

20 YEARS
ANS

NHRC + CNRL

National Housing
Research Committee

Comité national de
recherche sur le logement

Spring 2007



CMHC's EQUilibrium Housing Initiative: The Culmination of Years of Housing Research

Research on housing's impact on the environment has Canadians concerned about the amount of energy consumed, greenhouse gases emitted, resources consumed and waste being put in landfill sites. Canada is the one of the world's largest producers of greenhouse gases emissions per-capita and housing accounts for 16 per cent of those emissions. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) EQUilibrium housing initiative will showcase years of research on producing energy efficient and healthy homes. The name EQUilibrium was chosen to reflect the goal of balancing housing needs with those of the environment. EQUilibrium homes will aim to minimize the detrimental environmental impacts of housing on water, land and air while providing healthy, comfortable and affordable living.

Seventy-two homebuilder teams submitted an expression of interest to build demonstration EQUilibrium homes and 12 projects were chosen in January, 2007 through a two-stage competitive process involving independent housing experts as evaluators. The 12 demonstration homes will be built in communities across Canada and will be open to Canadians to view by 2008.

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About the National Housing Research Committee

The National Housing Research Committee (NHRC), established in 1986, is made up of federal, provincial and territorial, municipal, industry, social housing, academic community and consumer representatives. Its objectives include:

- identifying priority areas for housing-related research or demonstration
- fostering greater co-operation, developing partnerships and minimizing overlap in research activities
- encouraging support for housing research
- promoting the dissemination, application and adoption of research results

In addition to the Full Committee, the NHRC also operates through working groups to exchange information, discuss research gaps and undertake research projects. Currently, working groups meet on housing data, homelessness, sustainable community planning, seniors housing, and housing and population health. NHRC participants also contribute articles to the *NHRC Newsletter*, which is produced twice a year, and network with their online community: www.nhrc-cnrl.ca.

The NHRC co-chairs are John Black of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Doug Page of the Province of British Columbia.

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Although EQUilibrium housing is a recent initiative, the foundations for it were originally laid more than 60 years ago when CMHC was created. Research and innovative housing initiatives started in the postwar period, and included housing design, urban renewal and neighbourhood improvement, housing rehabilitation and renovation, and sewage treatment assistance. More recently, in the early 1990s, CMHC organized the national Healthy Housing™ design competition, which led to demonstration homes being built in Vancouver and Toronto. The cornerstone design principles of Healthy Housing™ are occupant health, energy efficiency, resource conservation, reduced environmental impact, and affordability.

EQUilibrium homes are being built on a solid research foundation involving many domains: indoor air quality, natural daylighting, passive solar heating and cooling, ground-source heat, energy-efficient design, appliances and lighting, renewable energy technologies, water conservation and reuse, and climate specific design. Research on land and natural habitat conservation, sustainable community design and green infrastructure practices will also help create new solutions for healthy and clean communities in the future.

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EQuilibrium homes incorporate an integrated design and development approach that involves the following five key principles for sustainability:

Health

EQuilibrium housing promotes healthy and comfortable indoor environments with superior indoor air quality, water and lighting, as well as minimizing exposure to interior and exterior noise sources.

Energy

One of the primary objectives of the EQuilibrium Housing initiative is to demonstrate the capacity of the housing industry to drastically reduce the energy load required by a home so that it produces as much, or more, energy that it consumes annually. This will be achieved by matching high-performance, energy-efficient, passive solar house design with commercially available on-site renewable energy systems, such as solar water heating, photovoltaics, and ground-source heat pumps. As well, homes will be equipped with low energy appliances, lighting and equipment. Connected to the electricity grid, these homes draw electricity only as needed—and can feed excess electricity back into the system. EQuilibrium homes also address another growing concern, peak electricity demand.

Resources

Through thoughtful, innovative design and construction processes, it is expected that EQuilibrium homes will help to conserve natural resources. Building size should be optimized for intended use, materials should be obtained from local and renewable resources, and construction waste should be reduced and well-managed. Additionally, improving the durability of building components can reduce the consumption of resources. Water conservation is another important element of an EQuilibrium home design.

Environment

EQuilibrium housing will eventually evolve to include site planning and community design that reduces demand for greenfield development, protects wildlife habitats, agriculture and fisheries, promotes resource-efficient native landscaping, and considers broader community issues, such as efficient transportation, reduced infrastructure, and preservation and restoration of natural features. To reduce the environmental impact of housing generally means doing more with less, optimizing the use of land resources, minimizing the impact of construction activities on the surrounding area and watershed, and reducing the release of pollutants into the land, water and air.

Affordability

Affordability is an essential aspect of sustainable housing. Sustainable housing uses durable systems with low maintenance and operating costs that require significantly less purchased energy. Flexible and adaptable design solutions enable the home to easily and inexpensively adjust to occupants changing needs and capabilities, both financial and physical, over their lifetimes.

One of the most important indicators of the success of this initiative will be the appeal and performance of the homes under actual living conditions. The homes will be open for public demonstration for six months and monitored for at least one year post occupancy by independent consultants retained by CMHC. The monitoring program will include an examination of the amount of energy consumption, as well as how much and when this is augmented by the renewable energy technologies. Information about indoor air quality and other key sustainable housing indicators, such as occupant satisfaction, will be collected. This information will be used to not only assess the extent to which the EQuilibrium objectives can be achieved, but also the capacity of the homebuilding industry to deliver sustainable housing.

For additional information, please contact Thomas Green, CMHC, (613) 748-2340, e-mail: visit@cmhc.ca or tgreen@cmhc-schl.gc.ca.

Second Stage Housing for Aboriginal Ex-Offenders in Winnipeg's Inner City

The partners in this research project were: Dilly Knoll and Heather Block (Andrews Street Family Centre), Murray Barkman (Open Circle program), Nancy Higgitt (University of Manitoba), and Susan Wingert and Jason Brown (University of Western Ontario). The project was financially supported by the Winnipeg Inner City Research Alliance, which is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

In Manitoba, Aboriginal people account for a large proportion of those incarcerated in federal and provincial institutions and the proportion of Aboriginal people who are incarcerated is increasing. When Aboriginal people are released from jail in Manitoba they often return home to their communities in Winnipeg. In the North and West ends of Winnipeg, Aboriginal people account for about one-fifth of the total population, which is a concentration not found in any other Canadian city.

