

The Senior Housing Shuffle: Connecting Public Policy To Universal Design, Sustainability, Health Management, And Aging In Place

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ABSTRACT

Having faced the turbulent waters of uncertainty connected with the underfunding of human service and health management programs before, Judy Jones, in this two part case study, is excited to learn of a major historical restoration in Uptown — a neighborhood of rich historical heritage and architecture which, over the decades, had fallen into disrepair and instability. Old Emory School was to be restored for use as a new senior housing facility by Preservation Incorporated. She knew that realities often fail to measure up to expectations in housing accessibility, affordability, safety, and health care management for the residents, and this was the situation she faced once more. Common managerial and housing related problems are encountered and Judy reflects on the advantages of a built environment that uses universal design principles and wonders why real estate and commercial developers, architects, and urban planners are not more sensitive to these orientations. Based on experience, common housing shortcomings are identified and their relationship to aging in place, sustainability, and selected titles of the Americans with Disability Act, 1990 (ADA, 1990), are explored.

Keywords: Health Care Management; Public Policy; Sustainability; Universal Design; Aging in Place; Architecture

Recommended Courses: Management; Health Care Management; Health Care Policy; Sustainability; Public Policy

INTRODUCTION: A MAJOR RESTORATION PROJECT FOR SENIORS

*F*or Judy Jones it was another routine, boring drive to work on the Crosstown Expressway. Customarily, she selected her favorite morning radio show that interspersed local and regional news with Classical 80's and 90's Rock. Today, however, the host briefly mentioned a major restoration project in "Uptown,"—the neighborhood where she resided. The project would cater to older citizens and would also serve older persons with disabilities. Anxious to get the "rest-of-the-story," she bought the local newspaper and quickly paged to the local and regional section. There she found a feature story on the new developments and their associated and intended uses in the metropolitan area.

The Uptown neighborhood where Judy lived had experienced a gradual, but protracted, deterioration over the years and many of the older and larger structures, such as schools, department stores, warehouses, and commercial buildings, that once proudly served the community, had fallen into disrepair and underutilization—derelict, in an urban planning sense. Her spirits were elevated today as she read about the soon to be completed rehabilitation and restoration of the old Emory School and how it was being converted into a reasonably modernized and up-scale apartment complex for seniors. This was good news for Judy since she was employed as program manager at Senior Services—a local social services agency that served older adults. As an aficionado of historic places, several years ago she and her husband purchased a home that was listed on the National Historical Register

and painstakingly restored it to its former majesty and charm as one of the great “Victorian Ladies” of the neighborhood. She loved the beauty and distinctive old world character of the aged buildings and her passion for historical preservation was palpable both at work and as a leader in her neighborhood association. The Emery, as it was affectionately called in the community was once located in a prosperous, reasonably middle-class, residential and commercial district, but had fallen on hard times in the last thirty years as families matured and the “old-stock,” single residential units were converted into multiple dwelling units, many as apartments, and all were the victims of neglect and general urban decay.

When Judy arrived at her office, there was a buzz about the new facility. It was not every day that new senior housing was on the development dashboard, especially, one that targeted a building in an area of town that was economically vulnerable. The facility was rumored to be for low-to-moderate income seniors. This was exciting since Judy’s program was focused on having an up-to-date listing and inventory of community services, providers and facilities for seniors, and this complex was being developed by a large corporation by the name of Preservation, Incorporated. Her research indicated that Preservation Incorporated was a highly respected “class” act and had a solid record of accomplishments with similar projects in large metropolitan areas where it set up shop. Judy had to rein in her enthusiasm for the Preservation Project, since earlier, another company had taken on the Emery School project, but soon abandoned the project after several weeks of construction, and past promised community development projects in Uptown had been slow to materialize. In the last decade, only one other housing project had been completed in the area—Scenic Hills—an assisted living center managed by Hamilton Associates. Prior to Hamilton Associates taking over the property management of Scenic Hills, it had changed hands several times in the last few years.

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS IS UNRAVELED

Judy’s agency had an on-going relationship with Hamilton Associates because they were the only facility with a radius of fifteen miles that provided an assisted living level of care through the state Medicaid program for the elderly. Hamilton Associates had recently hired a new administrator, Nancy Fredericks, and already the reviews on her performance were mixed. Nevertheless, Fredericks assisted Judy plan a community education event at Scenic Hills, and many service providers and agencies were successfully brought together for a day long program; some of the residents and their family members expressed dissatisfaction with the level and range of services they were receiving at Scenic Hills, and they showed general discontent with the disrepair of the facility.

