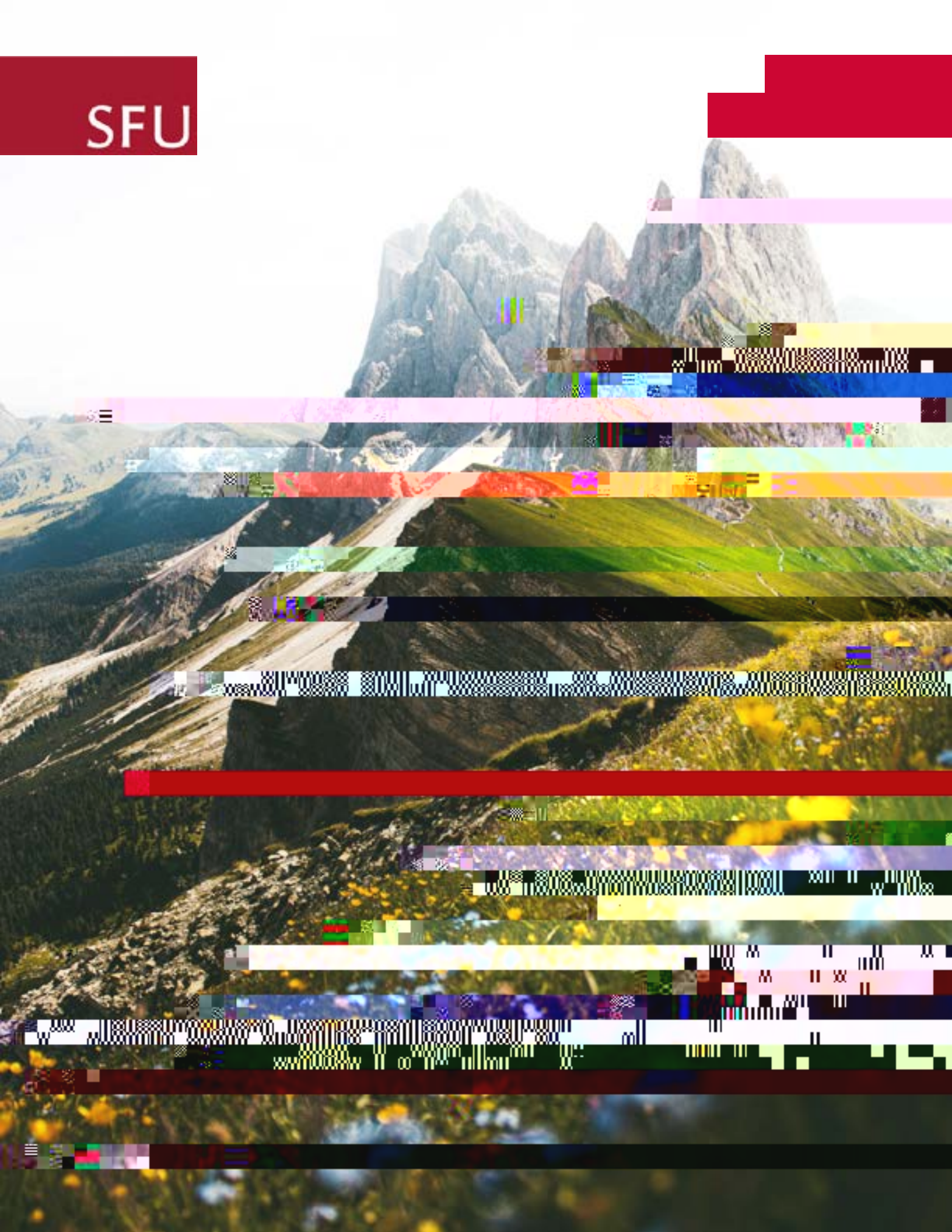


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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

chard, Université de Moncton, New Brunswick; and Dr. Michael Routledge & Kathy Henderson from Winnipeg Manitoba, as well as the United Way panel, addressed new social prescribing initiatives across Canada. The new Seniors Advocate of BC, Dan Levitt, delivered a terrific evening public lecture. The recording of the conference can be found at: <https://www.sfu.ca/grc/events/friesen/2024.html>. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to John Friesen and his family, who are the original benefactors of this event. Several other benefactors of the GRC and department were recognized at the conference, including Lorna Court, Jessie Childe, Louise Samson, Heidi Andie, as well as several faculty donors for graduate student scholarships, including Gloria Gutman, Barbara Mitchell, and myself.

It is worth noting the strong representation from BC and SFU Gerontology at the 2024 UN Open-Ended Working Group on Aging. Also spotlighted in this issue is our newest gerontology faculty member, Dr. Mei Fang, jointly appointed with Urban Studies, who has expertise in age-friendly communities targeting marginalized and vulnerable populations. Several major collaborative projects spearheaded by gerontology faculty are also prominent in this issue, including the DemSCAPE project and SWAN/MAP.