The partners in this research project had found that very little literature on the housing challenges faced by Aboriginal ex-offenders existed, despite considerable evidence that these men are vulnerable to homelessness. Their project helps to fill that gap by conducting interviews with ex-offenders, as well as community organizations that provide services to residents of North End neighbourhoods in Winnipeg. The partners used the principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR), a collaborative approach to research that equitably involves, for example, community members, organizational representatives, and researchers in all aspects of the research process.

Thirty research participants, all men, ranging in age from 19 to 49 years, were recruited from Andrews Street Family Centre and the Open Circle program. The participants had been released from an institution from one to 12 times, and the length of time since last release ranged from six days to 20 years. Participants were asked about their housing experiences before and after they had done time in jail, how they saw their strengths and challenges, as well as the plans they had for their futures.

A total of 14 interviews were also completed with agencies serving North End neighbourhoods. These interviews were conducted with a representative of each organization. They focused on the communities served by local agencies, the approaches taken to providing service, the needs and challenges of the North End, as well as issues and services for Aboriginal men returning to the community.

Upon release from prison, many participants reported that they had no or little support in making the transition back into the community. It was noted that housing support for men varies depending upon their release conditions: offenders who receive day parole are released to halfway houses, which were described as "dorm settings where residents learn to cook and learn skills such as budgeting;" while offenders who receive full parole do not have housing set up for them; they are "literally dropped off with nothing after release." Most of the men returned to their families—immediate or extended—and while this was beneficial for some men, it was problematic for others. Those who had no families or had been cut off from their families, perhaps due to the length of their prison terms, were on their own to seek affordable housing. These men secured "the worst of the worst" housing. Without employment and rental references, they were hard pressed to find affordable, adequate and safe housing. Some found temporary housing—a room in a hotel on Main Street or a hostel for example—with the help of social services. Temporary housing is often a "high crime environment" that "provides temptation" and can lead ex-offenders back into crime and/or prison. Men going to halfway houses are viewed to have a definite advantage over those released with no support, although it was pointed out that halfway houses do not deal with drug and alcohol issues. Some of the men interviewed ended up on the street or back in jail upon their release from prison.

Participants in this project called for housing units (for single men and families) to be made available and easily accessible by Aboriginal men leaving institutions and halfway houses. Currently "second-stage housing", which is intended to offer a supportive living environment, as well as tools and opportunities for social and skills development, is not available for Aboriginal ex-offenders or their families and children in the North End. The participants in the project stated that this housing should have a strict enforcement of the "no drinking, drugs or crime" rule. There should also be counselling and support from mentors who have life experience, as well as opportunities to continue education or gain on-the-job experience. Such housing should also be culturally based. The study concluded that the expertise to develop and operate such a service is presently in the community, and that funding is needed to address the issue.

For additional information, please contact Jason Brown, University of Western Ontario, (519) 661-2111 (ext. 88617), e-mail: jbrow97@uwo.ca.

Urban Aboriginal Households Profiled in 19 Urban Centres

New research, combining the most current Statistics Canada census data with data collected by CMHC, provides a socio-economic profile of Aboriginal Canadians in 19 urban centres in Canada's Prairie and Northern regions. This profile establishes baseline information for agencies involved in Aboriginal and affordable housing issues in urban centres and can help inform community discussions and planning.

This research project is a small example of the type of research that can be done once CMHC has enhanced its "first generation" of Housing in Canada Online (HiCO) by adding an Aboriginal component. HiCO is now a permanent part of CMHC's *Canadian Housing Observer's* expanded housing data resources, developed to help inform all Canadians about housing conditions in their area of residence. CMHC is currently working on adding to HiCO an ability to distinguish Aboriginal from non-Aboriginal households so that communities with significant Aboriginal household populations will be able to compare changing housing conditions for the two groups over time, identify any gaps in conditions, and then monitor to determine if efforts to close the gaps are working.

In this current study, factors such as age, education and income were studied, since they affect the type of house that is occupied and tenure. These variables and others were collected and analyzed for centres located in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the three territories. The research details First Nation, Inuit, and Métis populations. It reveals why Aboriginal peoples in the area studied are less likely to own a home than the non-Aboriginal population (40.7 per cent compared to 70.1 per cent).

The Aboriginal population is young and growing fast. Over 44 per cent of the Aboriginal population is under 20 years of age, compared to about 26 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population. Within the 19 urban centres studied, the Aboriginal population has doubled over the last 20 years.

There is a relationship between education and the quality of housing—those who have more schooling tend to have higher salaries and can afford to live in buildings that are more comfortable, and include places for privacy and study. The research found that fewer Aboriginal people have completed high school (56.2 per cent) and university (6.4 per cent) compared to non-Aboriginals (72.5 per cent and 18.4 per cent, respectively).

Unemployment rates were equally disproportionate: in all but three of the urban centres studied, the unemployment rates for the Aboriginal population exceeded 10 per cent and was above 20 per cent in two locations. Differences in employment were reflected in household income levels. Aboriginal households earned \$15,000 to \$20,000 less per year than non-Aboriginal households and, therefore, spent a greater percentage of their income on housing. As a consequence, more Aboriginal households were in core housing need, compared to non-Aboriginal households.

Income is often affected by marital status. Fifty per cent of Aboriginal households in the urban centres under study were headed by a lone parent, compared to only 17 to 19 per cent among non-Aboriginal households. Shared and overcrowded housing were not uncommon.

Increases in educational attainment, age, and other factors since 1996 were reflected in improved 2001 incomes and housing status. Core housing need was compared between these same dates in five of the Prairie cities. While the core housing need in the cities was higher than for the non-Aboriginal population, it did decrease significantly over the five-year period, both in absolute terms, as well as declining at a faster rate than for non-Aboriginal households. However, caution needs to be exercised in analyzing trends for Aboriginal households. A growing number of people who had not previously identified with an Aboriginal group are now doing so, thereby changing the characteristics of the overall group. Some improvements may be due to this change.

Studies based on the 2006 Census will continue to track Aboriginal housing conditions. Once HiCO is updated with CMHC's 2006 Census-based housing conditions data, it will serve as a primary vehicle for data analysis by housing decision-makers.

