrounding neighborhood.

There are many examples of high-density urban senior housing that has not been an agent in urban change. Consider, for example, Union Towers in Los Angeles. This 200-unit, 15 story building, designed by Maxwell Starkman & Associates 33 years ago, functions ably, but it has not acted to transform its surroundings. It is inwardly oriented and monolithic in character both visually and in relationship to its setting. While these characteristics make security simpler, disconnection from the neighborhood tends to lead to an island of isolated safety. Mercy Housing's Christen points out that this project approach was typical in part because lenders, including HUD, had very narrow views of how projects should "look," and mixing uses, incomes, or ages didn't fit the "standard formulas and governing regulations."

### **Safety is still priority one for successful urban senior housing**

The tools used today by architects to create secure places to live for seniors extend beyond a secure project perimeter. Consideration of the exterior design character with "active glass" that provides eyes on the street is a starting point. Mixing of uses, ages, and income levels contributes to a diversity and energy that help high density projects engage their surroundings and challenge the status quo for the betterment of the community as a whole. Detailed review of sight lines for lobby staff, lighting, video monitoring that extends beyond the project boundary, and even planning for travel routes to destinations such as shopping are part of the program for security.

### **Parking and density**

The density required by land values, transportation, and infrastructure in urban environments is always in conflict with the huge amount of space needed for private cars. With 400 square feet needed for every parked car, the costs add up quickly, whether it's cheap-to-build, land consuming surface parking or expensive, structured parking. Active senior developments can be success-





**Edith Witt Senior Community, San Francisco, Opening 2010**

**Architect:** Kaplan McLaughlin Diaz Architects with associate architect Kodama Diseno Architects

**Developer:** Mercy Housing California

**Public Partners:** Catholic Charities Catholic Youth Organization, South of Market Health Center, Redevelopment Agency of the City and County of San Francisco, HUD, City of San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing, Federal Home Loan Bank of SF, Catholic Healthcare West

This 11-story development is part of a larger project that includes a 12-story affordable family development. On-site amenities include a small health clinic, ground floor neighborhood commercial, and a youth and family center. The senior units are targeted at very low-income seniors, using HUD funds to subsidize rents to no more than 30% of income. 27 units are targeted for homeless seniors.



**Talmadge Senior Village, San Diego, 2006**

**Architect:** The Davis Group

**Developer:** Southern California Housing Development Corporation and the San Diego Community Housing Corporation (Ken-Tal Senior Partners)

**Public Partners:** City of San Diego Housing Commission and Redevelopment Agency, Hope through Housing Foundation

**Photo:** Courtesy National Community Renaissance

Located on a transit corridor, this smart growth project replaced a problematic old motel. The exterior design was based on the character of the existing neighborhood, which was actively involved in the project's planning.

ful with very low parking ratios compared to other types of housing—beginning at 0.5 per unit and going down to near zero. Minimal parking coupled with the typically compact, one bedroom plans foster density that is consistent with smart growth, even in the lower massing that can help integrate with established neighborhood patterns.

**“Penciling” the deal.**

Starting the process of “urban activation” can be a “chicken and egg” dilemma—the amenities that attract people can't survive without the customers to support them, yet the customers won't commit to living in a place without the amenities, conveniences, and most importantly a feeling of safety. Government subsidies are the traditional approach to breaking this logjam—reducing the risk for developers, which often include non-profits. Since the low rents of affordable projects will not support normal, cash flow-based *pro formas*, all these developments use a variety of subsidies, often including a grab bag of fund sources. In fact, the establishment of robust funding mechanisms like Affordable Housing Tax Credits may mean that affordable housing is the project type that may be the most feasible path for financing development in challenge areas.

**Financing quirks**

Tax Credits leverage a future relief from federal taxes into current cash. The credits are typically sold by specialized syndicators to large corporations. Current economic conditions, in which fewer corporations are making profits, have led to a reduction in the value of tax credits on the open market. At their peak, a dollar of tax credits could command up to 1.05 (accounting magic—a dollar sold for more than a dollar). At present, the value of a dollar of tax relief through sold credits is about 70 cents.

In California there are two “flavors” of tax credits, both administered by the State, the most desirable being “9% credits,” which are awarded based on a complex system of points that projects must win. Due to intense competition, almost all tax credit project submittals score “maximum base points,” so awards are effectively based on “tie breaker” scores. Sustainability features, serving special needs, tenant amenities, the development team, and local cash in the deal, all affect point scores. Developers who are successful tend to be specialists and include both large



**Armstrong Senior Housing, San Francisco, Opening 2010**

**Architect:** David Baker Architects

**Developer:** Bridge Housing

**Public Partners:** Redevelopment Agency of the City and County of San Francisco, HUD, City of San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing,

Part of a larger development that includes an affordable family townhouse development, this TOD includes on-site, neighborhood-oriented retail. The exterior design was influenced by the colors and patterns of the historically African-American neighborhood. The units, which are above the ground level shops, library, and community center, frame an interior courtyard. A car-share pod is planned, along with facilities dedicated to bicyclists, including storage, showers, and lockers.

non-profits like Bridge Housing and Mercy Housing, as well as for-profit firms. To make the projects work, local government is invariably a partner—usually through housing/redevelopment agencies. Many times there are other public and public benefit entities involved, as well. Low cost is not the primary consideration, since tax credits are based on project cost; up to a point, investing more in quality can help a proposal be competitive. The process administered by the State through the Tax Credit Allocation Committee could push the envelope much further in months and years ahead, as there is great potential to encourage better design by granting points based on design quality. Since projects are committed to a 55 year or longer term of affordability, and cash flow returns are minimal, some teams help mitigate the risks of these ventures by taking on multiple roles—property management and even the contractor role, for example.

#### **Maximizing the value of the public's investment**

In the hands of an urban planner, every building project has the potential to be a tool in city shaping. With many urban problems complex—often having roots going back decades—public investment in urban development ideally will try to get the biggest bang for the public's bucks. It is not uncommon to have urban affordable senior projects go far beyond their housing mandate to address such disparate city needs as historic preservation, infrastructure upgrades, public services like libraries or fire protection improvement, and brownfield toxic site clean up. Revitalization of urban areas is inherently green and sustainable, as it makes use of infrastructure that was created decades ago.