The GRC continues to forge new frontiers in research, practice, and policy in its six thematic areas: Aging and the Built Environment; Chang-

ing Demography and Lifestyles; Culture and; Population Health and Aging; Prevention of Victimization and Exploitation of Older Persons; & Technology and Aging. Numerous research and community-based projects connect organizations, academics, government, older adults, and private sectors to advance knowledge and practice. The GRC is led by the Director and Associate Director Dr. Habib Chaudhury, with core members: Research Associate & Prof. Emerita Dr. Gloria Gutman, several prolific post-doctoral fellows (Drs. John Best, Jennifer Ferris, John Pickering, Julie Beadle, and Mohammadjavad Nouri), and a highly supportive staff (Sarah Qiu, Dora Lau, and Heidi Antolick), plus a strong supporting cast of affiliate members including all gerontology faculty. The GRC Steering Committee guides the strategic initiatives and governance of the GRC and is comprised of university-wide experts in aging research as well as community leaders in the field. You can read about these in this issue and visit our website <https://www.sfu.ca/grc.html>, and other social media outlets.

One of the flagship long-term research projects of the GRC is the Canadian Longitudinal Study

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The GRC News is a print and digital magazine designed to keep readers inspired and informed about the

31st John K. Friesen Conference

Sarah Qiu

On May 23-24, 2024, the 31st John K. Friesen Conference brought together researchers, community organizations, stakeholders, students, and more. This year's theme was "Community Care and Supports for Older Adults: Inclusion, Innovation and Integration."

Dr. Suzanne Dupuis-Blanchard from the Université de Moncton presented the opening keynote address on Rx Building Community: Approach for Aging in Place. Kathy Henderson and Dr. Michael Routledge from the Manitoba Association of Senior Communities presented the keynote address on day two about Social Prescribing in Manitoba: Innovation in Community Connection.

With a focus on community support, this conference highlighted local, provincial, and national projects and resources aimed at improving the lives of older adults. In particular, social prescribing was highlighted across several sessions.

Presentations from community organizations and healthcare providers such as United Way British Columbia, L'Chaim Adult Day Centre, Seniors Services Society of BC, West End Seniors' Network, and the BC Centre for Palliative Care provided attendees with a multi-disciplinary approach to support services for older adults.

Finding the link between community services and healthcare services is key to aging in place – which is preferred by many older adults. As the cost of living increases, it will become more difficult for older adults to age in place. Brightside Community Homes Foundation is one or-

methods, statistics, and a detailed discussion before putting forth a brief conclusion at the end. We were told that, in contrast, effective communication for politicians starts with the conclusion, backs it up with a bit of evidence, and then reiterates the conclusion.

In writing for politicians, scientists must also overcome their need for 100% accuracy and their reluctance to make absolute statements. Part of this is to better convey how much trust

Introducing Dr. Mei Lan Fang: Creating Age-Friendly Living Ecosystems

Mei Lan Fang



We would like to welcome Dr. Mei Lan Fang who joins the Department of Gerontology as an assistant professor. With a joint appointment with Urban Studies, Fang's background in co-creating healthy, inclusive age-friendly cities and communities, and aging in the right place make her a great addition to the department. We interviewed Fang to learn more about her and the research she is currently engaged in.

Tell us about yourself.

I am an Assistant Professor specializing in Urban Aging within the Urban Studies and Department of Gerontology at Simon Fraser University, Canada. Additionally, I serve as a Visiting Scholar in the School of Health Sciences at the University of Dundee, Scotland. My research focuses on advancing community-based participatory research concepts, theories, and methods to co-create healthy, inclusive, and age-friendly places and environments.

What research are you currently working on?

As the Co-Lead, I'm currently working on IncludeAge, a £1.7 million project funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council.





THE ROLE OF BUILT ENVIRONMENTS FOR HEALTHY AGING

Sarah Qiu

On March 18, 2024, Dr. Lisa Lim, Assistant Professor, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and Director of the Health Design Lab at Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) presented a public lecture.

Lim’s presentation was on “The Role of Built Environments for Healthy Aging,” where she discussed how the interactions that people have with their physical environment influences their health as they age. Two healthy behaviours that are associated with healthy aging are walking and playing.

