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Future City Centre Living and The Ageing Society - Attitudes to Mixed-use Developments in UK

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ABSTRACT: The idea of city centre living has gained prominence as one of the alternatives for urban regeneration and sustainability. For a decade, planners have been searching for the right strategies and methods to bring life back to the city. Creating more mixed-use schemes is believed to be an effective strategy. This paper aims to explore the attitude towards mixed-use development in city centres and especially focuses on ‘Empty-nesters’, who are aged 55 to 75 and whose children have grown up and left home. It is confirmed by the latest census that, in common with western countries, this is an “ageing society”. Based on a survey, this paper tries to answer the question of whether a multi-function city centre is an attractive place to live for Empty nesters. A review of mixed-use developments and housing policy in Nottinghamshire was undertaken and a survey of the elderly in Nottinghamshire conducted. The gap between policy makers and householders is investigated and the need for further research into housing for Empty -nesters is suggested as a means of accomplishing a more successful mixed-use city centre and fulfilling the needs of the ageing population.

Keywords – City centre living; Empty-nester; Mixed-use development

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the last decade, urban regeneration has been instrumental in creating sustainable urban environments. Revitalizing abandoned town centres by creating more mixed-use developments in order to attract residents back to the city is now a widely practiced policy in the UK. It is believed that there are several significant positive contributions made by mixed-use schemes. First of all, they can help achieve the idea of the “compact city” through efficient land uses of higher densities and improved public transportation. Secondly, instead of creating further social segregation, it might be possible to improve the social cohesion by blending different social, income, and age groups in one living environment. Thirdly, more residents in a community may help to create a safer environment with “eyes on the street”. (Jacobs, 1961). It is believed that the creation of the right mixture is an effective approach to reduce the concentration of deprivation and manifestations of anti-social behavior. (CIH, RTPI, 2003) Most importantly, mixed-use schemes could create a more vital and viable city living style to satisfy residents with different demands, for instance, the older population. In the meantime, the emerging issue of increasing older population would result in further demands of social care services and housing provisions. Given that the elderly population will constitute over one third of the total population in the UK in the next decade, their housing needs can not be fulfilled by sheltered houses, bed-side accommodation or nursing homes. This paper aims at a specific ageing group, “empty nesters”, who are aged 55 to 75, whose children have grown up and left home. These baby-boomers are heading for a richer, healthier, longer life in comparison with their parents. A convenient, safe environment full of character, facilities, and leisure activities would have the potential to attract this generation. A better understanding of older people’s attitudes to city living is fundamental to implementing this approach. Therefore, this paper expects to explore the relationships between mixed-use schemes and city centre living and, in addition, tries to examine the potential housing demands of the older population in mixed-use development in Nottinghamshire. The potential possibility for older people to move into city centre is another attempt to examine in this paper. A better understanding of their needs and

preferences should enable us to introduce new policies to create attractive living environments for empty nesters which are safe, convenient and possess diversity.

2. CITY CENTRE LIVING AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 City Centre Living

The idea of city centre living derives from the promotion of sustainable development. Since the early 1990s, environmentally sustainable development has emerged as an important goal in urban policy. In 1994, the Department of Environment officially advocated the concept of city centre living in *Sustainable Development: the UK Strategy*. (1994) From then on, numerous pieces of research studied different aspects of city centre regeneration. Encouraging a wider range of land uses and attracting people to live in the city are the main suggestions. In addition, the government realized the importance of using the “already developed areas in the most efficient way” in contributing to a sustainable development. Pettersson, for instance, indicated that for “*creating vibrant city centres, housing is the essential ingredient.*” (Pettersson, 1996)

Despite the predominant residential trend to suburbanization, Heath (2000) argued that there is a new housing demand pattern with increasing numbers of residents returning to the city centre in places such as Boston, London, Manchester, and Sydney. Four scenarios are usually applied for inner city accommodation namely development of the infill sites, the subdivision of existing residential units, the redevelopment of brownfield sites, and the adoptive re-use of abandoned buildings. (Heath, 2000) As Angotti & Hanhardt stated, in the United States, there is a trend towards creating new residential developments by converting surplus offices and obsolete industrial buildings in business and industrial districts. (2001) In Nottingham city centre, there are a number of new apartment sites under construction to fulfill this new demand for “city centre living”. In addition, it is thought that three population cohorts are most likely to be potential residents of the city centre: students, young couples, and the third agers.

