



# Should I Stay or Should I Move?

It is a big decision to move or change your living arrangements at any stage of life, but especially when you are older. Planning now, before a crisis forces you to move, can make the decision easier and ensure you will be happy with your choice.

Here are some important things to consider before you use the Age-Friendly Housing Search Checklist to help you decide on what you need and what now and in the future:

**Your health and mobility.** How healthy and mobile are you now? How healthy and mobile do you think you will be 10 years from now? Think about existing health conditions and what you would do if your health changes or you experience a fall or injury.

**Transportation.** Are you willing to move and/or use public transportation when you are no longer willing or able to drive.

**Living with others.** Would you like to share living space with others? Or do you prefer to live on your own? Would you want to move if your partner becomes ill or dies? Do you want to live in a community with all ages, or do you prefer to live only with other older people?

**Social Connections.** Do you have friends, family, and social networks that are close to where you live now? Would you be able to maintain these social connections if you move?

**Caregiving.** Would moving help or hinder your role as a caregiver (now or in the future), as well as your ability to maintain your own health and well-being? How does the person you are caring for feel about moving? Do the Checklist together to see where your preferences match and where they do not."

## The Age-Friendly Housing Search Checklist

The Age-Friendly Housing Search Checklist asks questions related to the 4 As of housing options: affordability, accessibility, appropriateness and availability. Feel free to add your own living and lifestyle requirements to the Checklist, such as a desire to have pets, privacy, access to gardening or cycle paths, etc.



## The four A's are:

### Affordable

Affordable housing costs less than 30% of your before-tax income (for a household or person living alone). Housing costs include mortgage or rent, utilities (hydro, gas and water), property taxes, insurance and other fees (e.g. condo fees, maintenance costs). Access to affordable housing for low- and moderate-income seniors, both renters and homeowners, is challenging in the current market.

### Accessible

As we age, we may experience physical and cognitive changes that limit our movements, senses or activities, and make it difficult to stay in our home. The home may need to be adapted to enable safe, independent living. There is a need for more housing options in Ottawa that are accessible for people with disabilities, especially as the number of people over the age of 65 continues to increase.

### Appropriate

Regardless of the setting, appropriate housing is safe, secure, clean, and well-maintained. Living independently in the community is the appropriate choice for most older people. However, assisted living may be a better option for seniors with health problems that cannot be managed with help from community services. Housing that is close to public transit and neighbourhood services (shops, libraries, parks, seniors' centres, etc.) allows older people to take part in the community fully. Neighbourhoods that encourage social contact prevent isolation.

### Available

Older adults in Ottawa want options that are affordable, accessible and appropriate. Too often these options are limited or just not available in their community of choice. Some options, such as cohousing or home sharing either do not exist or are not available now. Other housing options such as social housing, retirement homes and long-term care homes have long waitlists.



# Age-Friendly Housing Search Checklist

Things to consider	Now	Future Options
<b>Affordability</b>		
What are your current costs for utilities, taxes, insurance, rent/ mortgage, home maintenance? How does this compare with other options (e.g. renting an apartment, living in a retirement home, or moving to a smaller home or condo)?		
Are you spending more than 30% of your before-tax income on housing?		
Can you afford to renovate your home so that you can stay there if you develop disabilities or is it more affordable to move?		
Can you afford to pay for services that you may need now or in the future? (e.g. help with cleaning, snow removal or lawn care, general home maintenance, meal preparation, bathing, dressing or medications)		

 **Comments:**



<b>Accessibility</b>		
Can you get in and out of the home/ driveway/ garage easily? Does the home have a no-step entry or a ramp at the entry?		
Is it difficult to move around in some parts of the home?		



Things to consider	Now	Future Options
Are there stairs that are difficult to manage? If you live in a multi-floor building, is there a reliable elevator that works for people using a mobility device (e.g. walker or wheelchair)?		
Can you move easily in and out of the bathroom? Are there grab bars installed? Is there a walk-in shower?		
Is the laundry equipment easily accessible?		
Is the home accessible for people with mobility devices (e.g. a walker or wheelchair)? Are the doorways wide enough for a wheelchair to enter? Is there a bathroom on the main floor?		
Can you renovate the home to fix accessibility problems?		
Can friends and family visit easily? Consider access to the building and visitor parking spots as well as stairs.		
Can you easily get to a grocery store, drugstore, postal outlet or mailbox, bank, healthcare facilities and other necessities?		
Is there an accessible bus shelter or public transit station with seating nearby? Can you safely get there when using a mobility device (especially in winter)?		
Is door-to-door transportation available in the community for people with physical limitations?		
Is it easy to perform home maintenance tasks such as changing light bulbs, vacuuming and cleaning rooms, counters and sinks?		

 **Comments:**



Things to consider	Now	Future Options
<b>Appropriateness</b>		
Is living independently in the community the best choice for you? Or is residential living more appropriate for you?		
Do you feel safe in your current home/neighbourhood? In the new home/neighbourhood you are considering?		
Can you safely walk in the neighbourhood? Consider traffic, intersections, curb cuts that allow for walking with a mobility device, winter maintenance, and street lighting.		
Are there benches and other places to sit in the neighbourhood?		
Can you walk to parks, paths and green spaces?		
Is the location (home and outdoors) welcoming for pets?		
Is there transit available nearby?		
Do you want to live in a neighbourhood where your first language is spoken?		
Can you comfortably shop and run errands during bad weather?		
Is the location close to family, friends, restaurants, places of worship, libraries, recreation and community centres and other places that offer social opportunities?		
Are you close to someone who can help when you cannot shop, run errands or have an emergency?		

 **Comments:**



Things to consider	Now	Future Options
<b>Availability</b>		
Is there affordable, accessible and appropriate housing (buy or rent) in the neighbourhood(s) where you would like to live?		
Are the services available that you need now or in the future? (e.g. help with caregiving, cleaning, lawn care, general home maintenance, meal preparation, bathing or dressing).		
Are doctors, dentists and other health professionals available in the area? If not, are you able to easily travel to medical appointments with your current health care practitioners?		
Is home delivery of your medication and groceries offered in the community?		
What services (e.g. help with personal care) are not available to you at this time?		
Are there “must haves” in a new location/home not listed in the Checklist? If yes, what are they?		

 **Comments:**



# Resources to help you stay

## **Community Support Services:**

champlainhealthline.ca

www.caredove.champlaincss

# 211

## **Financial Help:**

Province of Ontario

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/seniors-manage-your-finances>

## City of Ottawa

# 311



# The Council on Aging of Ottawa

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