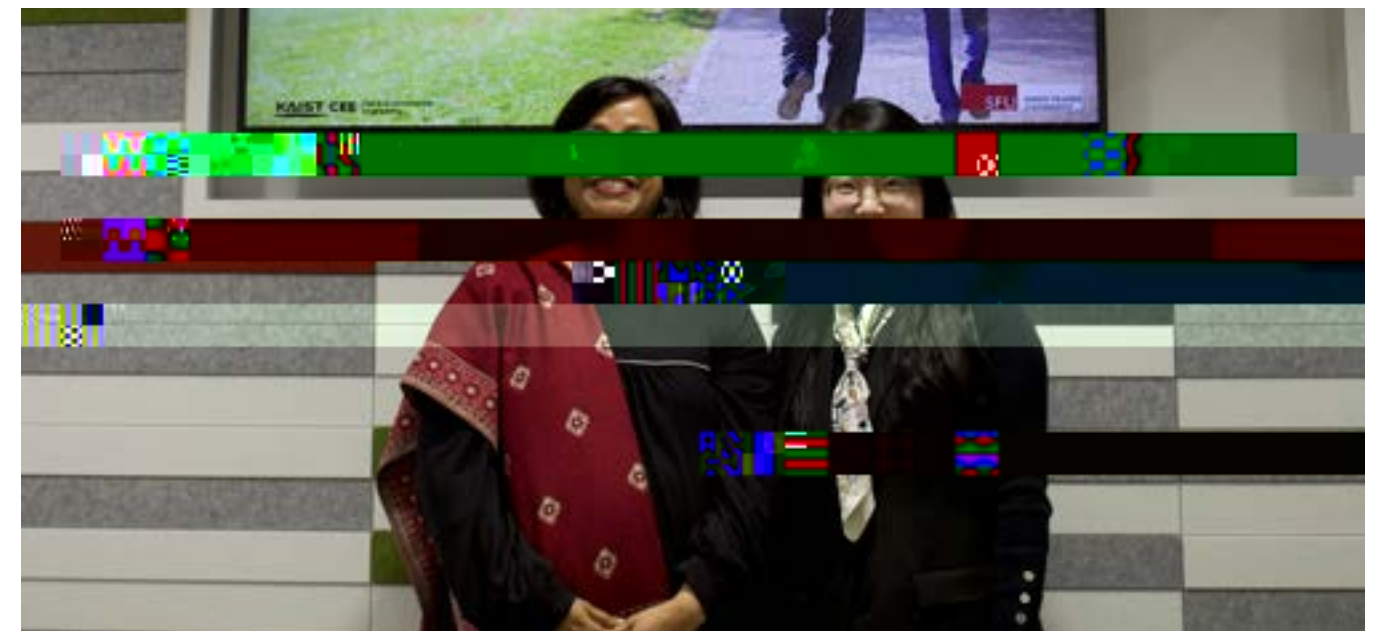
How does the built environment relate to one’s health? Existing research shows that nature is correlated with better physiological health. This is associated with the term “nature is medicine.”

Similarly, the physical design of environments and spaces can contribute to a person’s health by encouraging physical activity. Lim discusses the importance of mixed land use when designing communities to promote physical activity. By building supermarkets, schools, malls, and recreation centers in close proximity to residential

areas, people are more likely to walk to these places instead of driving there.

Lim also stressed the need for communities to have inclusive and accessible spaces to play outside of a person’s home. Based on Lim’s research in South Korea, her team looked at the use of leisure spaces across different age groups. They found that there were significantly more leisure spaces for the younger generation compared to the available leisure spaces for older adults. For leisure spaces that are preferred by both groups, such as cafes and malls, they tend to not be age-inclusive. For example, having really loud music playing in the background. Creating accessible age-inclusive spaces for all generations needs to be prioritized by the public sector.

In order to promote walking and playing amongst older adults, these spaces need to be created. Having safe and accessible streets is also necessary for people to walk to these spaces. Therefore, integrating technology with the built environment is needed to help older adults walk and play more.



Pictured (l-r): Atiya Mahmood & Lisa Lim.

