

By Bruce Weir

The New Old

A new breed of "seniors' lifestyle community" eases into the West.



.....
 ↙ Tapestry at UBC is banking that the thirst for learning doesn't retire at 65.

28

WesternLivingMagazine.com

Whatever you do, don't call them retirement homes. That would be reductive, almost condescending. At a modern seniors' "lifestyle community" residents still play bridge and the occasional hand of whist, but they're just as likely to work out in the gym, relax in the spa or even primp for the big Bobby Curtola concert and '50s sock hop (show time 2 p.m.).

According to the 2006 census, there are now 4.3 million senior citizens in the country, and with the first of the baby boomers set to turn 65 in 2011, aging ain't what it used to be.

Boutique Retirement

These days, seniors are willing to spend some cash in order to spend their golden years in a measure of comfort. "Seniors today are discerning," says Heather Mutcherson of Winnipeg's Sturgeon Creek II. "They shape the buildings and the services offered."

At the "seniors' living centre," which opened in February 2007, that means amenities like a library, bistro café, spa room, workout equipment and a private dining room for entertaining visitors. These are complemented with design features like grab rails, non-slip floors and an

intercom system for residents to get in touch with staff at any time.

It's all designed to create a homey feel, a process aided by giving residents choices. One-bedroom suites are available in more than 20 floor plans, and there is a range of meal options. These choices mean rents vary from \$1,975 to \$2,460 for the suites, a price that includes things like housekeeping, transportation and, of course, all the aforementioned amenities. But no matter the floor plan, the suites



.....
 ↑ Touchmark at Wedgewood residents live in bungalows.

all offer a surprising perk. "With the separate bedroom, you can still close the door and not make your bed," Mutcherson says, proving that, regardless of your age, sometimes slacking off is the greatest indulgence.

Back to School

Tapestry at Wesbrook Village UBC is set to become the first independent senior's home in Canada to be connected with a university, a trend seen in recent years in the United States. "The connection with UBC is very exciting," says David Podmore, president and CEO of Concert Properties, which is developing the project. "It is our plan that our residents will be able to enrol in continuing education classes, and have access to theatres and athletic venues on campus." Concert worked closely with

UBC and its alumni association when planning the 180-suite development (134 suites for rent, 46 condominiums). "We heard from many professors and university workers who want to stay in the area when they retire," Podmore says.

The two six-storey buildings will contain amenities normally found in an upscale hotel: rooftop garden, valet parking, concierge, spa, beauty salon and even a virtual golf centre.

"Our intent is to create a non-institutional feeling," Podmore says, noting that staff members don't wear uniforms. "We want to create a stimulating environment."

A Green Retirement

Call it the greening of the greying, but some seniors are choosing to reduce their environmental footprint as they retire.

Renaissance Regina uses solar and geothermal heating and has an extensive recycling program. "It's definitely a selling feature for some people," Grace Brown, general manager says. "If they're concerned with the environment, this is a good move."

Of course, the two-year-old development in downtown Regina also has touches like a library, computer room, 9,000-square-foot patio and weekly housekeeping, which mean seniors are going green in style. Studios in the 157-unit building start at \$1,235 per month, and two-bedroom suites are \$2,800. (These prices include meal plans and snow removal—this is Regina after all.)

It all means that residents' needs are met so they can enjoy themselves. Brown says a recent wedding is proof that this is happening. "The couple met here,

29



OFFICIAL CANADIAN DIAMOND DEALER



1832 West 1st Avenue
 Vancouver, BC, V6J 1G5

Tel 604.734.9259
 www.costenatbalue.com

When inspiration becomes reality.

so it only made sense for them to get married here," she says. The service was held in the Renaissance's chapel (it also regularly hosts movies and armchair aerobics). The resident newlyweds honeymooned upstairs.

What Retirement?

A looming labour shortage (Statistics Canada says that by 2016 there won't be enough people entering the workforce to replace retiring boomers) means a growing number of people will work past 65. In fact, the term "retirement community" is already a misnomer at places like Touchmark at Wedgewood where some residents are still gainfully employed. "We have had residents who job-share, so they work for a month then take the next month off," says executive director Leanne Gugenheimer. "In that month, it's worry-free living.

They're free to travel—we pick up their mail and look after the landscaping."

The 24-acre development in Edmonton's west end caters to those 55 and over and looks like a fairly typical suburban development. The main building opened in the fall of 2005, but construction continues on some of the 66 bungalows that will ring the property. Along with these detached homes, there are also independent- and assisted-living options. The latter run from \$2,250 to \$3,500 a month.

This range of living options allows for "aging in place," a process aided by a host of design touches such as hand railings set a little lower than usual, wide

hallways that allow two wheelchairs to pass, levers instead of knobs on faucets and walk-in showers. "This may well be our residents' last move," Gugenheimer says, "because they can move within the community as their needs change." *W*

◀ A fireside dining room at Winnipeg's Sturgeon Creek II.



BALLET BRITISH COLUMBIA'S 6TH ANNUAL

Home & Garden Tour

SATURDAY, MAY 24 & SUNDAY, MAY 25, 2008

Spectacular homes and gardens on display in Vancouver's premiere neighbourhoods

TICKETS

Ticketmaster 604.280.3311

www.ticketmaster.ca

www.balletbc.com

Self Guided \$50*

Comfortable Coach \$75*

*PLUS APPLICABLE SERVICE CHARGES

HG

BALLET BRITISH COLUMBIA
JOHN ALLEYNE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Artful Living ■ Distinctive ■ Inspired ■ Diverse

A PROJECT IN SUPPORT OF BALLET BRITISH COLUMBIA, A NON-PROFIT REGISTERED CHARITY.