Several additional weeks passed and Judy wondered what role her agency might play in the new Emery Estates; as the new development was formally named. Then, her director asked her to sit in on a meeting with the administration of Preservation Incorporated. Judy had done her due diligence research on Preservation and its mission statement revealed that it intended to rehabilitate historic buildings into quality senior housing, and at the same time, provide services to residents through active partnerships with community service agencies. Since Judy’s program was dependent on this type of relationship with the community, it was a natural fit. For every dollar spent on her program she had to secure a \$.33 in local matching contributions. The contributions could either be in cash donations or in-kind services. Partnerships and networking arrangements in the community were essential because of the tough economic climate and the abundance of other local non-profits who sought similar arrangements. In her world of experience, donations and in-kind service agreements were becoming increasingly difficult to find. Judy sent much of her time searching for new ideas and sources of what her organization called “match,” and now opportunity was knocking at her door. After considerable discussion, Preservation Inc., proposed an agreement that would be mutually beneficial to both organizations: Judy’s program would counsel residents about available support services in the area; Preservation Inc., would provide meeting space, technology links, and residential marketing opportunities. In short, a formal contract was signed and Preservation Incorporated then disclosed that they were planning on doing a similar rehab at another historic building in Uptown, and the arrangement with Senior Services would be helpful in their attempt to secure funding, and would help them move ahead with dispatch on the new development. Judy was ecstatic—this was a great day for the neighborhood, city, and area seniors.

EMERY ESTATES IS OPENED TO THE PUBLIC IN A CELEBRATORY WAY

Months pasted, Emery Estates was opened on its anticipated leasing date, and new apartments opened with

a grand celebration—a major community event. Those who participated in the grand opening, praised Preservation Inc., for its attention to detail and for enhancing the elegance of style and the maintenance of architecture integrity in the restoration. Certainly, to all concerned, Preservation Inc., had set the bar high for other senior housing complexes in the regional area. Judy had no doubt in her mind that Scenic Hills would soon be filled to capacity since the pent up demand for low to moderate priced housing was intense and the facility was located close to the centers of demand. Also, in the area, there were long waiting lists for leasing apartments similar to those presented at Scenic Hills.

Things began to move quickly and Senior Services decided that Judy would hold office at Emery Estates for two hours each week. She was eager to start the new project and had experience doing this type of counseling and referral at another senior center in the area, but her experience was that it was not well attended due to a lack of marketing by the host agency. Judy hoped that she would at least have one senior to talk with and counsel per visit to Emery Estates. She kicked-off the informational session as scheduled and it was well attended.

Judy arrived at the agreed upon time and was taken to a conference room that she was to use for her office and to meet with and counsel seniors. Initially, she was disappointed that the manager of Emery Estates was not present to meet her, as intended; she was told he had “pressing business,” only to see him casually stroll into the office fifteen minutes later with a frothy hazelnut latte. In preparation for this new assignment, Judy had been supplied special technology that allowed her to work wirelessly by phone and computer while at Emery Estates, but in the meantime, Preservation Incorporated had decided to locate Judy in a remote area of the basement. In her basement location, the phrase, “...they don’t build them like they used to,” came to Judy’s mind. The basement walls were uncommonly thick and none of the technology that Judy had to communicate with, worked in the dense environment. As weeks ticked by, although Judy complained about her office space, she was not relocated to an upper floor as requested. Despite these annoyances, she was happy with the number of residents that stopped by for assistance—although the facility had only reached 50 percent occupancy.

Weeks of activity at Emery Estates turned into months and Judy had worked one-on-one with many residents. She often would check-in with Fred Winks, the manager, while on-site, in order to keep the lines of communication open. Fred was new to Preservation Incorporated, the community, and lacked experience dealing with the many issues faced by seniors.