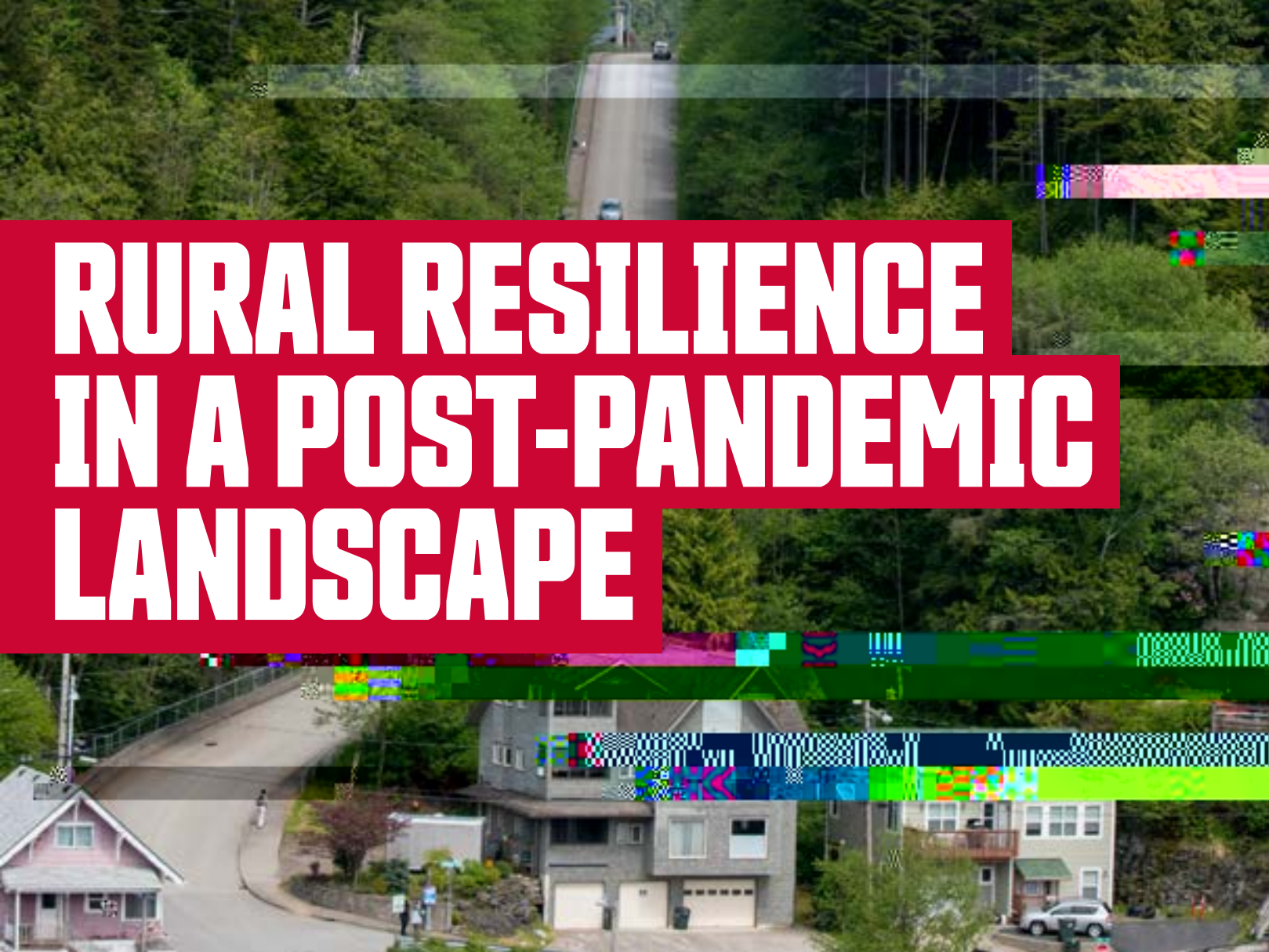
Sharing Knowledge to Connect, Collaborate and Co-Create Dementia-Inclusive Spaces for Community Access, Participation, and Engagement (DemSCAPE)

Cari Randa-Beaulieu, CPG, MA, Mitacs Graduate Intern

To meet the objectives of a Mitacs and Michael Smith Health Research BC Reach award-funded knowledge mobilization extension of the Dementia-inclusive Streets and Community Access, Participation, and Engagement (DemSCAPE) study, two World Café events were hosted in year three (2024) of the project. The DemSCAPE study identified patterns in activities outside the home by people living with dementia in the community. It also explored how the environmental features of the neighbourhood influenced participants' mobility and community participation. The community engagement events brought together researchers, trainees, advocacy organization members and municipal partners in Metro Vancouver to showcase the project findings by video and photo exhibits at two public discussion sessions called World Cafés to encourage conversations, collaborative learning and new ideas.

Knowledge mobilization, awareness-raising, and education were central to the four goals of the community engagement events. Goal 1: Provide attendees an overview of why the neighbourhood built environment is important for people living with dementia, based on research and lived experience. Goal 2: Raise awareness about the needs of people living with dementia in the community and provide guidance to municipalities and organizations in adopting the findings of this research. Goal 3: Showcase the photo

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RURAL RESILIENCE IN A POST-PANDEMIC LANDSCAPE

John Pickering

enges from the perspective of the people most affected, such as the older adults living in Port Hardy. By engaging with them through in-depth interviews, we aim to gather insights into their experiences of social isolation and loneliness, and access to healthcare during and after the pandemic.

The importance of this research lies in its potential to influence future interventions and policies. By identifying the factors contri3s. 470003Tj/TT1 1 Tf0 -

United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing

Laura Kadowaki & Kahir Lalji



Pictured (l-r): Kahir Lalji and Laura Kadowaki.

The United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA) held its fourteenth session in New York from May 20-24, 2024.

The SFU Gerontology community was well represented at the working group, including students (Isaac Adedeji), alumni (Yongjie Yon, Kahir Lalji, Laura Kadowaki, Margaret Young), affiliates (Dan Levitt), and community partners (Leslie Gaudette).

