

Intergenerational and Seniors' Innovative Housing Models: A Scoping Review

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Atiya Mahmood, Kishore Seetharaman, Habib Chaudhury & Joe Humphries
Department of Gerontology, Simon Fraser University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Consistent with one of the research priorities set out by the National Housing Strategy of Canada, this study seeks to explore alternative approaches to addressing housing needs and challenges of older adults by focusing on key innovative housing and service models developed and implemented in Canada and other countries. The housing and service models studied in this review include: (i) co-living; (ii) cohousing; (iii) homesharing; (iv) cooperative housing; (v) affinity communities; (vi) service-integrated housing; and (vii) life lease housing and (viii) community hub; (ix) Naturally Occurring Retirement Community Supportive Services Program (NORC-SSP); and (x) the Village. The research questions guiding this study include: (i) *What are the needs and challenges of older Canadians in terms of housing?*; (ii) *What types of innovative housing models exist in Canada and other nations to address these needs and challenges?*; and (iii) *What are the advantages, disadvantages, strengths, and weaknesses of these housing models in relation to the diverse needs and challenges of older adults at the intersection of different characteristics?* The review synthesizes findings from 94 journal articles, book chapters, as well as program and policy reports.

The literature revealed the following key housing needs and challenges for older adults in Canada:

1. **Need for affordable housing**, especially among (i) older women; (ii) oldest-old (i.e., aged 85+ years) adults; (iii) older adults who are visible minorities and/or recent immigrants; and (iv) low-to-moderate income older adults.
2. **Need for a wide range of supportive services and environments** that promote and enhance the daily functioning, accessibility, community engagement, and autonomy of older adults, and the desire to age in place.
3. **Need for more targeted/tailored housing and service options**, that meet more diverse and specific housing needs and challenges, especially those of ethnocultural minority older adults and LGBTQ2S+ older adults.

The literature outlined several key advantages and challenges in relation to the aforementioned innovative housing and service models. These have been grouped into the following themes:

1. *Financial aspects*: Some of the key housing and service models **enhanced affordability** by i) providing dedicated funding for older adults with financial need; (ii) fostering cost-sharing among residents for common amenities and resources; and (iii) maintaining low entrance fees despite fluctuating market rates. However, the **lack of external funding**, resources, and supportive infrastructure was often cited as a barrier to the scaling and sustainability of most

models and easing financial pressure on older adults (i.e., due to membership fees, rising rents, ongoing maintenance and management costs).

2. *Health*: Some housing and service models were found to lower depression among older adults and were associated with a **decreased need for formal care**, as well as increased awareness of health promotion and disease prevention strategies.
3. *Social interaction and engagement*: Several of the models augmented older adults' social participation and reduced loneliness and isolation. By fostering the formation and maintenance of social networks, these models enabled older adults to feel a **sense of belonging** to their community. However, a common issue with some of the congregate housing (i.e., housing with private bedrooms and shared living, dining, kitchen, and amenities) models was inter-resident conflict, especially on account of varying needs and preferences. Conflict resolution is a pertinent issue especially for housing communities that are self-governed and democratically managed on the basis of resident consensus.
4. *Intergenerationality*: In some of the housing and service models, having an intergenerational environment (i.e., one where residents of all age groups live together) fostered the provision of **mutual support** (e.g., older residents helped raise children and in return were assisted with daily tasks by younger residents), enabling older adults to make meaningful and valuable contributions to their community.
5. *Autonomy and interdependence*: Some of the housing and service models were found to enable older adults the opportunity to have **control in decision-making** and planning, delivery, and utilization of services. Their sense of autonomy is facilitated through the availability of support through services and programs but also through fellow-residents' assistance, which fosters a culture of **co-caring and interdependence**. However, the exchange of mutual support may be challenged when older adults' needs become too complex and require skilled care and, consequently, may affect the sustainability of the housing and service model.
6. *Diversity and inclusion*: Besides a few cases of innovative approaches to housing ethnic minority older adults and LGBTQ2S+ older adults most models were criticized for a **lack of diversity** and lacking tailored support for the inclusion and integration of older adults who have (i) high-level and complex personal care and functional needs; (ii) limited social or economic resources; or (iii) diverse racial and ethnic identities.

Future research should focus on (i) the influence of innovative housing and service models on older adults' health and quality of life; (ii) expanding the application of innovative approaches to housing and services for ethnic minorities, LGBTQ2S+ individuals, Indigenous older adults, and low-to-moderate income individuals; (iii) the adoption of similar innovative approaches to those examined in this study to meet the specific housing needs and challenges of older adults living with physical and cognitive impairment, and other vulnerabilities including issues related to mental health, substance use, and homelessness; (iv) physical environmental adaptations within these models to cater to the accessibility needs of older adults living with physical and cognitive impairments; (iv) innovations that pave the way forward for promoting diversity and inclusivity in the provision of innovative housing and services for older adults and challenges or barriers to their implementation; and (v) scalability and sustainability of innovative housing and service models for older adults.