MAJOR PROBLEMS ON THE MANAGEMENT DASHBOARD

During one of Judy’s visits with Fred, he mentioned that there were many problems with the residents and that he was glad that Judy was on-board to deal with essentially social worker type problems. Fred asked Judy about a situation that he was dealing with that involved Hamilton Associates and Scenic Hills. Although Judy was well aware of the situation at Hamilton since a group of residents there had met with her earlier to discuss their concerns. Cautiously, Judy chose her words carefully since was bound by HIPAA standards regarding her conversations with senior residents and had good relationships that she wanted to preserve at both Hamilton and at Emery Estates. Fred expressed his frustration with Hamilton for not providing the needed paperwork to Preservation for several potential clients, including John Zagby, who had requested the needed rental references from their agency.

Judy had consulted with Zagby’s case manager/social worker at her office after receiving several complaints from friends of John Zagby who now lived at Emery, but were former residents at Hamilton’s Scenic Hills. The social worker had worked with Zagby on the relocation and indicated that Nancy Fredericks was difficult to deal with, although Zagby would make a suitable candidate for an independent living arrangement.

Many of the residents at Scenic Hills, an assisted living facility, had moved to Emery Estates since the facilities were close to one another in the city and it was an attractive alternative. Seniors could use their Medicaid waiver program to pay for In-home in an independent apartment, rather than in assisted living care at an assisted living facility. Hamilton’s administrator felt that the residents who were moving to Emery Estates did not belong in independent living although they were still using the Medicaid program for Home Community Based Services for their care and, therefore, they could safely remain in their independent home as is common with the Medicaid waiver program. Nancy made this known to Fred. She said that she “...would have to talk with John’s doctor about

this!” Fred asked Judy if Nancy Frederichs could block a client from leaving the assisted living facility. In his own words, he said, “...that just doesn’t seem right?” In response, Judy said, “It is my agency’s stance, as an advocate for older adults that any adult can make their own decision to live where they wish.” She further stated, “...that unless a doctor or a court of law, through the guardianship process, says that an adult can no longer make their own decisions, any adult can decide to live as they choose. We all make decisions, some good and some bad, every day. Just because someone is disabled or older does not mean that they cannot make their own decisions.” Fred was relieved to hear what Judy had to say on the matter.

WHAT IS JUDY TO DO ABOUT SCENIC HILLS?

Judy left her meeting with Fred with mixed feelings. She knew that some of the residents at Scenic Hills were just as unhappy as the people that were coming from Hamilton. Emery Estates, in their business model of completing the rehab project had only done the bare minimum to be ADA compliant. There was, for instance, only one ramp into the entire building. One wheelchair bound resident at Emery Estates was attempting to get out of her lease because the window locks in her apartment were too high for her to reach from her chair. Also, there were no door assists to aid with opening the large front doors at the ramped entrance, and the bath tubs were too narrow to safely accommodate a shower chair or transfer bench. Additionally, if there was an emergency and the elevators were not working, how would a resident in a wheelchair get out of the facility safely?

These were some of the issues that weighed heavily on Judy’s mind. In previous conversations with Fred, he had stated “...this is independent living,” to which Judy replied, “Someone can be independent and disabled.” Judy was concerned that Hamilton was overstepping its role by directly contacting the resident’s doctors and not supplying the needed rental references. Also, she felt that Preservation was taking people that were not safe in their building in order to get a full census. Of course, all parties to these disputes, including Fred, Nancy, and the residents looked to Judy for intervention and resolution of their problems—especially to take their respective positions.

As Judy left the office, she stopped by to say goodbye to Fred. Fred stated, “Well, I just got off the phone with Nancy from Hamilton. She still has not sent me the references I need for John Zagby’s application. I asked for them over a week ago, but to no avail. I told her that Senior Services said Zagby can move if he wants to! Judy did not respond, and only repeated her goodnight sentiment as left the building.”

QUESTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS

1. What are Judy’s personal and legal risks of breaking confidentiality for her clients? Please explain. How could Judy have communicated her organizations message better? Please give examples.
2. Do you think it is ethical to have transparently within a community of professionals working with the same clients, especially in today’s climate of partnerships between organizations. What are the implications? Please explain.

