

Long-term Care: Inside and Out

What neighbourhood factors are important for the wellbeing of LTC residents?

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Why is this important?

- Aging population and aging facilities = more new long-term care (LTC) facilities
- There is research on features of 'neighbourhoods' in LTC facilities and features of neighborhoods for aging in place at home that support residents wellbeing^{1,2}
- But we don't know much about the features of neighbourhoods where LTC facilities are in and the impact that has on the wellbeing of residents, staff and family

How did we investigate this?

This is part of a larger evaluation of the impact of transitioning from dated LTC facilities into a purpose built facility.

- ❑ Study Design: Longitudinal evaluation, mixed methods
- ❑ Data Collection: In-depth interviews with 21 residents, 22 family members, and 32 staff. Collected prior to move.
- ❑ Data analysis: Following a thematic approach, transcripts and field notes were coded and analysed to access what was significant to participants

Where are these facilities?

Original two buildings: both were located in a downtown urban setting. Described as an interesting, busy, heritage neighbourhood.

New building: located in a quite residential suburban area. Described as being in a nice, new, little neighbourhood.

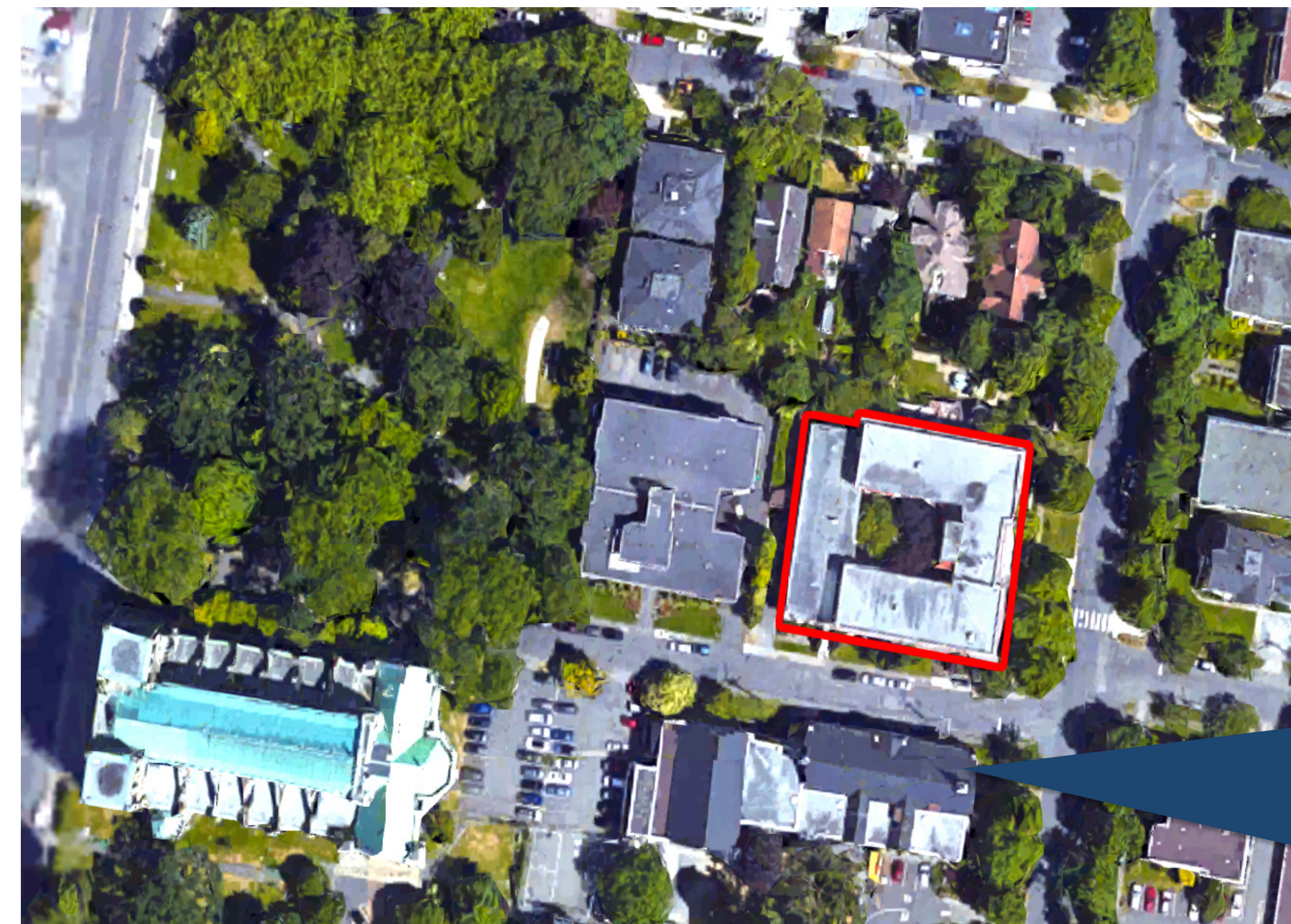
This research was supported by Baptist Housing. We are grateful for all the staff, family, & residents participation.