Central government policy makers have been advocating local authorities to foster the creation of lively, animated and welcoming environments in the inner city areas which include the improvement of public transport, the development of night-time recreational and cultural activities, and the installation of closed-circuit television cameras. They have underlined the governments commitment by issuing a number of planning policy guidelines (PPG's). (DoE, 1994) “*Getting the right mix*” is strongly recommended by the Urban Task Force for mixed-use projects. (Urban Task Force, 1999) To ensure mixed-use developments feasible, government policy for zoning incentives, infrastructure improvements, and tax abatements are essential. The Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) has been promoting mixed-use development as a mechanism for revitalizing town centers through the 1990s. The very first significant reference of mixed-use development was in RPG3 in 1989. (RICS, 1998) Afterwards, in 1992 and 1994, mixed-use development became a key concept in national planning policy guidance. In 1992, PPG12 first stated the need to maintain the character and vitality of town and city centers; to revitalize older urban areas; and to protect and improve residential amenities in terms of promoting sustainability. PPG6, in 1993, clearly promoted “different but complementary” uses in town centers in both daytime and nighttime. (DoE, 1993) Meanwhile, a statement made in the draft PPG13

encouraged the planning system to provide a better environment for people who choose to live near work or to use public transport. Again, in the revised PPG6 in 1996, authorities were asked to promote mixed-use developments including housing and lively street frontages by focusing on applying urban design strategies for small sites and individual buildings. (DoE, 1996) Basically, the idea of creating more mixed-use schemes in order to bring residents, back to city/town centers recognizes the role of vitality in national planning policy guidance.

At the Regional and Local level, most regional planning guidance also offers increasing encouragement to promote and retain mixed-use development by focusing on change of use residential areas and bringing buildings back into use. The first attempt at encouraging mixed-used developments was indicated in Strategic Guidance for London RPG3 in 1989. It stated: *“In many areas a mix of residential, business and other uses contributes to the character, vitality and diversity of local communities...”*(RPG3, 1989) In the Nottingham area, bringing *“forward appropriate mixed-use development will be a key element in realizing this vision and the successful regeneration of Nottingham”* was indicated in the latest Nottingham Local Plan Review in 2003. Amongst all Nottingham local authorities, Nottingham City is deeply committed to promotion and retention of mixed-use development. According to the master plan, there are 42 mixed-use development sites proposed and most of them are located in the city centre and Regeneration Zones. So far, three regeneration zones are proposed including Waterside, the South and East regeneration zones. Along with the completion of first phase of the Tram in early 2004, the City Council expects that mixed-use development sites could contribute to the location of businesses, reducing auto dependency, and furthermore, creating a sense of place.

