Abstract

This paper is based upon several observations and concerns:

- There is a significant increase in the number of elderly population in Singapore.
- The elderly in future will be more vocal and have higher expectation towards their living environment.
- Our society will face the difficult issue of how to support and house the growing elderly population if preparation is not made to allow them to be independent and mobile.

This paper does not provide technical guides. Technical specifications are necessary but not sufficient for a good design, because they normally do not explain the reasons behind their formulation. This paper is an attempt to highlight the fact that in order to create an accessible solution that truly works for the elderly population, one must understand the total needs of the aged individual and be sensitive to those features of the environment that improve the quality of life. The issues surrounding the elderly population are vast and varied. This paper has chosen to concentrate on issues related to barrier-free design in the built environment, and to examine how the built environment can influence interaction between the elderly people and his surroundings, by looking at Singapore’s context.

Part One presents an overview of the ageing process and its environmental implication. Within this context, specific design considerations and attitudes towards ageing are discussed.

Part Two focuses on built environment for the elderly people in Singapore. It provides a framework for approaching this concern by presenting specific issues associated with barrier-free design. It examines the problems faced by the elderly people and identifies potential possibilities to accommodate their needs.

This paper is an attempt to achieve the following objective:
"If we open the reader’s eyes to the need for accessibility and the strategies for achieving it, then the reader will be well equipped to solve problems on his or her own." (Wm. L. Wilkoff and Laura W. Abed, 1994)