The Research Highlight can be obtained on-line through CMHC's Order Desk www.cmhc.ca, product number 64804 or by calling 1 800-668-2642.

For additional information, please contact Tom Kerwin, CMHC, (403) 515-2929, e-mail: tkerwin@cmhc-schl.gc.ca.

National Housing Initiative's National Research Program:

Phase II Overview, Recent Research, and the new Homelessness Partnering Strategy

An Overview of Phase II of the National Research Program (NRP)

March 31, 2007 marked the conclusion of Phase II of the National Housing Initiative's (NHI) National Research Program (NRP). The NRP strives to support evidence-based research that improves an understanding of the complexities of homelessness—including the magnitude, characteristics and causes of homelessness—and creates a foundation for policy and community research. The NRP was founded on the principle that partnerships between researchers and community organizations foster the production of relevant, meaningful research that contributes to the development of sustainable solutions to homelessness. In addition to partnerships, the NRP invests in projects that facilitate the sharing of best practices and promote the dissemination of knowledge. It encourages the development and assessment of appropriate and effective responses to homelessness that are designed to produce tangible, beneficial impacts on the lives of homeless individuals and families, at both the local and national levels.

Between 2003 and 2007, the NRP funded 28 research projects in the following six priority domains: health; justice; immigration; cycles of homelessness; education, employment and income; and the North. These domains were identified, in consultation with research experts and community stakeholders, as areas where the least information was available.

Recent NRP Research

NRP projects completed in 2006 have produced new research on homelessness in the areas of justice and immigration—two priority domains with significant knowledge gaps. Under the justice domain, the John Howard Society released a NRP-funded study authored by Dr. Steven Gaetz (Department of Education, York University) and Dr. Bill O'Grady (Department of Sociology, University of Guelph), entitled *The Missing Link: Discharge Planning, Incarceration and Homelessness*.

This is one of the first Canadian studies to examine the interconnections between incarceration, prison re-entry and homelessness. The authors interviewed inmates and recently released inmates in Ontario and British Columbia and found that the relationship between homelessness and incarceration is bi-directional: homelessness puts people at risk of involvement with the criminal justice system, and being incarcerated increases the risk of becoming homeless.

A central reason for this bi-directional relationship is a lack of discharge planning for inmates. The authors highlight the positive links between stable housing and employment, family support, access to government benefits, and mental and physical well-being. They also highlight the negative links between unstable housing situations and exposure to environments conducive to re-offending. The authors provide a number of recommendations for improving the discharge planning process for inmates, including enhanced community housing supports, improved release linkages to the labour market, and stronger community and institutional health care and substance abuse services.

Under the immigration domain, the NRP provided funding to the Canadian Council on Social Development for a study, authored by Dr. Ekuwa Smith, entitled *Domestic Violence in Sponsor Relationships Among Immigrant and Refugee Women and its Links to Homelessness: Implications for Service Delivery*.

This study responds to the knowledge gap surrounding immigrant and refugee women's vulnerability to homelessness, in particular those who were sponsored by their partners. The author conducted interviews with immigrant and refugee women who had experienced homelessness in Vancouver and Ottawa, as well as focus group interviews with front-line service providers who work with immigrant and refugee women.



The study identified four main research findings: studies on homelessness and various anecdotal reports from shelters indicate that homelessness is growing among immigrant and refugee women; immigrant and refugee women who experience homelessness share similar characteristics, such as an inability to communicate in English or French, unemployment, a lack of familial supports, and social isolation; the major causes of homelessness among this population include domestic violence, the breakdown of sponsorship arrangements, poverty, high rental costs, and a lack of affordable housing alternatives; and many immigrant and refugee women are unaware of services designed to provide support, and many existing services lack the culturally or linguistically sensitive services required to meet their unique needs.

The author puts forward nine recommendations, including that immigrant and refugee women should: be granted principal applicant status; be provided specialized language and settlement services to aid integration; and be supplied spaces in which they can interact with each other and volunteer counsellors in order to socialize, learn about Canada, and obtain information about rights, responsibilities and benefits. In the areas of housing and homelessness, the author recommends the provision of culturally sensitive services for homeless immigrant and refugee women and their families, more emergency shelters for abused women and a general increase in affordable housing, as well as greater monitoring and accountability measures for housing providers in order to reduce racism and discrimination in the allocation of social housing.

Research and the new Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS)

On December 19, 2006, the Government of Canada announced an investment of \$269.6 million over two years, commencing April 1, 2007, for the new HPS. Under the new HPS, research on homelessness will be undertaken by the Homelessness Knowledge Development Program (HKDP), an initiative that will build upon the NRP by encouraging evidence-based research and facilitating access to, and dissemination of, best practices, information and tools. To achieve these goals, the HKDP will enhance data collection, analysis and dissemination by fostering horizontal partnerships between all levels of government, data developers, researchers and non-governmental organizations in order to better understand homelessness issues.

The HKDP will promote evidence-based research through various activities. For example, it will encourage comparative international research and the examination of options to implement trend-based, longitudinal and demonstration projects. It will also support better information sharing and mechanisms to advance knowledge transfer and the exchange of information on housing and homelessness. The HKDP will continue to strive for better and relevant integrated data to assist affected communities and individuals, as well as focus on policy-oriented solutions that cater to policy makers, researchers and service providers working on homelessness and related issues.

For information on how to obtain copies of completed Phase II NRP projects, and for information about the new HPS, please visit www.homelessness.gc.ca.

What Role do Rooming Houses Play in Housing and Homelessness?

The recently completed CMHC study *Profile of Rooming House Residents in Vancouver, Ottawa and Montréal* provides additional knowledge on the demographics and issues of rooming house tenants and builds on the work of two earlier studies: *Out of the Long Dark Hallway from Winnipeg* and *Rooming House Residents from Toronto*.

The consultant team, led by Social Data Research, interviewed 240 tenants (80 each in Vancouver, Ottawa and Montréal) and a number of landlords in each city, and then held workshops with stakeholders in each city to validate and interpret the results.

Since there were no complete lists of rooming houses from which to randomly select buildings, samples of convenience were drawn in each city. As a result, the rooming houses surveyed may or may not reflect the full range and characteristics of rooming houses in each city. The researchers deliberately over-sampled unlicensed rooming houses and those located outside the downtown core, since little is known about this part of the rooming house sector.

