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NEWS RELEASE

To Support Ageing in the Right Place, Go Where Older Adults Already Live in Large Numbers

New report from the National Institute on Ageing and the NORC Innovation Centre at University Health Network calls for a national strategy to unlock the potential of NORCs

TORONTO, Nov. 4, 2022 — Most older Canadians would rather [age in their homes and communities](#) than in long-term care (LTC) or retirement homes, but several obstacles can stand in their way — from unmet health care and social needs to a lack of housing options. One of the most promising opportunities is a model that leverages the high density of older adults living within a community by delivering programming that integrates the provision of health services and social engagement while fostering independence.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, known as **NORCs**, are communities that house a high density of older adults but were *not* built for the purpose of providing care in the way that retirement homes, assisted living facilities or LTC homes were. These may be communities that were designed to house primarily older adults, such as 55-plus apartment buildings, or those where the proportion of older adults grew naturally over time. They can take several forms, from condos to social housing to clusters of single-family homes within the same community.

NORCs, in partnership with local care providers and community organizations, can leverage the density of older adults living in one place to provide a range of health and social services, known as “NORC programs,” in the community. These supports and services can keep older adults out of LTC homes while realigning the delivery of existing health and social services in a more efficient and forward-looking way. And because NORC residents are often involved in the design and management of programs, this allows for more autonomy and leadership opportunities for older adults, especially those from equity-deserving communities.

However, in the absence of an enabling policy environment for developing NORC programs in Canada — or even widespread awareness or data on their effectiveness in this country — attempts to harness their potential have largely been limited to grassroots, localized initiatives.

In this second report in the [Ageing in the Right Place](#) research series, titled [It's Time to Unleash the Power of Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities \(NORCs\) in Canada](#), the **National Institute on Ageing (NIA)** and the newly launched **NORC Innovation Centre at University**

Health Network (UHN) take a deep dive on NORCs, examining what makes NORC programs successful in other jurisdictions and what would be needed to make them work in Canada.

“Canadians deserve access to a range of housing options that provide the support they need to age with dignity, autonomy and a high overall quality of life,” said Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Health Policy Research for the NIA. “With support from all levels of government, community organizations and older adults themselves, NORC programs can be one of these options.”

The NORC Innovation Centre has identified more than 1,900 residential buildings across Ontario that can be considered NORCs, housing a total of 217,000 older adults — higher than the number of Ontario LTC and retirement home residents combined. These numbers offer a glimpse at the vast potential of NORCs, but this potential is going largely unfulfilled, according to Tai Huynh, Policy Lead of the NORC Innovation Centre.

“In most communities across Canada, there has been little effort to identify existing NORCs, let alone provide the public funding to foster programs that support residents with meaningful social engagement and assistance with everyday tasks,” he said. “This is more important than ever as Canada is confronted with an ageing population and an overtaxed LTC sector.”

To help all levels of government leverage the power of NORCs, the NIA and NORC Innovation Centre have developed four policy recommendations:

1. Develop a national strategy to better advance NORC programs across the country
2. Support and engage with local communities to enable the development of NORC programs
3. Establish sustainable funding mechanisms and other opportunities to encourage the development of local NORC programs
4. Build greater system capacity for innovation, research and knowledge exchange around NORCs and NORC programs across Canada

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About the Ageing in the Right Place Research Series

*Supporting more older Canadians to age in their own homes and communities for as long as possible, commonly referred to as “ageing in place,” will be essential to better caring for Canada’s ageing population. Yet doing so effectively requires more responsive systems and **services that allow for what the National Institute on Ageing calls Ageing in the Right Place: “The process of enabling healthy ageing in the most appropriate setting based on an older person’s personal preferences, circumstances and care needs.”** This [ground-breaking research series](#) presents a practical framework to understand the concept of Ageing in the Right Place (AIRP) and what is*

required to make it work, and highlights existing best practices and new opportunities that can reduce unnecessary long-term care home admissions and better support the implementation of successful AIRP policies and programs across Canada and beyond.

About The National Institute on Ageing

The [National Institute on Ageing](#) is a think tank at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) focused on the realities of Canada's ageing population. Follow us on Twitter [@NIAgeing](#) and support our call for a National Seniors Strategy [@NSS_Now](#).

About the NORC Innovation Centre at University Health Network

The [NORC Innovation Centre](#) at University Health Network is a first-of-its-kind centre dedicated to advancing a 21st century model of integrated care in naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs). By leveraging multiple capabilities across the UHN enterprise, the NORC Innovation Centre seeks to provide Canadians with new options for aging in place with dignity and choice. It was born out of the efforts of UHN OpenLab, an interdisciplinary design and innovation shop dedicated to finding creative solutions that transform the way health care is delivered and experienced.

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