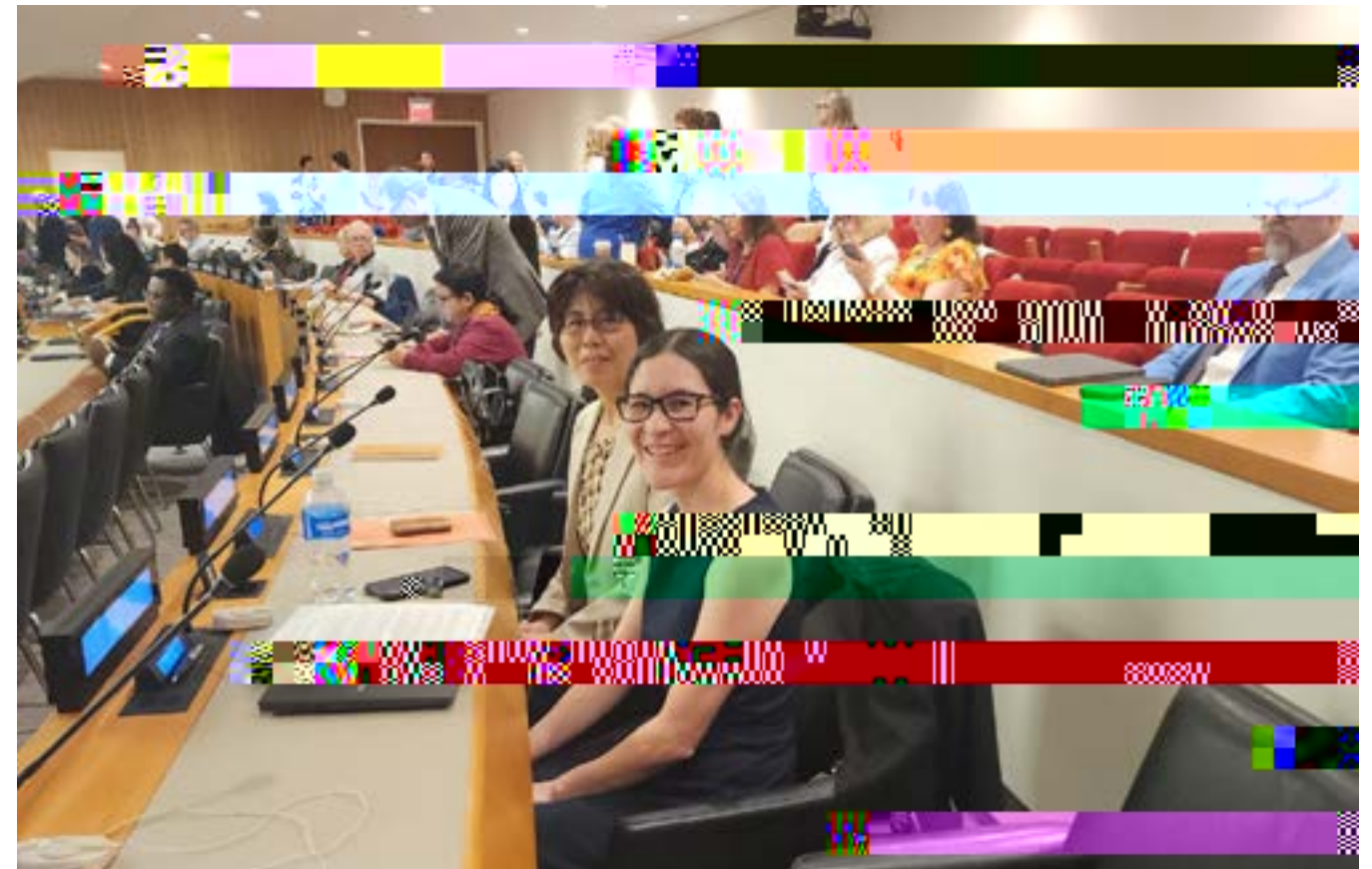
[United Way British Columbia](https://www.ilccanada.org/ccaa) is committed to ensuring seniors stay active, connected and engaged in their communities.

One way we are doing this is through our membership with the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism (CCAA - <https://www.ilccanada.org/ccaa>). The CCAA is a nation-wide social change movement to end ageism against older people while protecting and strengthening their human rights. The key priority for the CCAA is advo-

cating for a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

Kahir Lalji (Provincial Director, Government Relations & Government Programs) and Laura Kadowaki (Specialist, Research & Knowledge Mobilization) represented United Way British Columbia and the Coalition at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA). OEWGA was established in 2010 and its mandate is to consider existing international human rights frameworks for older persons and identify possible gaps and how best to address them. This year was a critical session for OEWGA, as the working group was voting on whether to adopt a draft decision identifying gaps in the protection of older persons' human rights and suggesting ways to address them.

Laura Kadowaki raised awareness about the



gaps in older person's rights to housing in an oral statement at OEWGA "While Canada is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the right to housing has been enshrined in federal housing policy through the 2019 National Housing Strategy Act, there are a growing number of older persons who are precariously housed or homeless, including older persons living in cars, storage lockers, housing without heat or electricity, or camping in the bush in subzero temperatures. Government retirement income benefits are not keeping pace with the rapidly rising costs of living, making it impossible for many low-income seniors to afford housing in current rental markets."

Read our recent report entitled [Aging in Uncertainty: The Growing Housing Crisis For BC Seniors](#) to learn more about seniors housing precarity and our recommendations to find a solution.

