



Igniting Housing Possibilities

Collaborative Solutions for Older Adults in Peel

The Solutions Lab

The Igniting Housing Possibilities for Older Adults in Peel: Collaborative Solutions for Urban and Rural Communities in Peel Region Solutions Lab (“the Lab”) is a project initiated by the Region of Peel, with support from SHS Consulting, and funded by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) through the National Housing Strategy’s Solutions Lab program. The lab aimed to improve the housing situations, journeys, and outcomes for seniors in Peel by embarking on a collaborative process to co-design innovative housing solutions.

In 2020, this solutions lab set out to explore the following design challenge:

How might we enable seniors from diverse backgrounds living in urban and rural settings and system stakeholders to participate in a design process that increases the suite of innovative and diverse affordable housing options available to seniors that promote community inclusion and proactive responses to affordability issues?

Methodology

To explore this complex challenge, the lab used participatory methods to build a deeper understanding of older adults’ experiences. The Lab Team worked with stakeholders to translate insights into new solutions that could address a range of older adults’ affordable housing needs across the Region of Peel.

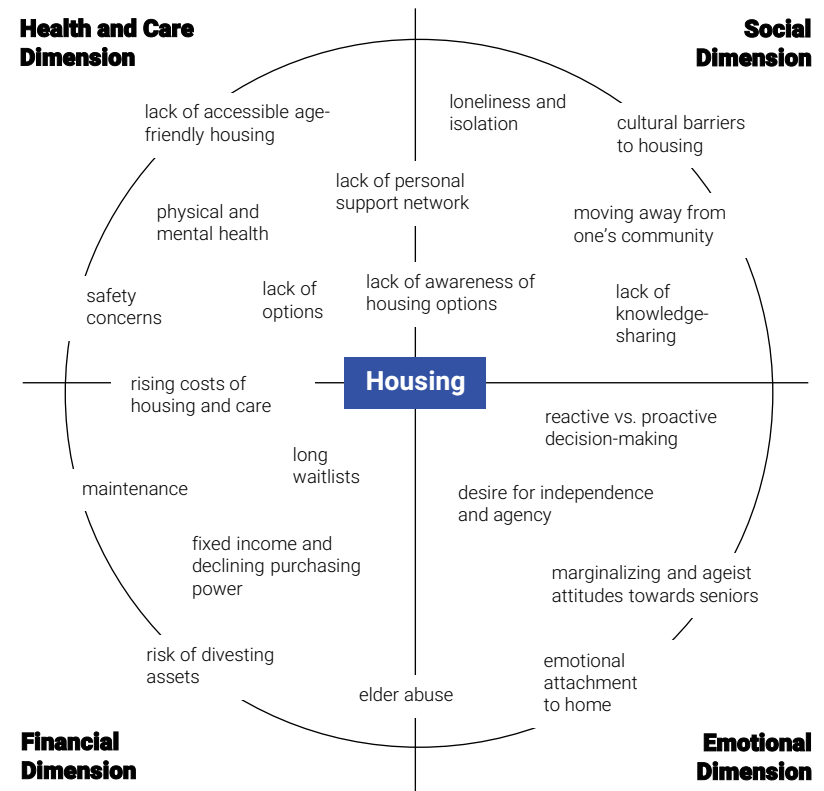
Engagement sessions took place over **four phases of the lab: Discovery, Development, Prototype, and Roadmap**. Each phase involved participation from a variety of stakeholders.

Four participant groups were integral to the Lab process: the **Lab Team**, the **Community Design Team (CDT)**, the **Knowledge-to-Action Group (K2AG)**, and the **expert interviewees**. Descriptions of these groups can be found at the end of this document under *Acknowledgements*.

Seniors’ Housing and Wellbeing Today

In the Discovery Phase, the Lab Team engaged with the Community Design Team and experts on seniors’ housing and wellbeing in the Region of Peel. The following diagram captures the themes related to the needs and challenges with the current system of seniors’ housing and seniors’ wellbeing. The diagram highlights challenges related to the health, social, financial, and emotional dimensions of housing for seniors.

Areas of Importance



Success Criteria

In-depth engagements with the Community Design Team helped the Lab Team understand what CDT members value most around housing and community. This conversation led to creating a set of success criteria to help guide solution generation. The criteria act as a customized checklist for CDT members, reflecting their housing needs and desires.



My housing

- Is **well-located** relative to my needs;
- Is manageable for **on-going maintenance**;
- Is in **walking distance** of where I need to go;
- Has access to the **outdoors**; and
- Can adapt to evolving **accessibility** and **support** needs.



