GREENVILLE, Ala. — Meet Mattia. She doesn't realize it, but she's helping frail and forgetful seniors remain in their homes long after living on their own becomes too difficult.

With her curly blond wig and glasses, Mattia — a full-size mannequin — is playing the role of an 83-year-old widow who, after making annual gifts at all costs giving up her freedom and moving into an assisted living facility, a nursing home or in with her adult children.

She is part of a $3.3 billion demonstration project on the University of Florida campus here that seeks to link in computer and sensor technology to help the legions of seniors live longer (as well as to lower the cost of health care).

Mattia "lives" in a 50-square-foot "house" that takes up more than half the fourth-floor computer lab in UF's computer science engineering building. It has a fully furnished living room, kitchen, bathroom and bath.

In June, she will move to a real 3,500-square-foot house in the ex-campus Oak Hammock retirement community, but for now, the "technology" is doing just fine.

As a Mattia, because built her home but complete living environment is in a windowed 12-foot-by-2-foot window that provides a "smart" and small area of experimental assistive-living devices, ranging from sensors that track an elderly person's whereabouts in the house to a microwave

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By Jeanette Almada Special to the Tribune

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The low rents had kept their building from being sold by the board of directors around them around them.

In an eight-year plan that began in the early 1990s, they worked with their alderman and a community development group to convert their building into a limited-equity cooperative.

The tenants, through their corporation, agreed that the amount of equity to be earned by any unit in the building would be capped, thereby preserving the affordability requirements for future buyers.

While most owners of houses, condos and coops expect some annual increases in the equity they have in their homes, residents of limited-equity co-ops are willing to give up that profit in exchange for the benefits of stabilized housing costs in neighbor

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