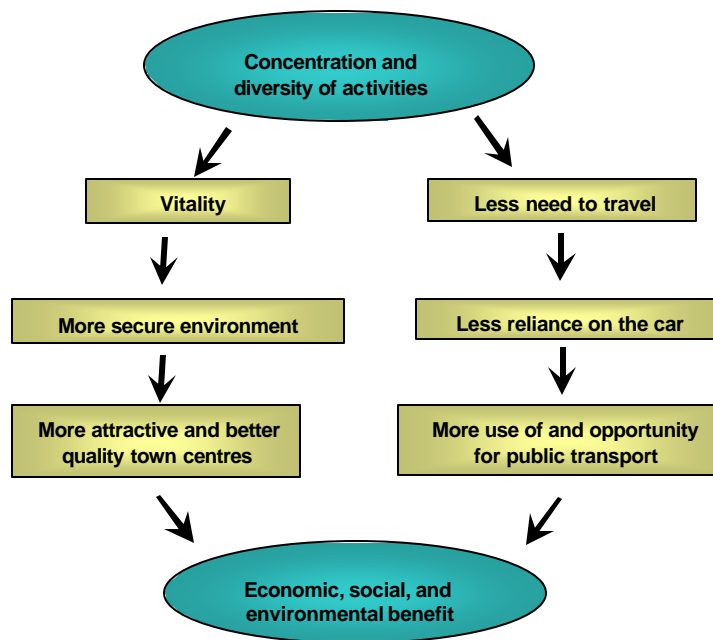
In addition, developing more attractive and liveable urban centres is the key to the government regeneration policy. Because of the manifesto, towns and cities are making comebacks as places to invest in. However, making them more liveable and attractive demands more than creating more shopping centres, offices, or luxury apartments. The real challenge is to create towns and cities places to be, not just places to pass through or to stop by. In year 2002, the Prime Minister highlighted the idea of ‘place-based’ regeneration in the Urban White Paper. Several approaches are addressed in the liveability agenda including increasing police power and enacting for Business Improvement District. The main purpose is to create an “identifiable” place for people who live there and for people to would like to visit there. In other words, to forge ‘sense of place’ which comprises natural landscape, artificial building and cultural activities is essential for liveable urban area. It is believed, through urban design mechanism, mixing land uses could certainly establish the distinctive character of towns. Recently, the Smart Growth movement applies mixed land uses in terms of blending traditional buildings in with the local cultural and natural environment to create a feeling of belonging for residents. (Jones & Hillier & Comfort, 2003)

However, safety or the fear of crime is still the main reason deterring people from living in city centers. The 1994 British Crime Survey reveals that more than one third of people feel unsafe when out after dark, and even worse, half of the people who live in the inner city have the same feeling. (Hough, 1995) In 1999, the Urban Task Force identified the key reasons against city centre living including the fear of crime, noise, and the quality of the environment. (URBED & MORI, 1999) In fact many studies have confirmed that the actual frequency of offences against the person in inner city areas is no higher than in many high-cost residential areas in the suburbs in terms of domestic burglary and vehicle crimes. The types of crime taking place in the city centres are pick pocketing, shop lifting, assaults, and

disturbances in a public place, but the public still consider the inner city an insecure place after dark. Thus, the fear of crime is the most important obstacle to overcome in the promotion of city centre living.

2.2 Mixed-Use Development and the Safer City Centre

There are many studies focusing on measures to create safer city centers. From the psychological perspective, as Walmsley (1995) indicates, it is believed that there is a relationship between ‘place’ and ‘behavior’. The influence of ‘place’ can, to a certain degree, modify people’s behavior. Hence, the most effective way to reduce the fear of crime and further crime reduction is to create or change the ‘place’ itself. The idea of adopting a wider range of land uses, in other words introducing mixed-use developments into city centres is believed to be a necessary, although controversial approach. Department of Environment stated the contributions of creating mixed-use development from economic, social and environment perspective in the following diagram. (DoE, 1995)



Benefit of Mixed-use development

Source: DoE, 1995

The earliest but most famous statement in relation to mixed-use development was made by Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. (Jacobs, 1961) Later on, the protagonists of ‘eyes on the street’ advocated a mixed-use development in most government planning policies in the UK, especially over the last ten years. According to Pettersson (1996), ‘*the key to safer and economically robust central districts would appear to rely on the success of these centres to attract and retain a diversity of people using their district throughout the day and the evening, into the night.*’ Most of them emphasize that natural surveillance in a diverse and lively neighbourhood is essential for safer city centre living. (Fowler, 1992; Sucher, 1995; Oc & Tiesdell, 1997) Oc and Tiesdell (1997) strongly argue that the concept of integrated environment with mixed land use helps to create safer

environments. Despite a lot of doubts about the actual effects of natural surveillance, it is widely accepted that people do feel safer living in physically diverse areas with higher density and mixed land uses. (Fowler, 1992) Therefore, at the local level, the potential for increasing safety through the development of mixed uses has been stated explicitly in local plans and planning guidance, usually relating to the city or town centre environment. In this paper, this effective approach will not only be reconfirmed, but also, extended to identify potential residents for these mixed-use areas and, their needs and preferences.