References

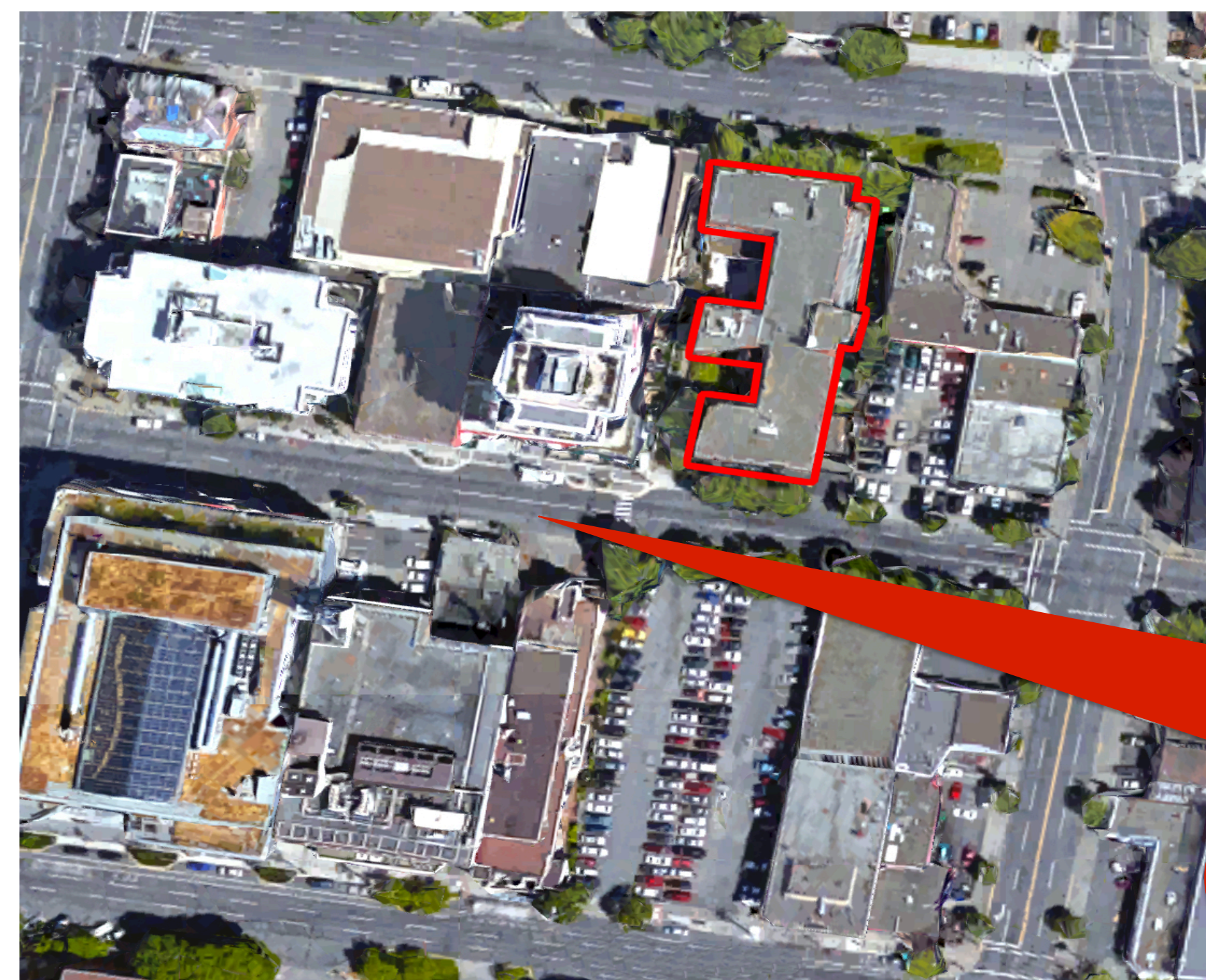
1. Lawton, M.P. (1982). Competence, environmental press, and the adaptation of older people. In Lawton, M., Powell, Windley, Paul G., Byerts, Tomas O. (Eds.), *Aging and the environment: Theoretical approaches*. New York: Springer
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What did we learn?