At the fourteenth session of OEWGA, the working group's draft decision was approved by consensus and will now be presented to the United Nations General Assembly in fall 2024. This decision is an important step forward and will allow the next phase of advocacy work for a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons to begin. It is anticipated that further work to advance the human rights of older persons and discuss the potential of a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons will continue at the Human Rights Council in Geneva and a Forum on Older Persons in New York.

#StopTalkingStartDrafting: Musings on the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Aging

Isaac Adedeji

Gerontology Alumnus Anthony Kupferschmidt Receives the 2023 SFU CERi Community-Engaged Partnership Award

Sarah Qiu



Congratulations to gerontology alumnus Anthony Kupferschmidt on receiving the [2023 SFU CERi Community-Engaged Partnership Award](#).

Kupferschmidt was the lead community partner on a Michael Smith Health Research BC funded project entitled, “Independent Senior Centres: Connecting and Supporting Older Adults in Metro Vancouver.” He is accepting this award in partnership with the Langley Senior Resources Society, the senior centre where he was the Executive Director during the completion of this project.

This work emerged from Kupferschmidt’s passion for supporting senior centres in BC and ensuring that older adults have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in research. It examined how independent, not-for-profit senior centres in Metro Vancouver impact the health and well-being of older adults in this province.

This project also provided insight on the challenges that senior centres face. As current research in this area is limited in BC and Canada, this project identified opportunities and potential strategies to ensure that senior centres continue to meet the needs of the diverse community of older adults that they serve. This work also included the co-development of a research agenda for senior centres.

Since graduating from Simon Fraser University’s Master of Arts in Gerontology program in 2009, Kupferschmidt has been actively involved in community outreach initiatives across the not-for-profit and municipal sectors to address gaps in programs and services for older adults. Kupferschmidt continues to dedicate his time to advocating for older adults and ensuring their voices are heard in research.

Read the full report on [Independent Seniors Centres](#).

Environment on Community Mobility of People Living with Visual Disabilities

Jason Fan & Kishore Seetharaman

Introduction

To better understand how the built environment shapes the community mobility of people living with visual disabilities, a scoping review was conducted under the Stakeholders' Walkability/Wheelability Audit in Neighbourhoods (SWAN) project, a sub-project under the Mobility, Accessibility, Participation (MAP) among people with disabilities partnership, to answer the following research questions:

- What aspects of the built environment affect the community mobility of persons with visual disabilities?
- How does the built environment affect the community mobility of persons with visual disabilities? This scoping review was published in Volume 12, 2024 - Issue 1 of the Urban, Planning and Transport Research Journal. The review was conducted as part of the SWAN (Stakeholders' walkability/wheelability audit in neighbourhoods) project, which is part of the larger project Mobility, Accessibility and Participation (MAP) among people with disabilities, funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

Background

In 2020, there were an estimated 1.1 billion people living with vision loss worldwide, of whom 43 million are blind (The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, 2023). For people with visual disabilities, navigating the pedestrian environment can be challenging due

to issues of spatial perceptions, cognition, decision-making and solving. Transportation planning research suggests the inaccessibility of the built environment for people with disabilities stems from the lack of attention to the diverse experiences of disability (Levine & Karner, 2023). Addressing this gap, past literature emphasized the need to explore how people with visual disabilities interact with and navigate the built environment (Boys, 2014; Parkin & Smithies, 2012). While there exists an extensive body of research on orientation and mobility in relation to people with visual disabilities, there have been no literature reviews on the influence of the outdoor built environment on their mobility in the community. The aim of this scoping review was to explore the scope and range of extant literature on the community mobility of persons with visual disabilities, focusing specifically on the influence of the outdoor built environment.

Methods

Eight databases were searched, following the process outlined by Levac et al. (2010) for conducting scoping reviews and the reporting guidelines of the PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist (Tricco et al., 2018).

Results

43 studies were included in the final review with 11 studies based on quantitative methods, 28 based on qualitative methods, and 4 employing mixed methods, conducted in North America, Europe, and Oceania. Most studies were explor-

atory in nature with a focus on identifying how different aspects of the built environment support or hinder the pedestrian experience for people with visual disabilities. Built environment features mentioned often include curbs, curb ramps, tactile warning/guiding surfaces, and accessible pedestrian signals. Key findings from the review that highlight the role of the built environment were grouped under two themes: 1) Barriers to outdoor mobility, and 2) cues for spatial perception and navigation.

Barriers to Outdoor Mobility

The studies reviewed examined the role of the built environment in posing physical barriers to the outdoor mobility of people with visual disabilities. Barriers reported in the studies included:

- 1) **Sidewalk and ground surface quality issues:** This includes cracks, bumps, undulation, unevenness, potholes, and slipperiness. Associated with depth perception problems which increase the risk of falling (Zhao et al., 2018, Jenkins et al., 2015).
- 2) **Suboptimal-level changes:** This includes small or uneven curbs, minimal separation between adjacent curb ramps, unmarked stairs (Brundle et al., 2015, Laliberte Rudman et al., 2016, Suderman & Redmond, 2015, Zeng, 2015).
- 3) **Waist height or eye-level objects that are harder to detect:** Studies found that it is preferred when objects do not interfere with the path of travel and are located in the street furniture zone of the sidewalk, so as to not disrupt wayfinding (Nuzzi et al., 2018, Ratelle et al., 2010, Suderman & Redmond, 2015).
- 4) **Suboptimal ambient conditions:** Poor lighting and inclement weather hindering the use of built environment features (Alexander et al., 2014, Kaminsky et al., 2014, Park et al., 2017).

