

Subject: Councillors T. Kavanagh and A. Hubley – Supporting Aging in Place through Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities

File Number: ACS2025-OCC-CCS-0049

**Report to Community Services Committee on 22 April 2025
and Council 30 April 2025**

Submitted on April 7, 2025 by Theresa Kavanagh, Councillor

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Ward: Citywide

Objet : Conseillère T. Kavanagh et Conseiller A. Hubley – Favoriser le vieillissement chez soi grâce aux communautés de retraite naturelle

Numéro de dossier : ACS2025-OCC-CCS-0049

Rapport présenté au Comité des services communautaires

Rapport soumis le 22 avril 2025

et au Conseil le 30 avril 2025

Soumis le 2025-04-07 par Theresa Kavanagh, Conseillère

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Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville

REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Community Services Committee recommend that Council:

- 1. Request that the Government of Canada develop a national strategy to better support Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) model in their programming to enable aging in place across the country; and**
- 2. Request that the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada**

establish long-term sustainable funding streams to support capital infrastructure and programming costs associated with Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities; and

- 3. Request that the Province of Ontario explore opportunities streamline home care services in Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities in order to simplify older adults' access to services and refine the current fragmented system; and**
- 4. Direct staff to incorporate into the upcoming Ottawa's Older Adult Plan the collaboration with community partners to monitor and provide up to date information on the prevalence of apartment-based ("vertical") and neighborhood-based ("horizontal") NORCs in Ottawa to support infrastructure and program planning; and**
- 5. Direct staff to incorporate into the upcoming Ottawa's Older Adult Plan the development of a NORC collaboration network with community partners to enhance community-based aging in place services.**

RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité des services communautaires recommande ce qui suit au Conseil :

- 1. Demander au gouvernement fédéral d'élaborer une stratégie nationale pour mieux soutenir les communautés de retraite naturelle dans leurs programmes visant à favoriser le vieillissement chez soi partout au pays; et**
- 2. Demander au gouvernement de l'Ontario et à celui du Canada de créer des voies de financement pérennes et viables pour financer les infrastructures et les programmes propres aux communautés de retraite naturelle; et**
- 3. Demander au gouvernement de l'Ontario d'étudier les possibilités de normalisation des soins à domiciles dans les communautés de retraite naturelle afin de faciliter l'accès des personnes âgées aux services et d'améliorer le système actuellement fragmenté; et**
- 4. Demander au personnel de prévoir dans le prochain Plan relatif aux personnes âgées une collaboration avec les partenaires communautaires pour que l'on puisse disposer de renseignements à jour sur le nombre de communautés de retraite naturelle à Ottawa formées d'immeubles d'appartements (communautés « verticales ») et de quartiers**

(communautés « horizontales ») et en suivre l'évolution, afin d'orienter la planification des infrastructures et des programmes; et

- 5. Demander au personnel d'intégrer au prochain Plan relatif aux personnes âgées la création d'un réseau collaboratif entre les communautés de retraite naturelle et les partenaires communautaires en vue d'améliorer les services communautaires favorisant le vieillissement chez soi.**

DISCUSSION

Ottawa's population is growing, changing and aging. According to the 2021 Census, 37% of Ottawa's population is over the age of 50 and represents the fastest growing age group, with those over 85 and 100 showing particularly significant increases. There are now more older adults than children under 15, and by 2030, it is estimated that one in five adults will be 65 years of age or older.

The findings from the 2024 Older Adult Plan consultations for the renewal of Ottawa's Older Adult Plan confirmed the preference for community-based services to enable people to age in place for as long as possible.

The widespread practice of institutionalizing older adults often takes them away from their existing support networks, which are crucial to their emotional and social well-being. This practice is also a costly way of providing housing adding a financial burden on the older adults, their families and the community.

Supporting older adults to age in place as an alternative will require innovative housing models, infrastructure, and coordinated services to ensure their independence, safety, health and social well-being are being supported.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Community is typically a multi-unit residential building that over time may naturally come to house a high density of older adults. In 2020, approximately 170 residential buildings were characterized as Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities in Ottawa, or communities where 30% or more residents are older adults.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities are paths for older adults to age in place, while providing opportunities to realign the delivery of existing health and social services in a more efficient and innovative way.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities Social Support programs, like Oasis, strengthen and sustain healthy communities of older adults by addressing important

determinants of healthy aging such as isolation, nutrition, physical fitness, and sense of belonging.

Ottawa Community Housing has 22 affordable housing communities for older adults (NORCs) where on-site programs provided by Ottawa West Community Support services have demonstrated significant health and quality of life benefits for tenants.

The first Ottawa Oasis project in the Ambleside Naturally Occurring Retirement Community is supported by a collaboration between the residents of Ambleside Condominiums, Queen's University as the funders and researchers, Olde Forge Community Resource Centre as the on-site program provider and The Council on Aging of Ottawa as the advocate/champion. Since its inception in 2023, the program has demonstrated positive outcomes in social connection, nutrition, mental health and physical fitness, thereby supporting many older adults to age at home. The project has also provided access to community health supports for older adults without a primary physician. The success of the project has resulted in reduction in emergency room visits since has been implemented.

All levels of government must create new paths to allow for more older adults to age in place to ensure that local, provincial and national policies are integrated and reflect best practices.

It is crucial that a comprehensive strategy to support aging in place is developed in Ottawa now.

Accordingly, this report proposes recommendations to better support NORCs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with implementing the report recommendations.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications associated with implementing the report recommendations.

OPERATIONAL STAFF COMMENTS

Community and Social Services staff support this report as it aligns with the community engagement results that are being considered in the development the new Older Adult Plan (OAP) 2025-2030.

Staff accept the direction to incorporate into the OAP the action to work with community partners to monitor and provide up to date information on the prevalence of apartment-based (“vertical”) and neighborhood-based (“horizontal”) NORCs in Ottawa to support infrastructure and program planning. Staff interpret this direction to mean that reporting on this action would be done as part of regular OAP outcome reporting.

Staff also accept the direction to include the development of a NORC collaboration network in the new OAP, and will work with community partners to find a lead for this work, as community partners are actively working on advancing the NORC concept locally. This work is best aligned to a community partner with a broader mandate in order to promote collective impact and strengthen the ongoing efforts to enhance community-based aging in place services.

CONSULTATION

No consultation was undertaken on this report.

DISPOSITION

Should Council approve this report, the relevant departmental staff will action the recommendations accordingly.