

“ The rural culture and love of the land can not be replicated in an urban setting and this leaves a hole in the heart of rural seniors who must, because of lack of adequate rural support facilities, move to an urban setting during their sunset years. ”

-- Phil Unland



Finding Solutions for Challenges facing Rural Seniors

CDS' community consultation revealed that rural senior needs are not being met with the current service level. There is a need for an "Age-in-Community" strategy.

Communities Development Society (CDS)

CDS began by listening to seniors. CDS exists to initiate and support grassroots community development in rural western Rocky View. Our approach is always to listen to residents to identify key issues and to find community-led solutions. We involve ourselves, as a community partner, where we can best make a difference—by supporting you or your group in starting and achieving initiatives that improve community life. And that was how we arrived at our "Age-in-Community" strategy.

Age-in-community strategy

An Age-in-Community strategy recognizes the importance of helping seniors live their lives in their "home" communities. CDS

believes that the needs of rural seniors must be addressed with both supportive services and housing options.

What rural seniors said they want

- The option to stay in their communities as they age either in their own homes or in seniors' housing with members of their own community.
- Easy access to open natural landscapes in a rural setting.
- To be close to friends and family.
- Formal and informal networks to support lifestyle choices.
- To continue to contribute to the community and to foster a sense of place through culture, history and geography.



Supportive Services for Rural Seniors

Our plan is to work with the community to help seniors stay in their own homes as long as they wish, and access the resources they need to maintain their independence.



Home services



Our age-in-community strategy goals

- Identify strengths, needs, current resources and service gaps.
- Increase understanding of the issues faced by rural seniors.
- Promote solutions to support seniors—either through community partnerships or support from existing grants.
- Enhance regional service infrastructure.
- Provide a forum for rural seniors to have a collective voice.
- Invest in activities that result in innovative solutions to support seniors - through a Social Enterprise Fund.

Non-Profit Rural Senior Housing

A group of dedicated seniors have been meeting to develop their concept of rural senior housing and have contributed countless hours to this community-led project.

How will CDS achieve its goals?

Creating home-service options for seniors and building a seniors' housing community are huge goals. CDS is developing a strong volunteer base of community members and has been fortunate to obtain financial support to maintain an office and some staff. CDS has applied for several grants to help us fund these initiatives. We were also very fortunate to receive a generous land donation to support the project. Most importantly, we have a group of dedicated seniors who meet monthly and contribute their time and talent to the project.



Rural Senior Housing Project Committee



Ruth Hunt, A view of the donated land

Strong community support

Ruth Hunt donated a quarter section of land to support this project and fulfill her and her husband Wilf's, life-long dream of helping rural seniors. The land is located in the Lochend area near the corner of Bears paw Road and Big Hill Springs Road.

Approximately 20 acres will be used for housing and common facilities. Another 20 acres will be set aside for walking paths and community structures. The remaining 120 acres will be designated as an agricultural conservation reserve.

The rural seniors' housing concept

Over the next three years, CDS will begin formal land development and home construction for a seniors' housing community.

- We project we will build 55 senior housing units and 4 staff units (estimated capacity based on water yield).
- Common facilities will include: dining and recreation hall, commercial kitchen, medical and therapy rooms, hair salon, office space and walking and wheelchair outdoor paths.
- Housing will be clustered to support a “walking” community. All buildings will be single level and fully accessible for all abilities.
- Housing units will address mixed income needs that reflect the diversity of rural communities.



Successful well drilled

senior
housing

“ This unique project is being planned by and for Rocky View seniors and will reflect rural values they define as: community involvement, the preservation of history, stewardship of the land and the sharing of knowledge and skills. ”



Inter-generational horticulture

Housing community reflects rural values

The housing project will be built and operated in a manner consistent with rural values. This is what we hope to achieve:

- The project will be an “eco-agra” community. We will minimize energy demands from non-renewable sources, limit the eco “footprint” of the development, maximize preservation of agricultural lands, and demonstrate sustainable agricultural practices.
- All buildings will meet the highest standards for energy efficiency and minimal environmental impact.
- Water management will be a high priority to minimize impact.
- Net zero waste water systems will be used that both save energy and recycle waste material.
- The design will enhance a supportive close-knit community.

Gathering place promotes rural life

We invite community groups to explore possible partnerships with us: we want to include community agricultural facilities on the land, that align with our values. In so doing, the seniors hope to contribute to these organizations, encourage young people to learn about their rural roots, and contribute to sustaining the rural way of life. The goal is to create an activity hub where community gathers.



Walk-about on the donated Hunt land with family members

Our Community, Our Solutions, Our Quality of Life

The success of this project will be determined by our community and our ability to reflect what is important to us.



Community Tea



Benefits for seniors and the community

- Seniors can continue to be valued community members, are happier and healthier.
- Seniors benefit from maintaining their social networks.
- Children and grandchildren benefit from close relationships with seniors.
- Community benefits from the transfer of wisdom and knowledge.
- Seniors encourage the development of rural services.
- Adds to our resource-base for seniors, creates local jobs and improves area economic sustainability.
- Community shows leadership and creates a model for participatory community processes, responsible eco-sensitive development and the care of our seniors.
- In the rural tradition of neighbours helping neighbours, we are rolling up our sleeves to develop our own unique solutions.
- Community demonstrates the ability to sustain lifelong residence: a sense of home for all.



“ When seniors are able to remain in the community they built, the whole community benefits and is healthier, more diverse and more resilient. ”

Healthy rural community life

Seniors recognize the value of the peace and security found in a rural close-knit community. Indeed, a supportive community may well contribute far more to seniors' health and their quality of life than being close to medical services in an unfamiliar urban centre, far from loved ones.

What can I do to help out?

We will need volunteers and staff and most importantly, your ideas and concerns. This is a community-led project and we highly value what you know and care about.

If there is something that concerns you let us know. If you know someone that could help us, let us know. If you want to volunteer to help but aren't sure how, give us a call!



Historic Bears paw School

Contact us!

Our offices are located in the walk-out basement of the Historic Bears paw School. Give us a call or drop by:



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Calgary, AB, T3L 2P7

Phone: 403 239-0646
Fax: 403 208-2590
Email: info@theruralway.ca
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“ When residents are active, connected, engaged and working together on issues that matter, they can achieve what they set their minds to. ”



Land for Community Agricultural Facilities

CDS and the Rural Seniors Housing Project have land available for potential community agricultural facilities. Let's explore how we can partner?



Background

Through the generous donation of a quarter section of land from Ruth Hunt, the Communities Development Society is committed to developing approximately 20 acres for a senior housing community. Another 20 acres will be set aside for walkways, natural parkland and possible agricultural facilities. The remaining 120 acres will be designated as an agricultural conservation reserve. The land is located on the NW corner of Bears paw Road and Big Hill Springs Road.

Agricultural Facilities

As part of the operational strategy, rural seniors would like to maintain active involvement in their communities and would like to encourage community organizations to propose agricultural facilities near the seniors' retirement community. By doing so, the seniors hope they will be

able to contribute to these organizations and encourage young people to maintain a rural lifestyle. CDS also believes that by supporting rural based organizations through partnerships, CDS will contribute to sustaining rural values and lifestyles.

At this time CDS has not determined how the land ownership will be established. This will be open for discussion and agreement over the next few months.

Request for Interest

Organizations interested in locating a facility on the proposed land should advise CDS of their interest before June, 2009 to ensure that the community development plan includes the potential for such a facility. Interested organizations can confirm their interest by contacting Ben Eby (beneby@shaw.ca) and Lori Kovacs (lori@theruralway.ca).