5) **Barriers at street crossings:** This includes a lack of traffic/pedestrian signal, defunct signal, insufficient crossing time, and complex street intersection/crossing layouts (Guth et al., 2005).

6) **Fixed and mobile/temporary obstructions:** Mobile obstacles are harder to locate and remember while temporary obstructions such as sidewalk closures lead to confusion and disorientation (Zimmermann-Janschitz et al., 2017).

Cues for Spatial Perception and Navigation

The review suggests that people with visual disabilities receive cues from different elements of the built environment which prompt decision-making for outdoor mobility and navigation. These cues are:

- 1) **Tactile cues:** Multiple studies indicated that tactile cues are the most useful for outdoor mobility of blind pedestrians. A prerequisite for tactile cues to be used in mobility and navigation decisions is their detectability. Their usefulness may be compromised due to snow, moisture, or poor lighting. Studies highlighted the importance of precise placement and location of tactile cues to augment their usefulness.
- 2) **Kinesthetic cues:** Studies showed that changes in elevation or slope provide people with visual disabilities crucial information at key junctures in the outdoor environment, such as street crossings (Suderman & Redmond, 2015). The absence of tactile and kinesthetic cues as seen in streets designed with the 'Shared Space' approach can be disorienting due to a lack of distinction between pedestrian zones and the road (Havik et al., 2012; Magnus, 2016).
- 3) **Auditory cues:** Audio prompts provided by accessible pedestrian signals are a crucial source of support for the outdoor mobility and navigation of people with visual disabilities (McGrath et al., 2017; Petraglia & Boudreau, 2006). Audio cues are also used by people with visual disabilities to identify the location of community desti-

nations (Papadopoulos et al., 2020).

4) **Visual cues:** For partially sighted people, visual contrast in lighting and between environmental features was suggested as being useful (Zhao et al., 2018). Partially sighted people keep track of the number of environmental features and changes in the built environment encountered en-route to update their cognitive maps of the environment and perform way finding (Williams et al., 2014; Zimmermann-Janschitz et al., 2017).

Discussion

The studies reviewed were found to heavily emphasize the cueing properties of different environmental features, underscoring the role tactile/haptic cueing plays for people with visual disabilities (Golledge, 1993). There literature was also found to focus more on how proximal built environmental features influence pedestrian experience compared to the role of larger-scale built environmental features in shaping mental representations of the outdoor environment. Future research should seek to expand the focus on different levels of spatial information to gain a fuller understanding of the cognitive maps of people with visual disabilities. Little attention was placed on the differences in mobility experience based on aetiology. Studies did not focus on the interplay of visual disability, physical, cognitive, or mental comorbidities, and built environmental factors in shaping the pedestrian experience. Furthermore, the studies reviewed did not examine differences in the influence of the built environment on the outdoor mobility of people with visual disabilities based on gender, race, socioeconomic status, or other identity markers. Applying an intersectional lens (i.e. exploring how systems of oppression shape the experience of people with disabilities) (Brinkman et al., 2023) in future research could yield more nuanced understandings of the diversity of mobility experiences of people with visual disabilities and help inform more equitable decision-making and planning for minoritized groups

of people with visual disabilities.

Implications for policy and practice

Given the knowledge gaps among built environment practitioners regarding the accessibility needs of people with disabilities, increased understanding of how the built environment influences the outdoor mobility of people with disabilities could enhance access and inclusion in cities through changes in the design and planning process (Jackson, 2018). Going beyond tactile warnings and guiding surfaces at street intersections, accessibility considerations for people with visual disabilities should also include creating a clear path of travel on sidewalks, visual and tactile demarcations around obstacles on the sidewalk, installation of accessible pedestrian signals with auditory and visual cues, and alignment of curb cuts (Smithies, 2015; Parkin & Smithies, 2012).

With technological advancements changing the way navigation for people with visual disabilities is

implemented, pedestrian level tactile warnings and guiding surfaces for people with visual disabilities



AGING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Shruti Wani

Introduction

The objective of the “The Stakeholder’s Walkability/Wheel ability Audit in Neighborhoods (SWAN)” (Project lead: Atiya Mahmood, at Simon Fraser University) is to evaluate how the neighborhood’s-built environment impacts mobility access and participation among older adults and individuals with mobility, sensory, and mild cognitive disabilities (Mahmood et al., 2020). SWAN is a micro-scale user-led audit tool. The study participants serve as co-researchers and collect the data with support from research team members. Data are collected across five domains of functionality, safety, appearance and maintenance, land use and supportive features, and social aspects (Mahmood et al., 2020).

