

## MICRA Seedcorn Funding Application, 2018-19

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**Funding stream:** Centre for Ageing Better/MICRA. Themes: homes and communities/ the physical and social aspects of communities.

**Research title:** *Developing age-friendly communities in the Northern Gateway urban regeneration project: A co-research approach*

**Outline of proposed research:** This research brings together an interdisciplinary team of social scientists and architects to explore the potential for developing age-friendly communities in the forthcoming Northern Gateway urban regeneration project in Manchester. Using a co-research approach, we will develop a new collaborative network of practitioners and stakeholders (including the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub, Far East Consortium, older residents). The intended outcome is to write a policy briefing, academic paper and develop an ESRC/AHRC funding application, to carry out a three-year study on the Northern Gateway project.

**Background:** In July 2018, Manchester announced the largest and most ambitious residential-led development opportunity that the city has ever taken, delivering up to 15,000 more homes over 15-20 year period called the Northern Gateway project. It will form the most significant individual contribution to the City Council's and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's strategy for residential growth. The regeneration framework describes that it has the potential to 'revitalise existing communities' and provide a catalyst for the regeneration of neighbourhoods in the north of the city and extended city centre (2018:15).

Our previous research on urban regeneration has shown that despite material transformation, community remains an important concept (Lewis, 2016; 2017; 2018, Yarker 2018). Research on urban redevelopment has also shown that it is often only advantageous to certain age groups (Phillipson, 2007). There is also emerging evidence that urban environments may place older people at a heightened risk of isolation and loneliness (Scharf and Gierveld 2008). Placing older people's experiences at the heart of the agenda is essential, in order to give older a people a voice so they can be involved in making decisions about future homes and neighbourhoods in the city. However, the paradox of neighbourhood participation for older people, who tend to spend a lot of time in their neighbourhood, is that they are often the last to be engaged when it comes to decision-making processes (Buffel 2013). To attend to this gap, *this project investigates the potential for developing age-friendly communities in the Northern Gateway urban regeneration project*. One of the central aims of the project is the 'creation of the place'. Using a co-research approach, this project will bring together a team of older people with architects and regeneration planners to make suggestions for how the Northern Gateway could integrate 'age friendly homes and public spaces' (such as parks, shopping and leisure facilities) to promote intergenerational and community cohesion and community cohesion.

In 2010, Manchester was one of the first cities to become a member of the global network of *age-friendly cities* established by the WHO. Under this agenda, governments have introduced policies supporting the idea of age-friendly neighbourhoods. These policies have emerged in response to the two most pressing forces shaping social and economic life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – population ageing and urbanisation. Recognising the advances which have been made in the city, the WHO has recognised

GM as the UK's first age-friendly city region due to its work with several initiatives seeking to address the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population. Manchester's approach has become known across the world because of its imaginative and effective partnerships, neighbourhood working and its unique relationship with the city's universities which puts engagement with older people, their voice and their influence, at the heart of their approach (*Manchester: A great place to grow older*, 2017). The results of this project will feed into the development of the *Ageing Society* component of the *Local Industrial Strategy*. Ageing is one of the national 'Grand Challenges', and Greater Manchester is one of three trailblazer sites working with central government to agree a package of work, providing specific guidelines on age-friendly communities. Bringing together a network of older people, researchers and practitioners at the very beginning of the Northern Gateway project presents a unique and exciting opportunity to contribute to these theoretical and practical discussions from the outset.

### Research questions:

- How can an 'age-friendly' dimension be developed in large-scale urban regeneration?
- What are the challenges to developing lifetime homes and neighbourhoods?
- How can the inter-generational dimension of urban living be recognised?
- What kind of innovations in housing design and urban planning are needed in promoting 'age-friendly' urban regeneration?

### Methods and Outcomes

1. **Conduct a literature review** on urban regeneration and age-friendly communities, exploring current academic debates and policy debates and a **documentary/visual analysis** of the Northern Gateway regeneration plans. (Month 1-3).
2. **Establish a network of researchers and practitioners** working on urban regeneration issues in Greater Manchester alongside older people who would act as co-researchers in a series of 3 roundtable discussions on, a.) housing, b.) public space, c.) neighbourhood/community. The project will engage with **older people as co-researchers** to analyse and translate research findings into practical and policy recommendations to improve the age-friendliness of neighbourhoods. The co-researchers will work with the project team to translate the research findings into co-produced outputs such as policy briefings. (Month 1-6).
3. **Write a policy briefing**, jointly branded by the Centre for Ageing Better, MICRA and Manchester School of Architecture, focusing on practical and policy recommendations on urban regeneration and age-friendly communities, in a style and format accessible to politicians and lay audiences specifically for the GM Ageing Hub with specific guidance on involving older people in the design of regeneration plans to create age-friendly communities. (Month 5-6).
4. A co-written **academic paper** bringing together architectural and social science approaches to explore urban regeneration and age-friendly communities. (Month 5-6).
5. **Organise and host a MICRA seminar** on urban regeneration and age-friendly communities in collaboration with the Manchester School of Architecture. (Month 5-6).
6. **Prepare a grant application** for the ESRC or AHRC for a major new study on the Northern Gateway project. (Month 3-6).

**Summary of budget costs:** The resources requested relate to the employment of two PhD researchers for six months, part-time (£3500) and the costs of running three focus groups including room hire, travel costs (£1500) and refreshments (£500) for the MICRA seminar as well as printing costs for the policy briefing (£500). **Total: £6000.**