

Aging boomers spark new real estate trend

Surging numbers of aging baby boomers, combined with a shortage of long-term-care beds, are spawning a new real estate trend in BC's Lower Mainland. "Aging in place," which was pioneered in the US, refers to retirement communities that seniors can buy into and stay in until the end of life, avoiding potentially traumatic moves to nursing homes.

The flexible communities provide graduated levels of health care and other services, such as meals and laundry service. At the end of the continuum, 24-

hour nursing care is available in licensed beds. A Vancouver company specializing in health care real estate, C. Pac Care Holdings Ltd., opened the first private aging-in-place community in the Lower Mainland in 1997, and plans to open another in the summer of 2000. The company thinks the developments are the first of their kind in Canada.

When Don Ho, president of C. Pac Care, looked at BC's demographic trends, he saw an obvious opportunity to accommodate not only aging

boomers but also affluent members of the current generation of seniors.

C. Pac's current development, the \$21 million, 4-acre Langley Gardens, offers 3 levels of accommodation: 61 owned condominiums, 64 rental units and 91 licensed long-term-care beds. But it comes at a cost. The purchased units, ranging from \$84 000 to \$177 000 come with a basic service package costing \$500 a month; the rental housing, which costs from about \$1950 to \$2700 a month, includes a full service package. Twenty-four hour extended care will cost about \$4000 monthly.

Despite the high costs, Ho is confident he's on the right real estate track. The marketplace and the provincial government seem to be proving him right. The BC Ministry of Health predicts that up to 10 000 new long-term-care beds will be needed by 2006; it now adds only about 400 beds annually.

At Crescent Gardens, C. Pac's first community, the local health region contracted for 18 of the 75 long-term-care beds, and today there is a 7-year waiting list for these subsidized beds. C. Pac plans to expand to other areas of the province and, eventually, across Canada. — Heather Kent, Vancouver



Aging in one place: Langley Gardens

Come, come to the fair

This year the team from Grand Manan in southwestern New Brunswick showed up with a sea kayak and wanted to know where they could hang it. Last year, representatives from Cheticamp, NS, arrived accompanied by fiddle music and hand-stitched quilts, tapping their toes to the former and looking for a wall for the latter. Dr. Richard MacLachlan, head of family medicine at Dalhousie University, says this element of fun and community pride makes the annual Maritime Job Fair for Family Physicians a roaring success.

This year's fair, held in Moncton, NB, attracted 15 communities from Nova Scotia, 16 from New Brunswick

and 4 from PEI, along with 70 medical residents from Dal and another 15 from the Université de Sherbrooke satellite residency program in Dieppe, NB. The goal, in addition to having a good time, is to let doctors know what jobs are available in their own backyard. "There's no question it is leading to matches for permanent locations and locums," says MacLachlan. "There's no question it is helping to keep doctors in the region. Residents consistently comment that they had no idea of the breadth or variety of the communities in the area."

The job fair, now in its fourth year, grew out of an annual retreat hosted by family medicine residents. In 1997, at

the height of Nova Scotia's doctor shortage, MacLachlan suggested the residents set up a mini trade-fair instead of a lecture series. "It was the worst night of the winter for weather," he remembers. "But it was a howling success. It was just magical."

In an effort to share the magic, the job fair was expanded the next year to include all 3 Maritime provinces. It's still organized by Dalhousie's family medicine program, but is now funded by all 3 provincial health departments and the 3 medical societies.

By the way, the kayak was hung from the ceiling with care. — Donalee Moulton, Halifax