There is limited research done to understand the impact of environmental features on older adults with vision loss (McGrath et al., 2017). The SWAN tool records the impact of environmental features for residents with mobility, sensory, and mild cognitive disabilities. Advancement in research can help urban planners in better planning of neighborhoods to include older adults with mobility, sensory, and mild cognitive disabilities.

Personal Reflections

I am currently a fourth-year Resource and Environmental Management student with a focus on urban planning. When I started my research assistant (RA) position in 2023, I had limited exposure to community-engaged research on the role of the built environment on pedestrian mobility and participation. I joined the Stake-

holder’s Walkability/Wheel ability Audit in Neighborhoods (SWAN) project to gain experience working on a community-engaged project with people living with disabilities, and to learn how urban planning and design of neighborhoods can promote inclusion and social participation of this group of pedestrians. As an RA in the SWAN project, I had the opportunity to be involved in the data collection phase for the vision stream, focusing on people living with vision impairment. The goal of this phase is to understand the barriers and facilitators that people with vision impairments face while navigating streets in the Metro Vancouver area.

The SWAN Audit Tool includes a series of observational questions about the presence and absence of built environment features on neighborhood intersections and sidewalks. The participants, with the help of the research team members, complete this audit tool. This is followed by an interview with the participants to go more in-depth into what they observed during their data collection session. In the following section, I highlight some key learnings from these data collection sessions.

Key Learnings during Data Collection

One of the key things that I learned was that our current neighborhoods do not fully accommodate pedestrians living vision impairments. The following are some of the key takeaways from data collection.

Role of Sidewalk Width

Narrow sidewalks make it difficult for those who use guide dogs or mobility assistive tech-

nologies (MAT) to walk or wheel due to inadequate space. MAT and guide dogs support persons living with disabilities to complete activities of daily living. Wider sidewalks have been shown to have higher pedestrian satisfaction compared to narrow sidewalks (Park & Kwon, 2023) and can better support persons using MAT or guide dogs.

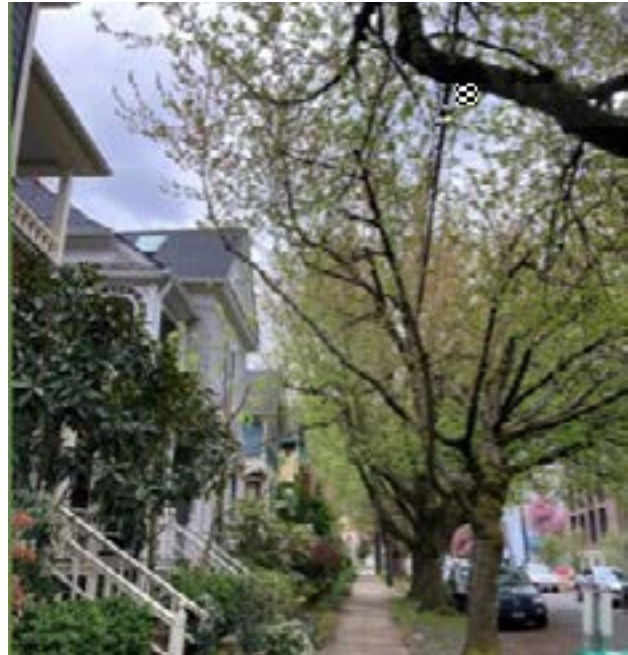


Figure 1: Shows a narrow street. Photo by Shruti Wani in Portland, USA.

Role of Green Buffer Spaces

Green spaces are used as a boundary between bicycle lanes and the walking spaces (Park & Kwon, 2023). There needs to be buffer green spaces along these sidewalks to accommodate guide dogs. Additionally, research has shown green spaces provide a better walking experience than areas without green spaces (Park & Kwon, 2023). These green spaces also help to enhance the aesthetics of a neighborhood.

Marked Crosswalks

Crosswalks need to be properly marked as faded crosswalks are a hazard for people living with disabilities, especially at night. Formal road crossings can significantly decrease the actual and perceived risks of pedestrian injury (Havard

& Willis, 2012). Sidewalks connected to the crosswalks need to have curb cuts and tactile surfaces to support safe crossing of the street.



Figure 2: Shows a marked crosswalk with tactile surfaces on curb cuts (a safe crosswalk). Photo by Shruti Wani in Surrey, BC.

Role of Curb Cuts and Tactile Surfaces

Properly designed curb cuts are crucial for people with disabilities whether they are walking or wheeling (Mahmood et al., 2020). Tactile cues on curb cuts can help pedestrians navigate at street crossings (e.g., which way to cross) (Seetharaman et al., 2024). Without tactile surfaces, crossing streets can be unsafe for pedestrians with vision impairments. The curb cut should be wide, aligning with the crosswalk. If the crosswalks are misaligned, then pedestrians living with vision impairments might not be able to cross safely.

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CANADA'S ENGAGED UNIVERSITIES