My health and well-being

- Includes home supports around my **physical wellness**, **safety**, and **security** as I age;
- Includes being close to my **health care providers**;
- Includes **emotional peace** and happiness; and
- Includes a sense of **personal accomplishment**.



My social community

- Enables my **civic participation** and **volunteering**;
- Includes neighbours who are kind and supportive;
- Includes **age-friendly public commons** like parks and outdoor spaces;
- Includes accessibility of a range of **transportation options**;
- Offers **senior-specific community programming**; and
- Is **diverse and inclusive** of different generations and cultures.



My financial ability

- Affords me **choice** around my housing options;
- Affords me **access to housing in the community** that I desire; and
- Enables me to take care of **changing health needs** as I age.

Opportunity Areas

Through work with the Community Design Team and other participants in the Development Phase, the Lab Team identified areas of opportunity to address seniors' housing needs in Peel. These are spaces where innovative solutions may emerge. The Lab Team framed the four opportunity areas as "How might we" questions.

How might we...

A

explore housing opportunities that orient around seniors as "elders"—valuable members of communities who have much to contribute?

B

empower seniors to learn about and contribute to the broad array of housing options that can meet their diverse needs and desires?

C

design desirable new housing options for seniors that take advantage of underutilized spaces in the Region of Peel?

D

afford the ability for seniors to remain in their homes and/or communities as their financial and/or health circumstances change?

Advancing Seniors' Housing Opportunities in Peel

Overview of Solution Directions

The Lab Team worked with the seniors' Community Design Team to explore a variety of solution directions within the four identified opportunity areas. The following seven ideas emerged from multiple workshops hosted with the Community Design Team and synthesis and analysis work conducted by the Lab Team.

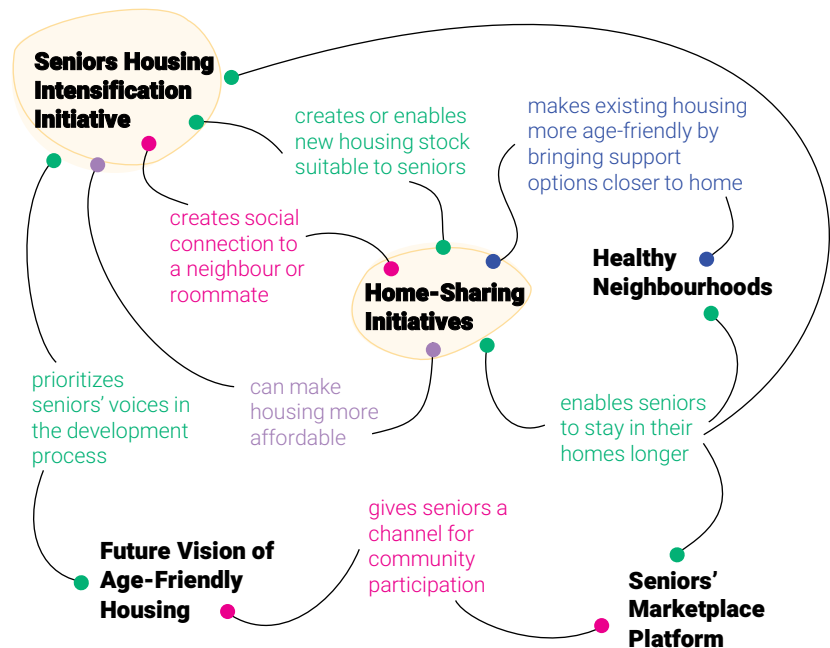
1. **Duplex Conversion:** A program to support seniors in converting their home into a duplex (a dwelling divided into two apartments)
2. **Modular Garden Suites for Seniors:** A program that supports seniors in installing a modular garden suite on their property
3. **Personal Support Worker HomeShare:** A supportive roommate program matching a student studying to be a personal support worker looking to complete practical experience hours with discounted room and board in a senior's home in exchange for support
4. **Seniors' International Caregiver Program:** A program in partnership with the federal government where international caregivers provide culturally appropriate care to seniors in exchange for reduced room and board
5. **Seniors' Marketplace Platform:** A physical and digital "marketplace" platform where seniors can offer and ask for goods and services needed
6. **Future Vision of Age-Friendly Housing:** An opportunity to include seniors in Region-led housing development opportunities, including contributing to the design of Region-led housing developments
7. **Healthy Neighbourhoods:** Partnerships to improve access to health and wellness services in neighbourhoods, helping seniors age in place in their homes

