



NORC-SSPs: An Innovative Supportive Housing Model for Older Adults

A **NORC** is the short form for a **Naturally Occurring Retirement Community**.

A **NORC** is a geographic designation for an area such as a rental/condo building or neighbourhood block, that just so happens to house a high density (variably defined as 30-60%) of older adults. NORC buildings have become home to many seniors for a variety of reasons, including greater ease of mobility, not wanting or able to maintain a single-family home, economic pressures, or a desire to be closer to amenities.

A **NORC-SSP** includes a supportive service program (SSP), such as health, social and recreational activities. Services may include publicly funded health and home care workers (government services) and additional private programs and services not covered by government (fees calculated on a sliding scale based on income).

What are the essential elements of a NORC-SSP?

- Is an older adult-driven model of **aging in community**.
- Has **shared space**, e.g., a communal kitchen where residents can gather to cook and share meals; a room that can be used for social and recreational activities, shared Internet use and/or visiting health and social care services; a shared outdoor space with a patio, vegetable garden and barbecue.
- Is led by **residents** and seeks their **input** to the use and management of the shared space and supportive service programs.

Why do we need NORC-SSPs?

- By 2030, older people will number over 9.5 million and make up 23% of Canadians. In Ottawa, seniors (age 65-plus) currently represent over 18.5% of the population; by 2031, they will make up more than 22% of our city's population.
- Most older adults want to remain independent and age in their community. Many would consider leaving their family home if an appropriate, accessible, affordable, and available option existed in their community that provided the supports they need.
- There are very few independent, supportive living options that lie between staying in your own home and moving to an expensive retirement home with its dependant model of care. NORC-SSPs are an affordable, proven alternative.



What are the social benefits for residents of NORC-SSPs?

- Reduces social isolation with its associated health risks (e.g., cognitive decline, depression, poor diet, poor physical health).
- Provides older adults with opportunities for enhanced participation and meaningful contributions to their community.

What are the economic benefits of NORC-SSPs?

- NORC supportive services are less expensive and more efficient to provide to geographic areas where a higher number of older adults live.
- They may delay older adults moving to long-term care by keeping them supported and independent longer, a more cost-effective option for the health care system.
- NORC-SSPs address housing, health, and social needs and reduce moving and relocation costs.
- Rental building owners report lower vacancy rates and higher renter satisfaction.

How do NORC-SSPs successfully operate in Ontario today?

- The primary example of a NORC-SSP is the OASIS Seniors Supportive Living in Kingston Ontario, a successful partnership between the residents of Bowling Green Apartment Complex, the property owner (Homestead Landholdings), and the Home and Community Care Support Services, (formerly called the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)), which funds a full-time PSW (Personal Support Worker) program coordinator.
- The program is so successful that Queens University received a grant to expand OASIS to six new locations in Ontario. See: oasis-aging-in-place.com
- Oasis expanded to Toronto and is supported by the OpenLab with University Health Network to redesign supports and care in the community. See: uhnopenlab.ca/work/labs/norc-lab

This fact sheet is produced by the Age-Friendly Housing Committee, The Council on Aging of Ottawa. November 2021. For more information, visit coaottawa.ca/committees/housing



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