



Singapore

Dementia-Friendly Neighbourhoods Study

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- **DURATION**

Started in 2019

- **POPULATION 2024**

6,040,000 (Growth rate 2%)

- **URA SCOPE**

SOCIETY. Staying Human

STRATEGY. Shared Vision

- **TOPICS**

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL,
SOCIAL INCLUSION, CITIZENS
PARTICIPATION, URBAN SPACES

- **MAIN ACTORS**

Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC), Ministry of National Development, Singapore, Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), Building and Construction Authority (BCA), Housing and Development Board (HDB), Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), National Parks Board (NParks), Land Transport Authority (LTA), MOH Office for Healthcare Transformation (MOHT).



As Singapore's population ages, dementia is becoming a pressing concern. The Dementia-Friendly Neighbourhoods Study steps in with a mission: to design urban spaces where individuals with dementia can live independently and comfortably.

This innovative initiative takes a fresh approach, tailoring solutions to Singapore's unique high-rise, high-density environment. But it's not just about functionality—it's about creating neighbourhoods that foster dignity, connection, and ease.

To truly understand the needs of those with dementia, the team used creative, non-verbal research methods, gathering over 2,000 insights into their daily challenges. They didn't stop at data. Collaborating with community members, healthcare providers, urban designers, and more, they co-created solutions grounded in empathy and practicality.

Real-world trials followed, refining these ideas into actionable design principles. Now ready to scale, the project's findings are being woven into policy, urban upgrades, and training programs.

At its heart, this study is about more than urban design—it's about building a compassionate community where those with dementia can thrive with dignity and support.

Data is not enough. The Dementia-Friendly Neighbourhoods Study brought together community members, healthcare providers, urban designers, and service organizations to co-create practical solutions.

This multidisciplinary team put these ideas to the test in real-world settings, using trials and reviews to refine their approach. Each step ensured the design principles would truly improve the lives of those with dementia.

Now, the project is ready to scale. The design principles will be integrated into policy frameworks, rolled out through urban upgrades, and supported by capability development initiatives, ensuring that the lessons learned become embedded in Singapore's urban planning for years to come.

At its core, this initiative is about more than design—it's about building a compassionate community where individuals with dementia can live with dignity, autonomy, and the support they deserve.



Impact

This initiative strengthens the Dementia-Friendly Singapore Movement by enhancing innovation and design capabilities to complement the Agency for Integrated Care's (AIC) social programs. Together, these efforts aim for more holistic and comprehensive outcomes in addressing dementia's growing prevalence.

It also supports the Age Well Singapore program by embedding dementia-friendly principles into national frameworks. These principles are under review for integration into the Building and Construction Authority's (BCA) Accessibility Code, Universal Design Guidelines, and the design briefs of public agencies like HDB, NParks, and LTA. This approach will help scale up dementia-friendly interventions, benefitting a vulnerable segment of Singapore's ageing population

The initiative equips Singapore's built environment professionals with practical resources, such as design principles, guidelines, and environmental assessment tools. These resources enable more effective design evaluations and upgrades, fostering the development of dementia-friendly neighbourhoods.

By involving ethnographic research, co-creation with residents, and cross-sector collaboration, the project delivered impactful design prototypes. Post-implementation reviews revealed increased public space usage and higher satisfaction among residents.

This approach contributed to Yio Chu Kang's vision of becoming Singapore's first dementia-friendly constituency by 2025. Beyond infrastructure, the project fostered awareness and support for persons living with dementia (PLWDs) through resident engagement and grassroots initiatives. It also built the capabilities of the town council and local service providers, ensuring sustained progress from planning to implementation.

This effort showcases the power of thoughtful design, collaboration, and community in creating a more inclusive future.

This initiative reflects Singapore's commitment to inclusivity—creating a future-ready city where everyone, regardless of age or ability, can thrive.

The Challenge

Singapore is ageing rapidly, with life expectancy rising and a growing share of the population aged 65 and above. This shift brings both challenges and opportunities. While longer lives are a testament to medical and social progress, they also highlight gaps—such as the 10-year average Singaporeans spend in ill health. Closing this gap requires more than good healthcare; it calls for a broader ecosystem that fosters health and well-being, integrating society, workplaces, and communities to shape healthier lives.

At the heart of this effort is dementia, a condition affecting one in ten Singaporeans aged 60 and above—a number projected to exceed 152,000 by 2030. Recognizing this, Singapore has embraced an integrated approach, blending “hardware,” like urban design, with “heartware,” such as preventive health and aged care, to support active, independent ageing.

The Dementia-Friendly Neighbourhoods Study exemplifies this vision. Conducted in Yio Chu Kang, a residential area in the northeastern region of Singapore, it explored how thoughtful design can help individuals with dementia navigate their daily lives in familiar environments. By combining research, community collaboration, and inclusive principles, Singapore is building neighbourhoods where seniors—and especially those with dementia—can live with dignity, connection, and confidence.

Solution Proposed

The Dementia-Friendly Neighbourhoods Study, led by CLC, AIC, and SUTD, employs a thoughtful “3xDesign” framework to enhance the quality of life for people living with dementia (PLWDs) in Singapore's high-rise, high-density environment.

The framework focuses on three pillars: Research Methodology, using non-verbal tools to gather 2,000+ insights from PLWDs; Community Co-Creation, partnering with residents and sectors to build a supportive ecosystem; and Design Principles and Prototypes, creating and testing strategies that prioritize simplicity, familiarity, and navigation ease.

This approach will scale through policies, urban upgrades, and capacity-building for lasting impact.

A dementia-friendly neighbourhood goes beyond physical changes. Design strategies reduce sensory overload, reinforce familiar landmarks, and prioritize clear wayfinding to support PLWDs' confidence and safety. Quiet, uncluttered spaces and simple choices further ease their experience. Importantly, inclusive designs also benefit caregivers by reducing stress and creating shared spaces for meaningful interactions.

Recognizing that change can be difficult for PLWDs, designs focus on gradual, adaptable upgrades that build on familiar elements, allowing individuals to embrace new opportunities at their own pace.