Aging in High-Rise Condos: Exploring Age-Friendly Community Planning and Housing in Toronto

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Abstract

This Major Paper explores seniors' experiences with aging in place in high-rise condominium buildings in North York, Toronto, and how these environments support or hinder age-friendly community planning, housing, and the well-being of seniors. With the aging population in North York and other areas of Ontario increasing, it is important for governments, planners, and developers to plan and design homes and communities that respond to seniors' needs. This study examines the accessibility, safety, affordability, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability of high-rise condominiums, as well as proximity to healthcare services and access to age-friendly transportation that influence seniors' ability to age in place.

The study uses a qualitative case study methodology to investigate how seniors perceive and experience age-friendliness in their residential and community environments. Data collection includes semi-structured interviews with seniors, city and developer planners, and condominium stakeholders, with a residential mobility study embedded within the interviews. Additional methods include participant observation, on-site field observations, an accessibility audit, literature and policy analysis, and an analytical framework. Findings are interpreted through a multidimensional theoretical framework comprising interpretivism, intersectionality theory, the press-competence model, and Nancy Fraser's (2013) framework of social justice.

The findings highlight that aging in place in high-rise condominiums is influenced by interconnecting factors such as building design, accessibility, social relationships, condominium governance, and easy access to transportation and neighbouring services. Senior participants in this study were content with their living conditions and would rather remain in their homes and communities than move to senior homes. Senior participants also mentioned feeling safe, part of the community, and supported by building maintenance and nearby green spaces. Some issues were recognized, particularly with affordability and the fact that accessibility needs can vary as seniors age, necessitating home modifications. Overall, the findings indicate that condos can facilitate aging in place; however, as senior residents' needs change over time, certain adjustments to condominium design, services, and supports will be required.

Keywords: Aging in Place, High-Rise Condominiums, Age-Friendly Planning, Accessibility, Community Belonging

Foreword

This Major Paper fulfills the requirements of the Master in Environmental Studies (Planning) program. My research is centred on my area of concentration, as delineated in my Plan of Study, concentrating on age-friendly community planning and housing. In this paper, I expand on my area of concentration by exploring seniors' aging in high-rise condominium buildings in North York, Toronto, and how these environments support age-friendly community planning and housing, as well as seniors' well-being as they age. My three components connected to my area of concentration include "Age in Place," "Accessible Condominium Housing," and "Sustainable Community Planning." For each of my components, I have established several types of learning objectives that will both direct my Major Paper and satisfy the MES degree requirements. My coursework, independent directed study, fieldwork experience, and research on aging in high-rise condominiums have informed my paper.

For my first component, "Age in Place," my learning objectives are to explore the lived experiences of seniors, review municipal plans and strategies that support aging in place, and assess the accessibility and proximity of nearby resources. These objectives are addressed in this Major Paper through semi-structured interviews with seniors, participant observation with my grandmother aging in place in a high-rise condominium, planning policy analysis, and on-site field observations of a high-rise condominium site and other senior housing types. These approaches investigate aging in place in high-rise condominium buildings in North York using a planning and age-friendly lens. I now have experience observing the lived experiences of seniors. I have also reviewed City of Toronto planning policies related to aging in place.

My learning objectives for my second component, "Accessible Condominium Housing," are to look at how governments, urban planners, and developers can enhance senior living conditions in high-rise condominiums, evaluate how condominiums can be more inclusive and beneficial for seniors, and identify accessible condominium design. This Major Paper examines these objectives through semi-structured interviews with seniors living in high-rise condos, city and developer planners, and a condominium stakeholder. It also includes the evaluation of the City of Toronto and North York's policies and guidelines, participant observation, on-site field observation, and an accessibility audit of a high-rise condo. Through these methods, I now have a deeper understanding of the planning, design, and governance factors that influence housing

accessibility and age-friendliness, as well as the roles that governments, planners, developers, and condominium corporations play in supporting seniors aging in place.

For my third component, “Sustainable Community Planning,” my learning objectives focused on understanding how social connections support seniors, how spatial and financial planning procedures can improve communities, and how to develop the knowledge and skills required to meet the program requirements of the Canadian Institute of Planners and Ontario Professional Planners Institute Candidate Membership. To achieve these objectives, this Major Paper integrated interviews, observations, and literature, policy, and theoretical analysis, which helped me build competencies in research and analysis, policy evaluation, professional communication, ethical and inclusive planning, and evidence-based decision-making. This component strengthened my understanding of how planning can support more inclusive, sustainable, and age-friendly communities, while also helping me develop practical research and policy analysis skills relevant to professional planning practice.

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Glossary

Accessible/Accessibility: Products, services, information, or environments that enable autonomous, equitable, and dignified access for people with disabilities, including vision, hearing, cognition, or mobility disabilities (Toronto, 2021, p. 40).

Accessibility Audit: A systematic assessment of a space used to identify barriers that restrict people with diverse mobility, sensory, or cognitive abilities from fully participating, while evaluating whether accessibility and universal design principles are implemented to support dignity, independence, and equitable access for all users (Toronto, 2021, p. 16).

Age-Friendly/Age-Friendliness: Creating environments and communities that encourage wellness, engagement, and safety to support active aging and enhance seniors' quality of life as they age (WHO, 2007, p. 1).

Age-Friendly City: A place where seniors are actively engaged, respected, and provided with services and infrastructure that successfully meet their specific needs (Alley et al., 2007, p. 4).

Age-Friendly Community: A community with policies, services, and physical and social structures that allow seniors to live safely, healthy, stay socially involved, and have their abilities, needs, choices, and contributions acknowledged and respected (Canada, 2025a, para. 2).

Age-Friendly Environments: Environments, such as houses and communities, that support functional ability and preserve intrinsic capacity throughout life, promoting healthy and active aging (WHO, 2023, p. 1).

Age-Friendly Housing: Housing that supports safety, independence, and care through its size, layout, design, and construction while being sufficiently adaptable to meet the demands of aging (Power & Mee, 2020).

Age in Place/Aging in Place: Seniors remaining in their own homes and communities rather than moving into residential care, supported by sufficient health and social resources that enable them to live safely, independently, and autonomously for as long as they desire and are able, while maintaining established social support networks such as family and friends (Canada, 2025b, p. 2; Wiles et al., 2011, p. 357).

Built Environment: The elements of the environment that have been modified by humans include residences, educational institutions, workplaces, parks, industrial sites, farmland, roadways, and highways (Alley et al., 2007, p. 15).

Condominium: A form of property tenure referring to both an individually owned housing unit and the building containing other units, comprising ownership, design, governance, security, and social position in urban life (Rosen & Walks, 2013, p. 161).

High-Rise Building: The Ontario Building Code defines residential "high-rise buildings" as those that are seven stories or higher, or more precisely, the floor level of the highest story of that major occupancy is more than eighteen meters above grade (City of Toronto, n.d., para. 2). This definition aligns with how high-rise buildings are understood in this research.

Independent Living: An autonomous lifestyle in later life in which senior citizens live in their homes or communities, retain control over everyday choices, and rely on both formal and informal support systems in addition to their own abilities to live securely and independently (Narushima & Kawabata, 2020).

Social Inclusion: Ensuring that all individuals can fully participate in social, economic, and civic life. This involves fostering a sense of belonging through mixed housing, diverse social and cultural representation, accessible transportation, age-friendly planning, and engagement in community development and decision-making (Qian et al., 2019, p. 661).

Sustainability: The harmonious integration of economic, environmental, and social factors, which are interconnected and essential for all members of society, is required to achieve sustainable communities (Qian et al., 2019, p. 659).

Sustainable Community Planning: The development of well-planned, safe, and inclusive communities that support a high standard of life, meet the needs of present and future residents, and ensure environmental responsibility and fair access to services (Winston, 2022, p. 193).

Universal Design: The design of products and spaces to be as accessible as possible to people of all abilities, without requiring modifications or specialized features (Toronto, 2021, p. 49).

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I am appreciative of the opportunity to carry out my research and for my time as a graduate student in the Master in Environmental Studies (Planning) program at York University. This program has taught me so much, allowed me to meet many wonderful people, and has been an important step toward my professional career. I would also like to thank Professor Liette Gilbert and my advisor, Professor Ute Lehrer, for their guidance, leadership, and support throughout my studies and research.

I would like to thank all my participants for contributing valuable insights and knowledge to my study. I would especially like to thank my grandmother, who was not only one of my interview participants but also took part in my participant observation, which gave me a deeper understanding of her experiences of aging in place in a high-rise condominium.

Last but not least, I am deeply thankful to my parents, my partner, and my family for their unwavering support throughout my graduate studies. They have consistently encouraged me, provided emotional support, and never stopped believing in me during this journey.

AI Disclaimer

With the agreement of my research supervisor, generative AI tools were used only to enhance my learning or expand my understanding of the material and not to produce or complete the work on my behalf. Generative AI tools were minimally used for basic assistance, including grammar and spell checking, brief summaries of materials, and to enhance the clarity and flow of writing. Generative AI tools were not used for substantive aspects of the research paper. My use of generative AI complies with York University's Senate Academic Conduct Policy and Guidelines for Graduate Students. This assignment is my original work, and all sources are properly cited.

1. Introduction

This study examines how high-rise condominium buildings and their surrounding communities either support or hinder seniors' ability to age in place through age-friendly community planning and housing in North York, Toronto. The aging population is transforming communities and raising new considerations for housing and urban planning. As the proportion of seniors increases, many prefer to remain in their homes and communities rather than move into senior housing. This preference, known as aging in place, has led to growing interest in how different housing types can support seniors' independence, sense of belonging, and quality of life. Although aging in place can occur across many housing types, this study focuses on high-rise condo living to explore its potential as a suitable option within an urban environment.

While aging in place is widely recognized, less is known about how high-rise condos and their communities influence seniors' experiences as they age. Key factors such as accessibility, mobility, social networks, building design, condominium governance, safety, proximity to services and green space, and affordability can significantly shape seniors' everyday experiences and overall well-being. Urban planning plays a role in shaping these factors by influencing the design of the built environment, access to housing and community services, transportation networks, and opportunities for social inclusion. This study identifies both the opportunities and challenges associated with aging in place in high-rise condo developments. This chapter outlines the background and context of the study, followed by the problem statement, research purpose and objectives, research questions, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background and Context

This section provides the background and context for this study by exploring population aging, aging in place, and high-rise condo living. It begins by examining Ontario's overall population aging patterns. It then discusses why seniors may choose to age in place and how condos can support their needs. Finally, it introduces North York as the case study area and the selected building as the primary case study site, explaining their relevance to this research.

<u>Background: Population Aging and Aging in Place in High-Rise Condos</u>

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the population age structure projections for 2026 and 2051 show a clear aging trend in both large urban areas in Ontario (including the Greater Golden Horseshoe [GGH], which contains the City of Toronto, as well as Ottawa and London) and Ontario outside of large urban areas. In both locations, the proportion of citizens 65 and older

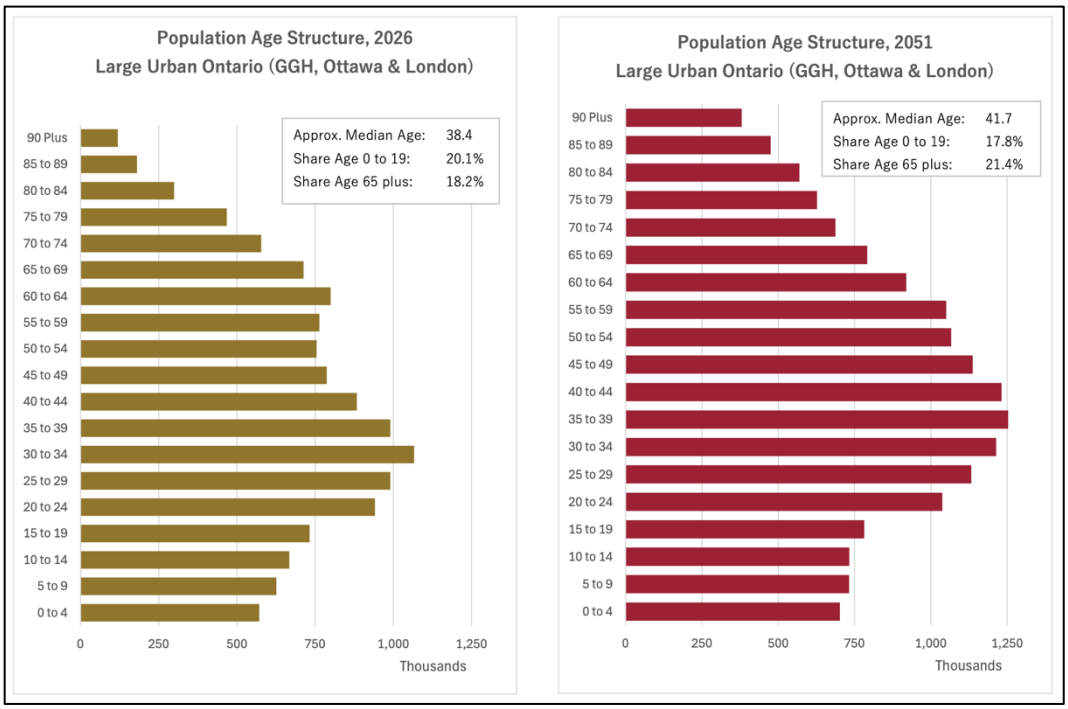
increases by 2051, with the top of the population pyramid widening and the base narrowing, signifying fewer children and youth aged 0 to 19 (see Figs. 1 and 2).

In large urban areas in Ontario, the number of seniors increases by 3.2% while the working-age population remains relatively large (see Fig. 1), which I think could be due to forecast immigration and population growth. This trend leads to a slower rate of aging, though the median age continues to increase significantly over time. In contrast, in Ontario outside large urban areas, the number of seniors is increasing, with 5.2% more seniors by 2051 and a noticeable decline in younger age groups (see Fig. 2).

Overall, Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that the population is evidently aging across Ontario, but the intensity and age distribution are different across geographic locations. The large urban areas are projected to maintain a comparatively younger age structure, whereas the rural and smaller urban areas are projected to have a higher proportion of seniors and experience more rapid population aging.

Figure 1

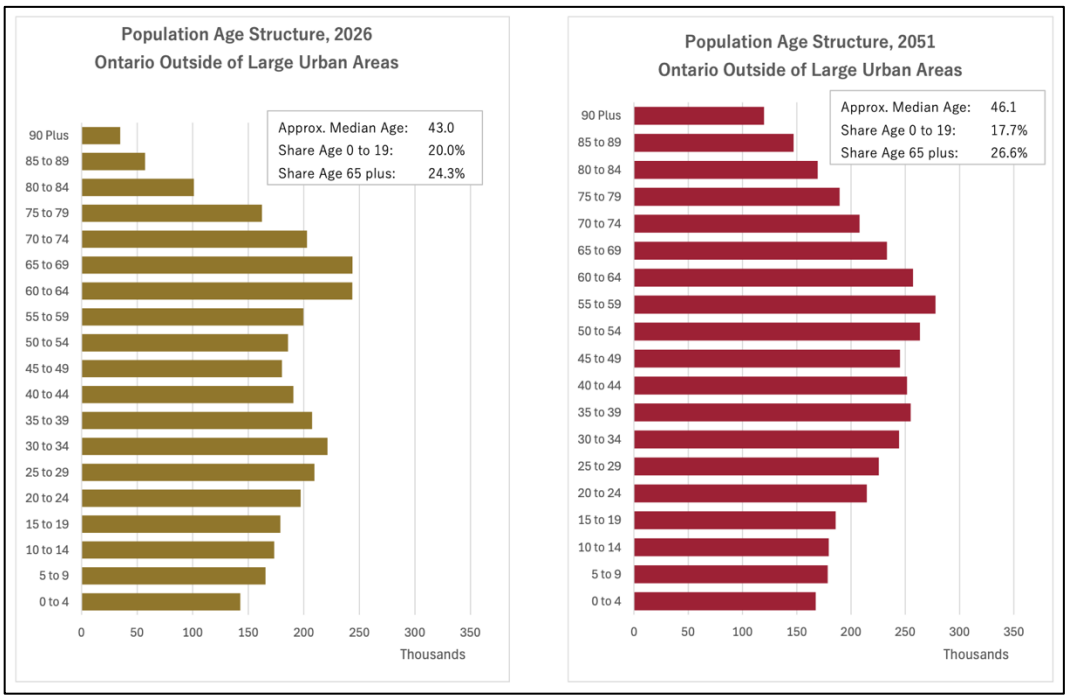
Population Age Structure in Large Urban Ontario, 2026 and 2051



Note. Age-cohort chart prepared by Stefan Krzeczunowicz, Hemson Consulting (personal communication, April 2026). Reproduced with permission.

Figure 2

Population Age Structure in Ontario Outside Large Urban Areas, 2026 and 2051



Note. Age-cohort chart prepared by Stefan Krzeczunowicz, Hemson Consulting (personal communication, April 2026). Reproduced with permission.

Why do seniors choose to age in place? Why high-rise condominiums? I would like to shed light on why seniors may choose to age in place, with a focus on high-rise condominiums. For instance, Golant (2020, p. 4) states that "... when older persons perceive a limited time left to live, they are more likely to age in place and occupy physical settings where they can prioritize their current positive emotional experiences." Many seniors may remain in their current homes due to a strong emotional attachment, as familiar environments provide comfort and improve well-being as they age.

Wallace and Estes (2019, p. 126) argue, "Older adults prefer to 'age in place.' They identify with the homes where they raised their children, formed social bonds with nearby friends, established relationships with healthcare providers and local services, and participated in community activities." That said, seniors may often choose to age in place, surrounded by memories formed with family and friends. Seniors can find themselves aging in place in condos by either living in them their whole lives, downsizing into them, or moving into them later in life for a change in lifestyle and greater convenience.

Familiar social connections and well-established routines build a sense of belonging. Golant (2020, p. 6) further argues that seniors tend to remain in physically and emotionally

familiar, manageable, safe, and predictable housing environments to preserve their network of significant interpersonal relationships. Maintaining these social units as seniors age in place can significantly boost their contentment and life satisfaction.

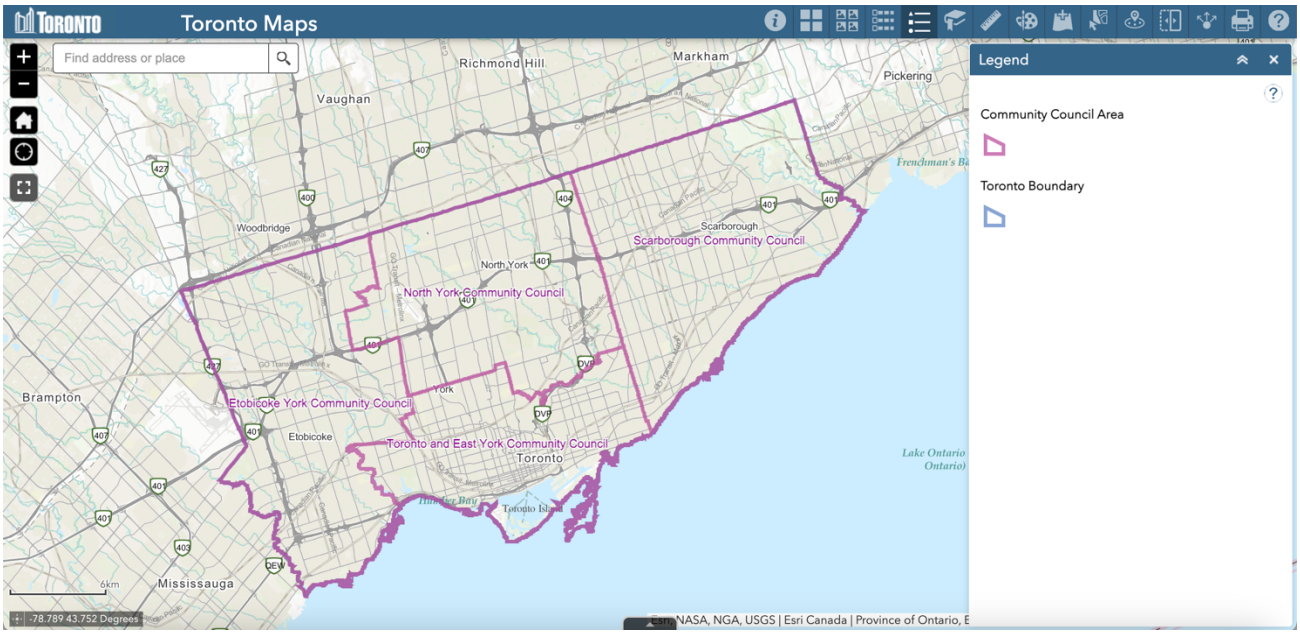
Seniors may choose to age in place in high-rise condominiums because these buildings often include age-friendly and accessible features that accommodate the aging process. Rosen and Walks (2013, p. 166) contend that condominium living comprises various transit options, minimal maintenance, comprehensive facilities, increased security, social opportunities, and closeness to cultural attractions. Therefore, high-rise condominium buildings can support seniors' well-being and address the varied requirements of aging in place.

Case Study Context: North York, Toronto

I used North York, Toronto, as my case study area (see Fig. 3) to explore how age-friendly planning is present in building design, active participation, and management processes of high-rise condominiums. I developed an interest in North York because my grandmother has been aging in place in a high-rise condominium building at the intersection of Keele Street and Wilson Avenue for about 20 years. Through frequent visits over the years, I observed North York transforming from a suburban area to a more urban area, with vertical, high-density developments and proximity to healthcare, community services, public transit, and parks and public space. According to the City of Toronto (2024b, p. 292), "The North York Centre of today is a product of planning policies and infrastructure investments that deliberately transformed a low-rise retail strip surrounded by single-family houses into a dynamic, high-rise, mixed-use area, with an active civic life." As such, North York's vertical development makes it a suitable location for researching the intersections of aging in place, high-rise condominium housing, community life, and urban planning.

Figure 3

Location of My Case Study Area, North York, in the City of Toronto

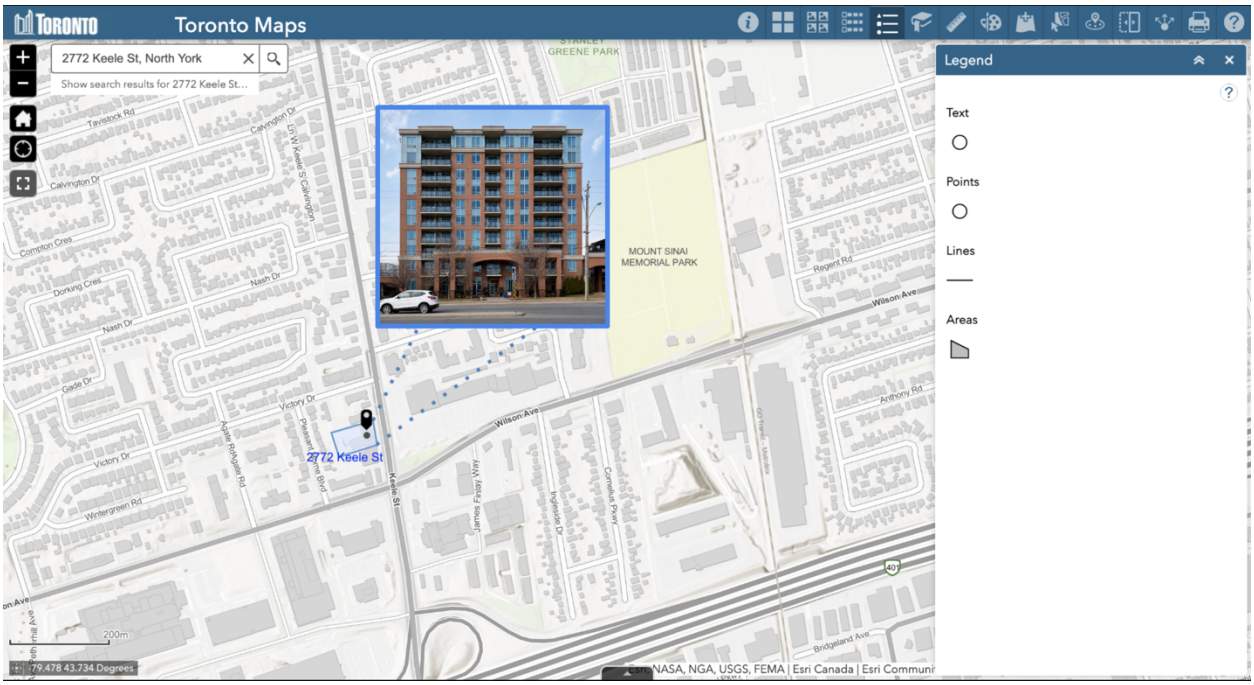


Note. Adapted from Toronto Maps (2026).

My grandmother's high-rise condominium has many seniors aging in place, and I found that North York also has a growing older population. The City of Toronto (2024b, pp. 16, 18) specifies that North York's population increased by 2.5% from 51,005 in 2016 to 52,280 in 2021, with 15% of the population aged 65 and over, much higher than the Ontario average. According to the City of Toronto (2024a, p. 5), North York has "… a higher proportion of seniors (age 65+) and lower proportion of children (age 0-14) and youth (age 15-24) than the Toronto average for the last three Census periods (2011, 2016 and 2021)." My grandmother moved into her building when it was first built and has developed a strong sense of community, which has contributed to her desire to remain there. My grandmother informed me that the building was built in 2007, so it is about 20 years old. I selected the high-rise condominium building (2772 Keele Street, North York, Toronto) as my primary case study site (see Fig. 4) due to both my familiarity with the building and its relevance to my research objectives. This site allowed me to examine whether high-rise condominiums and their surrounding communities in North York are accessible, safe, affordable, socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and sufficiently close to healthcare facilities and senior-friendly transit alternatives.

Figure 4

My Primary Case Study Site, 2772 Keele Street



Note. Adapted from Toronto Maps (2026) with a photograph by Angelica Eccles (2026).

1.2 Problem Statement

As Ontario's and North York's population ages, some seniors are choosing to remain in their own homes in later life. In urban areas like North York, seniors are aging in place in high-rise condos, possibly due to housing preferences, access to services, a sense of belonging, and a desire to maintain independence. However, high-rise condos are not designed to meet the changing needs of senior residents since they serve all ages, unlike designated senior buildings. My study explores whether high-rise condos and their communities support or inhibit seniors' accessibility, social connections, proximity to services, age-friendly building design, and autonomy in condominium governance and management.

Age-friendly planning frameworks and policies, including those from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2007) and other national and local initiatives (see Chapter 4), promote environments that foster healthy, active, and inclusive aging. I have found that very few academic and planning policy documents have examined how these principles are implemented in high-rise condominium environments. That said, it is unclear whether the principles of age-friendly planning policies align with the real-life experiences of seniors aging in place in high-rise condos. Therefore, I felt there was a need to analyze how these policies are expressed and experienced in these buildings and their surrounding communities.