The results of this study and of those previously conducted are remarkably similar. The typical rooming house resident is a single or divorced Canadian-born male, in his late 30s to late 40s, and living well below the poverty line. In all three cities that were the subject of this profile, at least 13 per cent of the tenants identified their previous residence as a shelter, the street or couch surfing.

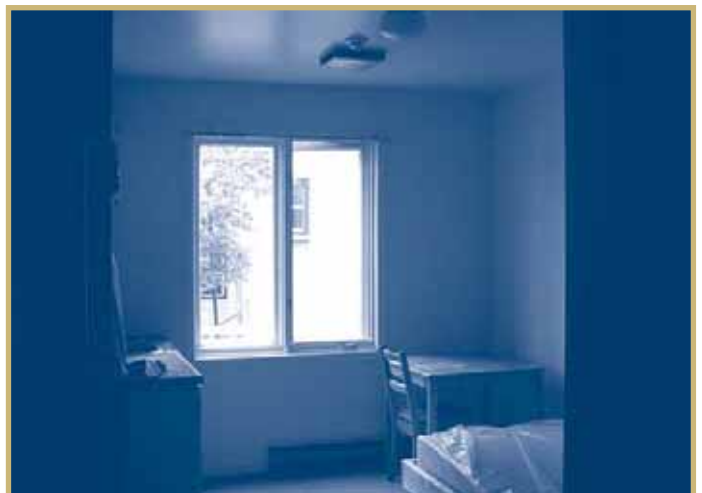
Although rooming houses are a relatively affordable housing option, most tenants are still paying more than they can afford on rent. At the same time, landlords report not being able to cover their costs and cited aging buildings and their inability to raise rents as major issues. Both landlords and tenants identified the following two issues: the need for more support either on-site or through linkages with community agencies for tenants with mental health or addictions issues, and the lack of physical accessibility for aging tenants or younger persons with disabilities.

Most rooming house residents viewed their tenancy as temporary, but about one-third called their current place “home” and viewed their rooming house as long-term accommodation. The survey found that the public perception of rooming houses was ambiguous. On the one hand, many people consider them to be sub-standard housing. On the other hand, they are a large step up from shelters, and provide far more privacy and security. Good quality rooming houses can provide housing options for low-income people and those who choose this form of housing for lifestyle reasons.

Stakeholders believe that the non-profit sector has a role to play. Landlords identified rising costs and increased regulation combined with static tenant incomes as an issue that made the rooming house business increasingly unprofitable. In this study, both tenants and landlords identified the need for supports to tenants living in rooming houses, exacerbated by an aging population. Considering these two issues, if rooming houses are perceived as part of the continuum of housing to end homelessness, this research concluded that a good case could be made to treat rooming houses as non-market housing which requires social services support.

The Research Highlight can be obtained on-line through CMHC’s Order Desk www.cmhc.ca, product number 65235 or by calling 1 800-668-2642.

For additional information, please contact Anna Lenk, CMHC, (613) 748-2951 e-mail: alenk@cmhc-schl.gc.ca



Vancouver Coastal Health Authority Studies Health, Housing Status and Hospital Use

There is general consensus that adequacy of housing, along with related low socio-economic status, are powerful factors affecting health and housing status. Numerous studies have documented the fact that individuals with poor or no housing use hospital emergency rooms as their point of contact with the medical system and tend to have longer hospital stays. It has also been found in previous studies that providing individuals with safe, secure, affordable housing linked to supports has a positive impact both on mental health, physical health and individual well-being and stability. The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCHA) has undertaken a number of studies to help determine the impact on emergency room visits and hospital stays when individuals with a serious and persistent mental illness are provided with supported housing.

In 2000/2001, BC Housing, in partnership with VCHA and the City of Vancouver, created housing specifically targeted to low income singles. The six developments (467 units) were managed by non-profit housing providers. Three of the housing providers entered into partnerships with Mental health-supported housing service providers who were funded by VCHA. The partnership allowed VCHA, in collaboration with service providers, to select individuals with a mental illness for tenancy in 97 of the housing units and to have the service provider provide the on-site support services for these tenants.

VCHA studied the change in hospital bed utilization for one year pre-housing and one year post-housing for the people who moved into the six developments to determine if supported tenants and non-supported tenants would have different use patterns. The study group included 45 individuals with a mental illness living in supported units and 163 individuals living in the non-supported units. As a combined group of 208 supported and non-supported tenants, there was little overall change noted in the utilization of hospital bed days. In the one year pre-housing, the group used 580 bed days and this was reduced to 547 bed days in the year post-housing, with an overall decrease in average length of stay of two days per admission. However, when looked at separately, the 163 non-supported tenants actually showed a 74 per cent increase in hospital bed days used in the year post-housing (from 230 days to 401 days). As well, there was evidence of a 34 per cent increase in number of admissions from 29 admissions in the year pre-housing to 39 admissions in the year post-housing. It is believed that as a result of having stable housing, individuals had more regular contact with health care providers and received necessary treatment for health conditions that had previously not been addressed.

Conversely, the 45 supported tenants when looked at separately had a 58 per cent reduction in hospital bed days, from 350 days pre-housing to 146 days post-housing. They also showed a significant reduction



Photo courtesy of Linda Thomas

in average length of stay from 17 days pre-housing to eight days post-housing. While it was not possible to ascribe the hospital stay reductions to either a medical or a psychiatric reason, as per the findings of previous studies, it is assumed that since individuals in supported housing were strongly linked to a mental health team prior to entry they would also have had better links to general medical care. This would mean that physical health issues might not have been as significant an issue as they were for individuals moving into non-supported units who did not have this pre-housing support.

Another VCHA study examined 263 individuals who entered mental health supported housing in 2003 and 2004, comparing their emergency room and hospital bed use in the one year before and the one year post-supported housing. The results showed emergency room visits were reduced by 38 visits from 118 in the year pre-housing to 80 in the year post housing—a reduction of 32 per cent. The hospital bed days were reduced from 2,927 to 1,270—a reduction of 1,657 days or 56.6 per cent. The reduction in bed days related to psychiatric conditions (1,323 days) represented 80 per cent of the overall reduction in use. There were 52 less hospital admissions and the average length of stay was reduced from 21.8 days to 15.5 days. The overall reduced utilization represented an annual decreased hospital bed use of 4.5 hospital beds.