#### **Opportunities for architects**

Affordable housing development sometimes begins in traditional ways—an RFP issued by a Redevelopment Agency for a parcel it controls, for example. In other cases, affordable housing projects arise from grass roots efforts launched at the community level. The motive force might be a church with surplus property, a toxic abandoned industrial site, or even an individual architect looking past urban blight and crystallizing a vision that might act as the nucleus for assembling a development team. ●



**City Heights Square, San Diego, 2007**

**Architect:** Dominy + Associates

**Developer:** City Heights Square, L.P. which consists of Chelsea Services Corporation and Senior Community Services of San Diego

**Public Partners:** City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency and the San Diego Revitalization Corporation

This development includes senior affordable housing for ages 62 and over, offices, retail, a pocket park and a medical clinic. It is part of a wider ranging, \$71 million revitalization effort in City Heights. The project covers a city block footprint of 2.7 acres. Support services for tenants include one meal a day, counseling, abuse intervention and legal programs. Tax credits were part of the financing.



**Mission Creek Senior Community, San Francisco, 2006**

**Architect:** HKIT Architects

**Consulting Architect:** Santos Prescott and Associates

**Developer:** Mercy Housing California.

**Public Partners:** San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, San Francisco Housing Authority, San Francisco Department of Public Health, San Francisco Branch Library Improvement Program, Catholic Healthcare West, State of California Department of Housing and Community Development (through Proposition 46), HUD

Mission Creek incorporates ground floor, neighborhood-oriented retail and a branch of the San Francisco Public Library. It targets very low income and frail seniors (ages 62 and older), and rents are limited to 30% of income.







# Inviting Seniors Out

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Avery Taylor Moore, AIA

We have not done a great job in America designing for the “senior surge” that has arrived as the baby boomers of the 1940s and ‘50s retire. Far too often, we expect our older population to enjoy segregated housing communities and dedicated senior centers. If they want to be “in the mix,” choices are hard to come by. If they live in the suburbs, a car is typically a requirement, and many seniors choose not to drive or cannot. For those who do, parking structures with complex circulation patterns are a barrier. In the inner city, dark nighttime streets, fear of crime, and an emphasis on speed all can be impediments to partaking fully in the urban lifestyle.

There are models, however, that show how we can design both for access and for the choice to connect or not.

## **Retail Models**

While retail architecture is not often looked to for inspiration, it is one setting where the age gap has been effectively closed. Shopping centers provide spaces that work together to make an entertaining and accessible destination. With many places to sit, wide walkways, good interior and exterior lighting, and visible security staff, seniors feel safe, comfortable, and part of the action. Since these are strolling environments, there is no urgency to get out of the way. Food, restrooms, and a movie are nearby.

As a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we have removed many barriers to access and institutionalized such physical improvements as sidewalk curb cuts, designated parking spaces, and accessible service counters, seating, and toilet rooms.

Retail management has gone further. Many large shopping centers provide a “mall walkers” program, an early-morning tradition in which seniors (and others) can meet, exercise in all seasons, grab coffee or a snack, and catch up on events. While not a direct source of income to many tenants, these programs benefit extended families and are a source of community goodwill.





Left, Almaden Branch Library and Community Center, San Jose, Field Paoli. Photography by David Wakely.

Right, Almaden Branch Library and Community Center, art classroom. Photography by Mark Schatz.

Far right, Carmel Plaza, Carmel-by-the-Sea, Field Paoli. Photography by David Wakely.

In geographic areas with extended family populations, malls often serve as a gathering place, bringing generations together to share food and news. For example, the population in the vicinity of Otay Ranch Town Center in Chula Vista is about one-third Latino, with many families. To support traditional family gatherings, restaurants and shops cluster around large, outdoor, landscaped courtyards that feature fountains, fireplaces, low seating walls, benches, and chairs.

The similarity to the historic urban plaza is obvious; the difference is that you have to drive to the mall. To solve parking difficulties, some malls offer valet service. Nearby bus and transit routes are essential, as are well-marked, accessible pedestrian connections. The recent trend to locate a mixture of family and senior housing next to retail centers has the potential to integrate seniors more fully.

### Community Centers

In more and more communities, the idea of constructing a designated senior center is falling by the wayside—and not just in response to the difficulty of passing bonds and obtaining public funding for single-use facilities. The city of Emeryville is planning a Center for Community Life to address the city's lack of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. A joint project of the city and the Emeryville Unified School

District, the ambitious program will house the city's K-12 schools on one site, across the street from the city's preschool and near retail shops. The design includes a range of services for all ages. Those that particularly appeal to seniors include an adult school, a dance/fitness studio, an arts studio, a music studio, a multipurpose/performance space, an outdoor amphitheater, a gymnasium, and tennis courts. While parking is limited, the facility will be located along San Pablo Avenue, a major bus transit corridor. The city's master plan calls for housing over retail on nearby sites, which would be ideal for seniors as well as the general population.

Some senior-only centers are expanding to include more generations. In Fullerton, the city plans to combine the Boys and Girls Club with the existing Senior Multi-Service Center. More often, traditional community centers are taking steps to ensure that seniors feel welcome, respected, and comfortable in multiple settings. The Almaden Library and Community Center in San Jose, which opened in 2006, combines full adult and children's libraries with a senior meal program, a tiny tots program, a gymnasium, and fitness facilities. Seniors occupy lobby tables and chairs, enjoying the noise and commotion of people coming in and out of the front door, the gym, and the library entrance. Those seeking a quieter environment meet in a dedicated senior

lounge on the second floor, where a commercial kitchen is used for cooking classes.

### Branch Libraries

Predicted to have a sharp reduction in users with the growth of computer technology, libraries have surprised many of us with their surge in use. Taking a cue from newer bookstores, they have added new media, small cafés, self-checkout, a bestseller section, and comfortable chairs with views to the landscape.

But, like retail centers, they have gone further, creating special teen sections, where banquettes or oversized chairs allow three or four kids to cram together with their laptops. Separate homework rooms and tech learning rooms have doors that shut. For seniors, the benefits are many: they can learn how to use a computer for free in a supportive, dignified, and quiet setting—behind a closed door. They can check out the latest DVDs. In the adult section, they can doze in comfort among like-minded adults in front of a fireplace. They can watch the activities of their neighborhood in an environment that is accessible, well-lit, and accommodating.

### Urban Design

Mobility is crucial for the aging population. Pedestrian-oriented environments with few stairs or grade changes, close to public transit,





and with a mix of uses in close proximity, are ideal. Dense urban locations are great places for seniors, provided that security is in place and skateboarders are not. Low-cost dining choices, pocket parks, and shops that serve basic needs—drugstores, cleaners, and markets—make a livable mix. The value of a range of activities to offer visiting grandchildren cannot be overestimated.