1.3 Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of my research is to explore how aging in place is experienced in high-rise condominiums in North York, and in other housing types across different locations. It also examines how seniors living in North York's high-rise condominiums experience their daily lives and how these environments support age-friendly community planning, housing, and overall well-being. My study investigates whether these buildings and their surrounding communities are truly accessible, safe, affordable, well-maintained, socially welcoming, effectively governed with resident autonomy, and supported by access to green spaces.

My research objectives are:

- To examine how seniors experience aging in place within high-rise condominium buildings and their surrounding communities
- To identify the key factors that support or hinder aging in high-rise condominium settings
- To explore how aging in place is experienced across different housing types
- To analyze how age-friendly planning principles are reflected in the design and management of high-rise condominiums
- To assess the alignment between relevant planning and policy frameworks and seniors' lived experiences of aging in place
- To develop recommendations to improve age-friendly community planning and housing, particularly for seniors living in high-rise condominiums

1.4 Research Questions

The main research question guiding this study is: How do high-rise condominium buildings and their communities support or hinder seniors' ability to age in place?

The following sub-questions guide this research:

1. How do urban planning and building design influence seniors' mobility, accessibility, and overall well-being in high-rise condo buildings and surrounding areas?
2. What opportunities and challenges do seniors face in their daily routines within high-rise condominium living?
3. What legal and governance challenges do condominium corporations face in ensuring the safety and inclusion of seniors, and how do these shape the age-friendliness of condos?
4. How do high-rise communities foster or limit social connections, engagement, and a sense of belonging among senior residents?

5. How do high-rise developments impact the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of an older population?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it explores the real-life experiences of seniors aging in high-rise condos, adding to existing research on aging in place and age-friendly community planning and housing. By examining how age-friendly planning principles are experienced within condos and their communities, this study provides insights into how building design, accessibility, social connections, governance, affordability, and access to services impact seniors' experiences of aging in place. These findings can inform scholarly literature and planning policy and practice. The findings may also be useful for municipal and provincial governments seeking to develop more age-friendly communities, improve housing options for seniors, and better respond to the lived realities of aging in place. This study can even help city planners, developers, and condo board members better understand the needs of seniors and promote the development of more inclusive, accessible, and supportive condo environments.

1.6 Outline of the Paper

This paper introduces aging in place for seniors and the importance of age-friendly community planning and housing, with an emphasis on North York's high-rise condominium environment. It then presents the research design and approach, including the data collection methods, analytical framework, ethical considerations, and study limitations. The paper also discusses the theoretical framework and existing literature on aging in place, age-friendly urban environments, and condominium living to lay the groundwork for the research and identify gaps in the literature. The next section reviews legislation and planning policy frameworks related to seniors, age-friendly communities, condominium governance, and planning in Ontario and North York. This is followed by the research findings, which explore accessibility and mobility, safety, affordability and maintenance, social inclusion, governance and resident autonomy, environmental and financial sustainability, and seniors' experiences of aging in place in condos compared with other housing types. The paper then analyzes these findings through the theoretical framework and planning policy context, identifies challenges and opportunities, and offers recommendations for seniors, city planners, developer planners, and condominium corporations. Finally, the paper concludes by summarizing the main findings, discussing the study's contributions, and suggesting directions for future research.

2. Research Design and Approach

This chapter outlines the research design and approach that I used to explore seniors' perceptions and experiences of age-friendliness as they age in place in high-rise condominium buildings in North York. The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the study was conducted using a qualitative case study approach to provide a detailed understanding of aging in high-rise condominium environments. According to Creswell (2013):

> Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes. (p. 97)

Building on this qualitative case study approach, this chapter describes the data collection methods, analytical framework, ethical considerations, and limitations, providing a clear methodological foundation for interpreting the findings in the later chapters.

To answer my research questions, I used a qualitative case study design aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding of how factors such as accessible building design, social connections, safety, environmental and economic sustainability, and urban planning shape seniors' well-being and ability to age in place. The qualitative methods I used included a literature and policy analysis and semi-structured interviews with five seniors living in high-rise condos and other housing types, two city planners, one developer planner, and one condominium board member. I also conducted participant observation with my grandmother, on-site field observations at my grandmother's high-rise condo building (2772 Keele Street, North York) and a long-term care (LTC) home, a residential mobility study embedded within my senior interviews, and an accessibility audit of my grandmother's building. Lastly, I completed an analytical framework involving thematic analysis, deductive qualitative analysis (DQA), and policy analysis, through which I coded themes, theories, and planning policy documents in relation to my research findings.

My methodological approach was inspired by studies that I identified in my literature review for my proposal. Below, I discuss the methods and my rationale for choosing them. The literature review is presented in Chapter 3.

2.1 Data Collection Methods

Table 1

Summary of Data Collection Methods and Participants

Data Collection Method	Participant(s)	Location/ Residence	Context	Characteristics	Timing
Semi-structured interviews	Maria (senior participant) *Pseudonym	2772 Keele Street, North York	High-rise condo	73 years old; female; active; moved from a single-family home at age 54	February 2026
	Nino (senior participant) *Pseudonym	2772 Keele Street, North York	High-rise condo	77 years old; male; active; moved from a single-family home at age 58	February 2026
	Daisy (senior participant) *Pseudonym	St. Catharines, Ontario	Single-family home	Older adult; female; active; moved at age 52	February 2026
	Claudia (senior participant) *Pseudonym	Woodbridge, Vaughan, Ontario	Bungaloft/ backsplit home	Older adult; female; active; moved at age 32	March 2026
	Natalie (senior participant) *Pseudonym	Florida, United States of America	Low-rise condo	Older adult; female; active; seasonal resident (about 6 months of the year for 27 years)	March 2026
	Avery (City of Toronto, strategic initiatives planner) *Pseudonym	Toronto, Ontario	Municipal government	Planner	March 2026
	Matthew (City of Toronto, senior transportation planner) *Pseudonym	Toronto, Ontario	Municipal government	Senior planner	February 2026
	Fiona (developer planner) *Pseudonym	Greater Toronto Area	Private development sector	Planner with seniors' housing experience	March 2026
	Rory (condo board president) *Pseudonym	2772 Keele Street, North York	High-rise condo	Condo stakeholder and resident in the building	April 2026
Participant observation	Researcher and Maria (my grandmother) *Pseudonym	2772 Keele Street, North York	High-rise condo	Maria: 73 years old; female; active; long-term resident (about 20 years)	Two full days (March and April 2026; approximately 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. each day)

On-site field observation	Researcher	Keele Street and Wilson Avenue, North York	Neighbourhood	Built environment observations (no participants)	March 2026
	Researcher	Unionville Home Society, Markham	Long-term care facility	Observational visit (no senior residents interviewed)	October 6, 2025
Residential mobility study	Embedded within Maria's and Nino's interviews *Pseudonyms	North York, Toronto	High-rise condo	Housing histories and residential mobility patterns	February 2026
Accessibility audit	Researcher	2772 Keele Street, North York	High-rise condo	Building and unit accessibility features	March 2026
Literature and policy analysis	Researcher	Not location-specific	Academic literature and planning policies	Review of academic and planning policy documents	January to July 2026

Note. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

This subsection explains the data collection methods used to conduct this study (see Table 1 above), which gather in-depth information regarding seniors' experiences of aging in place in high-rise condos in North York, as well as the viewpoints of participants involved in planning, development, and condominium governance. All participant names are pseudonyms.

Semi-Structured Interviews and Participant Recruitment

For my data collection methods, I used a qualitative case study approach, including a total of nine semi-structured interviews with seniors, city planners, planners who work or have worked for developers, and condominium stakeholders.

Among the senior participants, I interviewed two individuals aging in place in high-rise condominiums in North York, and three seniors living in other housing types in Vaughan, St. Catharines, and Florida. I recruited these participants through convenience and snowball sampling. As my grandmother ages in place in a high-rise condominium in North York, she helped me recruit participants through her personal relationships. Through her, I was able to interview a friend who lives in the same building and a family member who is aging in place in a different type of housing. The remaining senior participants were recruited through my personal connections, which included relatives and friends. I would like to note that during my undergraduate Urban Studies program at York University, I conducted a similar study in which I interviewed my grandmother and her senior friends who are aging in place in the same high-rise condominium. At the time, I concluded that their building had age-friendly characteristics that

supported aging in place. I returned to some members of this group for this study to further explore their lived experiences.

For my interviews with city and developer planners, I worked with my supervisor, Professor Laura Taylor, drawing upon her LinkedIn and personal connections to identify professional planners working in North York and on condominium projects. Professor Taylor gave me a list of potential participants, who I emailed, hoping some would be interested. Two planners from the City of Toronto ended up agreeing, one being a senior transportation planner and the other a strategic initiatives planner. A developer planner also agreed to participate in my interview, who has their own consulting business and experience with retirement buildings. The last interview I conducted was with the president of the Board of Directors at my grandmother's condominium building. I connected with this participant through my grandmother and learned a lot about their experiences managing a high-rise condo building.

For all my semi-structured interviews, I prepared flexible questions ahead of time for each type of participant, explained the interview process to them, took notes on their answers, and transcribed them if they consented to audio recordings. Each interview lasted about thirty minutes to an hour, depending on how much the participants connected with my research topic. I encouraged changes in topics between myself, the interviewer, and my participants during the interviews to facilitate more in-depth conversations. By using this technique, I was able to get answers to all my important questions, in addition to learning more about my interviewees' experiences, narratives, and interpretations.

Participant Observation in a High-Rise Condominium Setting

Another qualitative method I used was participant observation at my grandmother's high-rise condominium building located at 2772 Keele Street, North York. I stayed in my grandmother's condo unit for two full days, from about 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., one on a weekday in March and the other during the Easter weekend in early April. My grandmother has been aging in place in this high-rise for about two decades and has always expressed to me how much she loves living there and that she never wants to move. Throughout my participant observation, I gained first-hand knowledge of my grandmother's daily routines, the accessibility and navigation of her home and community, her social relationships, and security. I did not guide my grandmother to any place or tell her what to do; I only kept her company and observed her activities. I collected data through detailed note-taking and photographs of her living spaces and

the cultural food she made. The theories of intersectionality, the press-competence model, and Nancy Fraser's (2013) social justice framework informed my approach and were then revisited and expanded upon in relation to my findings.

On-Site Field Observations of the Built Environment and Surrounding Community

For my on-site field observations, I observed my grandmother's high-rise condo building and its surrounding community over the course of one day in March 2026. I walked along Keele Street and around its intersection with Wilson Avenue, taking notes on my observations. When I got home, I made maps of the area and marked the parks, public areas, libraries, greenery, crime risks, and transit stops that were close by. I also reviewed the availability of grocery stores and medical facilities, observed building upkeep and architectural design, and noted strong friendships and community connections.

On October 6, 2025, I went to a LTC home for the HLST 3520: Aging: Comparative Perspectives course, which I had audited during the Fall 2025 term. The home, Unionville Home Society, is located at 4300 Highway 7, Markham, Ontario. I made thorough notes about the senior residents' living conditions and dining experiences throughout my stay. This on-site field observation was validated by my TCPS 2: CORE 2022 certificate of completion and can be utilized in my research. I then examined my findings through the theories of intersectionality, press-competence model, and Fraser's (2013) social justice framework.

Residential Mobility Study and Accessibility Audit

As part of my qualitative case study approach, I conducted a residential mobility study and an accessibility audit. I drew upon Miller (2017) for my approach, following his age-friendly community planning and accessibility initiatives.

For the residential mobility study, I explored seniors' residential choices and mobility patterns by asking those living in high-rise condos and other types of housing questions in my semi-structured interviews. My interview questions probed the reasons and meanings behind seniors' choices to move or stay in their houses, as well as how these choices affected their identity, well-being, accessibility in their living situations, and social connections as they aged.

I then conducted an accessibility audit of my grandmother's building, following the City of Toronto's Accessibility Design Guidelines (2021). I walked around the building and her condo unit with my grandmother, having her show me and provide access to the shared spaces. I had reviewed the guidelines for my proposal, and I had these on hand. I sought to identify those

features, taking pictures of them and initially judging whether they were age-friendly. I then provided an assessment of the level of physical accessibility within the interior and exterior areas, examining whether accessible and universal design principles were applied or if the features presented barriers that negatively affected seniors and those with disabilities.

Literature Review and Policy Analysis

I completed a literature and policy analysis as part of my data collection methods. I built upon the detailed literature review conducted for my proposal. I again reviewed the materials and updated my review to reflect the issues raised in my data findings. I focused on topics related to age-friendly urban environments, ageism, high-rise condominium buildings, accessibility, condominium boards, and age-friendly frameworks. The literature review is presented in Chapter 3 of my paper and is discussed further in Chapter 6, Discussion.

For my policy analysis, I analyzed planning policy documents and regulations and identified and commented on sections that related to age-friendly community planning and housing, specifically what makes aging in place possible. I focused on the WHO's *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007), the Government of Ontario's *Creating a More Inclusive Ontario: Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations* (2021), the City of Toronto's (2018) *Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0*, the *Condominium Act* (1998), the *Planning Act* (1990), the Provincial Planning Statement (2024), the North York Centre Secondary Plan (1997), the Toronto Official Plan (2022), the North York Design Guidelines for Wilson Avenue (2004), and the Community Services and Facilities Strategy (2025). The policy analysis is presented in Chapter 4 of my paper and is discussed further in Chapter 6, Discussion.

These qualitative methodologies work together to provide extensive data on how seniors experience aging in place, as well as the social, physical, and policy factors that influence age-friendliness and accessibility in high-rise condominiums and surrounding communities.

2.2 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework used to evaluate and organize the data gathered for this study, includes approaches derived from my initial literature review and includes thematic analysis, deductive qualitative analysis (DQA), and policy analysis, as discussed in this section.

After completing my data collection, I used an analytical framework to make sense of my data. My Findings in Chapter 5 includes thematic analysis, a qualitative approach used to

identify and report pertinent patterns in data, organize the collected data in detail, and determine its themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). I grouped my findings into themes based on the data I collected from my semi-structured interviews with seniors and stakeholders, participant observation, on-site field observations, a residential mobility study, and an accessibility audit. The findings were arranged around themes of accessibility and mobility; safety and affordability; social inclusion; governance and resident autonomy; sustainability; and aging in place across various housing types.

In my Discussion chapter, I present the results of my completed deductive qualitative analysis (DQA) and policy analysis. Deductive qualitative analysis (DQA) is a theory-driven method for applying, evaluating, and improving existing theories or models (Fife & Gossner, 2024, p. 1). Using existing theories of interpretivism, intersectionality, the press-competence model, and Nancy Fraser's (2013) social justice framework, I implemented DQA to analyze my research findings. I interpreted my data through these theories and identified patterns that support and expand these theories to help answer my research questions. According to Patton et al. (2012, p. 21), policy analysis involves identifying and assessing policies or initiatives intended to address social, economic, or physical barriers, as well as the analyses and proposals that arise from this method. I used the policy analysis from my Planning Policy Context chapter and, in my Discussion chapter, further discussed the relationship between age-friendly planning policies and my senior participants' lived experiences of aging in place. By comparing planning policies with seniors' experiences in North York, and other housing types in Vaughan, St. Catharines, and Florida, this analysis evaluated whether policy initiatives are reflected in seniors' realities of aging in place, and whether gaps exist. Hence, I determined if these policies have been implemented, moving beyond their guidance and principles, and into action.

These analytical methods allowed the study to identify fundamental themes in the findings and critically analyze them within theoretical and policy frameworks. This analysis strengthened the overall interpretation of the findings.

2.3 Ethical Considerations

The subsection below analyzes the research process and the ethical considerations that helped shape the study, with particular attention to participant relationships and potential bias.

My positionality in this research may have introduced bias because I interviewed and completed participant observation with my grandmother. Our existing relationship may have

influenced her responses and my interpretation of the findings. To address this potential bias, I was aware of my position as both a researcher and a family member throughout the research process. I also ensured that my grandmother's participation was voluntary, that she understood the purpose of the study, and that she had the right to withdraw at any time. The other four semi-structured senior interviews I conducted were also with family members and friends. These existing relationships may have introduced additional bias, so I was mindful of how they might have influenced the interviews and my interpretation of participants' responses.

I used my mother as my Italian- and English-speaking translator to speak to my Italian immigrant senior participants, which may have created a conflict of interest. In other words, using a family member to translate could have been biased because she may have been affected by family dynamics or influenced the interview responses. In an effort to prevent these biases and provide a sufficient grasp of the participants' real experiences, I made sure to adhere to ethical research guidelines outlined in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans - TCPS 2 (2022)*.

The ethical considerations that guide the research process, as defined in TCPS 2 (2022), emphasize the significance of conducting research in a reliable and transparent manner, which maintains the integrity of the findings and minimizes risks to participants.

2.4 Limitations of the Study

This subsection highlights and examines the study's limitations, which may have influenced the extent, depth, and generalizability of the findings.

One limitation of my study was that I conducted semi-structured interviews with three senior Italian immigrants with their mother tongue and primary language of communication being Italian; each has limited proficiency in English. Unfortunately, since I, as the researcher, cannot speak or understand Italian, a translator was used to communicate my interview questions and retrieve the participants' answers. While this approach enabled their participation, I found some challenges, including delays in communication, loss of detail, and inconsistencies in translation. These factors affected the depth and clarity of their responses compared to my two other senior interviews, which were conducted directly in English. However, I do not believe that these challenges had a material effect on the overall findings of the study.

My study was limited to senior members of the Italian community, who may have an exceptional experience of community support, social connections, and cultural ties that influence

their ability to age in place. Since Toronto is a multicultural city with a diverse aging population, the experiences of seniors from other cultural communities may differ; however, exploring these differences was beyond the scope of this study.

Four out of the five senior participants in my study self-identified as female, while only one participant self-identified as male, limiting the representation of male perspectives on aging in place. Although this was not an intentional limitation of the study, the findings primarily reflect the experiences of female participants. Including more male participants could have provided further insight into how gender influences seniors' experiences of aging in place.

Another limitation of my study was that the two senior participants I interviewed who reside in a high-rise condominium building both lived at 2772 Keele Street, resulting in no variation in the case study sites examined. The accessibility audit, participant observation, and on-site field observations were also conducted at this property and within the surrounding community. As a result, my analysis of a single building in North York is not representative of all potentially age-friendly high-rise condos in the area. Studying multiple buildings may have identified differences in design, management, and residents' experiences of aging in place.

Recognizing these limitations provides important context for interpreting the findings and identifies opportunities for future research to further explore seniors' experiences of aging in place in high-rise condominium environments.

3. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter introduces the theoretical frameworks that helped guide this study, along with a focused literature review on aging in place, age-friendly urban environments, and high-rise condominium living. The purpose of this chapter is to examine and connect these theories and literature with how seniors in North York's high-rise condominium buildings perceive aging in place. I discuss the frameworks that informed my analysis of both individual lived experiences and broader structural conditions. Overall, the chapter links the study to existing literature and demonstrates how theories, such as interpretivism, intersectionality, the press-competence model, and Nancy Fraser's (2013) social justice framework, help explain how social, economic, political, and physical environmental factors shape seniors' experiences aging in place within their own homes and communities.

3.1 Theories of Interpretivism, Intersectionality, Press-Competence Model, and Social Justice

This subsection discusses scholarship about seniors' experiences of aging in place and the intricate relationships among lived experiences, social identities, environmental factors, and systems of power and inequality.

My study is grounded in a multidimensional theoretical framework that involves interpretivism, intersectionality theory, the press-competence model, and social justice. I use this integrated framework in my study to analyze how seniors experience and interpret aging in place within high-rise condominiums in North York. These theories enable my research to explore how aging in place is influenced by the interplay among individual agency, environmental conditions, and political, economic, and social structures.

According to Ryan (2018, p. 17), "Interpretivism argues that truth and knowledge are subjective, as well as culturally and historically situated, based on people's experiences and their understanding of them." I use an interpretivist approach throughout my semi-structured interviews with senior participants living in high-rise condos in North York, as well as in other housing types across different areas. Interpretivism helps me understand how seniors perceive and make sense of aging in place in their homes and surrounding communities, grounded in their personal experiences and perspectives. This approach is particularly beneficial for my research because it emphasizes that reality is socially constructed and understood through individuals' lived experiences and subjective meanings, which shape how they think, feel, act, and interact with others as they navigate everyday social life (Gattone, 2024, p. 67).

Intersectionality is both a lived experience and an analytical framework that examines how people's experiences of privilege and oppression are shaped by intersecting systems of power and overlapping social identities, such as age, "race/ethnicity, religion, gender, class, (dis)ability and more" (Baines & Ysseldyk, 2025, pp. 94-95). Cho et al. (2013, p. 797) further state, "… an understanding of intersectionality that is not exclusively or even primarily preoccupied with categories, identities, and subjectivities. Rather, the intersectional analysis foregrounded here emphasizes political and structural inequalities." This study uses intersectionality to analyze how seniors' age, gender, cultural background, language, and income interact with social, economic, housing, and built environment conditions that influence their experiences of aging in place. This theory is relevant to my research because it recognizes that

seniors' experiences are affected by their complex identities, as well as the planning, design, and community relationships within their living environments.

My study assesses how seniors' experiences of aging in high-rise condos are affected by the interactions between the environmental conditions they encounter and their abilities. Phillipson (2011, p. 281) investigates the Lawton and Nahemow (1973) press-competence model, asserting that a person's behaviour and well-being depend on how effectively their environmental demands (press) and personal abilities (competence) are balanced. When this balance is mismatched—for example, when environmental constraints exceed an individual's capacity—increased stress and decreased well-being may occur, a concept frequently examined in studies of age-segregated or restrictive living environments (Phillipson, 2011, p. 281). I used this approach in my study because it determines whether environmental "press" factors, such as safety, accessibility, and social opportunities, align with seniors' social, cognitive, and physical abilities (competence). The press-competence model helps identify the factors and regulations that either facilitate adaptive aging or create stress and barriers for seniors aging in place within high-rise condominiums. Drawing from Phillipson (2011), my methods included semi-structured interviews, observations, and an accessibility audit to examine how the condominium environment supports or challenges seniors' ability to age in place.

In my research, I was influenced by Fraser's (2013) perspective on social justice because her approach can be applied to aging to understand better how social structures, including concerns of equality, inclusion, and participation, affect seniors' everyday lives. Westwood (2018, pp. 4-5) states, "... Nancy Fraser (2013) … approaches social justice from three interrelated dimensions: resources (economic), recognition (social status, cultural visibility and cultural worth) and representation (social and political participation and access to justice)." As Westwood (2018, p. 7) explains, applying Fraser's (2013) approach to aging, diversity, and inequality establishes a more comprehensive, complex analysis that transcends traditional economic/cultural binaries, recognizes cultural differences beyond the surface, and declares political voice and community involvement as critical elements of justice. Through semi-structured interviews, I examined how seniors' lived experiences reflected Fraser's (2013) dimensions of redistribution, recognition, and representation.

Altogether, these theoretical frameworks provide a broad approach for examining how personal experiences, built environments, and social justice considerations influence seniors'

capacity to age in place within high-rise condominiums. I think these frameworks were useful in my study because they allowed me not only to examine the characteristics of condominium environments but also to dive deeper into seniors' subjective experiences, how social structures shape their identities, whether physical environments support aging populations, and whether seniors' needs are addressed.

3.2 Age-Friendly Urban Environments, High-Rise Condo Living, and Aging in Place

To determine whether high-rise condominiums can support aging in place, I undertook a literature review of age-friendly urban environments, housing, accessibility, and factors that influence seniors' daily experiences of independence and well-being. I found that I generally agreed with the perspectives and arguments presented in the literature, and I used these insights to guide my data collection methods.

My research analyzes how seniors aging in place in high-rise condominiums in urban environments can benefit from age-friendly features that support their independence and well-being. Phillipson (2011, p. 286) argues that age-friendly urban environments provide various resources, amenities, and social networks, such as parks, libraries, and public areas, as well as strong friendships and community relationships that foster everyday interaction and a feeling of belonging. Age-friendly urban environments can be viable options for seniors transitioning into retirement because they offer culturally and socially diverse aspects that accommodate a range of lifestyles and specialized needs (Phillipson, 2011, p. 286). This is important because age-friendly urban environments can preserve seniors' happiness, daily routines, social relationships, cultural customs, and freedom to go where they please, making aging in place a fulfilling experience.

My research looks at how ageist approaches in urban planning can limit the capacity of urban environments to be age-friendly, isolating seniors and impeding their ability to age within these spaces. According to Hammond et al. (2024, p. 135), spatial ageism originates from the intentional and subconscious prejudices of those who shape the built environment, including planners and developers. These prejudices lead to seniors being excluded from the planning of urban environments, which is exacerbated by physical, social, economic, and cultural barriers that intersect with class, religion, ethnicity, ability, gender identity, and sexual orientation (Phillipson & Grenier, 2021, as cited in Hammond et al., 2024, pp. 135-136). As discussed in Chapter 6, I believe that seniors need to be more involved in urban planning to stop being marginalized and excluded from urban living and environments. Rémillard-Boilard and Doran

(2024, p. 32) emphasize that seniors should have meaningful opportunities to participate in and influence decision-making to ensure age-friendly environments are developed collaboratively.

Through my data collection methods, I explore whether high-rise condominium buildings are suitable housing options for seniors aging in place, with age-friendly design features that facilitate social connections, ease of access, and wellness. Savage et al. (2025, p. 83) declare, "High-rise buildings are desirable to older adults as they can offer functional convenience (e.g., covered parking, property maintenance, elevators, proximity to amenities), economic feasibility, and social connectivity." This statement supports seniors aging in place in high-rise buildings, as they may find it a comfortable experience, requiring less home upkeep and providing access to mobility assistance and opportunities to interact with people and places they are familiar with.

Accessibility within high-rise buildings and within the larger neighbourhood is important for seniors as it helps them navigate their homes, access services, and participate in their communities. This study considers the built environment's inaccessibility to seniors, based on my findings from interviews, participant and on-site observations, and an accessibility audit. Phillipson (2011, p. 284) notes that "... problems associated with the built environment (such as poor maintenance of buildings, limited access to shops and facilities within the neighborhood) have been shown to increase levels of psychological distress even after controlling for variables such as age, gender, and financial strain." Phillipson (2011) acknowledges that the potential drawbacks for seniors are when housing and surrounding environments are not fully accessible. I argue that designing accessible spaces that support seniors' well-being is a vital role for planners, as it informs development initiatives that promote age-friendliness and accessibility.

Condominiums are a form of collective ownership governed by an appointed board of owners. The purpose of my semi-structured interview with a high-rise condominium board member is to assess whether condominium management allows senior residents to participate in decision-making, considers seniors' financial concerns, ensures security and accessibility, and creates opportunities for senior involvement. Lippert (2019, p. 47) mentions that condominium boards serve as forms of private residential governance, responsible for overseeing common areas, maintenance, finances, and resident behaviour within the frameworks established by condominium statutes. With limited institutional oversight or formal training from municipal, provincial/state, or federal governments, these elected bodies manage the day-to-day operations of condominium corporations, including contracting and building maintenance (Lippert, 2019, p.