Prioritization

Once the Community Design Team built out the solution directions, the Lab Team considered which of the seven solution directions would be the most feasible and viable for implementation by Region of Peel Housing Services. Through another round of synthesis the Lab Team combined some of the solutions and prioritized two solutions to explore further in the Prototype Phase: **Home-Sharing Initiatives** and **Seniors Housing Intensification Initiative**. However, the Lab Team recognizes that the other three solution directions (Seniors' Marketplace Platform, Future Vision of Age-Friendly Housing, Healthy Neighbourhoods) are also important in addressing the full range of problem areas identified by participants.

Dimensions

- Housing (Green dot)
- Health (Blue dot)
- Social and Emotional (Pink dot)
- Financial (Purple dot)

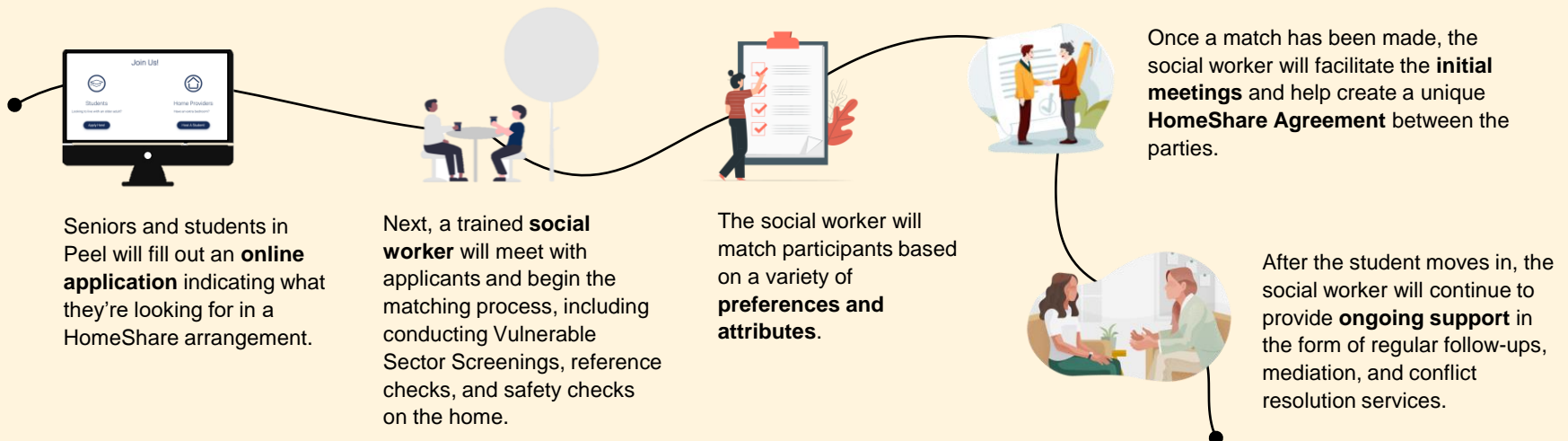


Home-Sharing Initiatives

This solution direction involves a pilot program currently being implemented in the Region of Peel by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE). Pending the outcomes of the pilot program, additional opportunities for future iterations of home-sharing initiatives may be explored.

Canada HomeShare Peel is a pilot program run by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE). The program matches older adults (55+) who would benefit from companionship, receiving rental income, and help around the house, with a university or college student seeking affordable housing. In exchange for a rental fee of \$400 to \$600 per month, the student provides up to seven hours per week of companionship and assistance with completing light household tasks, such as preparing and sharing meals, tidying up, carrying groceries, or walking a pet. The following image provides an overview of how NICE is currently implementing Canada HomeShare Peel.

How Canada HomeShare Peel Works



Other Potential Iterations

Upon completing the pilot program, the Region of Peel will evaluate the Canada HomeShare Peel program. Any program expansion will be recommended to Regional Council for approval. Program expansion may include other iterations of home-sharing arrangements beyond those outlined below.

Personal Support Worker HomeShare

This intervention could be a supportive roommate program that matches a student studying to be a personal support worker (PSW) looking to complete practical experience hours with discounted room and board in a senior's home in exchange for support. The Region could investigate partnering with PSW colleges to deliver this program.