Early streetcar suburbs worked for seniors. The Piedmont Avenue neighborhood of Oakland is a model. It grew as a suburb in the early 1900s along the Key Route electric streetcar line, and, although the streetcar is gone, buses still serve the area, which bears the imprint of its transit heritage. The street is pedestrian-friendly with a wide variety of uses, including a movie theater, restaurants, neighborhood-serving retail, and small plazas. For many, Kaiser Permanente's nearby Oakland medical center is a valuable resource. Starting in the 1950s, a number of high-rise senior housing developments were built here. Without the neighborhood amenities, such high-rises could be bleak; with them, and with the connections to families, they feel more like home.

The Pearl District of Portland, Oregon, is a neighborhood well suited for all age groups. The municipality opened a light rail line through the former industrial district in 2001, helping stimulate redevelopment. Housing

options range from rowhouses to rehabbed industrial warehouses to infill high-rises. Removing a concrete viaduct gave the area greater cohesiveness, and a network of open spaces, including Jamison Square and Tanner Springs Park, appeals to multiple generations.

Historic precedents are obvious. Consider the rich variety of small open spaces in Barrio Gotica in Barcelona, for example, where the community sorts itself out by age groups—older people occupying the few tables, the young lounging on the ground under a shade structure or straddling a long, low wall.

#### College Towns and Campuses

College towns also hold appeal for seniors, because they often offer high-quality medical institutions, well landscaped walking environments, good public transit, and a vibrant community of young people. University-linked retirement communities on or near campuses are on the increase, built by private developers, academic institutions, or partnerships between the two. In most cases, residents have access to university amenities, such as the ability to attend classes and cultural and athletic events and to use libraries and recreational and dining facilities. Universities benefit by attracting potential donors with good memories of their college years. Some of these new residents serve as student mentors and

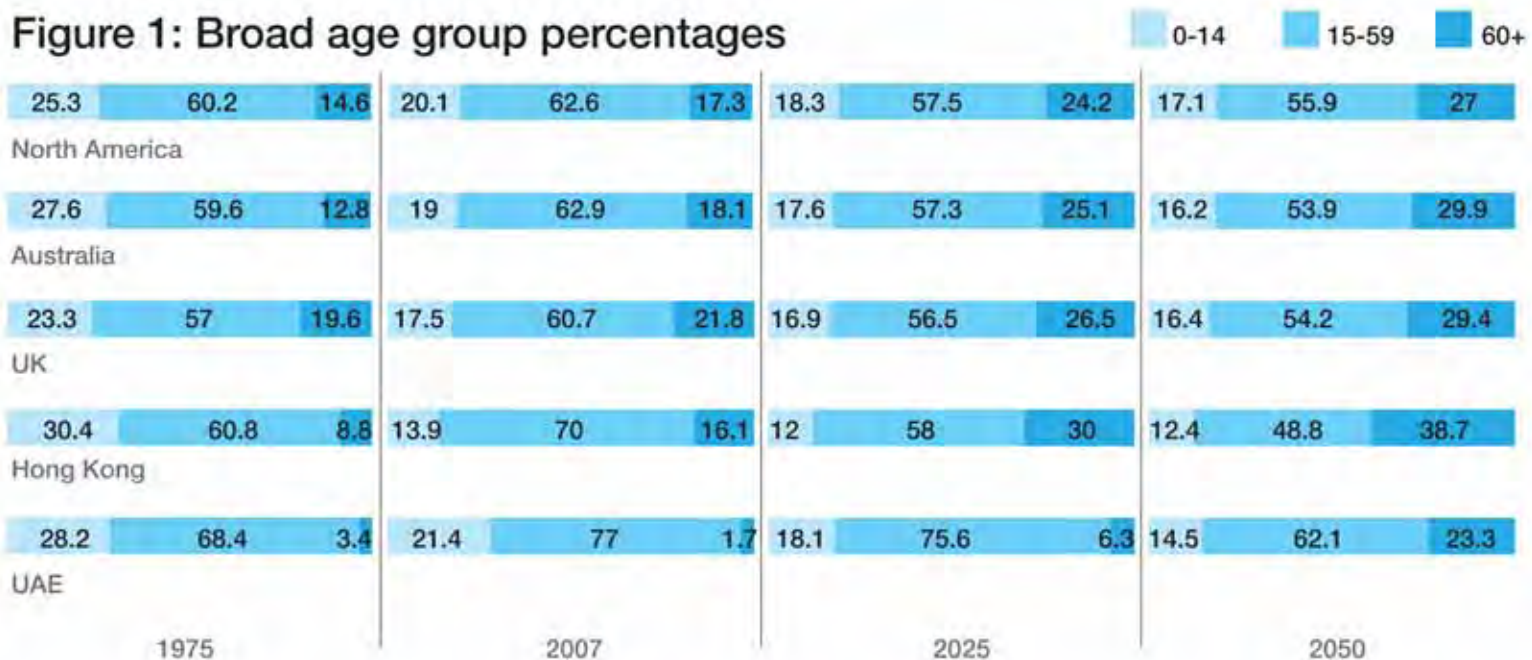
campus volunteers.

At least fifty university-linked retirement communities operate in the United States, at institutions such as UC Davis, University of Michigan, Penn State, and University of Florida. The University of Southern California is considering a retirement community as part of a mixed-use development intended to include housing for staff. San Francisco State University recently purchased adjacent housing towers and apartments that it is making available to alumni, with easy access to the nearby Stonestown Mall, the West Portal neighborhood, and a major streetcar line.

#### Places to Connect

All these settings illustrate that contemporary architecture and urban design need to provide opportunities for all ages to connect and feel like they belong. On the same day, seniors may opt for segregated spaces and then choose to be in the mix, quietly observing or actively participating in community life. What makes the broad concept of community possible is this choice to connect or not. Our job is to find ways to make different kinds of connection a viable option for everybody. ●

# Figure 1: Broad age group percentages



# The Graying of the Workplace

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Andrew Lian, Carolyn Karnovsky and  
Lauren Zmood

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*This article is adapted with permission from a longer white paper of the same title prepared by the authors at Woods Bagot, which is developing a suite of tools to evaluate workplace design and flexibility for older workers and to assess how well the physical environment supports and inspires a multi-generational cross section of workers.*

Two major changes are set to alter the workplace as we know it and challenge organizations and designers in the process. First, our population is aging, and people will be staying in the workforce until much later in life. Second, new styles of work foster different modes of exchange between different generations.