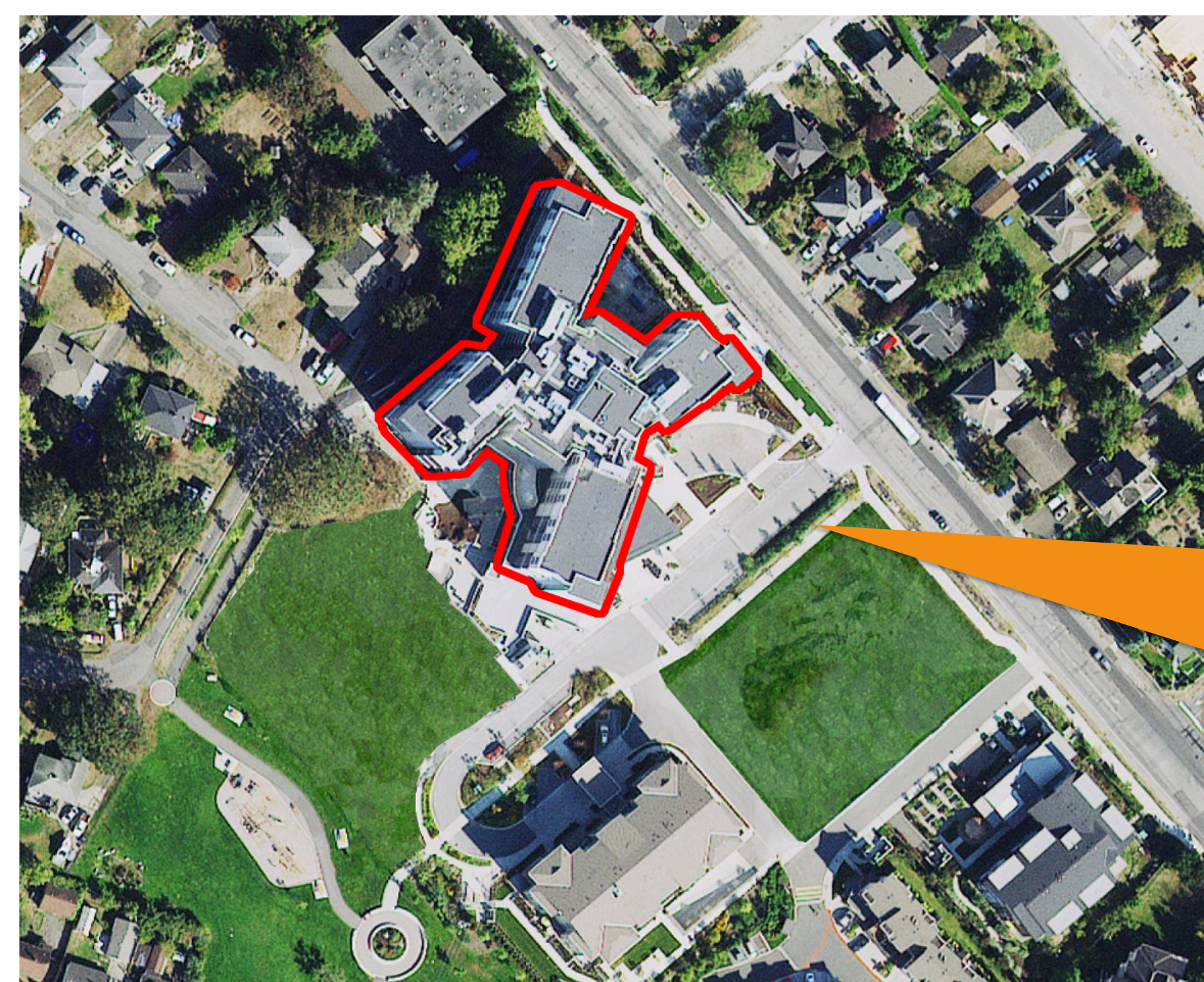
Three themes emerged as important to consider for LTC neighbourhoods:



Two Original Buildings



New Building



Access to Resources/Activities

Places to go and things to do were features of the original locations appreciated by many. Specifically mentioned: cafes, shopping, church, activities. Also having things to look at out the window such as people going by, architecture, memory triggers, and the activity of the city.

"And this place is close to town, so you're in walking distance to wherever you want to go. Now I go to the big place, up in the heights. I'm going to have to take a bus where we want to go or walk to the nearest mall, which is two blocks." (Resident)

Safety

Regarding security and mobility, many reported that the downtown locations were surrounded by street involved people. Related to this, the area was considered too busy and noisy by some. Some had concerns regarding walking in the area due to the pavement being uneven and the hilliness of the area.

"The location now, it's not good for residents who like to go out, it is not really a safe environment for an older person to be around." (Staff)

Access to Building

Family and staff need to be able to access the location easily. Some found the downtown location convenient while others found it inconvenient. Both were accessible by transit, but neither had sufficient parking. Other challenging factors at the downtown locations were traffic and not having a pick-up area.

"That we're closer and that I can come visit more. I can come visit more and take her out more and bring the dog more." (Family)

What's the impact on residents, family and staff?

- Family and staff report that they will take residents out more often if they feel the area is safe, secure, and accessible.
- Residents that are ambulatory will go out more if there are nearby destinations, resting areas, & level pathways which is important for quality of life and wellbeing.
- Residents with complex care needs that prevent them from leaving the building independently benefit from mechanisms that bring community and the outdoors into the building. E.g. large, accessible, well appointed, enclosed outdoor spaces.

How does it build on what we know?

Research has found these neighbourhood features to be important to seniors experiences and wellbeing: 1) physical amenities or aesthetics, 2) resource amenities, 3) safety, and 4) stimulation versus peacefulness.²

This project, as related to LTC, adds the neighbourhood feature: *access to the building*. This is important because easy access to the building (parking, pick up area, traffic, accessible sidewalks) influences the frequency of outings and visits for residents & therefore their wellbeing.

What should be done?

- ❑ The selection of the location of the facility needs to take into consideration neighbourhood features that will contribute positively to residents and their caregivers.
- ❑ Municipal governments need to provide and maintain accessible, walkable streets and neighbourhoods.