While further study is needed with respect to low-income, vulnerable populations and housing, it is clear that supported housing for individuals with a mental illness has a significant impact on emergency room visits and hospital use related to psychiatric concerns.

For additional information, please contact Linda Thomas, Vancouver Coastal Health, (604) 708-5302, e-mail: linda.thomas@vch.ca.

The Canadian Housing Information Centre: A Resource for Housing Researchers

Whether you are looking for housing statistics on seniors, reports on renovation rates, or papers on housing policy, CMHC's Canadian Housing Information Centre (CHIC) offers the most comprehensive and current information on housing and community development in Canada. You can find materials on a wide range of topics relating to housing, including new construction techniques, housing design options, new technologies for the home, Healthy Housing™, the homebuying process, mortgage insurance, energy efficiency, housing affordability and housing finance.

In addition to collecting books, journals, magazines, reports, and studies on all aspects of housing from Canada, the U.S. and internationally, CHIC is also a repository for all documents published by CMHC back to its beginnings in 1946. This includes research reports, pamphlets, publications, videos, house plans, annual reports, and images.

CHIC also has an extensive Photo Library which is devoted to collecting and providing access to images related to housing matters. The image collection includes slides, photographs, negatives and digital images dating back to the early days of CMHC. You will find images focusing on building science, construction technology, native housing, moisture and mold issues, retirement residences, housing in other countries, and much more.

CHIC is located at 700 Montreal Rd in Ottawa. Staff are available Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. EST to assist researchers with any request for information. They can supply factual information (such as an address, a definition, statistical data,

bibliographic citations, or telephone numbers), prepare reading lists and customized bibliographies, provide referrals to other housing experts and organizations, and search for images in the Photo Library. They can also instruct you on the use of CHIC's resources, including the online library catalogue, reference materials, indexes and research databases.

Researchers can do their own searching as well, using the online resources found in the Library section of the CMHC website. The main online resource for finding material is the Library Catalogue www.chic-catalog.cmhc.ca. Here, you can search the entire collection (excepting images, which are only accessible by staff through the Photo Library), by subject, keyword, title, author and more.

Other online housing research tools available on the website are Current Housing Research, which lists ongoing research projects by CMHC, the Acquisitions List, which shows you the newest material acquired by CHIC, as well as listings of housing journals, magazines, research reports and videos, bibliographies on popular housing topics, and compilations of Internet sites with a focus on housing.

The material in the library can be consulted on site,

borrowed through your local library through the interlibrary loan service (with some exceptions as some materials are no-loan), or downloaded from the catalogue where electronic versions are available.

CHIC can be contacted by phone at (613) 748-2367 or 1 800-668-2642 (ask for the library), by fax at (613) 748-4069 or by e-mail at chic@cmhc-schl.gc.ca.



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Knowledge Mobilization in the Social Sciences: Turning Research into Action



**University
of Victoria**

York University and the University of Victoria established a unique Knowledge Mobilization (KM) Unit in 2005, the first in Canada to facilitate knowledge transfer in the social sciences and humanities.

The project is funded by both universities, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research and is intended to serve as a pilot for knowledge transfer for university research in the social sciences and humanities across Canada. The goal of this initiative is to develop a culture of partnership between the universities and researchers and decision-makers in government, community organizations, labour and professional associations, in order to assist in the development of public policy, professional practice and social programming.

The Unit works in the same way as a technology transfer office to bring research results to government policy makers and social service agencies. Canadian academic research institutions have a long history of successfully transferring research with commercial potential to private sector partners in order to bring new technology-based products and services to market for the benefit of consumers. Most academic institutions provide their technology-based researchers with technology transfer services as part of a broader knowledge exchange strategy.

Although the social sciences and humanities represent more than 50 per cent of researchers at Canadian academic institutions and many researchers in the social sciences and humanities are working with non-university partners, no systematic service exists in any Canadian university to use the results of research in the social sciences and humanities outside of the university. Research in the social sciences and humanities does have the potential to create cultural, social and economic benefits, as shown when a researcher has worked with a non-academic organization to affect decision-making.

However, these benefits are only occasionally realized since there is no institutional mechanism to mobilize this knowledge and bring it to the attention of people and organizations that can use it in decision-making. Engaging social planners and policy makers in the design and funding of academic research will ensure that the research results are relevant to their needs and may be used in more effective and efficient decision-making. Furthermore, the KM Unit of each university will seek to combine resources so that research and researchers at both institutions will be made available to local social planners and other decision makers.

The KM Unit presents a number of opportunities for housing researchers in particular. The Unit consists of two components: a knowledge broker who matches up social agencies and government policy makers; and Internet tools that allow key stakeholders and government policy makers to identify academic research and researchers of interest. The Unit plans to: provide a database with researcher and organization profiles; host online discussion forums; and provide broadband communications services for a cost through the ABEL project (www.abelearn.ca).

There is also an opportunity to enhance communications between housing researchers and policy makers through the KM Unit's research translation service. As well, the KM Unit can work with its partner universities and community groups to increase the interest in the National Housing Research Committee (particularly in York Region and Victoria).

For additional information, please contact David Phipps, York University, (416) 736-5813, e-mail: dphipps@yorku.ca



Statistics Canada Survey Shows Higher Energy Costs Fuelled Household Spending in 2005

Data from Statistics Canada's 2005 Survey of Household Spending (SHS) were released on Dec. 12th, 2006. The survey collected data from a sample of more than 21,000 private households throughout Canada. Personal interviews were conducted in early 2006 to gather detailed information on spending patterns. The survey provides information on how much Canadians are spending on housing, cars, computers, cellphones and hundreds of other detailed categories. There is also information on dwelling characteristics and household facilities and equipment.

The survey found that higher energy prices fuelled the biggest gain in household spending in eight years as Canadians allocated more of their household budget to gasoline and utilities. The average spending on shelter increased 3% to \$12,610 in 2005 mostly due to a 5% rise in energy spending. There was also a 6% increase in property taxes, which rose to \$1,530 on average. Shelter includes payments for principal accommodation and also other accommodation such as vacation homes and accommodation while travelling.