PART 2. PROCEED ONLY AFTER ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS OF PART 1

THE PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Judy Jones returned to her office the next day and had an unsettled reaction to her last conversation with Fred Winks. She thought about the many older persons she had visited with and counseled over the years and began to mull over in her mind the complaints and concerns they had with being housed in different types of residential facilities that were oriented toward independent living arrangements. As she reflected on the problems that the actual users of rehabilitated structures encountered in their pursuit of gaining access to affordable, accessible, safe, and suitable independent living arrangements, she realized that the problems surpassed those presented at Emery Estates. As she began to register the complaints she had received from seniors living in different types of housing, she wondered why those involved in redesigning and restoring buildings for housing purposes were not more aware of, if not sensitive to, Universal Design (UD) practices that would be mutually beneficial, if not advantageous, for people of all ages and abilities. And, she further contemplated those amenities that would be most suitable for older

persons seeking independent living status. Paradoxically, as she reflected on what was best suited for her own charges, she began to think about those features that would not only meet their needs, but would be equally applicable to persons of her own age—indeed, she mused to herself, all ages, circumstances, abilities, activities, lifestyles, and stages of life. Then it became crystal clear why her major professor in graduate school repeated what she considered at the time to be a rather glib, if not trite, mantra: “Remember,” he would say, “We are all, at best, temporarily abled!”

Now more committed and Intent than ever in making a difference in the lives of those she touched on a regular basis, she surfed the Net looking for resources that might assist her in developing a more complete understanding and awareness of UD guidelines, checklists, concepts, principles, and features. As she sorted through the sundry websites dedicated to UD, she found a surprisingly large number of sites and studies which specifically addressed her own interests in designing and redesigning homes and residences and other facilities for independent living. The literature presented an abundance of suggestions that peaked her interest in the following areas: Floor plans, building codes and standards, assistive technologies, UD, remodeling options, home and residential renovation and remodeling, living designs for all of life’s stages, and sustainably and energy efficiency concerns.

JUDY UNVEILS COMMONLY OCCURRING HOUSING PROBLEMS FOR SENIORS AND SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Judy was beginning to build a better understanding of the multifaceted nature of UD features and built environment. Some of the standard concerns of housing design and rehabilitated structures had become common place in her vocabulary. Armed with a view of the “big picture,” associated with UD and independent living, she compiled a list of problems she was told about by seniors living in residential housing. Although her memory failed to recall with clarity every kind of complaint that she had hear, the ones that were repetitively given were easily recalled. She immediately set aside the other things that were flashing through her mind and compiled the following list of problems she was told about by seniors living in residential housing:

1. The width of sidewalks and interior/exterior doors were too narrow to easily and safely accommodate wheelchairs, walkers, and crutches.
2. Inadequate technology in residential units for those with diminished hearing and eyesight.
3. Problems with safely accessing personal care amenities, such as bathtubs, showers, sinks, and toilets.
4. Difficulties in using cooking, refrigeration, and laundry amenities.
5. Difficulties in opening, closing, and locking windows due to their weights, heights, or designs.
6. Slippery floors which make walking or exercise unsafe.
7. High pile carpeting that makes it difficult to navigate with a wheelchair or walker.
8. Cabinets that are often either too high or too low for safe accessibility and use.
9. Access to decks and other outside spaces made difficult because of heavy sliding glass doors and different levels of elevation.
10. Ramps that are inclined too steeply and often do not have no-slip safeguards.
11. Noise from adjacent apartments that interferes with relaxation, resting or sleeping activities.
12. Handles on doors, drawers, and cabinets that are not easily turned, pulled, or grasped (round rather than looped design).
13. Insufficient safety alarms for smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide detection in residences.
14. Lack of nonslip surfaces in shower and bath facilities.
15. Kitchen, bathroom, and laundry sinks are either too low or too high with difficult to use faucets.

With her list of common problems in hand, she was prepared to discuss the issues that were most commonly presented to her over the years. She felt that her compiled list would enable her to better represent her clients when she was asked to participate in planning sessions conducted by her own agency—Senior Services—and when dealing with builders, remodelers, developers, and construction companies and architects involved in the rehabilitation of existing historical and commercial structures for housing purposes. As a supplement to her own items of concern, she added some of the websites she felt provided useful checklists and guidelines for designing livable, accessible, and usable for everyone, regardless of their stage of life or ability, housing. Her list included the following suggested websites:

1. Universal Design Living Laboratory [<http://www.udll.com>]
2. Access for Everyone [<http://www.fpm.iastate.edu/accessforeveryone/default.asp>]
3. American Association of Retired Persons [<http://www.aarp.org>]
4. Center of Inclusive Design and Environmental Access [<http://www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea/home/index.asp>]
5. Toolbase Services [<http://www.toolbase.org>]
6. Universal Design and Green Home survey Checklist [<http://www.uiowa.edu/legalclinic>]
7. Smart Design Livable Homes [<http://www.livablehomes.org>]

