

## **Aging in Community: Options for Creating Mutual Support and Cohousing** [How can we build neighbourliness?]

Aging with resilience can be an exciting journey. Let's broaden our vision to seek innovative ways to foster aging in community. We embrace our **interdependence** – to move past the North American focus on independence. We dream of a good old age of connections and mutual support – creating many options beyond the two established paths: aging in place in frailty (often isolated, without support) or moving into assisted care. Increasing social isolation across society, lack of finances, and calls for sustainability add to the emerging cry for new alternatives.

Seniors across North America are organizing into mutual support 'villages' built around volunteering to help each other, innovative housing projects to optimize interdependent living and self-determination, and learning to share resources such as their homes, vacations, cars and especially their skills for the good of their communities. Aging in community aims to be interdependent, engaged, inclusive, sustainable, and healthy.

### **[Hamilton Aging in Community WEBSITE](https://hamiltonagingtogether.ca/)**

The website is a community hub of resources and ideas on Aging in Community – the general concepts and specifics related to the Hamilton Area. Check out the site also for senior services in Hamilton, a calendar of events, and a weekly blog. Subscribe to the blog at <https://hamiltonagingtogether.ca/contact/>

### **Hamilton Aging Together**

**Hamilton Aging Together** (founded in 2013 and led by Ellen Ryan) is an aging-in-community group of approximately 50 maturing individuals residing in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. We advocate for Age Friendly approaches to interdependence, especially innovations led by older adults. We are committed to learn and inform others about alternative housing options and other mutual support strategies for maturing adults and seniors. We are committed to get to know each other and to rely on each other in times of need.

Members of **Aging Together** have been invited to speak about social participation and aging in community by the Hamilton Council on Aging, the Hamilton Seniors Advisory Committee, Ancaster Senior Achievement Centre, Halton Seniors Advisory Committee, Age-Friendly communities in Ontario, and various programs at McMaster University.

**Aging Together** presents annual Community Information events during Seniors Month (June) on topics such as Aging in Community, Home Sharing, Intergenerational Programming, and Strengthening Connections through Faith Communities.

### **[Aging in Community Video - 9 minutes - E.Ryan](https://hamiltonagingtogether.ca/about/)**

Link: <https://hamiltonagingtogether.ca/about/>

## Village to Village Model

A non-housing approach to creating and sustaining a mutual support network within a specific geographical area. The fast-growing **Village to Village Network** already supports 200+ Villages across North America. The most frequent services offered by these mostly-volunteer, seniors-led villages are: information and referral, transportation and shopping, household and computer maintenance.

## Senior Cohousing Model

Adapting the European approach to senior cohousing for Canada, these innovative seniors-led housing communities support optimal aging. Senior cohousing combines private home ownership with shared amenities (small private space with large common space), lower energy use, neighbourly cooperation, intergenerational outreach, and emphasis on flourishing through mutual support. Most cohousing communities are located within a broader neighbourhood with easy access to services and opportunities.

## Other Community-Oriented Housing Models

In **Shared Housing**, a homeowner offers accommodation to a homesharer in exchange for an agreed level of support in the form of financial exchange, assistance with household tasks, or both. Alternatives include repurposing big homes with 3-4 suites and shared common space. Some municipalities offer a matching and support service.

[See the Halton HomeShare Toolkit \(2015\).](#)



[McMaster Symbiosis](#) is a program to match graduate students needing housing with seniors who wish to share their home in exchange for low rent and some contracted household chores. See link: <https://hamiltonagingtogether.ca/mcmaster-symbiosis-homesharing/>

In **Co-operative Housing**, members elect a board of directors and volunteer to support the common space. In Hamilton, some co-operative housing units are subsidized for lower-income individuals. Seniors Co-housing grew out of the older and more diverse Co-op movement.

### Websites

<b>Village to Village Network</b>	<a href="http://vtnetwork.org">vtnetwork.org</a>
<b>Solterra Co-housing</b>	<a href="http://solterra-co-housing.com/">solterra-co-housing.com/</a>
<b>Senior Cohousing</b>	<a href="http://seniorcohousing.com">seniorcohousing.com</a>
<b>Canadian Senior Cohousing</b>	<a href="http://canadianseniorcohousing.com">canadianseniorcohousing.com</a>

### References

- \*Blanchard, J. M. (Ed.) (2013). *Aging in Community*. Chapel Hill NC: Second Journey.  
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- Durrett, C. (2009). *The Senior Cohousing Handbook: Community Approach to Independent Living, 2nd ed.* Gabriola Island, BC: New Society.
- Green, L. (2013). *The Perfect Home for a Long Life: Choosing the Right Retirement Lifestyle for You.* Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers.
- McCamant, K., & Durrett, C. (2011). *Creating Co-housing: Building Sustainable Communities.* Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.
- Pinker, S. (2014). *The Village Effect: How Face-to-face Contact Can Make Us Healthier and Happier.* Random House Canada.