Homeowners with mortgages spent \$19,320, or 22% of their total expenditures, on shelter. While renters also spent about 22% of their total expenditure the amount was only \$8,720. Homeowners without a mortgage spent approximately the same amount as renters (\$8,420) however that amount was just 12% of their total expenses.

The highest average spending on shelter was \$17,690 per household in the Northwest Territories. (Since 1999, the SHS has included households in the Northern territories in every odd numbered year. The 2005 data in this release represent data for the 10 provinces and the territories. The 2004 data for Canada include the 10 provinces only.)

The one-fifth of Canadian households with the lowest income spent about \$22,040 in 2005. Of this, almost 51% went to food, shelter and clothing. Personal income taxes claimed close to 4% of their budget. In contrast, the top fifth of households spent an average of \$135,380 in 2005. They allocated about 27% of their budgets to food, shelter and clothing, while almost 29% went to personal income taxes. These proportions were similar to 2004. Note that 68% of households in the lowest-income quintile had only one person compared to 4% for the highest quintile.

For additional information, or to enquire about concepts, methods or data quality, contact Client Services (toll-free 1 888-297-7355 or (613) 951-7355; income@statcan.ca), Income Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

Average spending per household														
	Canada	NL	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	YT	NT	NU
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Shelter	12,614	8,415	9,652	10,097	9,074	9,715	15,135	9,997	9,924	13,137	13,899	11,428	17,692	10,027
Principal accommodation	11,745	7,711	9,042	9,465	8,478	9,217	13,953	9,206	9,156	12,168	13,089	10,447	16,428	8,987
Rented living quarters	2,460	1,052	1,882	1,744	1,310	2,564	2,661	1,554	1,377	2,142	2,948	2,749	3,708	4,845
Owned living quarters	7,146	4,220	4,636	5,295	4,704	5,110	8,864	5,656	5,076	7,345	8,328	4,988	8,393	2,428
Water, fuel and electricity	2,140	2,440	2,524	2,427	2,464	1,542	2,428	1,997	2,704	2,681	1,812	2,709	4,328	1,715
Other accommodation	869	704	610	632	596	498	1,182	791	768	969	811	981	1,264	1,039
Traveller accommodation	558	496	462	403	378	360	684	488	528	646	623	831	971	552

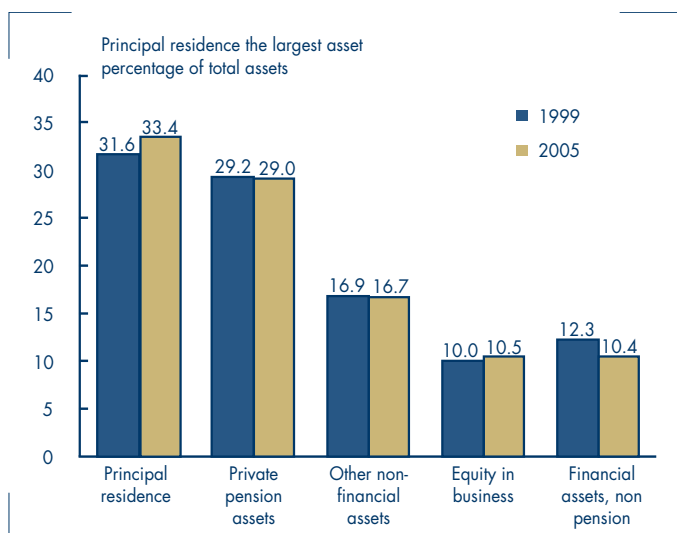
2005 Data from the Survey of Financial Security Now Available

On Dec. 7th, 2006 Statistics Canada released the results of the 2005 Survey of Financial Security (SFS).

Conducted between May and July 2005, the SFS offers comprehensive information on the assets and debts of families and individuals in Canada. The survey sheds light on how wealth is distributed, the extent to which it is concentrated, the forms in which it is held and how these are changing over time in the context of an aging population and an evolving economy. Prior to the 2005 SFS, the most recent survey results were for the year 1999. The 1999 survey introduced a new methodology to measure pension wealth. The 2005 SFS collected new information on the distribution of assets held in registered plans and mutual funds and on retirement status.

Following a trend observed in the housing market for the last few years, the value of homes increased substantially. Between 1999 and 2005, the real estate market experienced strong growth with historically low interest rates. New houses were built and the value of existing homes increased. The results found that the median net worth of Canada's estimated 13.3 million family units (economic families and unattached individuals) amounted to \$148,400 in 2005, a 23.2 per cent increase from 1999, after adjusting for inflation.

The combination of a strong real estate market and favourable economic conditions, as well as a rebound in the Canadian stock market, contributed to the overall increase.



The most important asset of Canadian families was their principal residence, accounting for 33.4 per cent of total assets.

In 2005, 61.9 per cent of family units owned their home, up from 59.6 per cent in 1999. The proportion of family units owning their home increases with age. The proportion was lowest for family units where the age of the major income recipient was less than 35 years and highest for those aged 55 to 64. The median value of the principal residence for homeowners, as estimated by the homeowners themselves, was \$180,000.

	Median value	Owners with mortgage on residence
	\$	%
All family units	180,000	55.1
Under 35	165,000	88.5
35 to 44	199,000	81.2
45 to 54	186,500	59.6
55 to 64	180,000	38.5
65 and older	163,400	12.0

Incidence of ownership of principal residence, proportion with mortgages

Another significant change in the composition of assets between 1999 and 2005 was the growth in the amount invested in real estate such as cottages, timeshares, rental properties and other commercial properties. The aggregate amount in this type of real estate was roughly 1.8 times larger in 2005 than in 1999 amounting to almost \$481 billion from \$266 billion, in constant 2005 dollars. This was by far the largest rate of growth of any single asset.

For additional information, or to enquire about concepts, methods or data quality, contact Client Services (toll-free 1 888-297-7355 or (613) 951-7355; income@statcan.ca), Income Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

Housing Researchers to Benefit from Market Analysis Centre's Enhanced Surveys and Analysis

The Market Analysis Centre (MAC) at CMHC provides researchers, government analysts, public administrators as well as the housing industry (renters, property managers, appraisers, developers, lending institutions and real estate professionals) with the latest Canadian housing market information. MAC's comprehensive statistics bring together a wealth of current and historical data as well as narrative summaries to help users identify and react to trends and social issues. Numerous tables provide users with information on housing starts, completions, and dwellings under construction, as well as market absorption, rental market conditions, mortgage loan approvals, interest rates, estimated households served through social housing programs, and demographic data. MAC tracks information for local, provincial, regional and national markets and for all kinds of homes: new and resale homes, retirement homes and condominiums.