3. The Ageing Society

3.1 Defining Empty-Nesters – The Demographic changes

It is no doubt about that it is an ageing millennium. Because of the changing population structure and social values, the older population in western countries has transformed from a minority to a majority. The latest demographic census confirmed that the increase in the older population in England from the end of the twentieth century to the early twenty-first century is significant. (ONS, 2002) It is obvious that the population in the UK is becoming older and by the year 2040, half of the population will be over the age of 45. Most social scientists have been aware of the “ageing society” phenomenon and started to notice the changes in ageing population. They also intend to find a proper definition of this changing older population. Old age today in British is still defined in terms of official retirement age, which is 65 for male and 60 for female, although more and more people intend to leave working force early. (Heywood, Oldman, Means, 2002) Other researches in studying the elderly population would define fifty-five as the start of the third age. (Arber & Evandrou, 1993, HMSO, 1994, ONS, 2000) It is believed that a broader definition of older people in terms of age range, socio-economic background and cultural difference would be more appropriate. Just as Heywood et. al indicate that ‘later life’ would be a better term for old age describing a phase in life begins around 50. It represents a later part of life and covers all range of cultural social varieties. (2002)

A study done by Gilleard and Higgs (2002) has pointed out the significant difference between today’s older people and their parents. Defined as ‘the third age’, epitomised by the baby boomers, the ageing cohort of today and tomorrow has greater wealth, a larger income, a better quality of life, a higher educational background, occupies a higher social class and has a better social welfare provision including health care. Since the 1950s, the average number of working hours per week has decreased by nearly 10 percent. In other words, people have more time for leisure activities and holidays. (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002) However, Gilleard and Higgs only focus on ‘retired’ people in their research. Hence, in this research of third agers, we define and expand upon a sub-cohort of ‘Empty nesters’. We define them as ‘aged 55 to 75, whose children have grown up and left home’. They have all the characteristics of the third age and ‘no children’. With the children having left home, the empty nesters have completely new life style with more time, wealth, energy and less need for accommodation space. Moreover, living independently is very important for them. Facing the fact that they may be the majority of the population in the near future and that their needs for life will no longer be satisfied by simply social care, there is a need for further research of this new cohort.

3.2 Where do the Empty Nesters reside?

It is believed that the choice of household is mainly dominated by age. Peace and Holland indicated that “the movements of households through a series of dwelling places has been conceptualized in relation to the requirements of the ordinary life cycle.” (Peace & Holland, 2001) As people grow older, their housing choices reflect aspects of social diversity and individual housing histories. The relationship between gender, housing, and quality of life in old age is related to a range of social, psychological, and physiological issues. Hence, in trying to explore the living patterns of empty nesters, a proper understanding of their social, psychological and physiological background is essential. Furthermore, ageing becomes one of the challenges in the UK since the growing numbering of elderly simply means more resources of housing, health, leisure, mobility, and social welfare demanded. (Jagger, 2002)

Today’s British population approaching their sixty are the post-war baby boomers. They have very different life experiences as their parents- higher life standard, more freedom of movement, more exposure of cultures, fewer children, more working opportunities, and better social benefit care. In other words, they are more independent. Hence, based on these differences, they not only play a very important role in the society in the near future due to the large amount but also create a special living culture. First of all, unlike the traditional parents, they encourage children to be independent and leave family when grow up. Secondly, most research shows that more and more people intend to delay their retire age due to the healthier and longer life. With their own jobs and more savings, old people are more independent and less relying on their children. Besides, they are more likely to have their own accommodations than before. In other words, life quality becomes essential for their independent life. There is no national open-ended quality of life question for older people carried out. However, many individual authorities have asked such a question of a representative sample of their residents, which can be analysed by age of respondent to understand the views of older people. For instance, a recent survey carried out by MORI reveals key priorities for older people’s life independence are bus services, shopping facilities, traffic and road and pavement maintenance and, interestingly, among those aged 55-64, better leisure and sports facilities. (DETR, 2001) In addition, in a study of housing satisfaction of older people in Scotland Leather identified that the key priorities for older people’s choice of dwelling as safety, security, regular public transportation, and accessible shopping. (Leather, 2000)