Judy Jones' interest and work experience had taken her down corridors of thought that she would have been unfamiliar with just a few months earlier. She understood that senior housing had changed dramatically during the last decade and now she no longer had clients just in skilled nursing facilities, but increasingly as aging had become a national and international phenomenon, her job took her into the arenas of independent living, assisted living, and increasingly, "market-rate," and memory care housing. New concepts in her field were beginning to drive consumer expectations and demands, such as more luxurious fixtures, furniture, and surroundings; greater accessibility to daily living amenities for shopping, eating, relaxing, and interacting (restaurants, laundry facilities, florist shops, etc.), and the notion of "aging in place within a multi-generational communities" with infrastructures geared toward lifelong learning, advanced age friendly technology, wellness centers, coupled with service and care systems that provide for "one-stop assistance."

Indeed, the world of senior housing had changed and the options that were now available through nonprofit and profit based developments went well beyond providing skilled nursing beds and governmental subsidized housing. Conflicted by her professional values, she wondered if the future would be dominated by free-enterprise and market-rate housing forces. She wondered if Martha Stewart's often repeated adage, "It's a good thing!" applied equally to her profession, clients, and affordable and accessible residential housing.

QUESTION AND INSTRUCTIONS

3. Please contact an organization in your own community that provides counseling and referral services similar to those provided by Senior Services. What are the major problems and difficulties which seniors face in your area relative to affordable, safe, comfortable, and accessible housing? Please elaborate.
4. Please contact a residential housing unit that provides independent living for seniors in your community and inquire about the extent to which their rehabilitated or new independent living centers use the latest suggestions and guidelines associated with Universal Design principles. Please be prepared to provide examples of their sensitivity to UD guidelines and practices.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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SUGGESTED RESOURCES

1. National Aging in Place Council [<http://www.ageinplace.org/>]
2. Aging in Place [<http://aginginplace.com/>]
3. SeniorResource.com [<http://www.seniorresource.com/ageinpl.htm>]
4. National Association of Home Builders Aging in Place [http://www.nahb.org/reference_list.aspx?sectionID=717]
5. NeighborWorks [<http://www.nw.org/network/comstrat/agingInPlace/>]
6. Partners for Livable Communities [<http://livable.org/>]
7. Aging in Place in Multifamily Housing [<http://www.huduser.org/periodicals/cityscape/vol7num1/ch5.pdf>]
8. Leading Age [<http://www.leadingage.org/>]
9. National Complete Streets Coalition [<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>]
10. Fair Housing Accessibility First [<http://www.fairhousingfirst.org/>]
11. National Multifamily Housing Council [<http://www.nmhc.org/Content/ContentList.cfm?NavID=179>]
12. Universal Design Specifications and Resident Assessment Tool [<http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/solutions-and-innovation/senior-housing/best-practices-and-reports>]
13. Assisted Living Federation of America Best of Best Awards [<http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/solutions-and-innovation/senior-housing/best-practices-and-reports>]

The Senior Housing Shuffle

Name: _____

CASE LOG AND ADMINISTRATIVE JOURNAL ENTRY

This case analysis and learning assessment may be submitted for either instructor or peer assessment

CASE ANALYSIS

Major case concepts and theories identified:

What is the relevance of the concepts, theories, ideas and techniques presented in the case to that of public or private management?

Facts — what do we know *for sure* about the case? Please list.

Who is involved in the case (people, departments, agencies, units, etc.)? Were the problems of an “intra/interagency” nature? Be specific.

Are there any rules, laws, regulations or standard operating procedures identified in the case study that might limit decision-making? If so, what are they?

Are there any clues presented in the case as to the major actor’s interests, needs, motivations and personalities? If so, please list them.

LEARNING ASSESSMENT

What do the administrative theories presented in this case mean to you as an administrator or manager?

How can this learning be put to use outside the classroom? Are there any problems you envision during the implementation phase?

Several possible courses of action were identified during the class discussion. Which action was considered to be most practical by the group? Which was deemed most feasible? Based on your personal experience, did the group reach a conclusion that was desirable, feasible, and practical? Please explain why or why not.

Did the group reach a decision that would solve the problem on a short-term or long-term basis? Please explain.

What could you have done to receive more learning value from this case?

NOTES