47). This can impact the standards and consistency of condominium management practices, thereby influencing senior residents' quality of life and their capability to age safely, comfortably, and independently in place. I want to note that my focus is on high-rise condos, but seniors can live in many other ways. Common housing options for seniors include bungalows, condominiums, small homes, townhomes, life lease housing, retirement homes, supportive housing, social housing, co-operative housing, and long-term care homes (Ontario, 2025).

Age-friendly planning principles are set out in the "grey" literature by organizations guiding planning. Since this research examines whether high-rise condominium environments support aging in place, WHO's Age-Friendly Cities Framework (2007) provided a useful lens for evaluating age-friendly features that benefit seniors. WHO's (2007, p. 1) eight domains that influence seniors' urban experiences include outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, and community support and health services. All together, these eight domains promote accessibility, safety, inclusion, and independence for seniors by striving for features like affordable housing and transportation, clean environments, barrier-free design and home modifications, clear communication, community integration, opportunities for engagement and contribution, and accessible healthcare (WHO, 2007). I adopted these domains as a framework for evaluating how condos and surrounding communities support or hinder seniors' ability to age in place.

The *Toronto Seniors Strategy* outlines four age-friendly service planning principles that prioritize equitable access to services and programs, social and physical connectedness through involvement in city life, acknowledge the contribution of seniors, and provide high-quality services that improve health and well-being (Toronto, 2013, p. 6). These four principles are critical because they mutually aim to ensure that senior Torontonians feel appreciated, respected, and supported in maintaining their standard of living and ability to age in place. I used these principles to guide my understanding of how city planning and community supports can help seniors age in place.

Although these types of principles are not without their critics. Global and local frameworks and principles aim to enhance seniors' well-being, but this study underscores many limitations within planning policies. Ågotnes and Blix (2025, p. 45) argue that, even within age-friendly frameworks, seniors are often treated as a single, homogeneous group, overlooking

differences in experiences, needs, and identities. This lack of attention to diversity can unintentionally exclude or marginalize subgroups of seniors, as their intersecting identities—such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and disability—are made invisible, leaving their unique needs and individualized support unrecognized as they age.

This collection of scholarly work reveals that successful aging in place is determined not only by seniors' housing preferences but also by the accessibility, inclusivity, governance, and supportive aspects of the surrounding urban environment. In my study, I seek to take a broad approach to considering the experience of those aging in place.

3.3 Gaps and Limitations in the Literature

I found limitations in the literature, including the lack of academic sources that explicitly discuss seniors aging in place in high-rise condominiums. I did not find a source that addressed my topic of study in a holistic manner. I needed to piece together a wide range of sources for my literature review to explore why seniors may prefer to age in condos within dense, urban environments. There are also gaps in the age-friendly policies mentioned above, including WHO's Age-Friendly Cities Framework (2007) and the *Toronto Seniors Strategy* (2013). Ågotnes and Blix (2025) point out that age-friendly policies are often generalized and fail to consider seniors' lived experiences and diverse needs in age-friendly community planning and housing. These gaps and limitations suggest for more targeted research and policy development that is supportive of seniors and takes into account the barriers associated with aging in high-rise urban environments. Therefore, in my study, I aim to address these gaps and limitations by capturing seniors' unique experiences and perspectives on aging in place in condos.

4. Planning Policy Context

This chapter looks into the planning policy framework that shapes the opportunities and challenges for seniors aging in place in high-rise condominium environments in North York. This chapter aims to identify policy frameworks and planning documents that affect age-friendly community planning, housing, accessibility, transportation, and community services at multiple levels of government, including the City of Toronto and Province of Ontario.

I considered it important to review these policies for my major research because planning has the potential to improve seniors' experiences of aging in place by shaping the buildings and neighbourhoods they live in. I wanted to understand the current policy framework better because

my proposal suggested that age-friendly planning guidance is limited. After completing a more comprehensive policy review, I found that these limitations still existed. This really affects how communities are experienced, and, as I saw during my participant observation, the world created by planning is the one my grandmother has to live and age in.

This chapter lays the groundwork for determining if existing planning initiatives promote seniors' ability to remain independent, connected, and active in their homes and communities by reviewing global, national, local, and condominium policies. This planning policy context is directly relevant to the study because it provides a basis for comparing policy aims to seniors' lived experiences of aging in place, which is then analyzed in Chapter 6, Discussion.

First, I review the broader age-friendly planning framework, which establishes guidelines to support seniors' ability to age in place. I then examine the provincial legislation and local planning policies that shape housing and community environments in Ontario and in North York.

4.1 Planning Policy Frameworks for Seniors and Age-Friendly Cities

Considering global, provincial, and local planning policy frameworks that guide how environments are built to promote seniors' independence, involvement, and well-being is the first step toward understanding age-friendly community planning and housing.

Age-friendly planning is shaped by interconnected policy frameworks across different levels of governance, with provincial and municipal initiatives building on the principles established by WHO's (2007) framework. The eight domains identified in WHO's (2007) international framework for age-friendly planning support healthy and active aging. These domains are reflected in Canadian national and provincial policy initiatives that emphasize accessibility, inclusive communities, and aging in place, such as Ontario's *Creating A More Inclusive Ontario: Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations* (2021). At the municipal level, the City of Toronto (2018) operationalizes these frameworks through the *Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0*, which addresses recommendations related to housing, transportation, health, and service accessibility to foster a more inclusive and age-friendly city. All together, these global, national, and local policy frameworks inform development approaches that promote seniors' independence, well-being, and ability to age in place within urban environments.

Housing is a central policy priority in age-friendly planning, as the availability, design, and accessibility of homes directly influence seniors' ability to age in place. The WHO (2007,

pp. 36-37) asserts that housing should be affordable for all seniors, well-designed and modifiable for aging, have a safe and comfortable environment, be easily accessible to services and facilities, and be connected to the surrounding community. These home features are essential for seniors' well-being, regardless of geographic location. Although the Government of Ontario (2021, pp. 20-21) strives to create age-friendly communities that encourage both public and private sectors to develop accessible, affordable housing options with supportive services, allowing seniors to age in place while minimizing the need for relocation and costly LTC. Aging in place has thus become a strategic planning focus for Ontario municipalities, with housing, health, and community support systems incorporated into a national policy framework. The City of Toronto's (2018, pp. 27-28) *Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0* includes housing initiatives, such as *HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan*, that aim to increase the supply of affordable housing, fund accessibility improvements, and address seniors' needs, especially in informal retirement communities such as high-rise condominiums. These three frameworks collectively show the importance of supportive housing conditions for aging in place, highlighting the need to assess whether high-rise condos meet seniors' unique needs.

Transportation is another significant domain in age-friendly planning frameworks, as accessible and dependable modes of transportation allow seniors to remain independent and connected to their communities. According to the WHO (2007, pp. 28-29), age-friendly transportation should offer accessible vehicles with clear signage and lower floors, reasonably priced rates and parking, safe and well-maintained roads, and specialized services for individuals with disabilities. Age-friendly transportation should also have stops close to senior citizens' homes and have access to important locations such as healthcare facilities, green spaces, shopping malls, banks, and senior centres (WHO, 2007, p. 28). These features should be widely implemented, as they support seniors' mobility, independence, and equitable access to essential services. The Government of Ontario (2021, p. 21) also argues that age-friendly communities should have "... a range of accessible transportation options, facilitating mobility and connected neighbourhoods that save residents time and money and improve quality of life." This planning policy aligns with the WHO's transportation domain, as both aim to provide services that improve seniors' ease of access, well-being, and ability to age in place. The *Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0* outlines transportation-related recommendations, including building new sidewalks where none currently exist to expand the walking network and implementing more Seniors

Safety Zones to strengthen street safety as part of the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan (Toronto, 2018, p. 34). Overall, unified age-friendly policies across levels of governance can support accessible transportation that helps seniors navigate their communities and age in place.

Social connections, community support systems, and access to health services are essential when planning for seniors and age-friendly communities, as they promote a sense of belonging and well-being. The WHO (2007, p. 44) asserts that age-friendly social participation occurs when community spaces and activities are inclusive, diverse, and easily accessible, bringing together people of all ages and backgrounds and enabling them to feel connected to and interactive with their neighbourhood. The WHO (2007, p. 71) also proclaims that well-designed community and health services, such as home care and emergency planning, should provide senior residents with access to medical assistance while avoiding financial and transportation barriers. These global planning policies support seniors' ability to age in place by helping prevent social isolation and ensuring access to the health and community services they need.

Age-friendly communities help seniors to stay social, active, healthy, connected, and supported as they age. The Government of Ontario (2021, pp. 20-21) recognizes the benefits of age-friendly communities for seniors, including cherished relationships that encourage independence and self-reliance, improved health and community inclusion, increased physical activity through walkable neighbourhoods, and lessening falls, dementia, and depression within communities. These are all positive benefits that guide municipalities and community organizations towards age-friendly environments, allowing seniors to continue their known way of living. Although the City of Toronto's (2018, pp. 24, 26) health recommendations aim to enhance seniors' well-being by increasing social connections through digital literacy programs, strengthening non-emergency community care and support, and encouraging active living with senior-friendly outdoor fitness infrastructure. After all, the City of Toronto's (2018) *Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0* provides specific local measures for age-friendly implementation, whereas the frameworks from the Government of Ontario (2021) and the WHO (2007) serve as broader, policy-oriented guides that share comparable foundational principles.

These planning policy frameworks work together to advance a common goal for age-friendly homes and communities and serve as an important standard for determining whether seniors' real-life experiences of aging in place align with the policy goals.

4.2 The Condominium Act, 1998, S.O. 1998, c. 19

The *Condominium Act, 1998*, is an important piece of legislation for seniors wishing to age in place in high-rise condominium buildings, as it governs individuals' ownership rights, common elements, accessibility-related changes, maintenance responsibilities, reserve funds, property insurance, and meetings. For example, Section 11(1) of the *Condominium Act, 1998*, states that "Subject to this Act, the declaration, the by-laws and the rules, each owner is entitled to exclusive ownership and use of the owner's unit." This provision ensures that seniors can maintain ownership of their private unit and make changes to suit their evolving needs, such as installing accessible furniture, grab bars, non-slip flooring, improved lighting, or safer bathroom and kitchen layouts. Although, Section 11(2) of the Act states that "The owners are tenants in common of the common elements and an undivided interest in the common elements is appurtenant to each owner's unit." This law clarifies that all owners share ownership and use of the common elements, such as elevators, hallways, entry ways, amenity spaces, and parking areas. While these spaces are essential for navigating the building, participating in activities, and socializing, they are collectively owned and shared by everyone residing in the condo building. Thus, if seniors find the common elements inaccessible, they cannot alter them on their own; instead, the condominium board must approve and coordinate any improvements, as outlined in sections 97 and 98 in the Act.

Upkeep is the responsibility of the condo board as set out in the Act, and effective maintenance in condos can help seniors age comfortably, safely, and independently. Seniors may find it increasingly challenging to maintain their living space as they age. When condo boards take responsibility for preserving the building's common elements, it can lessen seniors' burden, provide critical support, and help them remain more independent. According to Section 90(1) of the Act, "Subject to section 91, the corporation shall maintain the common elements and each owner shall maintain the owner's unit." In other words, the condo board is responsible for maintaining the shared spaces, while senior residents are responsible for maintaining their individual units. While this may not be sustainable for seniors in the long term, as they may eventually require external assistance to function within their own unit, having the common elements maintained is still a valuable advantage. The maintenance of the property's roofs, hallways, elevators, facilities, and outdoor areas is not a concern for seniors. The Act also asserts in Section 90(2) that, "The obligation to maintain includes the obligation to repair after normal

wear and tear but does not include the obligation to repair after damage." Section 90(2) may be problematic for seniors because responsibility for maintenance and repairs is divided between the condo board and individual owners. The condo board manages and repairs common elements that wear out naturally over time, while older residents are responsible for maintaining and repairing issues within their own units. This can be particularly difficult for seniors who have fixed incomes, limited mobility, or restricted access to support services. Therefore, assessing whether high-rise condo living can effectively support seniors aging in place requires an awareness of how maintenance responsibilities are handled inside condos.

Condo boards are required under the Act to establish reserve funds, which are collected from owners in the building. The Act states in Section 93(2) that, "A reserve fund shall be used solely for the purpose of major repair and replacement of the common elements and assets of the corporation." Seniors may benefit from this approach as costly repairs to elevators, automated doors, roofs, hallways, mechanical systems, and accessible features are scheduled ahead of time rather than abrupt payments. The drawback of reserve funds is that if significant repairs raise condo fees, seniors on fixed incomes may face financial difficulties that impact their way of life. Additionally, if common dangers cause damage to the building structure and owners' units, the condo board is obligated to provide insurance. Section 99(1) of the Act confirms that, "The corporation shall obtain and maintain insurance, on its own behalf and on behalf of the owners, for damage to the units and common elements that is caused by major perils or the other perils that the declaration or the by-laws specify." This is another relief for seniors as they do not have to worry about fixing uncontrollable damage to their living space, as it is taken care of by the condo board, although it is expensed through condo fees like reserve funds. As stated in Section 45 of the Act, the condo board is required to organize annual general meetings and meetings at any time, providing adequate notice to owners, so that seniors may discuss, participate in, and vote on business-related matters. The board maintains the building and provides opportunities for resident autonomy; however, rising and unpredictable condo fees drawn from reserve funds may threaten the affordability and stability of aging in place for seniors on fixed incomes.

As seniors age in place in condos, the *Condominium Act, 1998*, plays an important role in defining their rights, responsibilities, living conditions, and opportunities to participate in condo management, all of which affect their satisfaction with their living environment.

4.3 The Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13

The *Planning Act* serves as Ontario's provincial legislation, granting municipalities the authority to develop official plans, zoning by-laws, secondary plans, and planning policies that guide future development. Local planning documents, including the North York Centre Secondary Plan and the Toronto Official Plan, are established under the *Planning Act*. These plans facilitate the development of age-friendly communities for seniors wishing to age in place by addressing policies related to housing, accessibility, transportation, public participation, and the design of the built environment.

The *Planning Act* directs planning decisions that shape the environments in which seniors live, making it an important policy tool for supporting aging in place. When making planning decisions, the Minister, municipalities, planning boards, and the Tribunal must have regard to the significant matters of provincial interest as outlined in Section 2 of the Act. The provincial interests relevant to age-friendly community planning and housing include the creation of safe and healthy communities, accessible spaces for people with disabilities, sustainable and transit-friendly development, and built environments that are safe, functional, and easy to navigate. Section 2 of the Act also specifies that planning initiatives should incorporate a range of community services and facilities, including educational, health, social, cultural, and recreational spaces, as well as diverse and affordable housing options. By prioritizing these provincial interests, planning authorities can make decisions and implement policies that support seniors' ability to age in place by developing accessible, connected, and well-serviced communities. This approach can help seniors remain in their homes and communities throughout later life.

Through official plans and zoning by-laws, the *Planning Act* provides municipalities with a legislative framework that guides community development and shapes the environments where seniors live. Section 16(1)(a) of the Act states that an official plan should include "goals, objectives and policies established primarily to manage and direct physical change and the effects on the social, economic, built and natural environment of the municipality or part of it, or an area that is without municipal organization." This provision is significant because it guides community growth to meet population needs and supports seniors aging in place by promoting policies that foster social spaces, affordability, age-friendly buildings, and green areas where seniors can thrive. Section 16(1)(a.1) and (b) of the Act also declares that an official plan must consist of policies and procedures that guarantee affordable housing, as well as inform and

gather public feedback regarding proposed changes and plans. These measures can reduce the financial burden of homeownership for seniors and allow them to voice their opinions on policies that may affect their ability to age in place. In terms of zoning by-laws, Section 34 of the Act grants municipalities the authority to regulate "… the height, bulk, location, size, floor area, spacing, character and use of buildings or structures …." These laws influence the construction of condos and have the power to include age-friendly features, including accessible units, common elements, and services that are close by for senior residents. Although the Act provides guidance for developing supportive communities, how these policies are put into practice determines whether condo developments truly support seniors in aging in place.

The *Planning Act, 1990*, creates a crucial policy framework that can either facilitate or impede seniors' capacity to age in their homes and communities by directing decisions on housing, public engagement, accessibility, and community development.

4.4 Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), 2024

The Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), 2024, includes several policy areas that support seniors aging in place in high-rise condos. These policy areas include complete communities, housing, infrastructure and public service facilities, transportation systems, and public spaces, recreation, parks, and trails and open space. For instance, Policy 2.1.6 of the PPS 2024 promotes complete communities through diverse housing options, multimodal transportation, accessibility, public service facilities, and recreation spaces, all intended to improve quality of life and address the changing needs of people of all ages, abilities, and income levels, including seniors. These policy measures that facilitate the development of complete communities also comply with age-friendly community planning and housing principles, allowing seniors to age in place with suitable housing alternatives and easily accessible services that are closely connected and support everyday needs and social interaction.

The housing policies in the PPS 2024 provide a valuable framework for assessing whether condos offer the affordability, accessibility, and supports seniors need to age in place. Policy 2.2 of the PPS 2024 states that housing must be affordable to households with low- and moderate-income, and "… meet the social, health, economic and wellbeing requirements of current and future residents, including additional needs housing and needs arising from demographic changes ..." (p. 7). For seniors living on fixed incomes and aging in place, this policy could help them afford and maintain homeownership. Policy 2.2 is beneficial for seniors

who wish to stay in their homes and communities, as it proposes that housing options should provide social opportunities, access to health care, adaptability and accessibility, and support mobility needs, while accommodating seniors with disabilities.

Accessible services, facilities, and transportation networks contribute to the development of communities that help seniors stay independent and connected. Policies 3.1.3 and 3.1.4 of the PPS 2024 indicate that infrastructure and public service facilities should be well-positioned to respond effectively to emergencies, keep people safe and healthy, be near parks and open spaces, and be accessible by modes of transport. These policies promote the co-location and clustering of buildings and services, which is particularly important for seniors living in dense, high-rise environments, as it enables them to access multiple destinations in a single trip and reduces time and travel effort. Relevant destinations for seniors include local hospitals, community centres, libraries, and green spaces, delivered by safe transportation options such as walking and other accessible choices for those with limited mobility. Transportation policies, such as Policy 3.2 of the PPS 2024, also support these goals by improving connections among many travel options and making effective use of both current and planned infrastructure. These PPS 2024 policies show that the surrounding community has just as significant an impact on seniors' everyday experiences of aging in place as the design of their homes.

Public spaces, recreation areas, parks, trails, and open spaces are essential components of communities, since they provide seniors with opportunities to engage with the outdoors, meet people and socialize, exercise, and connect with nature. These areas can help seniors maintain their independence, improve their quality of life, and stay healthy as they age in high-rise condo buildings. According to Policy 3.9.1.a) of the PPS 2024, communities that are inclusive, vibrant, and vigorous should be "planning public streets, spaces and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of persons of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, foster social interaction and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity" (p. 20). Overall, policies that promote age-friendly public areas and community amenities, along with complete communities, housing, infrastructure and services, and transportation systems, contribute to making aging in place both possible and fulfilling without requiring seniors to relocate.

Collectively, these policies demonstrate how provincial planning priorities are in sync with the goal of creating age-friendly environments. They work towards supporting housing, services, transportation, and public spaces that promote seniors' well-being in their later years. I

think the Province offers a solid policy foundation for creating the types of communities needed to help seniors age in place.

4.5 Planning Policy Framework in North York

While provincial and municipal policies provide broad planning objectives, local planning policy documents influence how age-friendly concepts are implemented in the places where seniors live. Four key local planning policy documents, design guidelines, and strategic plans that guide growth and development in North York, Toronto, are the North York Centre Secondary Plan (1997), the Toronto Official Plan (2022), the North York Design Guidelines for Wilson Avenue (2004), and the Community Services and Facilities Strategy (2025).

To begin with, the North York Centre Secondary Plan (1997) is important to review because it was in effect when my primary case study site, my grandmother's condo at 2772 Keele Street, was planned and built. The Secondary Plan provides the planning policy context that shaped the development of the building and its surrounding community. For instance, Section 1 of the Secondary Plan emphasizes that the highest densities are located in areas effectively served by rapid transit, which contributes to reduced automobile use and a high transit modal split. The Secondary Plan also makes a distinction between the Centre's various sections, noting that "Generally, the North York Centre South will have higher densities and a greater concentration of commercial uses than the North York Centre North" (1997, p. 2). These policies strengthen the North York Centre's designation as a mixed-use area, allowing for a diverse range of residential, commercial, institutional, park, recreational, and transit-related uses. For seniors, who may rely less on driving and more on access to public transportation and the ability to walk to daily needs, this integrated land use plan is especially advantageous. In my study, I found that the Keele Street and Wilson Avenue area in North York reflects these planning objectives, with a mix of high-rise and other residential housing, commercial uses, parks, and various transportation options that seniors can rely on in their daily lives.

Chapters two and three of the Toronto Official Plan (2022) enforce policies related to transportation and land use, healthy neighbourhoods, the public realm, housing, and community services and facilities. For example, Policy 2.2.1.c) of the Plan specifies how land use planning and transportation must work together to create a more equitable and functional city by "increasing access to opportunities throughout the City by taking advantage of the combined travel benefits afforded by improved mobility and increased proximity" (2022, p. 2-5). This

policy explains how combining mobility and proximity improves access throughout the City by increasing transit alternatives and travel efficiency, and reducing distances between locations through dense, mixed land use. The Plan (2022, p. 2-30) also states that "A cornerstone policy is to ensure that new development in our neighbourhoods respects the existing physical character of the area, reinforcing the stability of the neighbourhood." Long-term familiarity and stability are supported by maintaining neighbourhood "character" and making sure new development preserves existing conditions. This results in healthy neighbourhoods, which are particularly beneficial for seniors aging in place who gain from a sense of belonging and predictable, consistent surroundings. In my grandmother's neighbourhood, I found that all essential resources are close to her building, decreasing travel time and making everyday tasks easier. None of the buildings appear out of character in the neighbourhood, helping seniors continue to feel at home.

The Toronto Official Plan (2022) outlines how to create supportive neighbourhood environments by considering the public realm, maintenance, and community services needed to support residents' quality of life. According to Policy 3.1.1.2.d) of the Plan (2022, p. 3-2), the public realm will "provide a comfortable, attractive and vibrant, safe and accessible setting for civic life and daily social interaction." In the public realm, safety and accessibility can help senior citizens navigate streets and public spaces while accommodating mobility limitations by providing features that support walking and the use of assistive devices. Comfort and opportunities for social interaction can also improve usability with elements such as benches, shade, and quieter surroundings, while also supporting mental health and reducing social isolation. Policies 3.2.1.1 and 3.2.1.2 of the Plan (2022, p. 3-28) state that housing will be maintained, enhanced, and restored to meet the present and future needs of residents, including ownership housing and housing that accommodates the needs of people with physical disabilities. These policies are vital for seniors aging in place in privately owned condos because they ensure the building is kept maintained and suitable for seniors with limited mobility. The Plan (2022, p. 3-37) asserts in Policy 3.2.2.1.b) that "improving and expanding local community service facilities and local institutions in established neighbourhoods that are under or poorly served" will promote equal and sufficient access to community services and local institutions. This policy enhances existing neighbourhoods and expands community support and healthcare services for seniors without requiring lengthy commutes.

The North York Design Guidelines for Wilson Avenue (2004) proposes unbroken sidewalks and improved public space, with tree planting and streetscape features such as pedestrian lighting, benches, transit shelters, and crosswalks. These additions can help make the area feel safer, strengthen neighbourhood identity, and increase connections to Downsview Park. The Guidelines also identify the Keele-Wilson intersection as a key gateway to the Downsview Park precinct, planning to incorporate treed medians, more organized road space, and new buildings along the street to define the street edge and pedestrian realm (Toronto, 2004). These urban design guidelines for North York, as applied to the primary case study site on 2772 Keele Street, support seniors aging in place by providing accessible mobility options, rest areas, strong connectivity within the precinct, and safe buffers between streets, all of which contribute to an environment that is both efficient and comfortable for seniors to use. The Community Services and Facilities Strategy (2025) mention that to serve the varied needs of the community, the evolving Toronto Public Library's Service Delivery Model places a strong emphasis on adaptable, multipurpose spaces that can be readily reconfigured, as well as more access to meeting rooms and outdoor areas. Along with strategic directions for integrating community leisure and services into high-rise developments, it also encourages a wider move toward centralized programs and services through co-location and partnerships (Toronto, 2025). These initiatives offer seniors living in high-rise condominiums opportunities for community engagement and social interaction, and bring recreation into their vertical, residential buildings.

When taken as a whole, these local planning policies, guidelines, and strategies lay the groundwork for supporting age-friendly communities in North York by addressing housing, accessibility, transportation, public spaces, and community services. However, they may not adequately address the unique issues that seniors may face when aging in place in condos.

5. Findings

In this chapter, I present the data from my study. These findings are organized thematically. My goal is to pinpoint and explain the major themes that surfaced from my semi-structured interviews, participant observation, on-site field observations, a residential mobility study, and an accessibility audit. These themes capture the perceptions and experiences of seniors and stakeholders about aging in place in high-rise condominium buildings and other housing types. By presenting these findings, I provide a clear understanding of seniors' lived

experiences, viewpoints, and realities, as found in my limited study, while also identifying the factors that facilitate or hinder their capacity to age in their homes and communities.

The themes discussed in this chapter include accessibility and mobility, safety, affordability and maintenance, social inclusion and a sense of belonging, governance and resident autonomy, sustainability, and housing choices, all of which are important to understanding age-friendliness in high-rise living environments.

These findings illustrate how the physical, social, economic, and governance features of high-rise condominiums affect seniors' independence, well-being, and ability to age in place, which directly respond to the study's research questions. The Discussion chapter that follows explores the findings in more detail, including their theoretical and policy implications, while this chapter focuses on data presentation.

5.1 Accessibility and Mobility in High-Rise Condominiums and Surrounding Communities

Seniors' ability to navigate their homes and condominium buildings while maintaining a high quality of life relies heavily on the accessibility and mobility in their community.

Seniors' Experiences of Accessibility and Mobility in High-Rise Condo Living

Through my data collection, I identified key findings related to the interconnected roles of accessibility and mobility in seniors' ability to age in place. Two senior residents, Maria (my grandmother) and Nino, whom I interviewed, have been aging in place for about twenty years in the high-rise condominium at 2772 Keele Street, North York. Maria is seventy-three years old, and Nino is seventy-seven years old; they are both Italian immigrants whose primary language is Italian, and they have limited English proficiency. During the semi-structured interviews, Maria and Nino discussed their condo building's age-friendly and accessible features, as well as the convenience of travelling to nearby locations.

In terms of accessibility within the building, Maria explained that her condo has the necessary features and supports she needs to age in place. Maria stated that the condo she lives in has elevators, which she finds helpful for bringing up groceries, emphasizing that one cannot depend on the stairs when older. She also mentioned that the building accommodates Wheel-Trans, so if she needs the service, she can phone in and they will pick her up at the door. Maria even explained that the lighting is always kept on in the garage, lobby, and hallways, and that the management office closes at night, but emergency numbers are posted around the building if something happens. Within her condo unit, she has two personal bathtubs, a kitchen, a

dishwasher, and washing machines that she said are functional and easy to use. Maria generally feels that nothing is missing within her building that would challenge her ability to age in place.