Seniors' International Caregiver Program

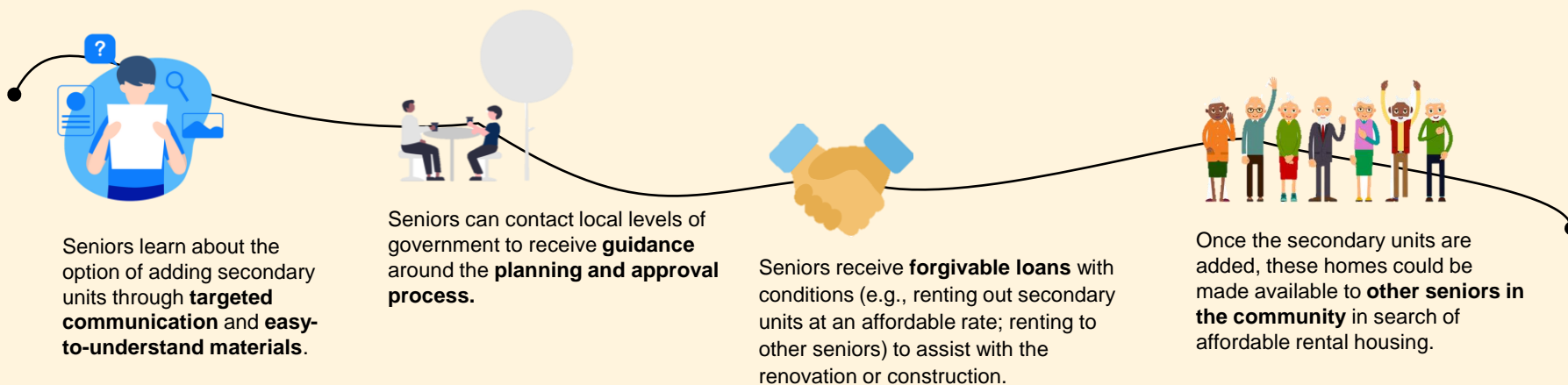
This program could be launched in partnership with the federal government, where international caregivers provide culturally relevant care to seniors in exchange for reduced room and board.

Seniors' Housing Intensification Initiative

This solution direction involves the potential expansion of the Region of Peel's My Home Second Unit Renovation Program. The expansion would create a senior-specific funding stream to encourage seniors to renovate or create a second unit in their home, including basement units, duplexes, and modular garden suites.

The program would address seniors' unique needs by creating targeted communication materials explaining the benefits and logistics of adding a second unit to their home and accompanying materials to help seniors navigate the process. This initiative would also involve working with local municipal partners to identify ways to collaborate and tailor the funding stream to seniors and meet shared policy objectives. For instance, updates to the Official Plan may be required by local municipalities to accommodate gentle infill policies. The following image provides an overview of how the program could work.

How the Initiative Could Work



Other Potential Iterations

Through the solutions lab process, the Lab Team worked with the Community Design Team to test out two potential scenarios that might go beyond the existing My Home Second Unit Renovation Program in Peel. This section provides an overview of the Community Design Team members' ideas around a duplex conversion program and a seniors' modular garden suites program. Upon completion of the pilot program, the Region of Peel will evaluate the My Home Second Unit Renovation Program. Any program expansion will be recommended to Regional Council for approval. Program expansion may or may not include the iterations outlined below.

Duplex Conversion

This program could support seniors in converting their home into a duplex (a dwelling divided into two apartments).

Modular Garden Suites for Seniors

This program could support seniors in creating a modular garden suite. A garden suite is a detached unit installed on a property.

Moving Forward

Knowledge Dissemination

The Lab Team hosted two webinars, inviting those who participated in the Lab and the broader community to hear about the Lab outputs. Seventy-four (74) people registered for the webinars, with approximately 50 participants in attendance. The Lab Team also convened the Knowledge-to-Action Group (K2AG) to provide their advice and feedback on the prioritized solutions for implementation.

Sharing Forum

In general, attendees thought the two prioritized solutions were promising and could be linked (e.g., the additional units could help support the home-share initiative). The success of the two solutions depends, in part, on using appropriate channels to provide seniors with the necessary resources and information—this could include newspapers, pop-up information sessions, and dissemination through existing seniors' groups and services. Participants noted piloting the programs is essential to iron out details and improve before scaling. More work can be done to better understand the broader appetite for these solutions—this could involve a more extensive survey of Peel seniors. Participants noted these solutions alone might not be enough to enable seniors to age in place (i.e., other financial and health-related supports may be required); however, it is a good start.