As the result of consultations with clients as well as extensive research on alternative methodologies and pilot testing of survey instruments, MAC developed a number of enhancements to its information products. Changes have been and are being made to both data collection and analysis and forecast information. The introduction of these changes began in 2006, and throughout 2007 MAC will continue to enhance a number of its products to offer more comprehensive and timely information on various markets. Information will now be available on a larger segment of the secondary rental market, and the condominium and rental markets. In addition, there will be new information covering renovation expenditures.

MAC has introduced and will be introducing four new product enhancements in 2006 and 2007:

- **Secondary Rental Market Information:** In December 2006, editions of MAC's rental market reports were enhanced to cover not only row and apartment rental units, but also the secondary rental market, which includes apartment condominiums, single, semi-detached, and duplex units in a number of major centres across Canada. When fully introduced this year, CMHC's expanded reports will provide rental market information covering close to 100 per cent of the rental market in these major centres.

- **Spring Rental Market Survey:** Starting in April 2007, MAC will be conducting a rental market survey, with reports to be published in June. This survey will provide higher-level information on key rental market indicators, such as vacancy rates and rents. This will give users access to more timely information on market trends. The April survey is in addition to CMHC's Rental Market Survey in October, which is reported on in December.
- **Annual Renovation Expenditure Survey:** Beginning in the spring of 2007, MAC will be publishing the results of a new annual survey that will track the renovation market in ten major centres. The survey report will include information about spending on different types of home renovation projects.
- **Publications to Cover Additional Centres:** Over the next year, MAC will be adding Abbotsford, Kingston, Peterborough, Barrie, Guelph and Brantford to market analysis reports covering major centres in Canada. These centres will now be covered in the *Housing Market Outlook*, *Housing Now*, and *Rental Market Report* publications.

These enhancements provide researchers and the housing industry with greater knowledge about the rental and renovation markets. As well, the addition of other housing centres provides consistent coverage of all of Canada's major centres.

MAC can be found online at
cmhc.ca/en/inpr/homain/index.cfm.



Best Practice Guides: Research Results in the Hands of Builders and Designers

Whether it is improving the durability of building envelopes, reducing the risk of construction failures, or making more informed design decisions, CMHC's series of Best Practice Guides (BPGs) on building technology offer user-friendly, detailed information based on sound research and practical experience.

Produced by CMHC's Policy and Research Division, these Guides provide clear, cost-effective information for architects, contractors, engineers, developers and other building professionals. The Guides are a synthesis, not just a collection, of research findings, which take into account all of the elements that make a building work. CMHC has the expertise to conduct this synthesis due to its unique position in the housing research community.

Under the direction of CMHC, the Guides are written by technical building science writers and vetted by codes and standards professionals. They are illustrated and peer-reviewed by members of the construction industry and provide a series of details based on sound research that can be used by architects, builders and engineers. The BPGs put this knowledge right into the hands of the builders and designers who need it.

The format is easy to use. The Guides come in a binder with metric and imperial measurements, wall details with explanations, and specifications. They include a CD-ROM, which enables users to download CAD drawings in DWG and DXF formats, in English

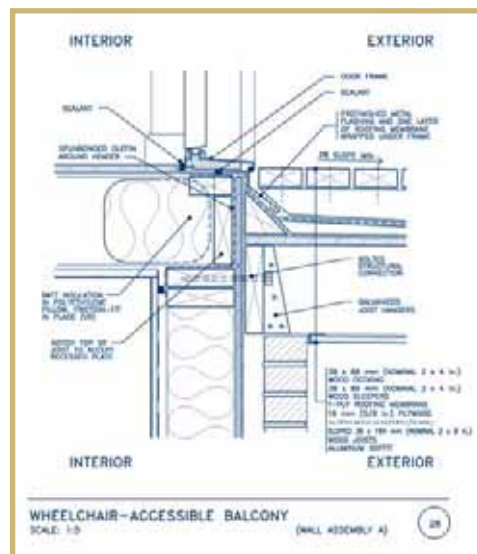
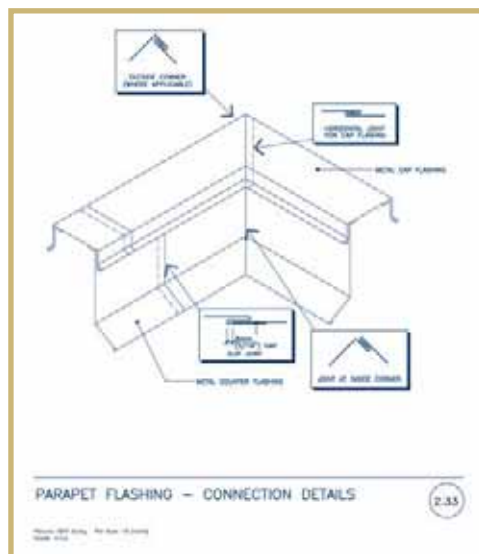
and French, and to adapt them for their own use. Specification files save building designers time and money, allowing them to prepare construction documents quickly and with the level of detail needed to ensure that designs are built to quality standards.

The results are: increased energy efficiency, improved affordability due to reduced life cycle costs and increased building durability and sustainability.

The following BPGs are available:

- *Glass and Metal Curtain Walls*
- *Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems*
- *Fire and Sound Control in Wood Frame, Multi-family Buildings*
- *Architectural Precast Concrete: Walls and Structure — Revised*
- *Brick Veneer Steel Stud*
- *Brick Veneer Concrete Masonry Unit Backing*
- *Flashings*
- *Wood Frame Envelopes*
- *Wood-Frame Envelopes in the Coastal Climate of British Columbia*

The Best Practice Guides are available in French or English for CAN \$89 each plus GST and shipping and can be obtained online through CMHC's Order Desk www.cmhc.ca, or by calling 1 800-668-2642.