In terms of mobility within the community, Maria lives close to the places she regularly visits, which she accesses by walking, driving, and using public transportation. Maria visits two friends who live in nearby buildings, each about a 10-minute walk away. She also drives 15- to 20-minutes to visit her sister in Woodbridge, Ontario. To maintain her cultural background, she regularly travels to Italian-oriented places, including bakeries, grocery stores such as Cataldi Fresh Market and Lady York Foods, and local butchers. Her family doctor is likewise Italian, and she previously had help from an Italian-speaking bank worker. To get to important places, Maria explained that she walks five minutes to the doctor's office and drives ten minutes to the Italian food stores. She highlighted that the places she visits are not far, offer free public parking, and are mostly within walking distance. Maria also commented that the underground parking garage in her condo building makes it easier for her to travel, as it keeps the parking area clean and safe and her car readily available. For longer trips, Maria stated that she uses the TTC bus and subway to go downtown Toronto for specialist appointments with a friend for safety. Her closest intersection, Keele Street and Wilson Avenue, is where the TTC bus stop is located. Maria's experience demonstrates how the location of her condo, as well as access to surrounding services and transportation modes, helps her age in place.

Nino expressed that his condo and neighbourhood have age-friendly and accessible features, but additional support may be needed as he ages. For instance, Nino said that the building has Wheel-Trans door-to-door pickup when needed, but he does not need a wheelchair at the moment. He further noted that there is a bus stop right in front of his building that he can depend on when lengthy walks become difficult, and that the building has elevators and parking. Nino feels that nothing is missing in the condominium for what he needs in his life for now, but the building is not designed for seniors, and if he needs more help as he gets older, he will have to move out. In terms of mobility, he visits his sister-in-law near the intersection of Dufferin Street and Wilson Avenue, about a 6-minute drive. Nino also goes to an Italian bakery called Rustic Bakery (a 5-minute drive) and Cataldi Fresh Market (a 10-minute drive). He even stated that he can walk to the doctor's office (a 5-minute walk), hospital (a 10-minute walk), and Metro supermarket (a 2-minute walk across the street). Nino feels safe walking, but not at nighttime because it is unpredictable, and everything is roughly a 10- to 15-minute drive for him. Nino's

experience indicates that aging in place depends not only on accessible features and nearby transportation, but also on whether condos can accommodate seniors' changing needs.

City Planners Identify Accessibility and Mobility Challenges for Seniors

The two planners I interviewed from the City of Toronto, Avery and Matthew, discussed seniors' access to high-rise condo living, age-friendly mobility, and municipal planning documents related to seniors' needs within dense urban environments. Avery has four and a half years of experience as a Strategic Initiatives Planner, while Matthew has more than four years of experience as a Senior Transportation Planner.

Avery explained that while broad planning policies promote accessibility and aging in place, specific tools are required to address the unique needs of seniors aging in condos. During my interview with Avery, she mentioned that the City of Toronto's Growing Up Urban Design Guidelines (2020) "encourage buildings for like multi-family units where people can age in place." Avery declared that while planning policies, like the *Building Code Act* (1992), have broad goals for equity, accessibility, and aging in place, they are frequently too general to address the unique requirements of certain populations, such as seniors living in high-rise condos. While planning aims to be inclusive for all, she pointed out that these general principles are translated into more focused, community-based solutions that reflect local needs and challenges using additional tools, such as social development plans, community development plans, and other supporting guidelines or action plans.

Avery expressed that high-rise condos may meet accessibility requirements but are not designed to support seniors as their mobility needs change. When I asked Avery what barriers she thinks prevent seniors from having equitable access to high-rise housing, she explained, "Not all units have … hand pulls or … maybe they're not wide enough for wheelchairs. So, I'm sure the physical unit design is not built for seniors unless they're specifically looking for that." When I asked her to elaborate on this idea, Avery added that most condos are constructed with countertops at a specific height, lack hand pulls, and typically have bathtubs rather than roll-in showers. Additionally, she clarified that even though condos may meet the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2005), those with small bathrooms and narrow doorways can still be challenging for people using mobility devices. She concluded, "If it's … a senior who can walk with a cane, it's definitely accessible, but someone in a wheelchair or

[another mobility device], I would say there's definitely going to be more challenges." True accessibility depends on the layout of the condo unit and the needs of the senior resident.

During my interview with Matthew, he explained that transportation planning and mobility infrastructure are important considerations for supporting seniors living in high-rise condos, particularly through accessible and safe sidewalks and roadways. As a planner working in North York and reviewing applications that consider the mobility needs of seniors, he mentioned that he pays close attention to sidewalk width, noting that many sidewalks are substandard and typically between 1.5 and 1.8 metres wide, making it challenging for two people using mobility devices to pass comfortably. Matthew also considered how people navigate Toronto's different grades, including hills and other potentially difficult elevation changes. He then stated that seniors frequently rely on driving as their primary mode of transportation, reflecting the auto-dependent community design of North America in the twentieth century. However, as people age, this becomes less dependable due to factors such as decreased vision and failing to renew their driving license. While traffic is a common source of aggravation for seniors, Matthew thinks more practical and solvable difficulties involve walking and, to a lesser extent, cycling, which many people do not consider to be modes of transportation. He stressed that mobility improvements to sidewalks and roadways fall under the City's authority and do not need to wait for development, especially given that some people feel unsafe walking in locations where traffic, such as buses, is too close.

Transit access is a key factor in helping seniors navigate their communities. Matthew said that "… there's a lot of variation in terms of the ability, like the physical ability of folks to get around, and … people have different types of mobility devices." He highlighted the need for improved intersection design and for implementing government-regulated street crossings at locations where pedestrians frequently cross. Such modifications provide more direct, visible, and regulated access, thereby promoting inclusive urban planning and accommodating diverse mobility needs compared to unofficial or hazardous crossings that may primarily benefit able-bodied individuals. According to Matthew, the transit system in Toronto, especially Lines 1 and 2, is predominantly focused on bringing people downtown for work, which may not represent how seniors navigate the city. He pointed out that, because local transit makes frequent stops and better serves people with limited mobility who may not be able to walk long distances, many seniors tend to rely heavily on it. Additionally, he noted that seniors may find rapid transit routes

less helpful because they do not stop at the smaller, local destinations they need to access. Based on his observations and discussions with older transit users, Matthew suggested that transit-oriented development can be advantageous because it maximizes transit access, reduces reliance on cars, fosters more pedestrian-friendly environments, and brings mixed-use services such as grocery stores, restaurants, and healthcare closer together to meet seniors' everyday needs.

Matthew's comments highlighted that transportation accessibility improvements can be constrained by funding and implementation challenges. Matthew mentioned that cost-benefit analysis is not always a friend to accessibility. He said that "… introducing new infrastructure to improve accessibility is really important. But it's not always something that organizations are willing to put their money behind because they have a lot of other, like, competing priorities for dollars. And that is a little bit difficult." Matthew then stated that transportation policies focus on widening sidewalks and providing direct access for pedestrians, emphasizing that active transportation is more direct than vehicle movement. He added that there are still set standards for accessible parking to assist people who drive and have accessibility needs. Matthew also described the fundamentals of universal design in transportation, namely level boarding, which permits passengers to enter vehicles without the need for ramps. He pointed out that this is more typical in systems like light-rail transit (LRT) or subways, where boarding is completely level, in contrast to standard buses that have the rolling out of a ramp for strollers or mobility devices. Although these characteristics are not often specifically included in policies, Matthew explained that they are generally acknowledged as recommended practices in design for accessibility.

Developer Planner Promotes Flexible and Accessible Housing Design for Seniors

I interviewed a developer planner named Fiona, who has about fifteen years of experience. She began her career as a planner, worked her way up to director, and then started her own consulting business as a licensed planner. She has six years of seniors housing experience, working with seniors and interviewing them to discover a good senior home. She feels retirement buildings of the future involve exploring technologies and design principles.

Fiona emphasized that developers had neglected seniors as a condo market segment but are now recognizing the need to implement age-friendly design in new buildings. When I asked Fiona whether seniors are considered an important market segment for condos, she responded that many developers do not focus on seniors and have a thorough understanding of their needs. She claimed that retirement homes offer a niche product compared to regular market condos, and

developers have disregarded this demographic in years past. Fiona went on to say that the population is aging in general, and developers are now recognizing this and wanting to incorporate principles into their designs. Fiona assessed seniors' abilities by conducting design charrettes, simulating what it is like to walk through a corridor to uncover barriers, and wearing goggles with limited vision, to develop and construct age-friendly buildings. She said that the building's amenities should cater to seniors by including a chapel, a pharmacy, a bistro café, a dining area (with armchairs and distinct contrasting colours on walls and floors), ramps rather than stairs, and ample parking. Fiona's perspective shows that buildings can better accommodate aging when developers consider seniors' needs during the planning and design phase.

Fiona commented on how thoughtfully designed layouts, accessible features, and flexible services can help seniors as their needs evolve with age. She mentioned that accessibility is determined by the *Building Code Act* (1992) for developers, and seniors can get by, given the improvements in the Code that make buildings equipped for all populations. Fiona recommended changing the building's amenities because many residents value having a café but hardly use the pool, based on her previous work experience with seniors. She also considered how seniors navigate a building, highlighting the significance of corridor length and creating shorter, taller structures to minimize walking distances to elevators. Regarding unit layout, Fiona highlighted considerations such as the placement of call buttons, the height of light fixtures, wide entrances, kitchen counters with lower ends, proximity of bathrooms, and the benefits of natural light from windows. She specifically recommended situating bathrooms near windows to increase natural lighting, thereby facilitating movement and reducing fall risk for seniors. Fiona observed that seniors' needs change over time; for instance, residents may be mobile at age 72 but experience vision loss or other challenges by age 82. She argued that senior housing should offer flexibility to support aging in place and allow for the gradual addition of services to address gaps in care. She felt that residents should not be required to pay for services they do not need. According to Fiona, flexibility and autonomy in decision-making are vital components of senior housing.

Condo Board Uses Resident Feedback to Improve Accessibility

I interviewed Rory, who has been a Board of Directors president as a volunteer for at least six years at my grandmother Maria's high-rise condominium building. She has been a resident at the building for many years and randomly got elected to be president by multiple Italian senior residents who had connected with her. She felt it would be a good opportunity to be

more involved and to have her input valued. Rory got re-elected twice and collaborates well with the two other people on the condo board.

Rory pointed out that the condo board continuously makes changes to the building's accessibility in response to resident feedback and the mobility needs of seniors. When I asked Rory how mobility limitations affect seniors' participation in condo life, she replied with an example of one thing that the board has been constantly changing, which is the entryways. She stated, "So, if [seniors are] on a walker, if they use a walker, if they use a wheelchair, getting in through the front door and the back door, we installed those hand-waving motion [doors], so it'll open the door when they come." She went on to say that if seniors' hands are full of groceries, whatever the situation may be, it is a little easier than trying to open one of those manual doors. Rory then informed me that the board had reduced the amount of time the automated doors were open after some residents complained that they were left open for too long. Then she had other residents complain that the door opening span was too short, so the board had to adjust it again to find a middle ground. Rory concluded, "So we're constantly changing and modifying things based on feedback that we receive." Rory's experience demonstrates that accessible building features and responsive condo governance can help seniors age in place.

When I asked Rory how building policies and design consider the physical abilities of senior residents, she answered that the condo board does not have any senior-directed policies. Additionally, she stated that the only significant design element that considers seniors' physical capabilities is the modification of the entry doors. Rory felt that there is not much additional design modification needed for seniors because the rest of the building is wheelchair accessible.

Condo Design and Neighbourhood Access Support Maria's Aging-in-Place Experience

For two full days, I stayed with my grandmother Maria, who is aging in place in a high-rise condo building at 2772 Keele Street. I observed and took notes on the accessibility and mobility features of her home and community.

On Wednesday, March 4, 2026, when I arrived at my grandmother's building, I had to go through a parking garage intercom that often glitches. The first dialing did not properly call her condo unit, so I had to call my grandmother's mobile phone to get into the underground parking, which was a bit inconvenient as a visitor. Once I got through the garage doors and parked underground, I had to dial her two more times to get access to the inside of her building and unit. Throughout the morning, my grandmother did laundry using her personal washing machine

within her unit. Since it is a small condo unit, her kitchen and living room are very close together, which allowed her to also enjoy watching television while cooking in the kitchen. Her friend, Nino, who lives with her, walked to the CIBC bank to pay their bills. The bank is a close, 2-minute walk from their building. In the afternoon, my grandmother started experiencing some back pain, so she comfortably sat on her couch with a heating pad at 2:00 p.m. We then took a short stroll inside the building and outside on the property to move around a bit and get some exercise at 3:00 p.m. In the evening, we tidied up after dinner and drove 20 minutes to Woodbridge to visit her sister for coffee and dessert.

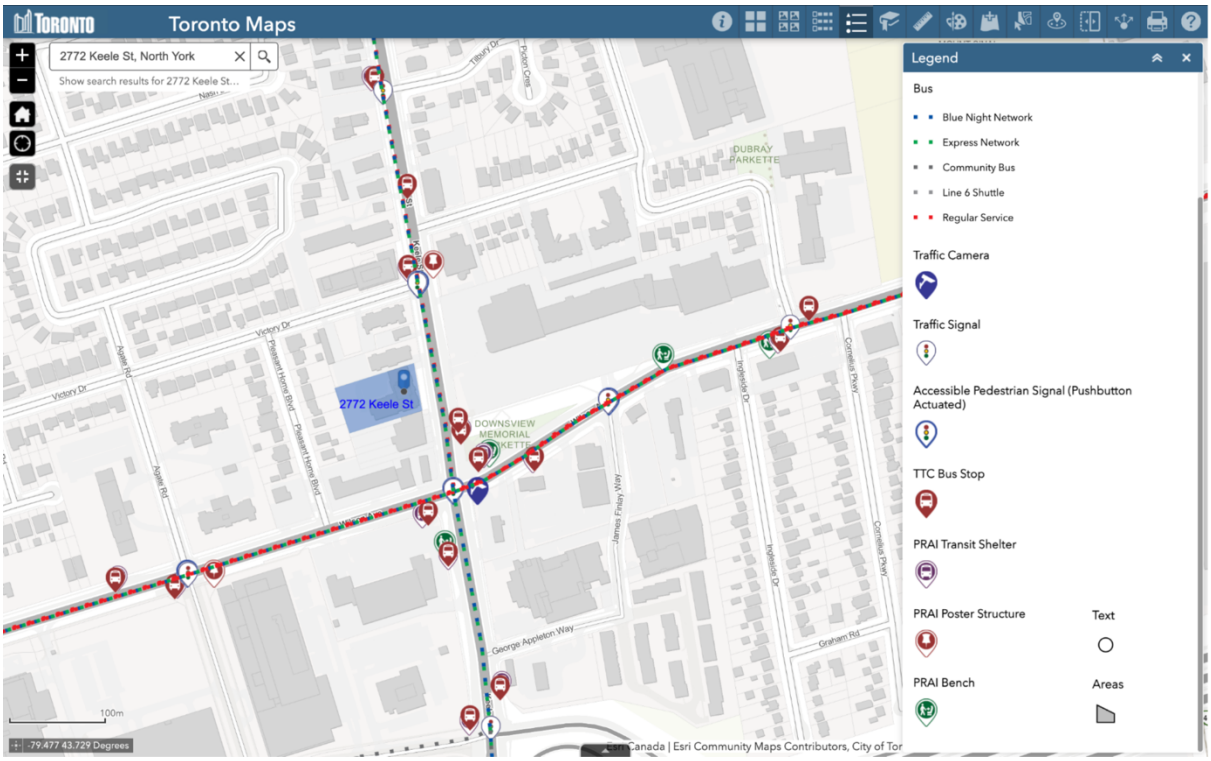
In the morning of Saturday, April 4, 2026, my grandmother needed to go to the grocery store to grab some food to prepare for Easter lunch for her grandchildren. We walked to the Metro grocery store together around 9:00 a.m., which is a less than 5-minute walk. At the Metro grocery store, my grandmother tried to look for and buy Italian, fresh ingredients to make her traditional foods. Before we went back to her condo unit, she stopped at her nearby CIBC bank (a 2-minute walk from the Metro grocery store and from her condominium building) to take out some money to give to her grandchildren for Easter gifts.

Street Design Creates Both Supports and Barriers to Accessing Nearby Destinations

During my on-site field observation at my grandmother's high-rise condo and its surrounding community, I mapped and documented the transportation system and accessibility features at the intersection of Keele Street and Wilson Avenue. In Figure 5, the map shows the various bus routes along Keele Street and Wilson Avenue surrounding 2772 Keele Street, including the blue night network, express routes, and regular service. Several TTC bus stops are also located along these streets within a short walking distance of the condo building. The intersection is monitored by a traffic camera and includes traffic signals and accessible pedestrian signals that support safer crossing for seniors and people with disabilities. At the intersection, Public Realm Asset Inventory (PRAI) transit shelters, benches, and poster structures are shown as part of the City of Toronto's publicly accessible spaces and physical features.

Figure 5

Proximity of the Transportation System to 2772 Keele Street



Note. Adapted from Toronto Maps (2026).

Throughout my observation period, the Metro grocery store stood out to me as it was directly across my grandmother's building. Even though they are directly across from each other, jaywalking is not feasible for a senior and is an offence. Thus, my grandmother would have to walk around, taking 4 minutes to the intersection and reach the other side of the street towards the Metro. I found the route overall safe with a sidewalk to walk on and crossing times at the traffic lights, but there is no buffer between the sidewalk and Keele Street on the Metro side, which is a direct segway into the busy street. I noticed that the Metro grocery store has an accessible design with automatic doors and ramps on all sides of its entryway, providing access for mobility devices. There is also a speed bump beside the entryway, which slows down the traffic and feels less dangerous for seniors getting groceries.

Accessibility Audit of My Grandmother's High-Rise Condo Building

When I conducted my accessibility audit of my grandmother Maria's condo building at 2772 Keele Street, I noticed several interior and exterior features that were and were not accessible, according to the City of Toronto's Accessibility Design Guidelines (2021).

The accessibility audit revealed that, while some exterior pathways around the condo enable free movement, others create barriers for senior residents with mobility limitations. For

instance, the exterior accessible paths of travel around the building "… should provide a continuous, unobstructed route providing exterior access to elements and spaces" (Toronto, 2021, p. 58). The Guidelines also state that "High-use, exterior accessible paths of travel should at minimum provide clear widths to allow for the simultaneous passage of two persons using mobility devices" (Toronto, 2021, p. 58). In Figure 6a, the path to the building entrance has consistent, very wide paving with no barriers, allowing multiple people to walk on it, even with mobility devices. However, other paths I observed during my accessibility audit lacked an accessible design. The high-use sidewalk in front of the building that residents use is very narrow, and I believe two people using mobility devices would not be able to pass each other at the same time (see Fig. 6b). An inaccessible path of travel into the outdoor communal garden area is evidently blocked by a large amount of snow, obstructing the route for residents (see Fig. 6c). The communal path of travel at the back of the property is also inaccessible because it is narrow, with cement bricks and posts serving as barriers, and bumpy, inconsistent paving that would be difficult for a senior using a mobility device to navigate (see Fig. 6d). Altogether, these findings indicate a gap between the Guidelines (2021) and the lived experiences of seniors with mobility challenges navigating condo surroundings.

Figure 6

Exterior Paths of Travel Around the High-Rise Condominium Building



Note. (a) Entrance path; (b) narrow sidewalk; (c) snow-obstructed garden path; (d) rear communal path. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

The accessibility audit found that the condo's parking facilities include features that support accessibility for senior residents and visitors. The Guidelines state, "Off-street parking should provide accessible parking spaces. Accessible parking spaces should provide a series of elements that make it easier for drivers and passengers, including persons using mobility devices,

to move from the vehicle to their desired destination" (Toronto, 2021, p. 114). As shown in Figure 7a, two aboveground parking spaces are designated for accessible permit holders (no overnight parking) and service vehicles. As a result, most residents and visitors must park underground. To access the underground parking lot, vehicles must go down a slope and through the garage to park (see Fig. 7b). The downward slope is not very accessible for seniors to walk up and down, so if they want to access the underground parking without a vehicle, the safer option is through the elevator or stairs from inside the building. In Figure 7c, there are very wide parking spots assigned to each resident, making the process efficient and allowing seniors to park and get out with plenty of space. There are also garage doors, controlled and easily opened by residents, that split the residents' parking and visitor parking (see Fig. 7d). In the visitor parking area, accessible parking spots with sufficient width to accommodate mobility devices are provided, along with available bicycle parking (see Fig. 7e). These findings imply that accessible parking facilities in condos can help seniors with their mobility and capacity to age in place.

Figure 7

Off-Street Parking at 2772 Keele Street



Note. (a) Accessible/service parking; (b) garage ramp; (c) resident parking; (d) garage doors; (e) visitor accessible parking and bicycle racks. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

The condo's exterior specialized areas include both accessible features and design constraints that influence how seniors use shared spaces. The Guidelines assert "Play spaces should provide surfaces that: (a) Are level, firm, stable and slip-resistant; and (b) Impact attenuating properties for injury prevention" (Toronto, 2021, p. 140). In Figure 8a, a circular cement border around the playground is not completely level, requiring a step down, which may be obstructive and dangerous for seniors with disabilities or using mobility devices. The Guidelines also specify that balconies must facilitate unobstructed movement when doors are open, include handrails or guards to ensure safety and visibility, and offer weather protection to enhance accessibility for all users (Toronto, 2021, pp. 158-159). Figures 8b and 8c highlight my

grandmother's balcony from her unit, featuring accessible doors for getting in and out, a tall, clear handrail and guardrail to keep things from going over, and a roof that shelters her from the sun, wind, and rain. According to the Guidelines (Toronto, 2021, pp. 143, 164), tables should be placed on clear ground, with accessible paths connecting them to prevent obstruction, and raised planter beds should be provided to support participation by individuals using mobility devices or with limited mobility. The picnic and garden area includes accessible benches with armrests and raised planter beds; however, the table design prevents wheelchair users from sliding underneath due to blocked access (see Fig. 8d). These findings show that accessibility extends beyond condo units to the shared spaces where seniors interact and form community relationships.

Figure 8

Exterior Specialized Areas at the High-Rise Condominium



Note. (a) Non-level playground border; (b) accessible balcony door; (c) protected balcony; (d) communal picnic/garden area. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

The condo's interior spaces demonstrate both accessible features and design barriers that influence how seniors navigate the building. The Guidelines specify that interior accessible paths of travel should have clear floor spaces that must be unobstructed, level, and adequately sized to accommodate individuals using mobility devices (Toronto, 2021, p. 201). The Guidelines also require that artificial lighting be designed to ensure even distribution at floor level and to minimize areas of excessive brightness or shadow (Toronto, 2021, p. 390). In Figure 9a, the hallway within the condo building is a bit narrow and does not provide enough space for seniors using mobility devices to travel comfortably. The hallway also has dim lighting, with pools of light and deep shadows, making it difficult for seniors with low vision to navigate (see Fig. 9a). The elevators in the building (see Figs. 9b, 9c, and 9d) are accessible according to the Guidelines (Toronto, 2021, pp. 210-211), as they include braille placed next to the control buttons, flat mirrors, handrails located on all non-access walls, spacious and stable floor surfaces, cab doors with reopening devices, and operable portions and controls. These findings suggest that, in

addition to the Guidelines (2021), seniors' lived experiences of moving through and using condo spaces should be considered when evaluating accessibility measures in condo buildings.

Figure 9

Interior Accessible Paths of Travel, Elevators, and Interior Lighting



Note. (a) Narrow hallway with uneven lighting; (b) elevator cab doors; (c) elevator interior; (d) elevator operable portions and controls. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

The condo's entrance areas and signage incorporate accessible design elements, such as gradual slopes, weather protection, and clear directions, to provide safe and clear travel throughout the building. The Guidelines (2021, p. 218) declare, "Doors and doorways should be provided at entrances that connect exterior and interior accessible paths of travel." In Figure 10a, the back entrance door is connected to the exterior private driveway through a gradual, inclined slope starting from the driveway to the path and into the building. The Guidelines (2021, p. 219) state that entrance features such as canopies should provide weather protection, sufficient clearances, and unobstructed overhead space to minimize exposure to inclement weather and ensure safe building access. Figure 10b depicts the entrance canopy of the condominium building that mainly leads to the back entrance and underground parking. The entrance canopy briefly protects vehicles and residents from the weather and clearly marks the start of the building. According to the Guidelines (2021, p. 219), "Signage should be provided at entrances to help individuals including persons with cognitive disabilities, persons experiencing confusion or age-related dementia while navigating and wayfinding." Figures 10c and 10d show signs directing individuals to visitor parking and a doorway leading to an exit, helping seniors avoid getting lost, as underground parking can be confusing and hard to navigate. These findings show that age-friendly design includes not only significant accessibility measures but also subtle features that increase seniors' safety, comfort, and confidence within the building.

Figure 10

The Condo Building's Exterior Entrances and Interior Signs



Note. (a) Inclined back entrance door; (b) accessible entrance canopy; (c) visitor parking sign; (d) underground exit sign. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

The condo's shared spaces and unit layouts have adaptable designs and accessible features that facilitate seniors' use and ease of access throughout the building. The Guidelines argue that meeting rooms should include flexible, accessible, and adaptable furniture and equipment, such as movable seating with or without armrests and tables that provide clear floor space (Toronto, 2021, p. 300). In Figure 11a, the meeting room, which some residents refer to as the "party room," has different seating and tables that can be adjusted, with a large amount of floor space that allows numerous seniors to come in and socialize, with or without mobility devices. According to the Guidelines (Toronto, 2021, p. 318), "The design of kitchens and kitchenettes should allow individuals, especially persons using mobility devices, to maneuver around millwork, work surfaces, sinks and appliances with ease." The kitchenette within the meeting room has a lot of space in an L-shape that allows seniors to use it with ease and be spacious (see Fig. 11b). The Guidelines (Toronto, 2021, p. 355) further state, "Exercise studios and weight rooms should have access to equipment and machines that are accessible, flexible and adaptable." The exercise room located on the first floor of the building has different kinds of fitness equipment that is accessible to everyone including seniors, such as a treadmill, ballet barre on the wall, elliptical machine, weightlifting, and opportunities for yoga (see Fig. 11c). According to the Guidelines (Toronto, 2021, p. 343), "An interior accessible path of travel that is level and smooth should be provided to and throughout bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens, living rooms, and where provided, balconies or terraces to ensure that residents and visitors have equitable access to elements and spaces within their suite." Figures 11d and 11e show the

spacious flow of my grandmother's condo unit, easily transitioning from the kitchen to the living room, kitchen table, and balcony. These adaptable and accessible interior spaces can contribute to creating supportive condo environments for seniors aging in place.