Jeremy Myerson, Director of the Helen Hamlyn Research Centre (HHRC) at the Royal College of Art in London, describes how the contemporary workplace is increasingly the setting for new styles of work. He reports seeing a shifting emphasis from knowledge gathering toward knowledge management.

Furthermore, “knowledge capital” is an asset increasingly carried by the individual, not the institution. The exchanges between workers that contribute to the organization’s sense of intellectual capital will be characterized by greater sharing across generations. The challenge for organizations that seek to attract and retain workers in the competitive twenty-first century job market will be to re-think the kinds of work experiences that effectively foster knowledge sharing among an increasingly multi-generational workforce. In order to support the intellectual exchange among different generations, workplaces will need to be responsive to a much wider spectrum of values, needs, and abilities and to be inclusive for workers of all ages.

## **The rise of the over 60s**

A fall in fertility rates, increased life expectancy, and a surge of post Second World War baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) are just some of the factors contributing to our aging population. The United Nations 2007 report, *World Population Aging*, highlights how population aging will affect North America, Australia, United Kingdom, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates.

Figure 1 shows the percentage breakdown of broad age groups predicted for 2025 and 2050 in the five regions specified.

## **Skill shortfall**

The dramatic aging of our population (see sidebar) will impact our economy, as businesses will



Figure 2: Percentage of the population in 60+ age group

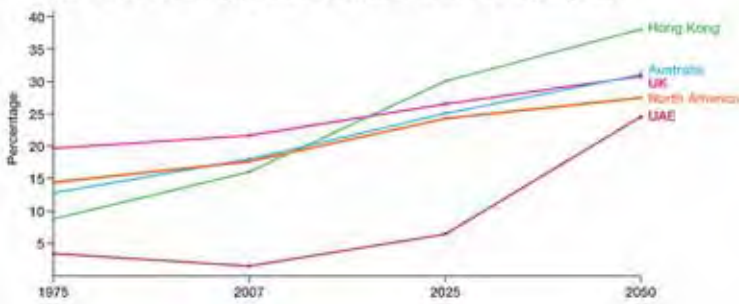


Figure 2 compares the percentage of people aged 60 and over specifically. The data in Figure 2 shows that in 2007 the UK had the highest proportion of people in the 60+ age bracket (21.8%), followed closely by Australia, North America, and Hong Kong with 18.1%, 17.3%, and 16.1% respectively. The UAE had a significantly lower percentage at only 1.7%.

Between 2007 and 2025, all five regions will experience a significant growth in this demographic, with Hong Kong showing a sharp rise in the number of over-60s during this period. By 2050, Hong Kong will have the highest proportion of people in the 60+ age group (38.7%), followed by Australia, the UK, North America, and UAE. The region with the highest rate of growth during this period will be the UAE, as the older demographic increases from 1.7% in 2007 to 23.3% by 2050.

be forced to operate below capacity if they do not act strategically. Some industries—including healthcare, engineering, public services, and government—will be particularly affected, as they tend to have a large proportion of workers aged 50 and over.

So what are some solutions to ease the pressure of a labor shortage? A 2006 article published in *The Economist*, titled “How To Manage an Aging Workforce,” suggests solutions such as moving production offshore, utilizing cheap labor from other countries, relaxing immigration laws, and using technology to increase productivity. An alternative is to utilize the abundance of older workers.

Despite approaching retirement, research suggests that the majority of older workers would rather remain in the workforce. Boomers are set to re-invent retirement and are likely to cycle between periods of work and leisure well beyond the age of 65. Older workers are now realizing that they won’t get the comfortable retirement lifestyle they planned for. Higher life expectancy is increasing the potential length of retirement, and if retirees want to spend their golden years in the way they planned, financial imperatives will push them back to work. Financial pressures aside, many employees want to stay in the workforce longer for the mental stimulation it offers, as well as to stay active and productive in society.

So, if employers need more skilled workers and older workers want to stay in the workforce, what’s the problem? A number of issues stand in the way of older workers being hired and/or retained.

#### Attitudes at work

Labor markets generally don’t work well for older workers; attitudes toward older employees can be negative, and recent age discrimination laws (particularly in Europe and the US), while making it harder for employers to dismiss older workers, can also make it harder for them to be hired in the first place. In addition, governments need to revise pension schemes and raise the age that people can receive entitlements to encourage them to retire later.

Employer attitudes will have to change if they want to retain workers—and knowledge capital. Perceptions that older workers are less productive, adaptable, creative, and more costly to manage are largely false. In fact, evidence suggests that older employees are better knowledge workers, give longer and more reliable service, offer a greater depth of skills and experience, and are less likely to take time off work due to illness, accidents, or injuries than their younger counterparts.

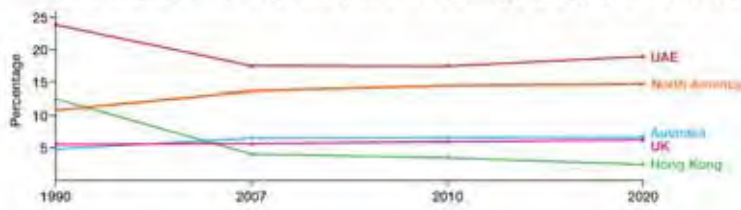
#### What older workers want

In 2005, an Australian Bureau of Statistics

survey of workers aged 45–54 found that 90% thought that part-time and flexible work conditions would encourage them to stay in the workforce. One hundred per cent of people surveyed would like to work 2–3 days per week or work by assignment, such as three months full-time followed by a break. Their reasons for wanting flexibility in work hours include less stress, more time for personal activities (including caring for grandchildren and travel), and the opportunity to work on tasks or projects that best utilize their skills and knowledge.

In 2006, recruitment company Hudson published a research paper, “The Evolving Workplace: The Seven Key Drivers Of Middle-Aged Workers,” which identifies the workplace motivations and aspirations affecting older workers’ participation in Australia and New Zealand. The survey of 1135 workers aged 40–70 years found that if offered more flexible and attractive work conditions only around 1% would choose to retire. Forty-seven per cent would be prepared to work full-time, 21% would work part-time and a further 20% would choose to stay employed on a contract or consulting basis. The key drivers affecting this choice include commuting time to work per day, pay conditions, a friendly work environment, feeling challenged at work, recognition, flexible working hours, and the ability to work from home.