Lab Website

Learn more about the solutions lab by visiting our website.

www.housingpossibilitieslab.com

Knowledge-to-Action Group

Overall, the K2AG felt the two prioritized solutions are worthwhile for implementation. The K2AG described the two solutions as relevant and pragmatic solutions that leverage existing resources and infrastructure already in place to pilot the programs. Additional program design will be required to customize these two solutions further to meet seniors' needs. This design can be done using the insights and design characteristics provided through this solutions lab and ongoing pilot projects. K2AG members appreciated that these two solutions do not require building entirely new seniors' buildings and make good use of the existing resources and assets in Peel communities.

Conclusion

This solutions lab initiative was an 18-month initiative, involving almost one hundred stakeholders from across Peel Region, from the Lab Team to the Community Design Team, Advisory Committee, key informant interviewees, and other participants. This process sheds light on the range of housing needs, desires, and preferences among seniors in Brampton, Caledon, and Mississauga. The seniors' Community Design Team kept the process grounded in the voices of lived experts and was a source of inspiration over the course of the lab.

While there is still a long road ahead to ensure seniors in Peel have an affordable, suitable, and adequate place to live, this solutions lab provides a pathway forward to implementing a set of initiatives that have the potential to move us towards meeting this goal in Peel. Further, the Lab offers additional solution directions for future exploration in hopes of inspiring others to take on the work of igniting housing possibilities for older adults in Peel.



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Acknowledgements

Lab Team

The Lab Team includes team members from the Region of Peel and SHS Consulting. The Lab Team undertook the day-to-day activities of the lab, including project management, facilitation, and process design.

- Jennifer McLaughlin, Manager, Housing System Performance, Region of Peel
- Erin Mifflin, Advisor, Innovation and Program Design, Region of Peel
- Katherine Lordon, Specialist, Housing System Performance, Region of Peel
- Christine Pacini, Partner, SHS Consulting
- Adrienne Pacini, Principal, Strategic Design, SHS Consulting
- Lanxi Dong, Senior Design Researcher, SHS Consulting
- Cheryl Hsu, Senior Design Researcher, SHS Consulting

Knowledge-to-Action Group (K2AG)

The Knowledge-to-Action Group is a group of individuals considered subject matter experts on seniors housing in the Region of Peel. They provided strategic advice to the lab through a series of virtual meetings.

- Lesley Nagoda, COO, Services and Housing in the Province (SHIP)
- Lauren Blumas, Manager, Legal and Special Projects, Victoria Park Community Homes
- Gurpreet Malhotra, CEO, Indus Community Services
- Raymond Applebaum, CEO, Peel Senior Link
- Keith Ward, former Commissioner of Human Services and General Manager of Peel Living at the Region of Peel
- Mike Davis, Chair, Elder Help Peel
- Teresa Ho, Advisor, Health Services Strategy, Region of Peel
- Melissa Slupik, Planner, Planning Innovation, City of Mississauga
- Katie Sawyers, Age-Friendly Caledon Project Lead, Town of Caledon
- Bindu Shah, Policy Planner, City Planning and Design, City of Brampton

Expert Interviewees

To better understand current seniors' housing options in the Region of Peel and the challenges and opportunities within the system, the Lab Team conducted 13 expert interviews with stakeholders throughout the Region, including municipal and community agency representatives.

- Edna Toth, Chair, Peel Poverty Action Group
- Baldev Mutta, Punjabi Community Health Services
- Dorothy Mazeau, Founder, Golden Girls Canada
- Andrea Warren, General Manager, Peel Living
- Mayor Hazel McCallion, former Mayor of Mississauga
- Lisa Levin, CEO, AdvantAge Ontario
- Regional Chair Nando Iannicca, Regional Municipality of Peel
- Councillor Annette Groves, Town of Caledon
- Councillor Chris Fonseca, City of Mississauga
- Councillor Dipika Damerla, City of Mississauga
- Councillor Paul Vicente, City of Brampton
- Douglas Kwan, Director of Advocacy and Legal Services, Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario
- Jack Fleming, Executive Director, North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services

Community Design Team

The Community Design Team (CDT) is a diverse group of 18 seniors in the Region of Peel representing all three local municipalities. The CDT brought their lived experience and expertise to the lab by participating in a series of interactive activities and workshops.

This project received funding from the National Housing Strategy under the NHS Solutions Labs and is a collaborative effort led by the Region of Peel with support from SHS Consulting. The views expressed are the personal views of the Solutions Lab team, and CMHC accepts no responsibility for them.