Figure 11

Interior Rooms and Specialized Facilities in the High-Rise Condominium

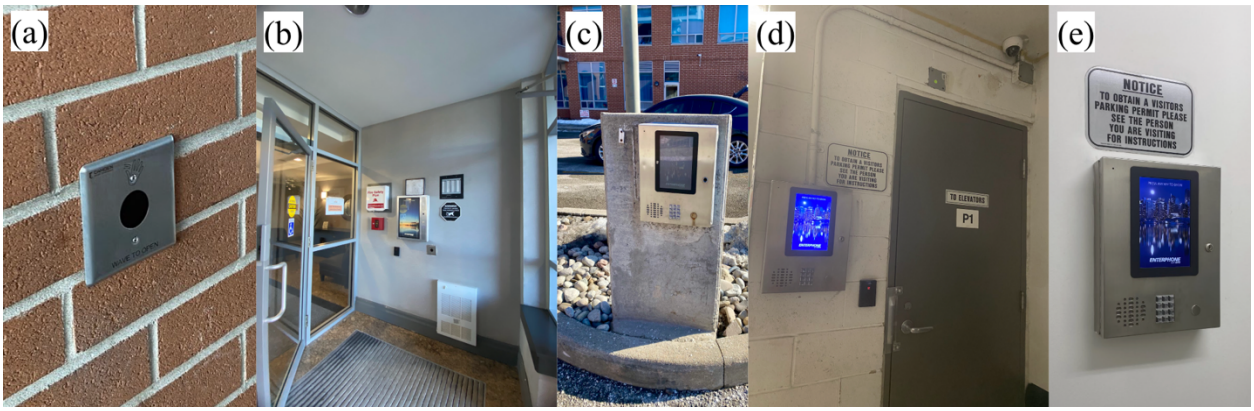


Note. (a) Meeting/party room; (b) accessible kitchenette; (c) flexible exercise room; (d) my grandmother's kitchen; (e) my grandmother's living space. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

The condo's card access and building security systems show how accessible design can improve seniors' access to the building, as well as their peace of mind and safety while aging in place. The Guidelines (Toronto, 2021, p. 418) state, "Card access and building security systems should be usable by all persons. The type and location of [these] systems should add to the comfort, protection and safety of a building. The usability and accessibility of applicable building controls should be designed for persons with limited dexterity and fine finger control." Figure 12a shows the hand waving motion doors, or "wave-to-open" systems, that are at the front and back entrances of the first floor, providing seniors with assistance when having difficulty to get inside. In Figure 12b, there is a dialling system, a door key fob, and hand-waving motion doors that provide security and ease of access for seniors. Figure 12c shows the dialling system for visitors going to underground parking, which requires them to call a resident to obtain permission to access. Figure 12d displays another dialling system and key fob to get from the visitor parking to the residents' parking area and towards the inside of the building. Figure 12e is the last underground dialling system visitors must go through to access the elevators and visit residents, providing additional safety and protection for seniors in the building. These security and entrance features demonstrate how well-considered building design can enhance seniors' sense of security and convenience in condo living.

Figure 12

Card Access and Building Security Systems



Note. (a) Wave-to-open doors; (b) entry system with dial pad, key fob, and wave-to-open access; (c) underground visitor dialling system; (d) controlled access point between visitor and resident parking; (e) final elevator access dialling system. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

This subsection analyzes key components of age-friendly environments, including accessible housing, transportation, and thoughtfully designed interior and exterior building and neighbourhood spaces. Together, these components support seniors' ability to age in place and thrive in their communities.

5.2 Safety, Affordability, and Maintenance

Seniors' experiences of aging in place strongly depend on perceptions of community safety, housing affordability, and the ease of maintaining their residential environments.

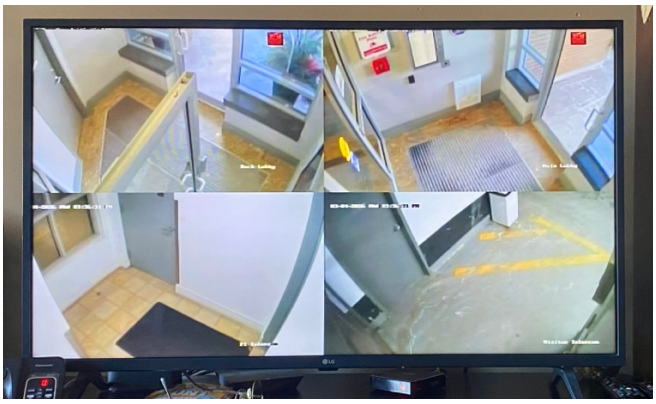
Condo Safety Features and Neighbourhood Affordability Support Seniors Aging in Place

In terms of safety, Maria commented that her condo has security systems and building design features that make her feel comfortable living there. When I asked my grandmother, Maria, if she felt safe and appreciated in her home and community, she replied that she does feel safe because there are no violence or gunshots. She then expanded on the age-friendly features within her condo building that provide her safety. Maria said that the security cameras within the building are all functional, monitoring the lobby entrances and the underground parking garage that can be viewed from her television system (see Fig. 13). She also noted that the building's security systems keep all the doors locked and are only accessible by residents' key fobs and dialling system, which provides her comfort. When I asked if she had any other information she wanted to share at the end of the interview, Maria wanted to bring to my attention that she likes to live on the lower floors of the high-rise condo because if something happens, she can easily use the stairs as a mobile senior. She still does appreciate the shared spaces and amenities that a

high-rise condo offers. Maria's experience demonstrates that seniors' perceptions of safety should be taken into account when determining whether condos promote aging in place.

Figure 13

Security Cameras within the High-Rise Condo



Note. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

When I interviewed Nino, he did not have much to say about the safety and maintenance qualities of his high-rise condo and its surrounding community. Although he did express that when he goes outside his building, he likes to go around the stores and plazas in the summer by car and on foot. Some of the places he visits are the Metro grocery store and Shoppers Drug Mart, and he likes to shop around Jane Street and Wilson Avenue. However, Nino never goes to Yorkdale Shopping Centre because it is too expensive and beyond his means. Nino's experience highlights how the surrounding neighbourhood and the affordability of nearby destinations affect seniors' daily experiences of aging in place.

<u>City Planners Recognize Condo Benefits and Affordability Barriers for Seniors</u>

I asked Avery during our interview how development pressures and market forces influence the availability of high-rise condominium housing for seniors. She explained that high-rises have been widely developed because their high density enables developers to distribute construction and land costs across numerous units, thereby enhancing financial viability. However, Avery noted that shifting economic conditions are increasingly supporting the development of "missing middle" housing, such as fourplexes and sixplexes, which can be more easily integrated into existing neighbourhoods and may foster more pedestrian-friendly environments. When asked about barriers to seniors' equitable access to high-rise housing, Avery also responded, "I'm sure the cost is probably the biggest thing." She further explained that seniors are living on retirement funds, and while the cost of high-rise living has decreased

recently, the previous higher costs may have been a significant concern. Avery's viewpoint emphasizes that, while high-rise condos can provide a housing option for seniors aging in place, affordability remains a significant factor in determining whether they are accessible to seniors.

Regarding safety and maintenance, Matthew noted that seniors may benefit from safer modes of transportation, as well as the security and upkeep services that condo living can provide. Matthew emphasized that safety is the most important mobility factor for seniors, highlighting initiatives such as Vision Zero. Yet, he reported that provincial legislation has limited the City of Toronto's ability to implement measures such as cycling infrastructure and road diets to remove vehicle lanes, thereby making it more challenging to improve pedestrian safety. Matthew also recognized that some condos offer front security, which can provide added comfort and safety for residents compared to buildings without security or a concierge desk. Matthew added that it may give seniors a little more ease to know someone is around and actively managing potential issues in the lobby or outdoor area. Additionally, he pointed out that seniors in condos are not responsible for maintenance tasks like shovelling or yard work, as these are handled by the building. He concluded, "So I feel like there are some benefits there in terms of like labour. That is something that might be required in different housing typologies versus like a condominium or like an apartment. I think it is definitely different." Matthew's perspective suggests that condos can have advantages for seniors who want to age in place by offering safety features and shared maintenance services that may not be available in other housing options.

Developer Planner Advocates for Affordable and Flexible Housing Options

Fiona made the point that making buildings more age-friendly requires consideration of security, affordability, and flexible housing options that cater to seniors' needs. During my interview with Fiona, she mentioned that security and 24-hour concierge would improve the age-friendliness of condo buildings. She also talked about seniors' income and affordability, as well as flexible planning strategies. For instance, Fiona said that market developers conduct preliminary market research to determine how much seniors can afford, whereas typical developers do not target seniors unless they enter that market on purpose. In such cases, they confer with other developers or go out with other researchers if they intentionally choose to sell to seniors. Additionally, she stated that senior income is critical for retirement homes, as the average unit cost per month is $4,000. She shared that seniors are concerned about paying for housing, so retirement homes must be flexible. Market condominium developers, according to

Fiona, are typically hands-off, do not retain ownership, and only offer amenities. Fiona explained that condo developers are less concerned with income because if one senior cannot afford it, another senior can move in. These market-driven condominium developer strategies are not sustainable in the long run, as age-friendly housing requires attention to both building design and the financial circumstances that affect seniors' ability to age in place.

Fiona stated that seniors sometimes rely on equity from selling their long-term homes to afford the transition to high-rise condos, but declining real estate values can erode this financial cushion and limit their choices. To help seniors afford senior housing developments in less wealthy communities, Fiona argued that developers can strip down some unit finishes to save on construction costs by using less expensive countertops and lower-cost materials for the building's structure. She stressed the importance of flexible plans or optional services that developers can add to the building; for example, seniors can purchase base rents and add optional services to create their own package. Fiona's argument highlights that age-friendly housing needs to consider seniors' financial realities and changing needs over time.

Condo Board and Senior Residents Collaborate to Strengthen Building Safety and Management

Rory acknowledged that senior residents improve building safety by monitoring the building and reporting concerns. Rory said, "So to me, I find that having seniors in the building is a plus because we have no additional security. And believe it or not, seniors are always walking around, keeping an eye on things, and voicing their concerns." She then expressed that senior residents like to tell her things but want to ensure she keeps their anonymity, and "… it's helpful because I can look into it and I can address it still in the same way." Likewise, Rory informed me that the condo board has ensured that the television's camera access has been operational, since many senior residents spend their days watching the cameras to see who is entering and leaving the building. She remarked, "[the senior residents have] caught things that [the board] would not have been able to catch without hearing from them because that's what they do, you know, like I said, they're like good security." Rory mentioned that the board increased the number of cameras in the seniors' television view from five to six, all of which are entry points, improving their safety. Rory's perspective suggests that seniors' participation in condo life can enhance building safety and foster an environment that supports aging in place.

Rory clarified that everyone who resides in the building has a key fob and a garage pass, while the code dialling system is for visitors. During the interview, Rory provided several

examples of safety incidents that occurred within the building. She noted that many senior citizens have personal support workers (PSWs) who visit them daily. Rory recalled that one senior resident has a nurse come to bathe her, but occasionally fails to pick up the phone to let the nurse enter the building. Another example occurred when a nurse was unable to enter the building because the senior resident did not respond to the access code system. When Rory unlocked the door to let herself in, the nurse stepped right in after her but refused to disclose which unit she was visiting, despite Rory's repeated assertion that building access protocols exist for security and safety purposes. Rory then told me, "So what [the condo board] recommended to those seniors, if you have a support worker, is to have a lockbox at the back of the building and the lockbox will hold the key to their unit and a fob. So, the fob will let them into the building. They don't have to call them up and they can use the key to get into their unit …" (see Fig. 14). When discussing seniors and having nurses visit them, she made it clear that the seniors' arrangements with their nurses are their responsibility and cannot be accommodated by the board; however, they can offer a recommendation.

Figure 14

Exterior Lockbox Used to Store Unit Key and Fob for PSW Access



Note. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

Rory described an additional safety feature of the high-rise condominium building, referencing a previous incident in which emergency access was restricted. She stated, "We've had break-ins, we've had circumstances where, you know, an elder left her unit to go to the casino and she left the water running in her unit. And so, her water, her unit got flooded and we couldn't get into her unit because she changed the lock." To address this issue, she highlighted that all residents should be on the master lock system that allows emergency responders to access units when needed. In the absence of such a system, firefighters, as well as ambulance or the

police, may be forced to enter and break down your door. The building has established protocols that permit emergency services to contact board members or property management to obtain the master key, thereby ensuring timely entry during emergencies.

I asked Rory how financial factors, such as maintenance fees, influence decisions affecting senior residents. Rory said the following:

> We want to keep the maintenance fees down as low as possible whenever we do our budget. Reason being is not just because of the seniors, it's just in today's world, everything is expensive. So, if we can't have our maintenance fees at a level that is manageable, then how do we expect anybody to live? Like that's a real challenge because we have to pay for an aging building as well… The building is becoming a senior. So, we have to take care of the building… make sure that equipment gets replaced or maintained.

Rory pointed out that while some seniors speak up at budget meetings and others stay quiet, she feels she is just as much of a senior as they are when it comes to paying maintenance fees. She said it is important to balance residents' interests with her own, since she lives in the building, pays the same fees, and sees it as an investment. Rory's standpoint indicates that fluctuating maintenance fees are important to keep in mind when determining whether condos are affordable and sustainable housing options for seniors who want to age in place.

Rory commented that senior residents are actively involved in addressing maintenance issues and strengthening building management to improve their living environment. She described an example of when the landscapers came to cut the grass and left, the senior residents noticed problems and spoke up. The seniors asked about the work done, pointed out bad trimming, and questioned what they were paying for their maintenance fees. Rory acknowledged that these complaints were justified and that such feedback was valuable when communicating with the contractor. She stated to the contractor, "If you're going to give us that kind of job, then you might as well lower your cost. Otherwise, do the job properly." Rory added that even if seniors' comments seem small, they help show what needs fixing.

<u>Condo Design Supports Maria's Daily Living, While Maintenance Delays Create Concerns</u>

While observing my grandmother, Maria, as she completed her daily routines, I identified an age-friendly feature in her high-rise condo building. After my family and I finished dinner during one of my visits, my grandmother tidied the table, washed the dishes, and took out the garbage. I accompanied her outside her unit and observed her throw out the garbage in a chute

located on the same floor (see Fig. 15). She explained that garbage chutes are located on every floor of the building. I was impressed by this age-friendly feature because having garbage chutes on every floor minimizes the distance residents need to travel while carrying heavy garbage, with the waste sent directly to the building's waste-handling area.

Figure 15

Garbage Chute on My Grandmother's Floor in Her High-Rise Condo



Note. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

During my other visit with my grandmother on Wednesday, March 4, 2026, I noticed a large crack running across the roof of her balcony, with tiny droplets of water coming out (see Fig. 16). I then asked my grandmother about this maintenance issue. My grandmother Maria said it has been like this all winter, and the condominium board/property management team will not look at it or repair it until the summer of 2026. This observation underscores that effective and timely maintenance is necessary to keep seniors' homes safe and functional.

Figure 16

Balcony Roof Crack with Visible Water Leakage in High-Rise Condominium Unit



Note. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

Well-Maintained Condo Spaces and Neighbourhood Safety Foster Age-Friendly Environments

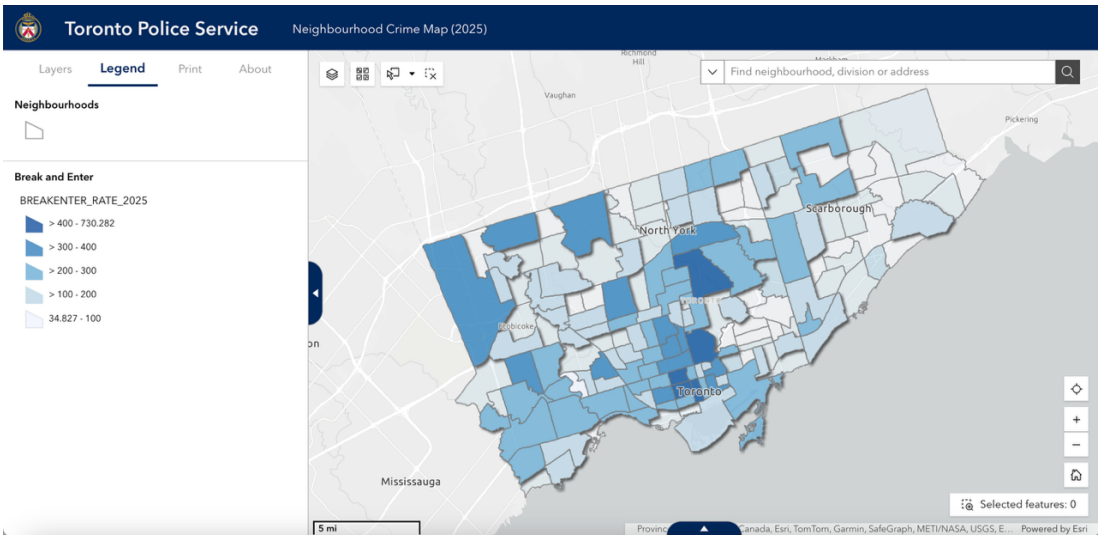
During my on-site field observation at my grandmother's high-rise condo and its surrounding community, I noted my thoughts on the building's maintenance and design as I

walked around the building. Some of my documented observations from Sunday, March 15, 2026, include that the building's maintenance and design overall appeared clean, cared for, accessible, and modern. The elevators, interior furniture, carpets, floors, painted walls, exterior windows and brickwork, plants, and communal spaces were all in good condition. Based on these observations, I felt that the high-rise condo is a suitable environment for seniors to age in place, as it provides essential amenities within a well-maintained environment.

While walking around the intersection of Keele Street and Wilson Avenue, I kept an eye out for crime hazards in the community, but I did not see any during my brief time there. When I went home that day, I used the Toronto Police Service's public interactive Neighbourhood Crime Map (2025) to visually identify break-ins, assaults, and robberies in North York compared to other community council areas in the City of Toronto. In Figure 17, the map shows mixed levels of break-and-enters, mainly low to moderate, in North York compared to other areas of Toronto. The neighbourhoods with the most break-and-enters in the North York district include Bridle Path-Sunnybrook-York Mills, Humber Summit, St. Andrew-Windfields, York University Heights, and Yorkdale-Glen Park. In Figure 18, the map demonstrates generally lower to moderate assault rates in North York compared to the rest of the City of Toronto. The neighbourhoods with roughly the most assaults in the North York district are York University Heights, Yorkdale-Glen Park, Black Creek, Oakdale-Beverley Heights, and Humber Summit. Figure 19 displays moderate levels of robbery, with higher rates in North York's northwest than in other areas of the city. The neighbourhoods with approximately the most robberies in the North York district are Humber Summit, Hillcrest Village, Oakdale-Beverley Heights, Yorkdale-Glen Park, and Glenfield-Jane Heights. My field observations around the intersection identified no visible safety concerns, while the three crime maps (Toronto Police Service, 2025) showed mostly low to moderate levels of reported incidents across North York.

Figure 17

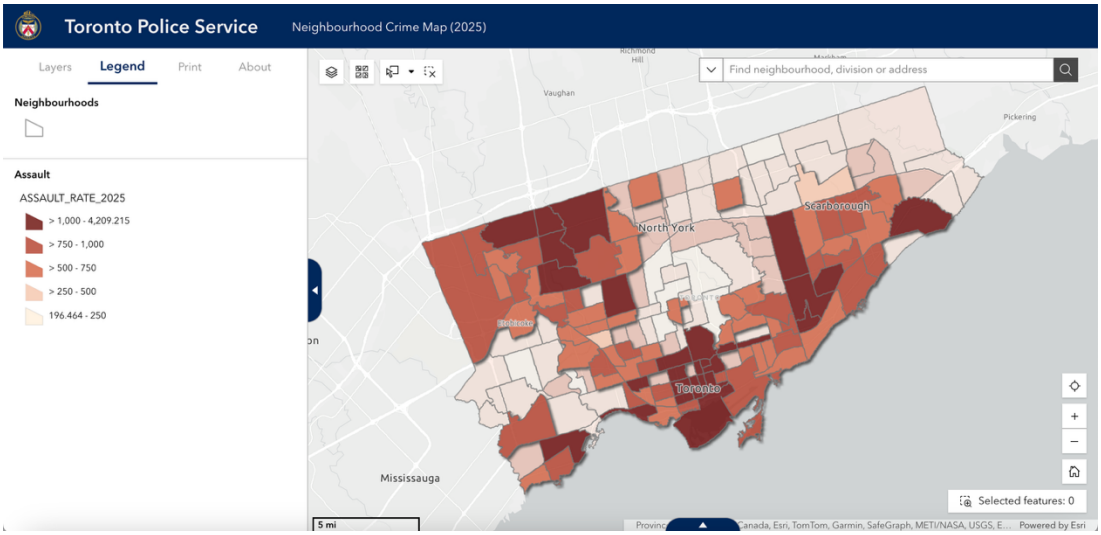
Break-and-Enter Incidents in North York Compared to the Rest of the City of Toronto



Note. Adapted from Toronto Police Service (2025).

Figure 18

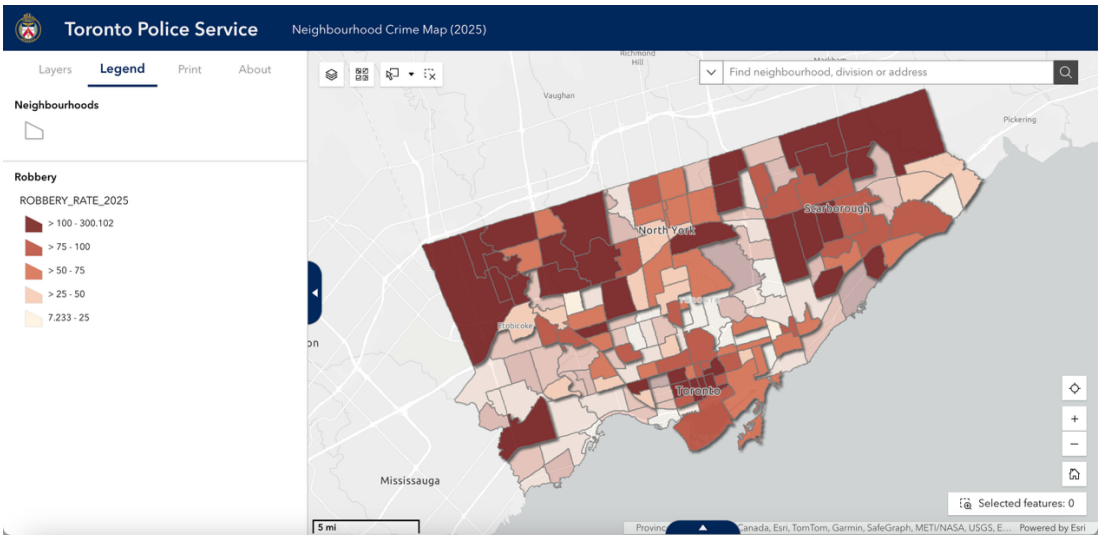
Assault Rates in North York Compared to the Rest of the City of Toronto



Note. Adapted from Toronto Police Service (2025).

Figure 19

Robbery Rates in North York Compared to the Rest of the City of Toronto



Note. Adapted from Toronto Police Service (2025).

Findings suggest that when seniors trust the safety and maintenance of their living environments, aging in place becomes more feasible. However, unaffordable condo costs may limit seniors' ability to remain in their homes and communities.

5.3 Social Inclusion and Sense of Belonging

Seniors' sense of belonging, quality of life, and attachment to place are greatly influenced by social connections and opportunities for community involvement.

Seniors Build Community Through Social Connections and Shared Spaces in Condo Living

Maria feels comfortable living in her condo because she has companionship at home, social connections with some of the other residents, and a sense of belonging within the building. My grandmother Maria told me during the interview that she lives with her friend in her high-rise condo and likes living with someone because she has company and Nino provides her with safety at night, since she is scared of the dark. When I asked how her relationships with people in the building were, my grandmother replied that they were normal. She said she is closer to some people than others because they are friendlier and share the same Italian background. She tries to make small talk with staff in the building, such as the cleaners, maintenance, and plumbing staff, but they work for the building, not for individual units. When I also asked if people get along in the building, Maria said that some people she meets in the elevator do not say hello unless she initiates it. She added that she is not confrontational, so she does not like arguing with people. She mentioned that she has more privacy in her unit and fewer opportunities to argue with people

because she does not share many common spaces. Maria is overall comfortable in her space because she owns it and feels welcomed in the building.

Maria keeps an active daily schedule that incorporates social activities, cultural practices, household chores, and community involvement. Maria shared her daily routines in and outside her condo building. On an average day, Maria said she wakes up early in the morning, makes coffee, prepares lunch for 12 o'clock, cleans her unit, watches television, sews, visits her friends around the building, and has coffee with them. She also maintains her Italian traditions by making sausage, tomato sauce, and bread, and growing parsley, basil, and zucchini on her condo balcony in the summer. Maria told me she goes to her local community centre twice a week to play bingo and have coffee, pastries, and pizza. She even likes to dance and go to Italian concerts, and sometimes goes to Casino Rama, but not too much because she does not like the risk of losing money. She drives to Woodbridge once or twice a week to see her sister. Maria occasionally uses the condo's gym and often visits the party room to play cards. During the summer, she spends time in the outdoor garden, walking and sitting on the bench to see the flowers and chat with friends after dinner. When the weather is nice, Maria said she leaves the building daily to run errands and socialize. Maria's experience demonstrates how social, cultural, and leisure activities in the condo and surrounding community can help seniors age in place.

Nino characterized his condo as a welcoming community where friendships and shared spaces are key parts of his everyday life. Nino stated in his interview that he lives with a friend in his condo unit. He said that he is very happy to live there, with lots of friends. He believes it is nice to live somewhere with friends, as it creates a strong sense of community. He said, "When you're alone, it's not nice." He added that many people leave the building because they just rent, so there are a lot of residents coming and going. He still tries to be friendly with everybody in the building and does not like to discriminate. Nino told me his daily routines, which involved watching television most of the time, like soccer games and romantic movies, taking naps, going shopping, smoking on the balcony part of his unit, and going to friends to have coffee, and he hosts them too. In the summer, Nino also likes to go outside and walk around, go to the party room almost every night, and spend time in the outdoor garden. In the wintertime, he said he walks around the parking garage for exercise and sometimes uses the exercise room, like the treadmill or the bike. Nino ultimately felt welcome in the building, and there were no instances when he felt uncomfortable.

City Planners Highlight How Condo Locations Influence Seniors' Community Connections

I asked Avery what she thinks influences seniors' access to condo living, and she said it depends on the building's location and the surrounding community services and facilities, such as existing community amenities. She then added that numerous ties contribute to why someone lives where they do. Avery supported her argument by saying, "I think in high-rise condos in particular, like your demographics within that condo, if someone's drawn to like that social cohesion, they're going to go follow their friends or whatever it is. So sometimes it's less about the physical building and more about the social. It all, I think it all depends on the person." Based on Avery's comments, seniors' experiences with aging in place are influenced by the social connections, services, and settings that surround their condos.