According to the changing of population structure, socio-economic situation and values of life, four possible interacted trends of empty nesters accommodation in relation to changes of their living patterns could be concluded as following,

➤ Smaller in size- bungalow is the most popular kind

After the departure of children, empty nesters might move from family house with three or four bedrooms into somewhere smaller and easier to manage. In Nottingham, a recent study, “The South Nottinghamshire older persons Housing Needs Study”, identified the demand for the provision of bungalows instead of the existing sheltered schemes, with households preferring to remain in general needs properties for as long as possible. (Anchor Trust, 2002) In fact, in the City there are currently in the region of 650 people aged 60 and over waiting to move from three or more bedroom general needs housing into bungalows, the likelihood being that these family homes are currently under occupied.

➤ Single in household

It is confirmed by Rhoden that there is a growing number of elderly households and there is also a growing trend for older people to live alone. (1998) Two reasons for the increasing trend of older people living alone stated by Balchin are the increase in divorce rate in recent years and the low remarriage rate of elderly divorced people. (1995)

➤ Owner-occupier in tenure

By the year of 2001, nearly three quarter of older people would own their own home. (Forrest et al, 1995) As mentioned above, today's British old people are very different from decades ago. They prefer to own their houses and intend to stay in the general need housing for as long as possible. Anchor's recent survey, conducted by MORI, showed that 66% of older homeowners wished to stay in their existing homes, while 30% preferred moving on options, mainly a move to smaller accommodation. From cost effective perspective, it is also the government policy to advocate older people to stay in their own home if possible.

➤ Close to town or city centre in location

Empty nesters who covet their independence also desire a more active social life. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that empty nesters will choose smaller but better quality accommodation located near shopping, leisure, and cultural facilities with easy access to social and medical facilities. In fact, the desire of more convenient living location of older people is also confirmed in a older person's housing needs survey by Scottish Homes is: '*For those considering a move, ground floor properties with easy access to shops, other facilities and public transport were preferred.*' (2001)

To further examine the four tendencies of older people's residency and the interrelation between ageing society and mixed-use development. The question of whether older people's housing improve or exacerbate the practice of mixed-use development is another agenda in the following sections.

4. THE SURVEY – Older people's attitude toward Mixed-use development and city centre living

There are several studies of older people's residential preferences at a National level or focusing on London area. It is disappointing that very few studies have been done regarding to older people's housing issue, especially the rising group of empty nesters in East Midlands. The necessity of conducting survey studies to obtain up-to-date information from occupiers and policy makers is pressing. Thus as one part of the ongoing PhD research project in the University of Nottingham, this paper extracts several relevant survey findings and indicates in the following sections.

4.1 The Objectives and The Methodology

According to the latest national census in 2002, the East Midlands will have a significant increase in its elderly population in this decade in comparison with England as a whole. Most boroughs in Nottinghamshire will have at least a 10% increase in population aged from 55 and up while the total population will decrease by 0.42% by the year 2011. Nottingham City Centre, although one of the United Kingdom's leading retail shopping centers, had until recently been from "losing residents" over the past few decades. However, recently, there has been a re-population of Nottingham city center due to the focus on regeneration, security

and public transport. Therefore, Nottingham provides a good research base to clarify the possibility of a city center attracting elderly residents.

In this research, both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied in order to obtain a better understanding. The research explores both the level of large-scale, structural features of social life and small-scale, behavioural aspects. (Bryman, 1995) The main objectives of this survey was to understand the living conditions preferences and expectations of older people, identify the attractions and deterrents of mixed-use development in the city center, and to discover the acceptance or otherwise of city center living.