Figure 3: Labour force participation in 65+ age group (DESA, 2007)



As Figure 3 shows, the labor force participation of the over-65s in the UAE and North America is significantly higher than in Australia, the UK, and Hong Kong. Labor force participation rates are predicted to largely remain stable in all regions through 2020.

### Designing the multi-generational workplace

With the combined forces of an aging population, changes in retirement trends, and a push to retain knowledge and expertise, there is no doubt that older workers will stay in the workplace longer, increasing the age difference of people working in the same environment to as much as 60 years. The problem with contemporary workplaces is they too often cater to the tastes and needs of Generation X and Y and are ill equipped to meet the needs of a multi-generational workforce. As Jeremy Myerson describes in Woods Bagot's publication *Public #4: 21st Century Guide to Life* (2008), "All that glass and steel, all those hard surfaces and glaring overhead lighting grids and precarious office stools ... The modern workplace adds up to an acoustic, visual, and physical nightmare for an aging workforce."

So, how will designers respond to the needs of an aging workforce? Researchers at the Helen Hamlyn Research Centre (HHRC) have been investigating ways to design inclusive workplaces, appealing to the widest range of ages and abilities. Under the guidance of Myerson, a research program of industry-funded studies into design for older workers, entitled "OfficeAge," explores the ergonomic, psychological, and physiological needs of aging knowledge workers, as well as their motivations and ambitions for life beyond work, and

considers the needs and hopes of older workers within the context of current trends in work technologies and workplace structures.

The World Health Organization's "Study of Aging and Working Capacity" (1993) found that changes in motor and visual systems associated with aging will affect working needs. For example, older workers appear to be more sensitive to heat, cold, noise, and light changes. The studies undertaken by the HHRC have begun to identify ways in which the workplace can respond to these changes. Through these and other findings, mature-aged workers are calling for lighting and acoustics that are more comfortable, furniture and equipment that is adjustable and has better ergonomic features, and technology that is "softer" or more intuitive. Older workers are concerned with health and want access to organic and tactile environments, green spaces and natural light, as well as environments that actively monitor health and encourage healthier work habits. They want greater control over where and how they work, with access to comfortable and varied settings for both private and collaborative work.

If designers can respond to these needs, workplaces will not only be easier and more enjoyable to use for older workers, but for people of all ages. Everyone will benefit from increased levels of comfort, flexibility, and usability.

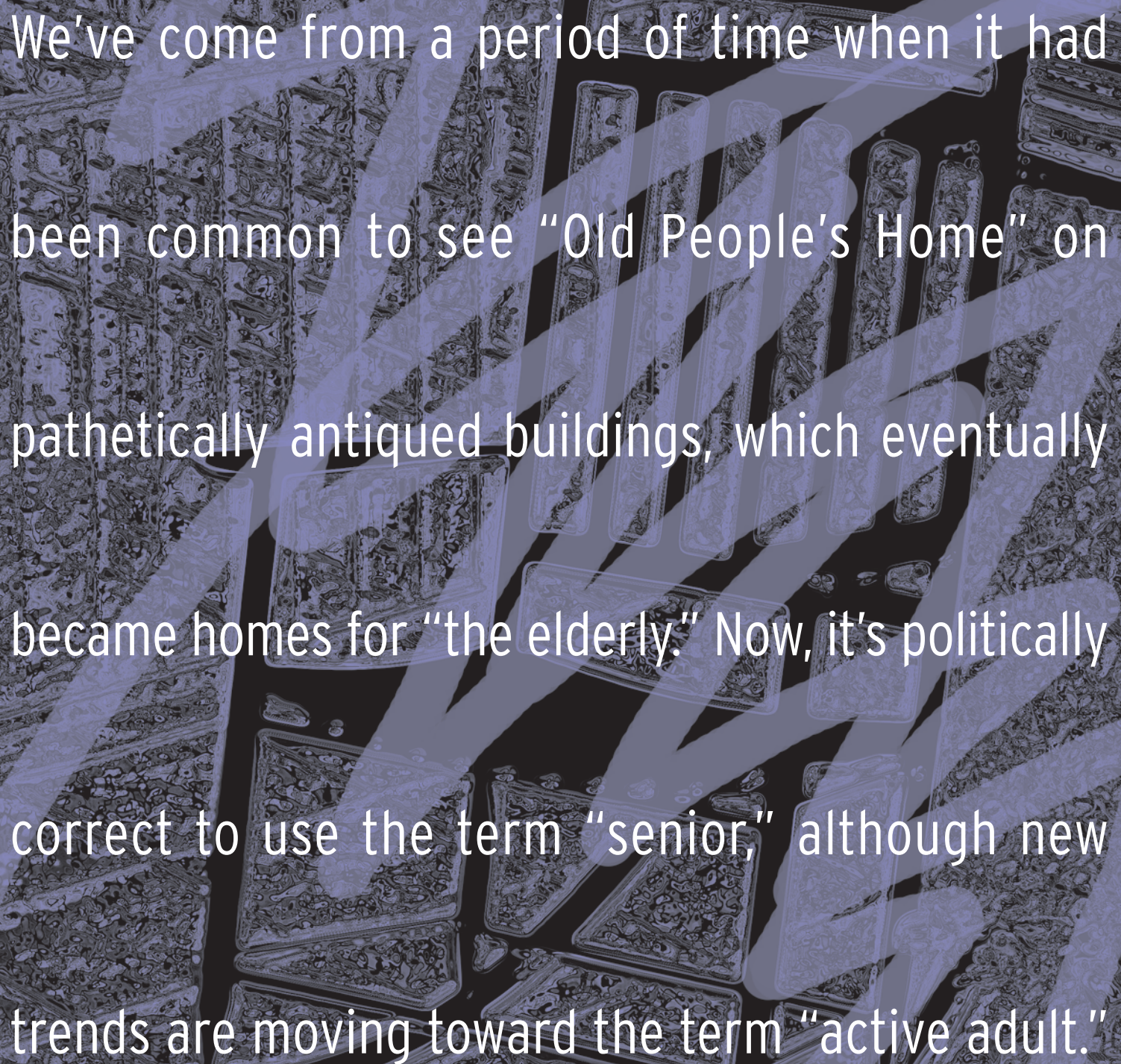
### Concluding thoughts

There is no doubt that the workplace is graying. Just as environmental sustainability is at the forefront of workplace design today, socially responsible workplaces that consider the needs and abilities of a multi-generational workforce will lead the way in the workplace designs of tomorrow.