Matthew emphasized that neighbourhood design can affect whether seniors aging in condos have opportunities for social engagement and community connectedness. Matthew shared with me that the Wynford Concorde Focused Area Study he was working on did not have many places for social gathering and interaction. He said that since the area consisted of tower-in-the-park neighbourhoods, it included only towers, private amenities, and green space. Matthew added, "So, there's not really a lot of places for like congregation and social interaction. And that's something that's very valuable and very important for seniors is to be able to … interact with one another and have and maintain friendships and start new ones and just have a conversation outside." Matthew explained that seniors' experiences can vary based on the living context. He noted that living in a tower in the park can feel more isolated, as residents might not step out onto a walkable street with retail or nearby destinations. While sidewalks may be present, he pointed out that there are often fewer local destinations and fewer opportunities for social interaction. As a result, Matthew said high-rise living can be suitable for seniors with accessibility needs, but the experience may differ depending on the location.

Developer Planner Encourages Flexible and Socially Connected Spaces for Seniors' Well-Being

While I was interviewing Fiona, she mentioned that age-friendly condo buildings should have spaces that are enjoyable and nostalgic, and that do not trigger stress for seniors. She thought the buildings should include memory care, with small rooms featuring cribs, old records, and books to foster a sense of familiarity with the surroundings rather than sterile rooms. She advocated for multi-functional spaces that can accommodate activities such as paint nights and be converted into book club rooms as needed. Fiona emphasized the importance of condos

having flexibility and spatial flow to support optional services that seniors may choose to utilize. She said that seniors should not be secluded and that interacting with community members improves their well-being, as many seniors cherish the company of others and family. Fiona even suggested blending children's day care with seniors, claiming that it enables seniors to reminisce about their own parenting experiences while children gain from seniors' parental guidance. Additionally, she discussed developing community spaces where seniors can attend activities such as dance classes to encourage social engagement. Fiona holds the view that age-friendly condos should feature flexible, meaningful, and socially connected spaces that support seniors' well-being and community involvement.

I then asked Fiona how demographic differences among seniors, such as cultural background, influence developers' decisions. She replied that retirement home developers have internal innovation teams that conduct the research, and regular developers are becoming savvier. She noted that cultural background plays a significant role in how developers design amenity areas to align with the cultural norms of the area's demographics. Using the City of Vaughan as an example, she claimed there is cultural recognition of Italians, such as installing party rooms in high-rise condo buildings for Italian seniors to play cards. She stated that having essential cultural elements in the building helps to recognize cultural patterns. Fiona acknowledged that it is challenging, since you do not want to appeal only to one background, such as Italians, yet still include some elements.

Condo Board Builds Community Through Shared Spaces, Events, and Resident Supports

I asked Rory how she would describe seniors' experiences and daily life in the high-rise condo. Rory answered, "So, I know that a lot of the seniors … get together because they're not working. They have nothing to do. They get together in the lobby or in the party room. We allow them to stay together in the party room in the evenings as long as they keep the party room clean and they clean up after themselves." Rory highlights how shared spaces in condos can help seniors maintain their social relationships and enhance their experience of aging in place.

Rory noted that the condo board helps senior residents by planning social activities and maintaining shared outdoor spaces where residents can gather and socialize. I asked Rory how she plans for future building changes or improvements as a condo board member that meet the needs of senior residents. She said that the board plans to host a summer barbecue to entice seniors to participate, as they enjoy spending time together, and that an outdoor event during the

summer would be nice. The board recently renovated a backyard pergola, according to Rory, despite some senior residents' suggestions that it be taken down. The board thought the pergola was a lovely garden feature and an outdoor gathering place where seniors can sit, mingle, and enjoy one another's company throughout the summer. She went on to tell me that the building hosts a Christmas party throughout the winter, and the board helps pay for the food and beverages, including wine, that the seniors enjoy. The Italian seniors will bring plates with sausage and cheese, panettone, and cookies, she added, as the board encourages seniors to bring a dish of their own, similar to a potluck. Rory added, "We provide the food and the drinks, but then it's nice to have that kind of feeling. And then we have the music, and we ask them what they like, and we dance with them." Rory's position exemplifies how condo boards influence the social environment experienced by senior residents.

To make senior residents feel more comfortable and encourage participation in community life, Rory secured a new service provider for telephone and internet for the building's property management, with Wi-Fi access on the main floor. She added, "So, we set up a password for [senior] residents so that they can use the Wi-Fi by logging in with the password if they're in the gym or … the party room. So, sometimes seniors will go to the gym, and they'll … ride the bike and … start going on Facebook … and the same [applies] with the party room." Rory's actions demonstrate that age-friendly housing includes not only physical design characteristics but also the services and supports offered within the property.

Maria's Condo Environment Supports Everyday Routines, Relationships, and Belonging

In the morning of Wednesday, March 4, 2026, I observed my grandmother, Maria, feeling at home by making her own bed, boiling vegetables, making pizza dough, cooking lentils, and washing clothes using her machine inside the condominium unit. She also had a coffee and a cookie for breakfast and talked to her sister on the phone, who lives in Woodbridge, Vaughan. Maria then made homemade pizza while watching her favourite Italian shows. Her friend, Nino, who lives with her, got up this morning, had coffee with cake, and played Italian cards on his iPad while Maria prepared lunch.

In the afternoon, Maria and I had lunch with her friend and family. She then tidied up the kitchen, and Nino made us all coffee right after our meal. Maria and Nino then relaxed in the living room and spent time on their phones looking at Facebook, specifically at friends, Italian celebrities, and cooking videos. After phone time, Maria made homemade bread with her

leftover dough from this morning, and Nino watched the soccer game for a bit. My grandmother Maria showed me her teacup collection and gave me a set to keep and bring home (see Fig. 20).

In the evening, Maria prepared dinner around 5:00 p.m., warming the tomato sauce and preparing the vegetables. Maria and I ate dinner around 6:30 p.m. with everyone from lunch, and another family member came over to join us. We ate traditional Italian food like gnocchi, meatballs, homemade pizza, rapini with beans, and salad (see Figs. 21a and 21b). We then tidied up, drove to Woodbridge to visit her sister for coffee and dessert, and went back to her home. This day illustrated how Maria's condo unit supported her ability to continue daily activities, maintain social relationships, and preserve a sense of belonging in her home and community.

Figure 20

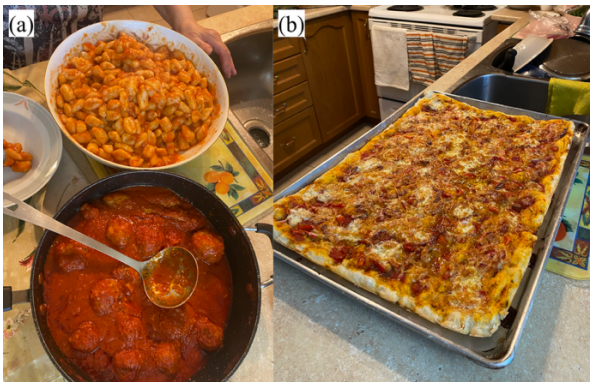
My Grandmother Maria's Teacup Collection



Note. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

Figure 21

My Grandmother Maria's Traditional Homemade Italian Food



Note. (a) Gnocchi with meatballs; (b) homemade pizza. Created by Angelica Eccles (2026).

In the morning of Saturday, April 4, 2026, Maria brushed her teeth and took a shower when she woke up. She then had a coffee with milk and a little cookie for breakfast. After her

errands, she made tomato sauce, meatballs, sausage, salad, potatoes, beans, gnocchi, pizza, and bread for afternoon lunch.

In the afternoon, all of Maria's grandchildren came over to enjoy an Easter lunch together with her and her friend. After everyone had eaten all her delicious food, the grandchildren helped Maria clean up the kitchen. Everyone chatted, played card games, watched the soccer game, and had coffee with dessert. Maria pulled out old family photos from her childhood in Italy and from her adult life in Toronto, and we all looked at them and appreciated the memories. The grandchildren left to go home before the evening began.

In the evening, Maria and I had a light snack for dinner since we had a big lunch, then relaxed while watching her Italian shows. She tried to get some rest at night after the grandchildren left, so she could have energy and cook for her family again for Easter Sunday, which was the following day. Maria's Easter gathering demonstrated that aging in place enables seniors to maintain family traditions, cultural practices, and close relationships within their own homes and communities.

Maria's Condo Benefits from Walkable Neighbourhoods and Community Connections

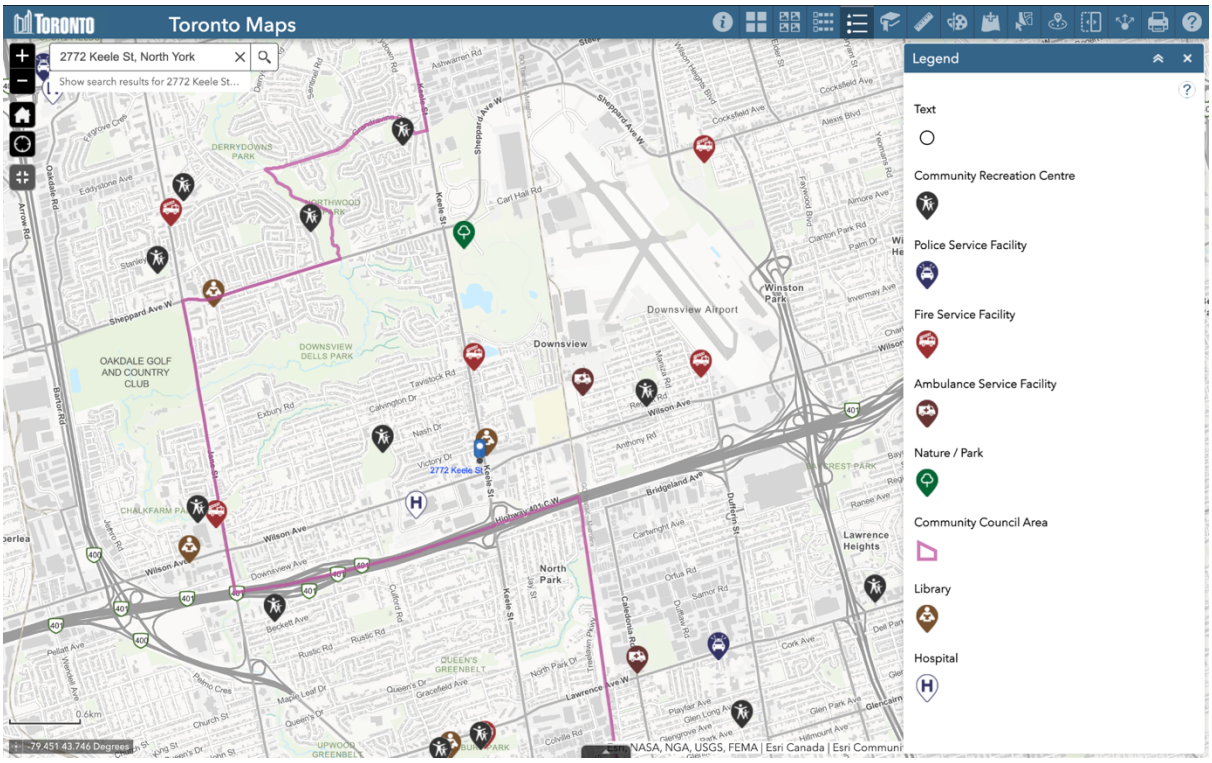
While I was conducting my on-site field observation at my grandmother's high-rise condo and its surrounding community, I did see social connections within the building with residents greeting each other and chatting in shared spaces. I also saw residents having nice and respectful conversations with staff when they voiced their concerns. In the surrounding area, many people were walking along the sidewalks to get to places. I observed that the Keele and Wilson intersection is a pedestrian-friendly environment and well-connected to the community, which is essential for seniors who depend on walkability and nearby transit. My observations revealed that the condo and neighbourhood provide spaces for social contact and daily mobility.

After my observations on seniors' social inclusion and sense of belonging, I mapped the proximity of community services to my grandmother's building. In Figure 22, the map shows the Toronto Public Library Downsview Branch, a 2-minute walk from the condo building and several community recreation centres at the intersection of Keele Street and Wilson Avenue, offering opportunities to engage with community members socially. There is also an 11-minute walk to the closest hospital, Humber River Hospital, and a 25-minute walk to Downsview Park from 2772 Keele Street (see Fig. 22). Figure 22 depicts numerous police, fire, and ambulance service facilities within the community in case of emergencies for seniors aging in place. The

surrounding community provides my grandmother's condo with convenient, walkable access to essential services, facilities, and recreational spaces.

Figure 22

Proximity of the Community Services to 2772 Keele Street



Note. Adapted from Toronto Maps (2026).

These findings shine a light on how vital social participation and a genuine sense of belonging are for nurturing seniors' emotional well-being and inspiring their long-term commitment to continue living where they feel at home.

5.4 Governance, Management, and Resident Autonomy

Seniors' experiences of aging in place are influenced by factors beyond physical housing and community conditions. For instance, management practices, condominium governance, and opportunities for participation in decision-making all contribute to shaping seniors' positive or negative perceptions of aging in place.

Condo Governance Supports Seniors' Inclusion and Autonomy in Aging in Place

Maria feels informed and included in decisions about her condo while maintaining autonomy over her own living space. While conversing with Maria, she told me that she is not a condo board member at the high-rise building she lives in and that she does not like to get

involved in politics. However, she does like to attend the condo board meetings and goes all the time. Maria informed me that at the meetings, the board members notify residents about renovations and fixing things, and Maria likes to be aware of everything. Maria said she does get chances to speak at the meetings and can vote on changes to the building. She also likes to share her opinions at the board meetings and with her friends in the building. When I asked Maria how much control she feels she has over her living space, she replied that inside her condo unit, she gets to make her own decisions and does as she pleases because she owns it. She did say, though, that if she does something major to her unit, then she must tell the condo board. She added that other residents use the building's common areas, so she has to stay respectful. Maria said she never felt excluded in building decisions; she feels included because she is very sociable, likes to talk to people, and is friendly with everyone. She still likes being friends with people, even if they do something wrong to her. Maria's experience demonstrates that collaborative condominium governance can help seniors remain informed, feel included, and maintain control over their living environment as they age in place.

Nino feels informed, respected, and included in the condominium governance of his building. Nino is not a condo board member at the building where he lives. He attends condo board meetings and shares concerns about maintenance with the board or with friends in the building, such as issues with the broken garage doors. Nino said that his voice feels heard and that the board respects him as an individual regardless of his age. He added that the board is very nice and that he has never had any issues with them. I asked Nino how much control he feels he has over his living space, and he said that he can make amendments to his condo unit, such as painting and renovating his floor, but must ask the board for approval for renovations that involve changes such as breaking walls. He clarified that he must provide notice to residents in the building if renovations in his unit will create noise. Nino mentioned that he feels included in building decisions, as he receives newsletters and attends condo board meetings where residents are informed. Nino's reflections show how seniors' experiences of aging in place are partly influenced by condo board support and resident involvement.

City Planners Encourage Senior Input but Recognize Limits Within Planning Decisions

Avery clarified that seniors could participate in municipal planning processes, but the extent of their involvement varies depending on development timelines. During our interview, I asked how these processes ensure that seniors have a voice or representation in decisions related

to high-rise condo developments. She said, “I’m not too sure [about] the singular building scale, like when a development application comes in, a community planner holds a … community consultation meeting … that’s open … to the people they send the notice to and anyone else to attend that meeting. So, there’s an opportunity for everyone to attend those meetings.” Avery explained that seniors regularly attend public meetings, but lengthy development timelines, particularly for master-planned communities, might create a disconnect because they may not directly benefit from them throughout their lifetimes. As a result, even though there are many opportunities for seniors to participate in development applications, she claimed that their engagement tends to differ depending on whether projects are at the building or broader community scale. Avery added that, to better reach seniors who might not use virtual platforms, planning processes employ a range of in-person engagement techniques, such as public meetings and open houses held in easily accessible areas like malls and libraries. She gave the example of Downsview, where a community resource group enables senior residents to apply and take a more active role in the planning process. Avery’s insights suggest that seniors have opportunities to provide input into planning decisions, especially when those decisions directly affect the housing and communities in which they age in place.

I then asked Avery how the municipality balances private development interests with seniors’ ability to age in place. She answered, “I think that comes through the comment review process … [and] it’s really the Official Plan that tells us … how we balance things, and we work towards achieving that goal and the vision set out in those documents.” Avery clarified that community input informs planning decisions and that, as a registered professional planner, you must ethically balance everyone’s interests and work for the “greater public good.” Avery discussed opportunities to change planning practices or policies to enhance seniors’ ability to age in place in high-rise environments. For instance, she said, “I think applying more of that social planning lens would probably help … [by showing] what we’ve seen and how you can tie that more social piece to it, as well as making sure [seniors are] involved in the process afterwards.” Avery suggested that people may not fully understand seniors’ needs until they have that lived experience themselves, but it is ultimately up to individual planners to advocate for seniors.

Throughout my interview with Matthew, he discussed seniors’ autonomy in municipal planning processes. He stated that when he goes to public meetings to speak with community members, many in attendance are seniors, regardless of whether seniors are the community’s

majority demographic. Matthew added, "[Seniors] … like to come out and … spend time with us, and they're very curious about what's happening in the community and very concerned usually about development applications …." He pointed out that seniors have chances to share their concerns through statutory and non-statutory public meetings, as well as community consultation meetings held by the City of Toronto. According to Matthew, planners listen, synthesize comments, and advocate for the needs of senior citizens to find a balance between city priorities and community interests. However, he said that planners provide expert advice and do not make final decisions, and that while community members can attend meetings and consultations, their influence is limited by formal planning processes and can be overruled by developers, tribunals, or a Minister's Zoning Order (MZO). Matthew's comments stress that, even though seniors can participate in planning processes, their ability to sway decisions depends on how their concerns are considered within broader planning systems.

I asked Matthew if he thinks seniors' lived experiences and abilities are recognized and considered in current planning practices. He replied, "I think like in terms of planning processes, … older adults are overrepresented in the people that come out to community consultation, so their voices are overly weighted … [and] they may not necessarily fit the demographic that has the most need." Matthew explained that organized residents' associations can have a significant impact on planning decisions, particularly in single-family neighbourhoods and some apartment or tower communities, where older, affluent residents may have a louder voice. He said that it can be challenging to ensure that all viewpoints are fully reflected, as these organizations, particularly residents' associations, have considerable influence over council members and in public consultations. To decide what is best for the whole community, Matthew said planners must critically evaluate whose interests are being voiced, differentiate between individual and organized advocacy, and rely on professional judgment and "the best planning move."

Developer Planner Engages Seniors While Navigating Policy and Market Constraints

Regarding senior participation in building design, Fiona explained that collaborating with seniors during the planning and design stages helps facilitate the development of age-friendly features. Before finalizing a concept or design, Fiona conducts focus groups with seniors to test specific technologies for senior buildings, making sure that the building design features created by developers are age-friendly. She said that gathering seniors' feedback on units, along with staff members' input, was beneficial. Fiona also talked about developing a prototype for a

retirement home, including floor layouts with registration near the elevators, a café on the south side of the building, and other design features to better meet seniors' needs. Throughout the process, she communicated that senior citizens are frequently consulted. During the design stages, Fiona engages seniors in a design charrette by displaying illustrations on the wall and presenting layouts to immerse them in the setting and provide a reference, before working with consultants to complete the rest of the design. Then, seniors are involved post-construction, where she asks how things are working for them and whether any improvements are needed. Fiona's approach reflects how actively engaging with seniors can help translate age-friendly housing principles into building designs that better suit their needs.

I asked Fiona whether she thinks internal or external power dynamics, such as municipal approvals or investor expectations, influence the outcomes of senior housing, and she shared some of her personal experiences as a developer planner. For example, Fiona said she has had arguments with municipal workers because she believes they are not as knowledgeable about senior housing as the developers who construct it. She stated that she finds it difficult with parking because not all seniors require a parking spot to meet the 1:1 ratio required by municipalities. She pointed out that most zoning by-laws require one parking space per unit, but senior homes often call for less parking than a typical condo, which she claims the city does not fully realize. She informed me that she also struggles with development charges, specifically when it comes to designing a building, getting site plan approval, and paying the city's charges. She said the charges are determined by the number of bedrooms, square footage, and full kitchens. Municipalities will try to charge you the standard apartment rate, according to Fiona, but some seniors should get a lower development charge because they hardly use the kitchen. Fiona declared that there is a discrepancy between the policies and the building's actual design, indicating that the policies do not fully reflect the specific requirements of senior housing.

Regarding investor expectations, Fiona stressed that financial performance must be feasible, as senior buildings are costly to construct and do not receive subsidies. She noted that the approval process for senior buildings is expensive and that requirements such as maximum parking and full kitchens result in significant development charges, which she described as overkill and could affect the availability of affordable units for seniors. Fiona's point of view underscores that, while planning policies may promote age-friendly housing, implementation is shaped by the economic constraints developers face.

Condo Board Supports Aging in Place Through Collaborative Governance

I asked Rory which types of people sit on the condo board and whether senior residents have much say in board decisions. She started by explaining that the three members of the board, two men and herself, each have unique skills and collaborate incredibly well. According to Rory, the treasurer manages the finances nicely and considers the concerns of their senior residents. She also said he owns two units in the building; therefore, he has a personal stake in serving on the board. Rory went on to say that the other Board of Directors originally owned a unit, moved in when a board member left, and was recruited to join the board by the property manager. She said he is skilled with technical machinery, so if something breaks, he can help get it fixed, and he understands all the mechanical stuff. Rory pointed out that to be on the condo board, you must be a unit owner. Rory then explained her role as the president of the Board of Directors:

> I've been around since the building's been built, so I know how things have transitioned … till now. Based on my experience and my knowledge at work, I deal with a lot of financial things as well, so I'm very familiar with how numbers go… statements and budgets, budgets a big one, dealing with contractors and difficult people, and communicating with the community and managing our contractors along with our actual property management. So, it's a lot of … setting expectations and having things actually delivered, like projects rolled out or certain things that need to get done … There's always got to be someone who's overseeing things, and I feel like I'm always doing that or … giving my feedback on how to make it better.

Rory encourages senior residents to engage in condo governance through meetings, accessible communication, and opportunities to express their concerns. Rory stated that seniors and new unit owners have a lot of say in meetings held twice a year, including an annual general meeting and general meetings for residents only to discuss updates. She then said, "And from time to time, we have other meetings, like when we talk about, you know, our project coming up, that's going to be for repairs to the exterior of the building and balconies." Rory said she consistently asks residents for their involvement, thoughts, and ideas, especially during general meetings. She continued by saying that all residents receive a package before the meeting, so they are aware that the board will review the budget and that they are encouraged to ask any questions they may have about the board's spending. She added that an auditor and staff from property management are available to assist with any concerns during the meetings. She invites

senior residents to converse with her, and many feels at ease doing so, particularly those who speak Italian and might encounter communication barriers with property management, as she is also fluent in the language. Rory clarified that she did not endorse the former property manager's heavy reliance on email since many of the building's senior residents do not use email, and it is unreasonable to expect them to. As a result, she frequently insisted that communication not be limited to email, emphasizing the importance of an open-door policy that allowed residents to walk into the office, express their problems, and have them addressed directly. Rory concluded, "So, that's my part in saying, no, we can't just accept emails. We need to think about our seniors as well." Rory's approach exemplifies effective condo governance through inclusive communication and decision-making processes that address the needs of senior residents.

As president of the Board of Directors, Rory described how she manages the condo with a hands-on approach and responds to the needs of residents. For example, Rory explained that she frequently offers hands-on assistance to residents, such as helping seniors set up security cameras on their phones. She described it as part of who she is, noting that residents trust her as board president because they know she is available to assist, especially when many corporations lack the "extra touch" or personal care. Rory then brought up a real-life example of how she handles resident complaints, sharing when a senior resident told her that a neighbour had left their door open and allowed their cat to wander the hallway. Rory handled the issue with the neighbour that has the cat while keeping the complaint anonymous. She ensured that standards such as fire safety were adhered to and that shared areas remained safe for all, including those with cat allergies. Rory's role illustrates the importance of condo governance in fostering friendly, safe, and well-managed living environments for seniors aging in place.

Rory commented that most issues within the building's shared spaces, services, or resources are not unique to senior residents. She identified a common complaint made by everyone, such as discomfort caused by temperature fluctuations during seasonal heating and cooling transitions. Rory said, "I don't think there [are] really problems that seniors face. If anything, we're accommodating more than allowing them to fall into problems." At the same time, Rory described how some complaints are highly individual and not always easy to resolve. She recounted a situation saying, "We have one senior who complains about a tree that's in front of his balcony … that blocks his view and … his wife is afraid that someone's going to climb the tree and jump on their balcony. … Like, he literally chopped branches off the tree himself so that

he could take care of it … because he felt like nobody was listening to him." Rory even mentioned that this senior resident constantly observes the building and raises complaints, and at times may become more aggressive when not taking his medication. However, she explained that other nearby seniors appreciate the same property tree and do not want it removed, and that it is in the condo board's interest to keep it, underlining that "we can't make everybody happy." Rory's stance underscores how condo governance must balance the needs of individual seniors with the interests of the broader resident community.

I asked Rory what changes in governance, policy, or building management would best enhance the quality of life for senior residents living in high-rise condos. Rory said the condo currently has a property manager three days a week to keep maintenance fees down, but "… if we could afford [and] have a property manager five days a week, that would probably be better for seniors." Rory also suggested that adding security to the building would benefit seniors, but it would cost too much. She added, "We kind of rely on each other to be each other's security, but we also have a good camera system that's able to see a lot of areas in the building when things are going on." Rory made clear that if something is happening within a resident's unit, it is not something the board can control. She explained that many seniors have a friend in the building or someone who checks on them. If something happens and someone is unable to reach a senior resident, she advised that they should contact property management, who can notify the Board of Directors to access the unit with a master key to ensure everything is okay, or call 911 if necessary. Rory stated, "… one good benefit is that the hospital is right across the street. If there's ever any … circumstance or situation where the ambulance is required, they get there so quickly. I've never had, like, issues waiting for an ambulance … everybody gets old, we [must] deal with things that way." While condo governance cannot address every challenge seniors face, strong management and community connections can support their ability to age in place.

The above findings show that seniors' sense of control, satisfaction, and empowerment in their homes and communities can be significantly influenced by responsive governance and management, as well as resident autonomy.

5.5 Environmental and Financial Sustainability

Senior participants living in high-rise condominiums and other stakeholders identified many aspects of living that affected the long-term viability of aging in place, including financial sustainability and access to green spaces.

Seniors Identify Financial Challenges Affecting Aging in Place

When interviewing Maria and Nino, they both disclosed that their approximate average household income is under $25,000 and that they rely on a fixed income as they age in place. Given their financial limitations, Maria and Nino still try to maintain their housing by managing rising condo maintenance fees, unexpected repairs funded by reserve funds, and other needs associated with aging in place.