4.2 The **Research** Findings

In order to gain further understanding of older people's, especially empty nesters', preference in relation to housing and mixed-use development, in the first phase, a postal questionnaire survey was conducted in Nottinghamshire (including Nottingham city, Broxtowe, Gedling, Rushcliffe, and Ashfield) from September 2002 to December 2002. The selected wards were based on concentric circles from the city center. The three areas were defined as "core area", "inner suburban" and "commuting village". There was a low response rate (only 12.5%) to the postal questionnaire. However focus groups were held to explore the patterns emerging from the questionnaire on the understanding of empty nesters' perception and expectations of mixed-use development. In addition, to obtain an overview of local authority planning policies toward mixed-use projects and provisions for an ageing population. Interviews with local authority officials were conducted.

Attitudes toward Mixed-use Development in the city centre

A report by the DTLR indicates that numbers of special groups such as single people, students, couples without children, and elder citizens have an obvious preference for living in mixed use environments. (DTLR, 2001) Studies have shown that older people prefer to live in their own houses rather than move in with their children or into residential care. (Arber & Ginn, 1991; Grundy, 1999) This tendency has become more clear in the past two decades. For instance, in 1971, nearly 42% of women aged over 85 lived in two or three generational households. In 1991, the percentage was down to 21%. Therefore, in responding to this finding, over fifty percent of respondents in our survey agree with the idea of creating more mixed-use projects in the city or town centre. Although the younger respondents find mixed-use environment living more acceptable, in the age group 50 to 60, only 5 out of 58 disagree with the idea of creating more mixed-use projects in the city or town centres.

In our survey, although the majority of respondents (empty nesters or not) have a positive response towards mixed-use development, the further T-test analysis indicates, with a P value of 0.039 (<0.05), that there is a significant difference statistically between empty nesters and non-empty nesters on this issue. A significant number of empty nesters chose "no opinion" as their answer. **T**he majority of respondents who answered "no opinion" are aged over 70. They are probably not very familiar with the idea of mixed-use development and may not consider a move at this time in life. The next question tried to explore the willingness of elder people, especially empty nesters, to move to a mixed-use environment. The outcome was quite positive. About 44.4%, 64 out of 144, respondents intend to agree with the idea of moving to a mixed-use area and were interested in city centre living once they become empty nesters.

Main Attractions and Deterrents of Mixed-use Development in city centre

For most of the last century, as Sir Peter Hall has pointed out, cities represented not a place for progress but the setting for decline, physical decay and social disorder. (Hall, 1992) Indeed, these three deterrents are still believed to be the main problems in the heart of urban areas. Despite much research regarding the attractions and deterrents of mixed-use development and city centre living, there has been a limited updated survey examining the relative factors in people's decision for residential location. A recent survey carried out by Tim Heath regarding attitudes toward city centre living confirmed that the top three attractions of city centre living includes, the proximity to work, convenience for daily living, and easy access to leisure/ entertainment facilities. The top three deterrents, on the other hand, are noise, the busy pace of city living, and prefer alternative locations. (Heath, 2001) The survey also emphasized that city-centre living would not be appropriate or desirable for everyone. Based on this finding, for empty nesters, the top three attractions of city centre living ranked by respondents in this survey are convenience, housing quality and safety. It is interesting that some respondents consider "safety" as an advantage in a mixed-use environment, which echos Jacobs and Oc's statement about "eyes on the street" and "natural surveillance" in mixed-use schemes. On the other hand, from the perspective of those who do not live in a MUD environment, noise, is perceived as the biggest problem of MUD and city centre living. For elderly people, safety is the most important factor in considering living in mixed-use developments in the city. This could include safety of housing, crime prevention, and safety of traffic. In addition, there is an encouraging tendency amongst younger empty nesters to rank city centre living higher. However, it is disappointing that "city centre" was not highly ranked by respondents to the question of most preferred area to move.

The most important finding in this survey has to be that although city-centre living might not be appropriate for everyone, it could be right for empty nesters as long as the safety and noise issues could be deal with appropriately through planning policy or urban design mechanism.

