



Rural Senior's Housing Initiative - Summary Communities Development Society

Seniors want to age in place:

Residents in the western MD of Rocky View have identified the need for seniors to have housing choices that would allow them to downsize and remain within their rural communities as they age.

The growing trend has been for seniors who can no longer maintain their homes on acreage and ranch/farm lands to sell and move to larger centres where better services and housing choices are offered. While some actively choose this option, there are others who dread the idea of not only leaving their homes and land, which may have been in their family for generations, but also to lose their social network and support of friends and neighbours. This exodus leaves the rural community less healthy, diverse and resilient. The champions of land stewardship, volunteerism and heritage along with their knowledge, expertise and involvement are lost to the larger community.

Seniors want to be part of the solution:

The Rural Seniors' Housing Action Group, under the direction of the Communities Development Society (CDS) and with various government and local support have been meeting weekly for the past two years to design a "housing community" in the Bearspaw area of the western MD of Rocky View. This group has contributed over 4,000 volunteer hours to provide overall direction to a unique community based housing concept.

This housing project will reflect rural values of a close-knit community neighbourhood feel within an environmentally sensitive and innovative design. The strengths of this initiative are that it is driven and shaped by seniors living in the community; builds and uses local skills, knowledge and involvement; reflects unique rural values that respect the land, history and environment and allows residents to influence their communities and drive the development process themselves.

The housing community concept:

As a pilot project, the housing project hopes to provide a blend of independent to assisted living choices with small homes and apartments that allow for gradual services and supports as needed. A common community wellness centre would house dining, recreational, fitness and meeting spaces as well as access to health professionals. The homes and suites will be functional, economical, beautiful and use environmental, financial and social sustainable principles.

This initiative will serve as a model that could then be duplicated in other rural communities as a prototype in participatory asset based community development....a true example of empowering local citizens to take control of defining their strengths, capacities and relationships.

For more information, phone the Communities Development Society office, 403-208-2599.