I asked both Maria and Nino what problems they face in their condo as they get older, and what changes to the building, costs, services, or community could make it easier for them to live there comfortably. Maria replied that she feels there are no problems in the condo where she lives. She said she will need to ask for government assistance when she gets older for a nurse to come to her condo unit. Maria also wants the hydro, maintenance, tax, and other bills to go down because she is living off a pension. When answering the question, Nino said the tax, electric, and Rogers bills are all too expensive, and he would like the prices to go down to accommodate his pension. Maria and Nino's lived experiences confirm that age-friendly planning must address the economic and social supports seniors need to remain in their communities.

City Planner Highlights the Need for Affordable Housing and Age-Friendly Public Realms

I asked Matthew how he thinks seniors' access to condo living is influenced by intersecting identities, such as income. Matthew said that while some seniors reside in relatively affluent communities, many still struggle financially, especially if they depend on a fixed income. He elaborated that while housing costs for seniors might not change, rising food and transportation costs could make day-to-day living more challenging. Matthew mentioned that, when comparing condos to rental housing, rental conditions are more financially unstable because costs fluctuate and rise annually. He added that this continual fluctuation can make it more difficult for seniors, especially those on fixed incomes, to keep up with rising rental expenses and stay in their homes over time. I then asked Matthew what barriers he sees that prevent seniors from having equitable access to high-rise housing. He responded:

> So right now, it's definitely cost, in my opinion. Like, you can get housing, but is it where you want it? [Does] it have what you need? Does it have the access that you desire or require? So, I think those are some of the things that are like very big barriers for people accessing housing in general, which I think also apply to high-rise [buildings].

Matthew recalled that his work on the Wynford-Concorde study revealed the need to enhance the public realm, such as increased street furniture, walkable spaces, and tree coverage. He stressed that the urban environment can be uncomfortable, especially without proper shade or weather protection. He stated that trees not only make it more comfortable for people to spend longer periods of time outside, but "… also create a little bit more distance from cars and a little bit more of a barrier to make it a more comfortable and inviting experience." According to Matthew, many urban design principles emphasize improving the public realm by promoting interaction through elements such as curb bump-outs that reduce crossing distances, small plazas, street furniture, and enlarged parks. These design elements further help add more green space, he continued, especially at the corners of different intersections.

Developer Planner Aligns Age-Friendly Design with Market Demand and Profitability

Throughout the semi-structured interview, Fiona talked about market demand and developer profitability in high-rise developments. She thinks that if developers do not provide additional services, such as home care for medication or call buttons, profitability will be low. Her solution is that developers must employ design and services to cater to the senior market, optimizing profitability and making their building stand out from other non-senior buildings. Fiona claimed that aging in place is important for seniors, so developers benefit when they can provide a true aging-in-place community rather than just a retirement home. Mixed-use development makes a project financially viable, she continued, and the builder needs to have their own flexible ways of making money. Fiona communicated that having a restaurant like Nando's at the base of the building generates revenue through rent and provides dining alternatives for both residents and the general public, drawing the community in. Fiona's comments argue that developers should consider senior-friendly features, services, and mixed-use opportunities when designing high-rise developments.

Condo Board Uses Reserve Funds to Maintain Building Sustainability

I asked Rory how financially sustainable components, such as reserve funds and renovation budgets, impact decisions that affect senior residents. Rory stated that the condo's reserve fund is allocated for significant building expenses, including machinery replacement and renovations on the interior and exterior of the building identified through a reserve fund study. She brought up an example of a resident's ongoing balcony water damage that requires engineering assessment and repair planning, which will be a major expense that comes out of the

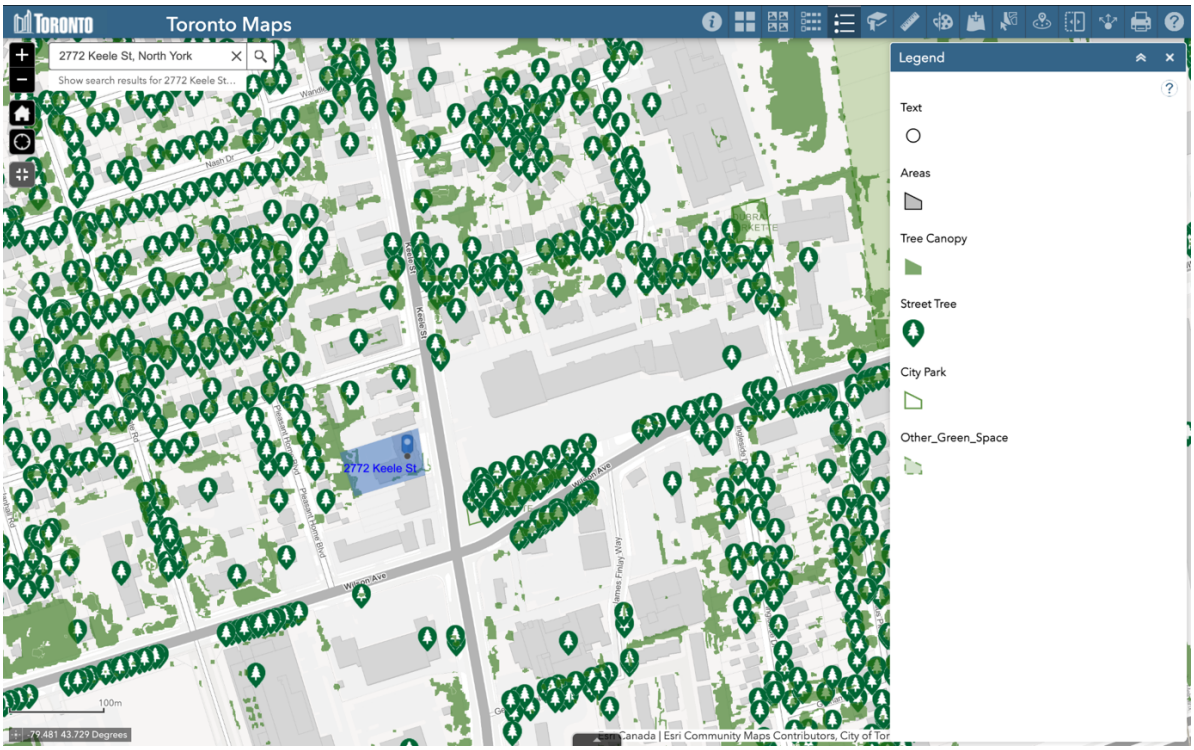
reserve fund. Rory clarified that reserve fund payments are distinct from maintenance fees, which are designated for daily operating costs such as utilities, contractual services, and routine maintenance. Thus, the board's financial planning through reserve funds helps prepare for significant building maintenance needs and can ease seniors' concerns about unexpected costs.

Green Infrastructure Enhances the Age-Friendliness of the Condo Neighbourhood

During my on-site field observation at my grandmother's condo building near the Keele and Wilson intersection, I identified nearby green infrastructure that could enhance senior residents' well-being and access to nature. Figure 23 illustrates the distribution of green infrastructure surrounding the building, including substantial street trees and areas with tree canopy. These features are dispersed throughout the neighbourhood along adjacent streets, contributing to a green, urban environment (see Fig. 23). The map also underscores Downsview Memorial Parkette as a distinct city park surrounded by street trees located at the northeast corner of the Keele and Wilson intersection (see Fig. 23). The surrounding neighbourhood contains various green infrastructure features that provide access to nature around the condo, contributing to an age-friendly environment that supports aging in place.

Figure 23

Proximity of Green Space Near 2772 Keele Street



Note. Adapted from Toronto Maps (2026).

Overall, these findings indicate that financial considerations and environmental design play a significant role in determining seniors' capacity to age in place, since costs, building and management choices, and neighbourhood green infrastructure all affect both daily comfort and long-term housing stability.

5.6 Exploring Aging in Place in High-Rise Condos and Other Housing Types

Comparing aging in place in high-rise condominiums and other housing types helps shed light on the different aspects that influence seniors' living experiences and preferences.

Seniors Relocate to High-Rise Condos to Better Support Aging in Place

I conducted a residential mobility study using semi-structured interview questions with Maria and Nino. I asked them why they moved to their high-rise condo and, before that, what type of home they lived in and what type of neighbourhood it was in.

Maria told me that she had lived in a single-family home before moving to her condo, and that the neighbourhood was culturally diverse. She said her single-family house was better because it was more spacious, but as she got older, she found it hard to maintain the house, like cutting the grass. Maria moved to the high-rise condo building because she was getting older, making the move when she was 54 years old. She said she chose this building at 2772 Keele Street because it is close to all the essential resources she needs, including doctors, dentists, a bank, and grocery stores. Maria stated that she does not want to go to a senior home because she thinks the residents are not treated well, based on what she saw on a television show. She thinks that she may need to change her shower in her condo unit to make it more age-friendly, like adding a handle or a chair, but right now she is comfortable the way it is.

Meanwhile, Nino commented that he lived in a single-family home, had just a few friends in his old neighbourhood, and the community did not have too many Italians to share his culture. He moved to his high-rise condo because he believes it is easier when you are sick, more convenient, and everything is close, and he does not have to worry about maintenance, such as snow removal or lawn care. He declared that he could do things on his own, likes staying in a condo, and does not want to move to a senior home.

Seniors Demonstrate How Other Housing Types Support Aging in Place

I conducted a semi-structured interview with a senior citizen, Daisy, who is aging in place in a single-family home in St. Catherines. In the interview, Daisy told me that she has been living there for 28 years and moved in at age 52. She said her home is in the country, which

gives her a strong sense of independence and privacy compared to living in a condo or an attached home. Daisy noted that she prefers this setting because it is not in an urban environment, with fewer cars and many evergreen trees and gardens.

Daisy further explained that her first language is French and her second is English, and that she uses French frequently in her work at a French school. She described herself as semi-retired, working three days a week, and explained that she lives off a pension while also renting out rooms in her basement. Daisy said that she lives with roommates and feels safer with them than living alone. She noted that the layout in her home feels easy and manageable, with the main floor including her living room, dining room, kitchen, and a deck that she enjoys in the summer. She mentioned that, as she gets older, chores have become more difficult, though she is still able to bring in wood for the fire and shovel snow. The main challenge she identified was that the washer and dryer are in the basement, and she would prefer to have them on the same floor as her bedroom to avoid using the stairs. Daisy expressed that, as a woman, she feels capable of doing whatever she needs to do.

As she has grown older, Daisy shared that she sometimes feels less important to the younger generation, although she does not feel like a burden to her family. She noted that she has friends her age and regularly spends time with them, such as visiting each other's homes, going for walks in the snow, and having meals together. She mentioned that Friday nights are usually for fish and chips, and overall, she feels she has a great life. However, Daisy explained that living far from her family can be difficult. She said she tries to visit and occasionally sleep over, but travelling long distances has become more challenging as she feels less secure driving, especially after recent car accidents. She expressed that she misses being able to help her family, such as making dinners and hosting them.

I asked Daisy what local places help her live comfortably where she is. She answered that she is about a 5-minute drive from the Metro grocery store, her bank, the Esso gas station, and the pharmacy. She noted that her pharmacy has known her for 30 years, highlighting the strong relationships she has built with her pharmacist. She said that Costco is about a 30-minute drive to Niagara Falls, her friends live about a 10-minute drive away, and her work is a 15-minute drive. Daisy identified her area as car-dependent, saying it is too far to walk to public transportation and that it takes an hour or more to reach it. She explained that when she is no longer able to drive for basic needs, she could place orders, arrange deliveries, or rely on friends for help.

Daisy stated that when she was younger, she would buy what she needed without worrying about prices, but she now pays closer attention to grocery prices as costs have increased. She described her neighbourhood as having large pieces of land that do not impact neighbouring properties, providing a strong sense of privacy. She explained that if residents want to make changes to their properties, they must consult the City and inform nearby residents, and neighbours often ask each other for input before proceeding. Daisy emphasized that living in a single-family home allows her to do as she pleases within her property.

I asked Daisy if she would consider aging in place in a high-rise condo as she gets older. She replied that she would not consider it. Daisy explained that she does not want to smell her neighbours' food or open her door to people on her floor, and that she would feel she would lose her privacy and independence compared to living in a single-family home. Daisy described her home environment as calm, quiet, and serene, with no noise. In contrast, she feels that high-rise condos can be noisy, with fighting and arguing, and that living far from neighbours allows her to avoid these issues. Daisy prefers stairs in her home over elevators in high-rises, noting that she is afraid of heights and concerned about elevators getting stuck. She added that she already has her own garden and space to socialize, and is a member of a local gym, so she does not feel she needs a condo to access these amenities. She still gets together with friends occasionally and is unsure whether a condo would help her make friends.

I asked Daisy what seniors need to feel appreciated, supported, and able to live comfortably and independently, no matter their housing type. She answered that seniors need to feel comfortable in their homes and environments and have friends and family nearby to feel loved. Daisy noted that reducing stress is crucial, as she believes stress can negatively affect seniors' health. She added that the government should help seniors who struggle to meet their budgets or cannot afford food. She suggested that government services could include sending people to check in on seniors to ensure they are mentally well, healthy, and not experiencing loneliness, as well as providing accessible food banks specifically for seniors. Daisy expressed that Canada already has relatively strong senior support programs but believes the government should further extend pensions to better reflect the rising cost of living. She pointed out that rising prices, mortgage rates, and taxes make it difficult for pensions to fully meet seniors' needs.

I conducted another semi-structured interview with a senior named Claudia, who is aging in place in a home in Woodbridge, Vaughan. Her home combines elements of a bungaloft and

backsplit design and was built in 1932; she moved into the home when she was 32 years old. During our conversation, she mentioned that she has been widowed for 7 years and that living alone as a woman does not affect her lifestyle. She has chosen to remain in her large home because she feels it keeps her busy with many chores and tasks, though she sometimes feels lonely at night. Claudia told me that being predominantly Italian-speaking with limited English is a little bit difficult, so she brings her children with her when she needs to go to the bank for comfort. Claudia also shared that she feels connected with her neighbours, and that her children and grandchildren live 10 minutes away if she needs anything. She added that she is very close to her older sister, with whom she spends a lot of time. She emphasized that having people nearby makes her feel more secure in an emergency. She noted that she is comfortable using technology, including her cell phone, which helps her stay connected and feel safe. Claudia stated that she prefers staying in her home to a high-rise condominium, as she still enjoys gardening, cooking in her big kitchen, and maintaining a property.

I asked Claudia if the design or layout of her home and community meet her everyday needs. She explained that her home has few stairs, which makes it easy for her to get around. She also said that her large home takes time to clean, but she is still able to maintain it because she is in good health. Claudia added that staying physically active at home helps her feel youthful and healthy. Her children have installed security cameras and alarms throughout her home so she can feel safe. Claudia also shared that where she lives is close to everything, including her bank, doctor, grocery stores, and shopping. She explained that she relies on family or friends to take her places because she does not drive, but she still completes her weekly errands with their support. She noted that there is no public transportation in her area and that the community is car-dependent. Claudia explained that owning a large property on her own does come with some challenges. For example, she noted that neighbours renovating or building homes adjacent to her may pose challenges, as she may need to deal with building permit issues, unlike in a condo. She shared that the cost of living does not affect her greatly. Claudia added that any changes initiated by the city in her neighbourhood do not bother her. She emphasized that she could make her own changes or renovate her home as she sees fit, with nothing restricting her, since she owns the property. Claudia reflected that when she first moved in, the area was much simpler and more rural, with fewer services and amenities. She explained that the area has exploded with shopping, activities, and housing development, making it more populated.

I asked Claudia if she would consider aging in place in a high-rise condominium building as she gets older. She replied that she would not want to live in a high-rise condo, as she finds them restrictive, boring, small, and too rule-bound. She said she would rather move to a smaller home, such as a townhouse, where she could still have a small garden and maintain her own freedom in a private backyard rather than sharing space with others. She said her house differs from a condo because maintaining the property requires many activities throughout the day that take up her time. She said she feels she cannot do anything in a condo, and that all you do all day is "stare at the walls in a small space." Claudia does not like relying on elevators or sharing common areas with others, as she values having her own space. While she considers herself social, she does not want to be around people all the time and prefers her solitude.

I did an interview with a senior named Natalie, a snowbird who is aging in place between Florida and Orillia. She informed me that in Florida, she lives in a low-rise, three-storey condo, stays 6 months at a time, and has been going there for 27 years. She was evicted from her home in Orillia, Canada, which was a one-storey single-detached house off the lake. Natalie said that she is now homeless because the owners sold the land, and she needs to find something else in Canada, as she is a Canadian citizen. She mentioned that she lives with her husband, with whom she has been married for 56 years. Natalie admired how she and her husband like the same things, are very active, try to do everything together, and are each other's best friends. She told me that she goes on a lot of cruises, taking 12 cruises in 6 months last year. She likes cruises for the entertainment, food, gambling, having lots to do, and not getting bored.

Natalie explained that she is doing well and feels satisfied with what she has. She shared that growing older in a place she loves, within a safe community, is important to her, and that she does not feel old in her environment. She described her Florida community as feeling more like a resort than a nursing home, with many amenities that keep the residents very active. Natalie said that she has no challenges within her Florida community and that her neighbours are very good. She informed me that her children visit often and that she regularly socializes with others by playing cards, attending shows, dining out, and participating in community barbecues. She elaborated that residents could book shared spaces to gather.

While speaking with Natalie, she mentioned that she was born in Italy and came to Canada when she was six years old, and that she continues to maintain Italian traditions with her family, celebrating holidays like Christmas and Easter in Florida with friends and family. She

added that many of her condo friends are likewise Italian. She expressed that, to feel appreciated and supported, she needs greater financial stability, noting that living on a pension is “bad” and not a good situation. She emphasized that good health and having family and friends who care and check in on her are also important for living comfortably.

I asked Natalie about the layout of her Florida home and its surrounding community. Natalie said her current living arrangement meets her needs, but she would prefer another closed-off bedroom within the condo unit. She noted that the building is well-lit and includes both an elevator and stairs, with everything working well for her. She also highlighted that her Florida community is gated, which helps her feel safe, and that the shared amenities include a pool, community centre, restaurant, golf course, pickleball courts, and tennis facilities. Natalie said that her area even includes a mall, Costco, local grocery stores that feel more European, Ross, TJ Maxx, and accessible walk-in clinics. She shared that she drives her own vehicle to get to these places. Although her neighbourhood offers a free bus that runs through the complex and can take residents to nearby destinations, she said that she prefers to drive and does not use it.

Natalie said her low-rise condo building has become more expensive, but she and her husband can survive through it. She mentioned there was a special assessment of $7000-$10,000 to assess the building because it is old, and taxes went up. She said residents can have a say through a voting system, but it does not matter what they vote for because the condo board does whatever it wants. She said the residents did not want a special assessment, but the board still did it. Besides these concerns, Natalie thinks the condominium building is well-maintained, with regular cleaning and landscaping that keep the community looking immaculate.

Natalie explained that she does not mind living in a high-rise, as she had lived on the 17th floor in the past when it was close to her work. However, she said she prefers low-rise living because it is closer to the outdoors. She described high-rise buildings as having more hallways and feeling more confined, like a hospital, noting that they can feel dark and depressing and make it harder to quickly access outdoor space. She also noted that high-rises have more people using elevators, and that in her previous building, she had to bring groceries up from underground parking all the way up the building. She shared that when the fire alarm went off on the 17th floor, it was difficult to get down all those stairs, making emergencies more challenging than in a low-rise. Natalie added that her current low-rise has fewer people, is less busy, and feels more peaceful, with more greenery.

City Planner Recognizes High-Rise Condos as an Accessible Housing Option for Seniors

Matthew explained that high-rise condominium buildings can offer accessibility advantages compared to other housing types:

> I think of a lot of the homes that are built in Toronto, like single-family homes … [and] bungalow[s] … it's not as easy to go upstairs sometimes when you get older and … use mobility devices. … [W]hen you think of a single-family home in the greater Toronto area, you're thinking of … two-storey. So, that's already problematic for older folks and people in mobility devices … not everyone can afford a private elevator in their home. So, that's one thing. And then, like, you also have to make modifications likely to the front of the home to have a ramp. And we see this in communities all the time to have ramps to individuals like single-family homes. So, in thinking about the benefits of kind of living in a condominium where you have shared common elements, like you have at grade access, you know, that's accessible by wheels. … I think when I see the designs, it's like very, very focused on providing accessible access to the front door. And elevators are kind of like a number one thing … So, it's … a one floor plan where you might not get that in other housing types. So, I think that's good.

LTC Home Provides Seniors with Supportive Care and Shared Spaces for Daily Living

I made many observations at the LTC home I visited on Monday, October 6, 2025, called Unionville Home Society, located at 4300 Highway 7, Markham, Ontario. For instance, the services I observed were a hair salon, physiotherapy once per week, hearing and dental services, home physician visits once per week, and a nursing station for discussing concerns. The LTC home had various communal areas, including the Box Grove dining area, a recreational space, an activity room, and an outdoor garden with a barbecue, seating, vegetables, and flowers. I also saw a family room where visitors could bring their own food and use the space to celebrate birthdays and family events. I was informed by the LTC home staff that only one family could use the room at a time, and it is booked on a first-come, first-served basis.

I observed the staff giving positive affirmations to the senior residents, saying "love your hair" and "you look incredible." The staff even provided supportive care during mealtimes, and when a resident became emotional while engaging with their memory box, the staff member offered empathy and reassurance. I noticed the staff trying to promote independence among senior residents and did not impose many restrictions on residents or family members.

When I observed the 32 senior residents eating lunch at the Box Grove dining area, I noticed that not all residents liked eating there; some preferred to eat in their rooms or in a private area. I saw the staff assist with feeding and accommodate different diets by offering two food choices in the meal plan. The LTC home added cultural foods to residents' meal plans, such as Italian, Greek, Chinese, Indian, and Canadian. The on-site nurse gave seniors' medicine before or with food, crushing it and mixing it with apple sauce, jam, coffee, or Jello. I witnessed some residents sleeping during mealtime and getting a bit aggressive because they did not want to wear the feeding bib. I noticed many loved ones present, sitting with residents, bringing food from elsewhere, and helping them eat. Staff told me that if food is given to residents by loved ones, staff will label it with the resident's name and date and dispose of it after three days.

At the Box Grove dining area, I observed the staff and residents sanitizing their hands before and after eating. Recreation therapists helped residents eat, though some were able to do so on their own. I noticed a drink cart with many options, as well as displays showing the food menu, mealtimes, and the week's meal plans. I observed very soft and quiet music playing during mealtimes. The dining area had warm, calming lights and was decorated with seasonal fall decorations. Staff appeared to be trying to organize mealtimes and make them less chaotic. I also observed that the kitchen was on the main floor and that staff prepared food for residents on-site. The food was often soft or mushy with muted colours to make it easier to swallow and digest. I noticed frequent coughing during meals, and staff sometimes changed residents' food to a puréed consistency. Residents were supportive of one another, often encouraging each other to "take your time" while eating. I learned that the dietary manager determined the food and texture requirements for each resident.

I observed that the senior residents' rooms had hospital beds, a nightstand, a dresser, personal belongings, furniture arranged to avoid tripping hazards, and sometimes a television. I was informed that free Wi-Fi was available and that air conditioning and heat were controlled by staff. I saw that memory boxes were placed in front of each resident's room. I noticed that rooms shared or divided had smaller television stands and shared toilets and sinks. Residents were unable to shower independently; instead, staff told me that one or two staff members assisted them in a separate shower area, with showers provided about twice per week. I also noted that family members could install cameras in rooms, with staff aware of the surveillance. I observed that residents had locked drawers in their rooms to store special belongings safely.

These findings show that while high-rise condominium buildings offer numerous benefits for aging in place, seniors' living experiences and preferences vary widely, underscoring the need for diverse, age-friendly housing options.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to go beyond reporting the thematic findings and explain what they represent in connection to existing theories, planning strategies, and seniors' lived experiences of aging in place. It relates participants' experiences to theories of interpretivism, intersectionality, the press-competence model, and social justice to better understand how social, environmental, financial, and institutional elements impact aging in place across different housing types. It also compares these findings to relevant planning policies to determine how they align with or differ from seniors' everyday realities. This chapter helps address the research questions by examining the challenges and opportunities for aging in place in North York's high-rise condominiums and other housing environments. Finally, this chapter establishes recommendations by interpreting the findings into actionable implications for seniors, city planners, developer planners, and condominium corporations.

6.1 Interpreting Findings through Theoretical Lenses

To reiterate, I used thematic analysis to group my research findings into themes. This qualitative method recognizes, examines, and reports significant patterns in the data while offering a thorough description of participants' experiences and viewpoints (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). My study used thematic analysis to methodically interpret seniors' experiences of aging in place and to pinpoint recurrent accessible, social, environmental, financial, and governmental factors that shape their daily lives. In this section, I apply a deductive qualitative analysis (DQA) to my thematic findings. DQA is a theory-driven method for applying, evaluating, and improving existing theories or models (Fife & Gossner, 2024, p. 1). I analyze my thematic findings using theories of interpretivism, intersectionality, the press-competence model, and Fraser's (2013) framework of social justice. This analysis discusses patterns that support these theories and addresses my research questions.

Interpretivist Approach Highlights Different Meanings Seniors Attach to Aging in Place

Using an interpretivist approach, I analyze how my senior participants interpreted their living environments and the meanings they attached to concepts such as independence, safety,

belonging, and aging in place. During my semi-structured interviews with senior participants, I found that those aging in place in high-rise condominiums generally expressed strong satisfaction with their living situation, frequently highlighting positive aspects of their building and the community they had established. In contrast, seniors living in other housing types expressed a negative view of aging in high-rise condominiums, preferring their homes more.

Maria reported that she feels safe in her home and community because there is no violence and there are operational security cameras throughout her condo building that she often watches on her television. From an interpretivist perspective, Maria's perception of safety is influenced not only by the building's physical security measures but also by the perceived absence of criminal activity in her neighbourhood, which provides her with peace of mind in her daily life. The primary case study site at 2772 Keele Street, located in Downsview, was not among the North York neighbourhoods with the most reported incidents shown across the three crime maps (Toronto Police Service, 2025). These findings support Maria's perception that there is limited criminal activity in her neighbourhood. Maria also said that she lives with a roommate in her building to have company and feel safer at night, since she fears the dark. Having companionship in her home increases her sense of safety within her living environment.

Maria claimed that she has privacy in her condominium unit and feels comfortable because she owns it. She also socializes in the building's common areas, which include the gym, party room, and garden. I believe her comfort and sense of belonging result from her independence within her private unit and her presence in shared spaces that provide social connections. Maria noted that she is aging in place in her high-rise condominium since it is accessible to grocery stores, banks, and medical facilities. She does not want to relocate to a senior home because she has seen on television that the seniors are mistreated. I interpret that her choice to stay in her building is influenced by her lived experiences and the proximity of resources, and that she would not consider other options based on her personal beliefs.

Nino clarified that he used to reside in a single-family home with few acquaintances and little Italian cultural ties to the neighbourhood. He mentioned having many friends in his high-rise condominium and how living with friends fosters a great sense of community. He enjoys social activities like visiting and hosting friends for coffee, spending time in shared spaces like the party room and the outdoor garden, and going for summer walks. Nino claimed that he loves living independently in a condo and does not want to relocate to a senior home. From an

interpretivist viewpoint, Nino feels he belongs in his home when he has valued friendships and opportunities for socialization, and he likes aging in place in his high-rise condominium because it increases his sense of control.

