New Tools and Processes for Aging Visionaries: Elders as Agents of Change in the Community

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Talking points

1. Seeing the big picture on local climate change
2. A special role for the aging as agents of change
3. Wiser visions and solutions: low-carbon communities for aging in place
4. Engaging with new visual media to change things
1 The big picture on climate change: connecting the dots

• **Impacts** on the aged:
  – health and vulnerability

• **Causes:** baby-boomers as agents of climate change

• **Solutions:** adaptation and mitigation
  – we owe it to ourselves to adapt, and to the rest of the world to mitigate
Our lifestyles are all connected.
Connecting the dots....

Diagram showing climate change cycle with categories: Causes, Impacts, Mitigation, and Adaptation.
2 A special role: holding the collective memory

• Elderly people today are unique in history: the only generation that has observed both “baseline” conditions before climate change, and its emerging impacts

• We thus carry a responsibility to tell our stories (accurately) and anchor the present to the past
  – what low-carbon living was like
  – not just nostalgia
  – reframing community perspectives on resilience
Low-carbon societies are not new....
2 A special role: The aging as agents of change

• **Aging visionaries:** the legacy for our children/grandchildren
  – Far-sightedness, taking the long view.

• **Unlikely champions of sustainability:** activists, agitators, and doers
  – Well respected with high-level contacts
  – Retirees often have time and energy to volunteer
The Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character & Housing: West Vancouver Community Survey (2008)

• **Neighbourhood Character**
  – 68% are concerned about changing character

• **House Construction**
  – 54% support tighter restrictions on size

West Vancouver municipal staff
Community Survey Results

- **Housing**

  - 81% concerned about *future affordability*
  
  - 80% concerned about *future housing choice*

  - **Majority support** *(with restrictions)*
    - Secondary suites (75%)
    - Bed & Breakfasts (71%)
    - Multi-unit complexes (65%)
    - Smaller lots (56%)
A Cotswold village shop: set up and run by volunteer retirees
3 Wiser Visions and Solutions: Community retrofits for aging in place

Lo-CAR communities

• **Low-Carbon**
  – 80% reduction in GHGs by 2050

• **Attractive/acceptable**
  – Retain sense of identity, character, and quality of life
  – Some change inevitable (paying for past benefits)

• **Resilient**
  – Adapt to climate disruption, high energy prices, better access to services
  – Better health

![Solar Panels Rise Pole by Pole, Followed by Gasps of ‘Eyesore’](image-url)
Electric vehicles
Local food, community gardens, urban farming

Megan Vogt, LARC 505 studio
Local food market
Live / work development
Stormwater drainage swale
Smaller, efficient cars
60% reduction in home energy consumption
Passive solar conservatory
Community gardening
Multifamily suites
Increased public transit
Electric commuter vehicles
Smaller, efficient cars
Increased public transit
Electric commuter vehicles
4 Engaging with new visual media to change things

- Community-led processes enhanced by new visualisation tools
  - Local Climate Change Visioning: a new kind of process
  - Collaborating with youth
Visioning research with communities and stakeholders

Workshops

Community Feedback/Perceptions
Components of Visioning Process

1. Participation

2. Scenario options

3. Best available science/data

4. 3D and 4D Visualizations
3D Visualization of summer surface temperatures in Toronto

Data: Natural Resources Canada
Visualization, John Danahy, U of Toronto
Existing Condition
2100: Storm surge (3.48m)
2100: Dike Adaptation
2100: Retrofitting largely complete

2100: Retrofitting largely complete
Getting people engaged in visualizing their own futures led to:

- Increased awareness of local effects of climate change
- Increased awareness of community choices (community capacity)
- Increased support for local policies on mitigation & adaptation (a constituency for change)
LOCAL CLIMATE CHANGE VISIONING AND LANDSCAPE VISUALIZATIONS GUIDANCE MANUAL
Ellen Pond et al., 2010

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Design the Future

WVSS Grade 10 students
Design the Future

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GRAY POWER, GREEN FUTURES

Proposal: a multi-disciplinary action research program for retrofitting pilot neighbourhoods to

- support aging in place
- reduce carbon emissions
- reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts
- maintain health and quality of life

Empowering/mobilizing seniors as agents of change with compelling toolkits for peer-to-peer learning and community engagement.
THANK YOU!

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