5. CONCLUSION

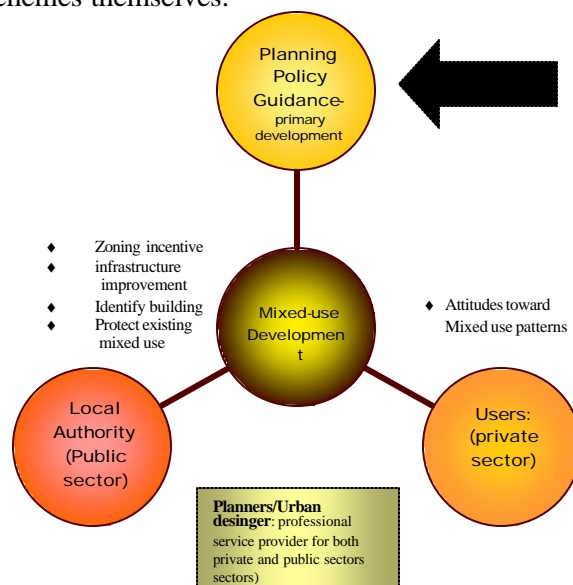
This paper discussed three dimensions of the contemporary planning agenda in relation to sustainable development. They are 'the where'-city centre, 'the who'-empty nester, and 'the what'-mixed-use development.

In this paper, the major intention is to examine the attitudes and perceptions of empty nesters, and to further confirm whether they are the potential resident group in city centres. It is confirmed from the survey that three most important elements for empty nesters in sustainable future city centre living are safety, variety, and the right mixture. In addition, many studies confirmed that attracting people back to cities has significant benefits. It could reduce the loss of countryside, promote more sustainable development patterns in inner city areas, and most importantly, transform the city centre into places people no longer wish to avoid/escape. (URBED, 1998) Heath also indicates that increasing the number of city centre residents could be a factor in achieving the three most important concerns of planning in the twenty-first century. They are to accommodate a substantial growth in household numbers, to revitalize cities, and to create more sustainable urban areas. (Heath, 2001) Therefore, the adoption of planning approaches and urban design mechanisms, i.e. creating safer open spaces by using street lighting, CCTV, and natural surveillance, could ease the fear of crime and prevent crime occurrences. With the right mixture, a diverse, vital city centre can be created. Meanwhile, to ensure the housing quality in mixed-use environments can secure a healthy city centre.

As indicated in the survey, it is affirmative that the housing preferences of today’s “young-old” are changing and they are more open to different living style. Although the city centre living and mixed-use developments might not be desirable for everyone, the positive responds from questionnaire survey confirmed the potential of this scenario. Therefore, with the empty-nester population continuously increasing, it is a good time to propose mixed-use development in the city/town centres in order to form a better city centre living style for empty nesters to choose from.

As Angotti & Hanhardt indicates, “Planners need to plan for successful mixed-use communities with the understanding that not all mixtures of uses make sense.” (Angotti & Hanhardt, 2001) Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further research in order to understand the preferred mixture of social, racial, and age groups at the local level. So far, in the Nottingham area, there is only one official research project presented by the bcal authorities regarding older persons housing needs in South Nottinghamshire in 2002. In the report, only the housing and population trends are predicted based on the latest census in Nottinghamshire. It is impossible to deliver good strategy or policy with such limited background information. Hence, it is essential to have up-to-date research of the whole Shire and covering every aspect including attitudes and preferences to provide a solid foundation for further action plans.

The diagram below illustrates the three-way partnership in a successful mixed-use development. Only when three key players cooperate and communicate well, a mixed-use development can be successful. Garlick points out that instead of promoting separate mixed-use schemes, to build a strategic framework is the priority and root for mixed-use development. (Garlick, 1999) It is believed that unless mixed-use developments are promoted within a strategic framework, the positive impact will not extend beyond the boundaries of the schemes themselves.



It is a new era for ageing population and sustainable living pattern in the urban area. There are new life styles for Empty nesters, too. Much still needs to be done to reassure the quality and safety of city/town center living and to compose a more vital and diverse environment, to attract more empty nesters to choose city centre living. Despite the urgent housing need of older persons, it seems disappointing that most boroughs have no plan to address this need.

Action plans for older person's housing are required in dealing with the need for more general housing in mixed-use schemes; most importantly, how to provide a proper housing service in response to the increasing interests of living in retirement housings, gated communities, and converted residential buildings.

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