While research into how the physicality of workplaces will need to respond to an aging workforce is still in its infancy, designers need to make this issue part of their dialogue and start to consider how the future workplace might look, as well as what tools they might need to help them design for a multi-generational workplace.

If workplaces can be designed that cater to a wide range of needs, abilities, and values, work environments will not only be more comfortable and enjoyable for everyone to use, but will encourage our most experienced and knowledgeable workers to stay and "play" a little longer. ●





We've come from a period of time when it had been common to see "Old People's Home" on pathetically antiquated buildings, which eventually became homes for "the elderly." Now, it's politically correct to use the term "senior," although new trends are moving toward the term "active adult."



# Activism & Bridge-Building in California

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Tom Brutting, AIA

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Last week, I attended a rock concert given by the Moody Blues. Looking around the room, I noticed that most of the audience was grey haired or bald. The enthusiasm for the music was evident, but it was also clear that the crowd swayed a little more slowly and with a bit less agility than one would expect at such an event. Baby boomers are aging, and they have become seniors! Yet they still perceive themselves as existing in the world when the Moody Blues first started forty years ago.

Throughout the United States, and in particular California, the average age is rising. It has been stated that in the next couple of decades the City of San Francisco will be inhabited primarily by seniors. Demographics are changing, as are needs and expectations.

A little over a year and a half ago, a Design for Aging Committee was started at AIA San Francisco. It exists under the umbrella of the national AIA Design for Aging Knowledge Community as a component group. Gauging interest, we found that a substantial number of people are indeed interested in aging in place and related design issues. We enjoy the participation not only of architects, but also of interior designers, landscape architects, providers of senior communities, contractors, students, and even the School of Gerontology at San Francisco State University. The discussions are lively, and the interaction among the different disciplines creates a beneficial dialogue and knowledge base, all in the interest of better design and living for seniors.

As the group has grown and become more active, AIA East Bay has become involved and is assisting in programs, announcements, and the sharing of knowledge. The group is now known as the Northern California Regional Design for Aging Committee.

The Committee has focused on topics such as different models for senior living, the recent “Greenhouse” movement, new technologies, and visiting existing senior communities.

The dialogue continues as broader-based groups look at issues, regulatory codes, and culture change. As an example, the Care Delivery and Design Improvement Committee (CDDIC) meets quarterly in Sacramento. Comprised of architects and providers, it also includes members

Sacrifice isn't generally in the vocabulary. Living longer and staying healthier, while probably working later in life, are becoming more mainstream. Traditional retirement is becoming a past concept.

from the State of California regulatory agency, OSHPD, and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). It is also attended by more established groups such as the California Association of Health Facilities (CAHF) and Aging Services of California (ASOC). At each meeting, discussion takes place around topics of current concern regarding health care and senior living. The bridge building occurs when CDDIC reports on the activities of the Northern California Regional Design for Aging Committee, and vice versa. This dialogue is important, as we are all learning from experience, building our collective knowledge base, and looking at ways to make communities and infrastructure better for seniors.

Other organizations, such as the California Assisted Living Association (CALA), look specifically at the assisted living level of care. Like ASOC, it holds regional conferences with seminars and information sessions directly related to senior living and care providing issues.

One can easily see that momentum is building, and certainly the well-coordinated groups in existence create an avenue for activism and change. We are learning each and every day about improved, supportive, and better

living as we grow to be an older society. These groups are looking seriously at legislation and making inroads for change on a scale never before seen in the realm of senior living. It's no longer a matter of warehousing in a traditional "nursing home" setting.

#### **So, why all the hoopla about culture change?**

Demographics are changing. Baby Boomers will not ever think of themselves as seniors. As at the Moody Blues concert, they will live an active life, as long as health permits and as though they are still much younger. They are not as concerned about the things that worried previous generations, and they are a generation raised on financial assets and instant gratification. Sacrifice isn't generally in the vocabulary. Living longer and staying healthier, while probably working later in life, are becoming more mainstream. Traditional retirement is becoming a past concept.

The way we serve this generation's needs and expectations, and those to come, will result in culture change. Options and being able to customize the individual living experience will be far more important than simple security and care.

There are also aspects of change regarding codes and licensing that require some all-around activism. OSHPD, as the State regulatory agency for health care, acute care, and skilled nursing facilities, is welcoming the dialogue and willing to make changes. Currently, the codes are being examined, and it's the dialogue that is moving change forward. The bridge building of information, facts, and challenges is helping to mold more practical ways of approaching the real situations faced by senior communities around the state. It is hoped that the Office of the State Fire Marshal will come on board in the dialogue, as much is influenced by their directives. Yet, overall, the coming to the table is real, and people are serious about making a difference for the better.

Some unique things come about that only recently are being addressed by the building codes. As an example, dementia/Alzheimer care has some specific conditions that usually don't occur in typical building situations: one wouldn't want a fully operable window where a resident might escape and wander off or jump and be injured, yet the codes generally require a means of access and egress of that sort. It's a contradiction within "life safety." There are

ways around this, and usually it can be handled through a cooperative understanding of the means and methods of escape and protection.

Universal Design also plays an integral part in the aging process. Instead of specific modifications for a senior's situation, Universal Design allows one to function in a space at any age and with supposedly any handicap. It is fully accessible in the broadest sense, and creates an environment where, ideally, one can easily and comfortably age in place. Not always practical in every situation, it still is a way of thinking and directing design without limitations. It also fosters creativity. Activism will infuse more of that thinking into our building practices and codes.

California appears to be at the forefront of developing and being in dialogue about aging issues. Members of the Flower Power generation are now seniors. The culture is still alive; it's just that the bodies and abilities have changed.

Fortunately, the dialogue continues on a broader scale as national and international groups work closely together to foster the sharing of knowledge and information. The AIA National Design for Aging Knowledge

Community was noted earlier. ASOC also falls under a larger national group known as the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA). They are active in advocacy and communication on a broader scale, as well as fostering technology improvements. Of course AARP, the American Association of Retired Persons, has been around for decades. The big secret, however, is that most Baby Boomers don't want to be associated with this association. That's for "old people," and they aren't old, or so they think! Its prime value has been the discounts offered to those of a certain age.

We've come from a period of time when it had been common to see "Old People's Home" on pathetically antiqued buildings, which eventually became homes for "the elderly." Now, it's politically correct to use the term "senior," although new trends are moving toward the term "active adult." It's forever changing, and always evolving, just like us, just like our bodies. The rocking chair is being replaced by exercise equipment.