Helping People “Age in Place”

By Margaret Polanyi

It's being called a “home within a lab”—a cutting-edge Canadian facility that will provide a home-like setting where researchers can create and test new tools to help older people and those with disabilities stay at home longer and more safely.

The Home Environment Laboratory in the heart of Toronto's “Discovery District” will resemble a typical single-storey dwelling. It will be used to study the challenges people face in their homes and to test artificial intelligence and other approaches that can support “aging in place.”

To be located at the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute (Toronto Rehab), the lab is part of iDAPT (Intelligent Design for Adaptation, Participation

and Technology), a unique rehabilitation research facility now being developed. iDAPT is a \$36-million research initiative of Toronto Rehab.

“Research in the Home Environment Lab will focus on sustaining independent living, as well as easing the burden of care for family caregivers,” says Dr. Geoff Fernie, Toronto Rehab's Vice President, Research, who is leading iDAPT in collaboration with the University of Toronto (U of T) and investigators at more than eight other academic institutions.

continued on next page



Bird's-eye view of the proposed “Home Environment Laboratory”

The home environment lab, slated to open in 2009, will be a “shared resource” for researchers across Canada and beyond—and a testing ground for Toronto Rehab researchers, who have a strong track record in developing advanced systems and products that will help more people continue to live in their homes as they age.

Consider, for example, a new home-based computer system that “prompts”—or talks—people with dementia through the task of hand washing. The “talking” bathroom is also outfitted with a computer screen to provide video cues. Ultimately, the system will also be used for other activities, such as dressing and cooking.

“Often when a person gets moderate to severe levels of impairment, they are taken out of their home and put into a care facility,” says Dr. Alex Mihailidis, who leads the Toronto Rehab-U of T team developing the prompting system. “We are using artificial intelligence to support aging in place.”

The researchers are working on a fall-detection system that uses computer vision to detect when a person has fallen and verbally interacts with them to determine if they need help.

“Our long-term goal is a complete intelligent/wellness environment that is seamlessly fitted into the home,” says Dr. Mihailidis. He envisions a future where homes learn and adapt to the habits of occupants, assisting everyone from people with cognitive impairments and mobility challenges to those “who just can’t find their keys.”

Toronto Rehab’s home environment lab will advance a range of research, including current efforts to devise better ways to lift and move people at home. Advanced technologies in computer vision, probabilistic modelling and decision-making, machine learning, and computational linguistics will be studied and developed, along with corrective prompting systems. A suspended grid will assist the development and testing of ubiquitous computer approaches.

Interestingly, the home will not be particularly well-designed or accessible. “We prefer to use a difficult living space so that the mobility devices we develop actually work in the real world where space is often limited and stairs are frequently encountered,” says Dr. Fernie. With functional plumbing and wiring—and a bathroom window covering—people will be able to live there and test innovations. Overhead will be an (accessible) observation gallery.

Invaluable contributions from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Ontario Innovation Trust, Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation, U of T, the Toronto Rehab Foundation and corporate partners have laid the foundation for the development of iDAPT and the future of rehabilitation research. Toronto Rehab is Canada’s largest provider of adult rehabilitation services.

For more information, please visit www.iDAPT.com or contact Dayle Levine, iDAPT Project Manager, Toronto Rehab, at (416) 597-3422 (ext. 7602) or Levine.dayle@torontorehab.on.ca.

Filling the Gap: Supportive Housing Services and Supports for Older Adults with Mental Illness

Adequate housing is an integral component of the well-being of all individuals and a stable home has been recognized as an important prerequisite in the mental health treatment and recovery process. Mental health systems have recently become more focused on assisting people with psychiatric backgrounds to live normal and meaningful lives in the community. A significant number of older people have a serious mental health problem that is not a form of dementia related to their age. Many are accommodated in long-stay psychiatric wards, long-term care facilities and hostels for homeless persons. Health and housing issues for older persons are many and diverse. Few community care plans consider the special needs of this group or how they might be provided with more suitable housing.

This study examined LOFT Community Services in particular, a model supportive housing service providing support to older persons with mental health and addictions problems in a large city. Qualitative interviews were held with multiple stakeholders: older persons living in supportive housing, as well as staff and community members, and the issue was approached from a variety of perspectives: how the physical and mental health of older persons is affected by individual, community and societal factors.

The 35 older persons in this study consisted of 16 men and 19 women, who ranged in age from 55 to 89 years. They had been living in supportive housing for an average of 8.8 years. The majority of individuals were Canadian born. Those born outside Canada had immigrated at an early age. The majority had been patients of a centre for addiction and mental health (psychiatric hospitalization) and/or boarding homes prior to their current housing. A significant number of individuals previously resided in public housing. All participants suffered from serious and persistent mental illness and had a long history of previous psychiatric hospitalizations and interaction with the mental health system. The perspectives of seven of the staff working in this program as well as 20 other community stakeholders including mental health case managers, psychiatrists, academics, policy makers, housing personnel and family members were also obtained. All interviews (face-to-face and telephone) were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were then examined for possible themes and a coding scheme was developed to reflect these themes.

A number of pervasive themes that contributed to enhanced quality of life and the creation of a home included community integration, a social support network and a significant element of choice and control within the environment. This study supports other research: a vision of mental health services which are delivered in the community and champion consumer choice and integrated services. Further themes that emerged consistently throughout the client interviews included freedom, stability, social relationships, meaningful activity, flexible support, and a sense of space and belonging. These themes are also consistent with current best practices in housing in the mental health field, and this model of supportive housing that was examined demonstrated a value-based approach to housing.

The value-based approach with emphasis on psychosocial and recovery models, led to enhanced quality of life for older persons in this study. A systematic review of the literature indicated that supportive housing is cost-effective. In addition to personal benefits for clients, supportive housing resulted in cost savings to the larger system in terms of reduced 9-1-1 calls, reduced emergency room visits, and reduced hospitalizations (both for physical and mental health reasons). The evidence from both the United States and Canada demonstrates cost savings when compared to psychiatric hospitalization, long-term care settings and hostels.

The study report *More than a Building: Supportive Housing for Older Persons Living with Mental Illness* can be found at http://www.loftcs.org/acrobat_pdfs/More_Than_a_Building.pdf Hard copies can be obtained by writing to author Katherine Boydell at katherineboydell@yahoo.com