I recently attended a party with a number of biotech researchers. There was some excitement in the discussion about the very near

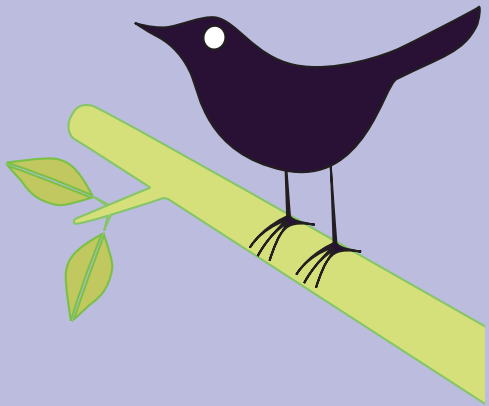
possibility of people living to be 150 years old. One even ventured to speculate that a day may come when life expectancy could reach 1,000! My head was spinning at that point. I just couldn't imagine a group of "active adults"—or whatever they would be called—at a Moody Blues concert.

Nonetheless, let's keep it realistic, continue the dialogue, bridge build, and certainly interject some positive activism for change in the way we live as we grow older. It's getting better each and every day. ●

#### On-line Resources for Design for Aging

1. Aging Services of California, [www.aging.org](http://www.aging.org)
2. AIA Design for Aging Knowledge Community, [www.aia.org/practicing/groups/kc/AIAS075684](http://www.aia.org/practicing/groups/kc/AIAS075684)
3. American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, [www.aahsa.org](http://www.aahsa.org)
4. American Association of Retired Persons, Housing & Mobility webpage, [www.aarp.org/family/housing/](http://www.aarp.org/family/housing/)
5. California Assisted Living Association, [www.caassistedliving.org](http://www.caassistedliving.org)
6. Mather Life Ways, [www.matherlifeways.com](http://www.matherlifeways.com)
7. University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Institute on Aging and Environment, [www.uwm.edu/Dept/IAE/](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/IAE/)

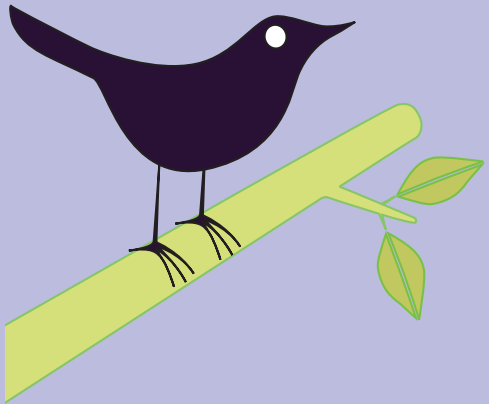




# Blog

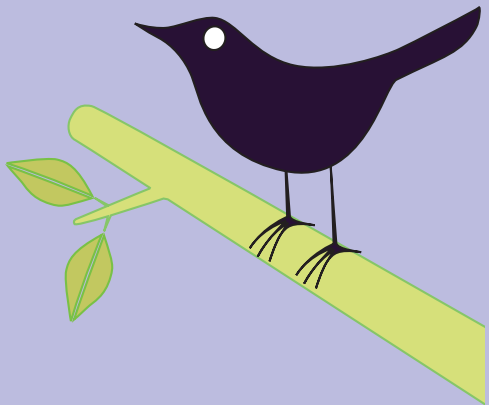
is in the details:

**Jimmy Stamp**



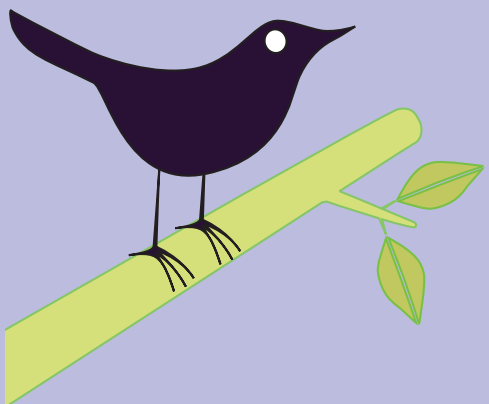
Of late, a lot of people have asked me about the quickly-growing web service, twitter. If you're wondering what the hell "twitter" is, you're not alone. It is, according to its founders, "a real-time short messaging service that works over multiple networks and devices" that allows users to "follow the sources most relevant to them and access information as it happens—from breaking world news to updates from friends." Think of twitter as "micro-blogging," to use a popular neologism.

Twitter users "follow" other users with whom they share interests, everyone sharing live-streaming, 140-character "tweets" that ostensibly answer the service's opening query, "What are you doing?" The answers range from, "Tuna sandwich for lunch. Again." to providing breaking news and insightful observations. But don't write off this new tool because of its limitless potential for mundanity or its cutesy parlance and adorable iconography. Twitter is what you make of it. It can be useless, but it can also be a fantastic way to keep a dialogue open with friends, peers, and clients.



While it's always tempting to embrace new technologies for their marketing potential, the strength of twitter is its power as a communication medium. Imagine it as collection of asynchronous, time-delay conversations—the kind of conversations Ground Control might have with Major Tom. I've found twitter to be a terrific place to exchange ideas (and jokes) with architects whose work I enjoy, such as British architect Sam Jacob (@anothersam) and fellow architecture bloggers like Geoff Manaugh (@bldgblog). Twitter can be a place to develop and build on one another's thoughts—an architectural hive-mind—or a way to build relationships with like-minded folk willing to share a few seconds of their attention each day.

Of course, most architecture magazines have their own twitter streams as well. A quick search will reveal many—their followers can get up-to-the minute news about competitions or newly announced projects. There's even a twitter stream broadcasting industry related layoffs (@archlayoff). How's that for a sign of the times?



Versatility is a key element of twitter. Although it exists independently at twitter.com, it can also be integrated into your company's website. A lot of firms haven't updated their sites for years—an increasingly glaring faux pas these days and an inconvenience to potential clients or employees. Why not integrate twitter into your website as a quick and easy method of providing live updates about new projects or photos of construction progress? You might even open up a dialogue with other architects and consultants, or attract the attention of publications looking for exciting new projects.

So give twitter a chance. Although it might at first seem like a massive waste of time, treat it as ambient information and pay it as much attention as you like. Don't like how someone else uses it? Simply unfollow. twitter's potential is limited only by your ingenuity and a 140 character limit.

Jimmy Stamp can be contacted on twitter as @LifeSansBldgs. ●

David Meckel, FAIA

## From Mark Twain...

Age is an issue of mind over matter.

If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.

[www.quotegarden.com](http://www.quotegarden.com)

## Number of Americans 65 and older

1900	3.1 million
1940	16.6
1980	25.5
2010	40.2
2020	54.8
2030	72.1

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

## Household income of 65+ year-olds (2007)

\$0 - 10,000	3.3%
\$10,000 - 14,999	4.1%
\$15,000 - 24,999	15.6%
\$25,000 - 34,999	17.5%
\$35,000 - 49,999	8.2%
\$75,000 and over	23.9%

[www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov)

## About half of the 37.9 million Americans aged 65 and older live in 9 states (2007)

California	4.0 million
Florida	3.1
New York	2.5
Texas	2.4
Pennsylvania	1.9
Illinois	1.2
Ohio	1.2
Michigan	1.2
New Jersey	1.2

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

## Life expectancy for those reaching age 65

Women	20.3 more years
Men	17.4

[www.agingstats.gov](http://www.agingstats.gov)

## Average annual health care costs for Medicare enrollees (2004)

85 and over	\$22,000
75 - 84	\$14,000
65 - 74	\$9,000

[www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov)

## Health care expenses for those 65 and older (2004)

35%	Physician/Outpatient hospital
25%	Inpatient hospital
15%	Prescription drugs
14%	Long-term care facility
8%	Other
3%	Home health care

[www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov)

## Average annual rates for care facilities in the U.S.

Assisted living	\$36,372/year
Assisted living Alzheimer's Care	\$51,204/year
Semi-private nursing room	\$68,985/year
Private nursing room	\$77,380/year

2006 Met Life Market Survey

## Percentage of Americans 65 and over who reside in nursing homes

Less than 5% (most choose to age in place)

[www.aginginplaceinitiative.org](http://www.aginginplaceinitiative.org)

## Highest educational level of those age 65+ (2007)

20%	Bachelor's degree or more
72%	High school graduate

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

## Healthy, active older adults perceive themselves to be 75 to 80 percent of their chronological age.

Aging Services of California

[www.aging.org](http://www.aging.org)

## Social Security benefits constitute 90% or more of total income for 1/3 of Americans over 65. (2003)

Social Security Administration

[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

Founded in 1958 for people 50 and older, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has over 40 million members and publishes the world's largest circulation magazine.

[www.aarpmagazine.org](http://www.aarpmagazine.org)

## From the Associated Press Stylebook for terminology about aging

Preferred Terms: Boomer(s), Elder(s), Middle-age(d), Older, Senior(s)

Most Disliked Terms: Baby boomer(s), Elderly, Senior citizen(s)

[www.asaging.org](http://www.asaging.org)

OXO tools, the groundbreaking trans-generational products, set a new standard when they were introduced almost 30 years ago.

15 - Number of designs when introduced in 1990

500 - Number of designs available in 2009

[www.oxo.com](http://www.oxo.com)

Emeritus members of the AIA California Council 1198 (average age 78)

[www.aiacc.org](http://www.aiacc.org)

Percentage of Americans age 65+ who get their news online

35%

<http://blogs.zdnet.com/ITFacts/?p=14067>

Percentage of gamers age 55 and older

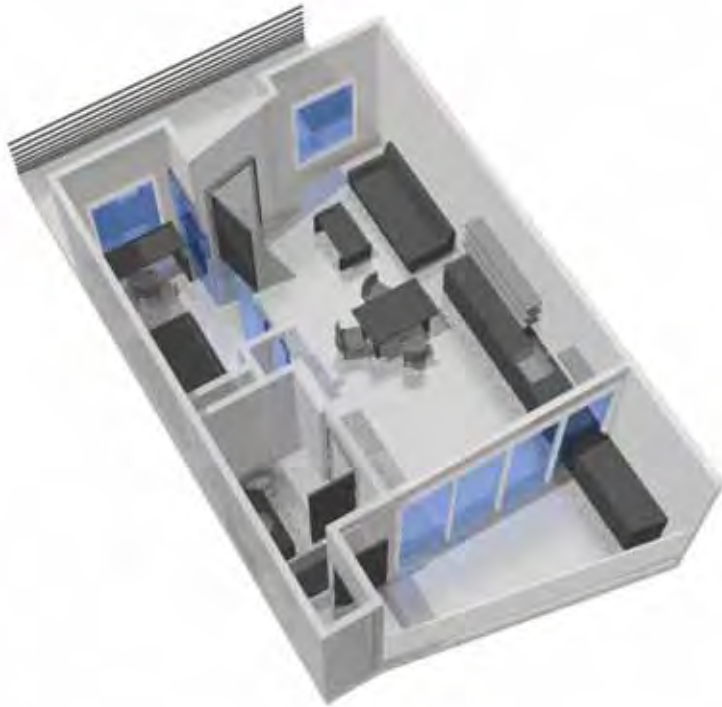
25%

Entertainment Software Association ([www.theesa.com](http://www.theesa.com))

From Henry Ford ...

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty.

[www.quotegarden.com](http://www.quotegarden.com)



## Small Space: Large Place

Facing the challenges of affordable housing and severely impacted by homelessness, Fresno's urban core is in need of creative solutions. Rising to the challenge, a group of young visionaries have set out to design, develop, and demonstrate how architecture and anthropology can respond to these issues.

The team, which includes architects, anthropologists, developers, and interior designers, has tasked itself with responding to the question, *"What is the minimum amount of space required for a successful dwelling?"* The evolving solution is a space roughly the size of a traditional living room that includes all of the spaces necessary for happy, healthy, and efficient living. It is aimed at supporting a population who desire to move out of homelessness, and it can also serve those seeking affordable housing: the working class, single professionals, students, and the single elderly.

Spearheaded by Kiel Famellos-Schmidt, Shaunt Yemenjian, Assoc. AIA, Michael Pinheiro, and Dr. Hank Delcore, an installation of the project opened at Fresno's arch|op on February 5th, 2009. The event featured, in addition to the full-scale model, examples of well-designed urban housing projects throughout California.

In collaboration with the CSU-Fresno Institute of Public Anthropology faculty and students, the project team has observed, documented, and analyzed public responses to the installation. Under Dr. Delcore's direction, this research will be used to drive the re-design of spaces to be built as part of a larger housing proposal. ©