Daisy, Claudia, and Natalie all showed reluctance to grow older in high-rise condominium buildings. They said high-rise condominiums made them feel uncomfortable and less private, such as smelling neighbours' meals, unwanted interactions in common hallways, hearing noise from fights and arguments, and feeling confined. Claudia said high-rise condo life is like staring at walls in a small space, and Natalie felt high-rises are hospital-like. I think their subjective meanings are shaped by lived experience, as high-rise condo living is seen as constrictive due to noise, limited space, and social interaction. As a result, they favour low-rise or single-family homes, which they associate with tranquillity, independence, and a closer connection to outdoor space and personal freedom.

Intersectional Analysis Challenges the View of Seniors as a Homogeneous Group

Interviews with seniors aging in place and city and developer planners reveal that intersecting identities, such as age, gender, income, health, mobility, cultural background, immigration status, language, and living arrangements, shape seniors' access to high-rise condo living and other housing types. Applying intersectional theory prevents treating seniors as a homogeneous group and allows their unique experiences and needs to be recognized.

Maria and Nino's experiences show how aging in place is shaped by the intersection of age, immigration status, language barriers, social ties, mobility, and low income. As Italian immigrants who are primarily Italian-speaking, they rely on going to culturally familiar spaces, including Italian grocery stores, bakeries, doctors' offices, and community events. Their cultural identities impact not only their outing preferences, but also their sense of comfort and support when socializing with Italian friends within their high-rise condo building. In Maria's condo unit, she upholds Italian traditions by making sausage, tomato sauce, and bread in her kitchen and gardening parsley, basil, and zucchini on her balcony in the summer. As Maria and Nino age in place, their strong Italian network is likely to provide them with social and emotional support, enhancing a sense of community and cultural maintenance. Maria and Nino, both in their seventies, remain active and can travel within their urban surroundings by walking, driving, and using the TTC bus and subway. However, a lack of English proficiency may make it difficult for

them to interact with people, use banking services, or get around. Their fixed income makes Maria and Nino more vulnerable to higher maintenance fees and reserve fund requirements.

Based on my semi-structured interview with Daisy, I discovered that her lived experiences as a senior demonstrate how aging interacts with gender, language, living conditions, shifting physical capabilities, and income. Daisy portrays herself as a capable and independent woman, but an intersectional analysis shows that structural factors continue to shape how she ages. Daisy's first language is French, and her second is English; she did not mention any language barriers during the interview. She practices her first language while working at a French school. By continuing to speak French throughout her life, she is likely to develop a sense of belonging and build relationships that feel familiar at work. Daisy still spends time with other friends her age, visiting each other's homes and having meals together, without necessarily linking all her connections to her culture. In contrast to some senior participants, Daisy's challenges are less tied to immigrant identity and language barriers and more to other factors, such as aging in an isolated environment. For example, her rural or car-dependent environment limits transportation access, and she lives far from her family. The physical layout of Daisy's home also creates mobility issues, as she wishes her washer and dryer were on the same floor as her bedroom to avoid using the difficult stairs. Rising prices, such as grocery prices, affect her financial decision-making as a senior on a fixed or limited income.

I gathered that Claudia's experience aging in place in her bungaloft and backsplit design reflects intersections of age, widowhood, gender, income, language barriers, and transportation dependence. As a widowed senior woman living alone, her experience of aging in place is different from that of the other senior participants living with roommates or partners who have immediate household support. Even though Claudia said living alone as a woman does not affect her lifestyle and that the cost of living does not impact her greatly, she still experiences intersectional vulnerabilities. For example, she is uncomfortable in institutional settings like banks due to her limited English proficiency and her Italian-speaking upbringing, which makes her dependent on her children for help. In my opinion, intersectionality suggests that language barriers may worsen with age, particularly when seniors depend on family members to get around. Claudia also no longer drives and counts on family and friends to run errands with her, restricting her independence in transportation. However, intersectionality uncovers sources of

support and resilience through Claudia's strong intergenerational family networks and close neighbours, which reduce some of the barriers she experiences.

Natalie's experiences as a senior demonstrate how aging, income, immigration status, cultural background, and living arrangements intersect within condominium living. Although Natalie mentioned she is financially stable enough to continue living in her low-rise condo building, she still expresses anxiety about living on a pension and the rising costs of condo ownership. Natalie said that greater financial stability is needed and that living on a pension is "bad," indicating that aging in place is difficult without adequate financial support. At the intersection of aging and income, most senior participants would like more financial support, like Natalie, except for Claudia, who expressed that she is doing fine. Natalie also communicated that she is an Italian immigrant who moved to Canada when she was six years old. Her strong Italian cultural identity shapes her social relationships, traditions, and sense of community. Many of her friendships in her condominium community in Florida are culturally based, reinforcing the importance of ethnic social cohesion in aging in place. In addition, Natalie's ability to drive gives her greater mobility and independence as she ages in place, unlike Claudia.

Avery emphasized that social cohesiveness and demographics, rather than just a building's physical characteristics, usually influence seniors' decisions about where to reside in high-rise condominiums. She pointed out that many people are drawn to living situations that make them feel at ease and socially connected, such as choosing to live in a building with friends. This demonstrates how the interplay of social identity and community belonging shapes aging in place from an intersectional perspective. Fiona likewise stated that, when creating common areas and amenities for condominiums, developers are becoming more mindful of their senior residents' cultural backgrounds. Using Vaughan as an example, she clarified that some developments include social facilities, such as party rooms where residents can mingle and play cards, that align with the social inclinations of local Italian senior communities. Her comments imply that developers are becoming more aware that seniors are not a homogeneous population and that cultural background can influence how people use and experience space.

This intersectional analysis reveals how each senior's experience of aging in place varies based on their social, economic, and cultural circumstances, stressing that age-friendly planning must take into account the interconnected factors that affect seniors' daily lives.

Press-Competence Model Shows How Supportive Environments Reduce Stress for Seniors

Through my semi-structured interviews, observations, and accessibility audit, I learned how seniors' living environments—including accessibility, building design, and transportation—interact with their social, cognitive, and physical capacities. The press-competence model analyzes seniors' experiences of aging in place by examining the interaction between environmental demands (press) and personal abilities (competence). It shows how supportive or stressful environments affect seniors' everyday lives and well-being. Phillipson (2011, p. 281) states that positive outcomes occur when environmental demands and personal abilities are balanced. When environmental constraints exceed a person's abilities, stress increases, and well-being decreases. I found that the condo building and location in North York lowered the stress of environmental demands and matched senior participants' competencies, supporting their ability to age in place. The press-competence model contributed to understanding this relationship by demonstrating how supportive environments can enhance seniors' independence and well-being.

Regarding the design of the building outside of each unit, Maria's condo provides shared spaces and services that support seniors' ability to age in place, including elevators, simple access to Wheel-Trans, decent lighting, and safety features. During my interview and observation with Maria, she stated that the elevators in her high-rise condo are helpful for bringing groceries up to her unit. She also mentioned that her building accommodates Wheel-Trans, the lighting is always on in the garage, lobby, and hallways, and emergency numbers are posted around the building. Using the press-competence model, I think that elevators in high-rises take away the physical strain of carrying groceries up flights of stairs, balancing environmental conditions with seniors' physical abilities. Wheel-Trans accommodations in the building also support accessibility and mobility for senior residents who may have declining physical competency as they age. The constant lighting and emergency numbers throughout the building can limit falls, improve visibility, and alleviate feelings of uneasiness, which can enhance seniors' feelings of safety, confidence, and preparedness in their environment. All these positive environmental conditions in Maria's condo building can decrease senior residents' stress as they age in place and encourage adaptive aging.

Access to the world beyond the building is another important factor influencing seniors' ability to age in place. Maria told me that the places she visits are mostly within walking distance, and the underground parking garage in her condo keeps the area clean and safe, with

her car readily available. Having Maria's resources very close by supports independence while aging in place because, when she is no longer able to drive, her living environment remains walkable. Having a protected underground parking garage in her home provides Maria with a sense of safety as a senior and saves her time by not having to clean her car from the weather. Maria also informed me that she likes living on the lower floors of the high-rise condo because, if something happens, she can easily use the stairs. Thus, her unit location and physical ability give her better access to the ground without having to go down many flights of stairs in an emergency or when the elevators are unavailable. This is the opposite of what Natalie said, since her environmental barriers increased stress when she had to descend many flights of stairs in an emergency, as she lived on the seventieth floor of a high-rise condo building.

Maria said that when she gets older and needs more support in her condo unit, she will need to modify her bathroom to make it more age-friendly. She specified that she might add a handle or a chair in her bathtub to make it accessible. Her bathroom design features currently do not support independence for aging in place, so modifications will be needed to balance with Maria's aging physical abilities. At the same time, I observed that Maria's garbage chute is located on the same floor as her unit, as it is on every floor of the building. This design feature supports independence by reducing the amount of movement required and the physical strain associated with carrying heavy garbage over long distances.

In my interview with Nino, he told me that there is a bus stop right in front of his building that he can depend on when long walks become challenging. That said, Nino's living environment offers many options he can lean on depending on his physical ability at that moment, making the location of his high-rise condo a good place to age in place without transportation stress. On the other hand, Daisy expressed that driving long distances has become more difficult as she feels less secure after recent car accidents, while still living in a car-dependent rural area. These environmental barriers, such as having to rely on a car to get around, create stress for Daisy and do not align with her cognitive abilities, as she is not fully comfortable with driving, which could negatively affect her well-being. Claudia then stated that the design of her home meets her everyday needs as it has few stairs, and her large home takes time to clean, but she can still manage as she is in good health. Having a few stairs in her home does not put much physical exertion on Claudia, balancing her environment with her well-being.

However, maintaining her home now is not sustainable in the long run, as she could become less independent with age, and a large home could cause stress and dependency for cleaning.

Avery said that most high-rise condos are built with countertops at a certain height, no hand pulls, bathtubs instead of roll-in showers, and narrow doorways that are not fully accessible for mobility device users. These standard unit layouts are not senior-friendly, with many environmental barriers that prevent seniors from aging in place smoothly without stressful home modifications. Matthew additionally mentioned that many sidewalks are too narrow for people using mobility devices and that public standard buses should have level boarding. This poorly made infrastructure and inaccessible spaces amplify difficulties for seniors with mobility limitations. He also highlighted that high-rise condominium living can reduce seniors' physical labour by having the building handle maintenance tasks. Having maintenance taken care of creates a stress-free environment, as seniors with limited physical abilities do not have to worry about mowing the lawn or shovelling snow.

Fiona discussed age-friendly unit design, including features such as accessible call buttons, wide doorways, lower kitchen countertops, close-to-bathroom locations, and more natural lighting. These age-friendly features improve safety and mobility in seniors' living environments, preventing barriers. She also suggested incorporating memory care spaces with familiar objects and environments to create a more comforting atmosphere for seniors. This is similar to my grandmother Maria's teacup collection in her high-rise condo unit, which holds special memories, as well as senior residents having memory boxes in the LTC home. This helps seniors have familiar items and spaces in their homes that support their cognitive and emotional needs. Rory addressed how condos adapt to seniors' mobility demands through features such as automatic motion-sensor doors that make access easier for seniors using walkers or wheelchairs, as well as for those carrying groceries. She also described how some seniors rely on PSWs and nurses for daily care, leading the condo board to recommend lockboxes with keys and fobs to help caregivers access units more easily. The examples Rory provided help seniors adapt to environmental challenges by accommodating mobility needs and improving access to support services within the condominium.

During my accessibility audit of 2772 Keele Street, I saw that the path to the building entrance was consistently wide and paved (see Fig. 6a). From a press-competence perspective, this path lowers environmental press, making entry easier for many senior residents with

mobility needs. Additionally, I noticed that the playground's circular cement perimeter requires a step down, which could be hazardous and obstructive for seniors with disabilities or using mobility devices (see Fig. 8a). This environmental barrier in a shared space can cause considerable stress for seniors with limited physical ability, as the perimeter is not level with the playground and is inaccessible. Seniors who use mobility devices or have low vision may find it difficult to move through the high-rise condominium hallway due to its narrow layout and inadequate lighting with pools of light and deep shadows (see Fig. 9a). These problems may cause seniors to adapt by letting one person with a device go at a time or seeking aid if the lighting prevents them from seeing where they are going, resulting in environmental conditions being unbalanced with seniors' capacities. The building's elevators (see Figs. 9b, 9c, and 9d) are accessible with braille next to control buttons, flat mirrors, handrails on all non-access walls, roomy and stable floor surfaces, cab doors with reopening mechanisms, and operable parts and controls. These accessible, age-friendly features support seniors' independence through accommodating the changing physical needs associated with aging in place.

Social Justice Framework Examines Seniors' Resources, Recognition, and Representation

My interviews with seniors, city and developer planners, and a condo board member helped examine how equality, inclusion, and participation shape seniors' experiences of aging in place through Nancy Fraser's (2013) theoretical framework of social justice. Fraser (2013) conceptualizes social justice in terms of three interconnected dimensions: resources (economic justice), recognition (social inclusion and cultural value), and representation (political participation and voice in decision-making) (Westwood, 2018, pp. 4-5).

I will now talk about Fraser's (2013) resources (economic justice) dimension, which focuses on how seniors' access to financial resources impacts their capacity to afford for housing and associated services. When interviewing Maria, she said she will need government assistance as she ages to access in-home nursing care and to reduce her bills, since she lives on a pension. Nino also said his bills are too expensive and that he would like them reduced so his pension can cover them. The concerns of Maria and Nino demonstrate that aging in place is not only a matter of housing design or personal preference but also depends on adequate financial assistance, as fixed incomes can limit seniors' economic stability, access to basic resources, and their ability to remain in their homes. Daisy proposed that the government should help seniors who struggle financially, conduct regular wellness checks, and ensure that food banks are accessible. While

she acknowledged that Canada has existing senior support programs, she argued that pensions should be increased better to keep pace with the rising cost of living. Daisy's proposal for increased government assistance and pensions suggests that the current redistributive systems may be insufficient to meet seniors' needs, amongst rising living costs.

Matthew remarked that, while some seniors live in wealthy communities, many still experience financial difficulties, particularly those on fixed incomes. He went on to say that rental housing can be more challenging than condominiums since annual cost rises make it hard for seniors to keep up and stay housed over time. Matthew's comments show how unequal access to economic resources can affect seniors' capacity to age in place, as those on limited incomes may struggle to keep up with escalating housing costs, especially in rental housing, where annual increases can threaten long-term housing stability.

Fiona noted that market developers perform research to evaluate seniors' affordability, whereas standard developers do not prioritize seniors till they enter the market deliberately. She pointed out that retirement homes rely heavily on seniors' incomes because of their high monthly fees (about $4,000 per unit), yet condo developers are less concerned with individual affordability because other buyers can take up units if a senior cannot afford it. Fiona's statements imply that some seniors are economically disadvantaged, as most developers do not consider their financial abilities, making many developments unsuitable for them to age in.

Rory underlined the importance of keeping condominium maintenance fees as low as possible, as rising costs and building maintenance make affordability difficult for all residents, not just seniors. She also mentioned that, while the existing property manager works three days a week, having full-time management and increased security would better help seniors, but it is too expensive. Rory works to keep costs low so that seniors can continue to live there, but her worries about affordability and financial constraints may limit the availability of programs and assistance that would otherwise improve seniors' experiences aging in place.

Now I will discuss Fraser's (2013) recognition (social inclusion and cultural value) dimension, focusing on whether seniors are being valued, socially included, and recognized in planning and condo governance. In my interview with Maria, she explained that she has never felt excluded from building decisions and feels embraced because she is sociable and friendly with neighbours, keeping good connections going despite any disagreements. Nino similarly reported that he feels listened to in the building, has had no issues with the condo board, and

added that he must notify the residents when repairs in his unit could make noise. Maria and Nino's experiences illustrate how feelings of inclusion, respect, and being heard in the condominium community and in board decisions reflect their social position and their sense of being respected and visible members of the building.

According to Fiona, developers are steadily incorporating age-friendly design elements into their projects as the population ages. She explained how to understand senior standpoints better and identify environmental barriers through design charrettes and simulations, specifically mobility and vision-impairment exercises. She stressed that age-friendly buildings should have services such as chapels, pharmacies, cafés, dining areas with accessible design features, ramps, adequate parking, security elements, and 24-hour concierge services. Lastly, she discussed designing retirement home prototypes and working with seniors to evaluate how well the spaces meet their needs and pinpoint elements for improvement after construction. Fiona's remarks demonstrate how seniors are being more acknowledged as an important and visible group in the design process, and how techniques are being used to uncover environmental barriers based on their lived experiences. This process also considers seniors as informed contributors whose needs and experiences shape the built environment, demonstrating appreciation for their social and cultural value.

Rory stressed that it is not proper to rely too much on email for communication because many senior residents do not use it. Instead, she advocated for more accessible ways to communicate, like offering residents individualized, hands-on care, which she views as an essential "extra touch" that fosters trust and helps seniors with concerns. Thus, Rory recognized seniors' needs within condominium planning and management practices, accepting all residents' preferred communication methods to promote respect and inclusion in the building.

Lastly, I will be examining Fraser's (2013) representation (political inclusion/voice) dimension, specifically seniors' having a say in condominium governance, and being included and influencing planning decisions. Maria said she goes to condo board meetings to stay informed about building decisions, even though she is not a board member and does not get involved in politics. She added that she shares her ideas with neighbours, speaks at meetings, and votes. Nino said he feels valued by the condo board and included in decisions through condo board meetings and newsletters. He explained that small changes to his unit are allowed, but bigger changes need board approval. Based on Maria and Nino's experience in their high-rise

condo building, they have a voice in condo governance through their participation in decision-making and voting, as well as through updates from the board and the building. Yet, Natalie said residents can vote on issues at her condominium community, but she feels the condo board ignores the results and does what it wants. In Natalie's case, the residents have limited influence over condominium decision-making processes, having their perspectives neglected.

According to Avery, public planning procedures and community meetings are two ways that seniors can express their opinions about high-rise condo developments. Although there are options to participate, she said seniors may find it difficult to experience the benefits over their lifetime due to lengthy time frames. Thus, seniors are included in planning decisions, but the slow pace of change can make them feel powerless in influencing policies that affect their lives. Matthew declared that seniors often attend public meetings, join discussions about development proposals, and express their concerns through formal and informal consultations. Public meetings and consultation opportunities authorize seniors to share their opinions on development decisions that impact their communities. Fiona suggested that developers use less expensive materials and simpler unit finishes to make housing more affordable for senior citizens. To allow seniors to select optional services at a base cost that better fits their budgets, she also stressed the importance of flexible planning. According to Fraser's (2013) representation dimension, Fiona's focus on flexible planning and service alternatives demonstrates an attempt to take seniors' distinct needs and preferences into account when making housing decisions, thereby giving them greater control over the design and supply of housing.

When I spoke with Rory, she explained that senior residents take part in annual and general meetings to discuss topics such as maintenance costs and building projects. She said that all residents are invited to review meeting information in advance, contribute feedback, and ask questions, with help from an auditor and property management staff. Rory also keeps an open-door policy to make communication easier, especially for seniors who face language barriers. As a result of these initiatives, senior residents are included in condominium governance, with a voice in decision-making. Seniors are also positioned as worthy contributors to condo board planning and discussions rather than as passive residents, and Rory works to reduce barriers to participation caused by communication gaps.

Overall, applying these theoretical frameworks shows that aging in place is greatly influenced by the intricate relationships among interpretation, identity, environment, and power.

6.2 Policy Analysis and Implications for Seniors' Experiences of Aging in Place

In this subsection, I delve into the policies I discussed in my Planning Policy Context chapter, exploring whether they truly reflect my senior participants' day-to-day experiences of aging in place or if significant gaps exist.

The WHO's *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007), Ontario's *Creating A More Inclusive Ontario: Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide* (2021), and *Toronto's Seniors Strategy 2.0* (2018) all share a notion for urban planning that helps seniors stay independent, healthy, and able to live in their own homes and communities. These frameworks at the global, national, and local levels call for affordable housing options for seniors. However, many of the seniors I spoke with said they need more support from the government. They described how hard it is to get by on fixed-income pensions while trying to stay in their homes. This disconnect shows a gap between policy initiatives and the everyday experiences of seniors, as policies sometimes do not provide the support needed for them to truly age in place.

Maria and Nino's condo aligns with the WHO's (2007) age-friendly transportation principles by providing easy access to public transit, parking, and everyday destinations. WHO (2007, pp. 28-29) declares that age-friendly transportation should have reasonably priced fares and parking, transport stops close to seniors' dwellings, and access to important services such as healthcare facilities, green spaces, shopping malls, banks, and senior centres. Maria, who is aging in place in a high-rise condo, told me that the places she drives to offer free public parking. Maria and Nino, who live in the same building, also have walkable TTC bus stops at the closest intersection. Their building is accessible to essential services, including the Metro supermarket, Humber River Hospital, CIBC bank, and the Toronto Public Library Downsview Branch.

Maria, Nino, and Natalie's condos have transportation features that comply with Ontario (2021) and Toronto's (2018) age-friendly planning policies, such as Wheel-Trans, community shuttle services, and accessible pedestrian crossings. The Government of Ontario (2021, p. 21) states that age-friendly communities should offer a variety of easy-to-use transportation options to help people get around and keep neighbourhoods connected, while the *Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0* (2018) suggests adding more Seniors Safety Zones. Maria and Nino informed me that their condo offers Wheel-Trans if needed. Natalie added that there is a free bus that passes through her Florida condo development and can transport residents to neighbouring locations.

Accessible pedestrian signals at the Keele and Wilson intersection (see Fig. 5) also complement Seniors Safety Zones by providing auditory cues and vibrations for seniors with low vision.

The policy objectives of the WHO (2007), Ontario (2021), and Toronto (2018) reflect the social and health supports that my senior participants experienced in their communities. The *Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0* (2018) outlines specific local measures that prioritize the development of social connections, community support systems, and health and wellness for seniors, whereas the WHO (2007) and Ontario (2021) frameworks adopt a broader approach. Besides these policy differences, my senior participants across various housing types reported maintaining social relationships and feeling included as they aged in place. These experiences among my senior participants align with the objectives of the planning policy initiatives.

The *Condominium Act, 1998* applies to seniors aging in place in high-rise condo buildings, since it covers individual ownership rights, shared amenities, accessibility-related improvements, maintenance obligations, and reserve funds. Section 11(1) of the Act guarantees seniors the right to keep ownership of their private unit and modify it to meet their changing needs. Maria and Nino maintain ownership of their condo unit and can do as they please. Still, they must inform the condo board and fellow residents of any major renovations. Maria and Nino, along with Natalie, also use all the shared amenities nicely and take the opportunity to mingle with people while doing so.

The Act states in Section 90(1) that, “Subject to section 91, the corporation shall maintain the common elements and each owner shall maintain the owner’s unit.” This provision supports seniors aging in place by mandating that condominium corporations maintain shared amenities. This reflects seniors’ experiences, as most appreciated condominium living because it spared them the physical demands of landscaping, snow removal, and building upkeep. Daisy and Claudia are responsible for upkeeping their own homes, which are not part of a condo board, unlike Maria, Nino, and Natalie.

Section 93(2) of the Act states that, “A reserve fund shall be used solely for the purpose of major repair and replacement of the common elements and assets of the corporation.” When interviewing Maria and Nino, they both disclosed that they depend on fixed incomes and try to maintain their housing while covering unforeseen repairs from reserve funds. Rory, a board member at Maria and Nino’s condo building, said the reserve fund is set aside for big building costs, like replacing equipment and fixing the inside and outside of the building, based on a

reserve fund study. Rory gave an example of a resident's balcony water damage that requires an engineer to assess and plan repairs, which will be a significant cost paid from the reserve fund. Maria and Nino also have a leak on their balcony roof (see Fig. 16) that will probably be paid for by the reserve fund, too. Thus, the *Condominium Act, 1998* is followed at Maria and Nino's condo building, and its legal framework is reflected in their everyday experiences and condo governance, helping to structure decision-making processes and maintain order.

Senior participants' experiences are consistent with the *Planning Act*, as most appreciated their opportunity to access amenities and have a say in their communities. Ontario's provincial legislation, the *Planning Act*, gives municipalities the power to create official plans, secondary plans, zoning by-laws, and planning policies that direct future development. The *Planning Act, 1990* mandates planning authorities to consider provincial interests such as safe and accessible communities, transit-friendly development, an array of community services and housing options, affordable housing, and opportunities for public participation in planning decisions. These provincial interests are in line with the experiences of senior participants, with most valuing living in areas near transportation, health services, recreational opportunities, and other common amenities that support their independence as they age. Maria, Nino, Daisy, and Claudia also felt they had the chance to express their opinions on their living areas and community developments, which reflected the Act's emphasis on public participation. Natalie, who commented that her Florida condo board does whatever it wants and disregards the residents' voting system, was the only participant who felt she had little say in her condo community.

Maria and Nino's high-rise condo community corresponds with the Provincial Planning Statement's (2024) principles of complete communities through its proximity to community resources. The PPS 2024 supports complete communities by focusing on a variety of housing options, easy-to-reach and transit-friendly neighbourhoods, well-planned infrastructure and services, and safe public spaces, parks, and recreation areas for people of all ages and abilities. I think Maria and Nino's living environment and experiences best match these policy goals, as they live in an urban area with immediate access to grocery stores, banks, healthcare, transit, community centres, parks, and libraries. These connected places help Maria and Nino maintain their daily independence and social engagement. This is quite the opposite for Daisy, who does not live in a complete community. She instead resides in a car-dependent rural area with all her essential services spread out, lacking connectivity, unlike what the PPS 2024 advocates.

Maria and Nino's condo location supports the North York Centre Secondary Plan's (1997) transportation goals through its access to neighbourhood amenities, walkable destinations, and public transit. The Plan (1997) emphasizes high-density, transit-oriented, and mixed-use development to reduce people's reliance on cars and increase access to basic services. Maria and Nino's home and community reflect this kind of development, particularly through their proximity to transit and nearby amenities, which support their independence and reduce their need to always drive. They informed me that many of the locations they visit are within a 2- to 10-minute walk or a 10- to 15-minute drive, and that they also use the TTC buses and subway to travel. This type of urban environment, with many transportation modes and a non-car-dependent approach, is important for enabling everyday mobility as active seniors age in place.

While Toronto's Official Plan (2022) policies are not specific to seniors aging in place, they reflect many of the housing and community qualities that Maria and Nino identified as beneficial for aging in their condo. The Plan (2022) includes policies related to housing maintenance, neighbourhood character, accessible public spaces, mobility and proximity, and equitable access to community services. Maria and Nino highlighted the importance of nearby amenities and transportation access, while building maintenance and management supported their daily living needs. I also think that Maria and Nino living in their home for a long time, building social relationships, and developing routines within their neighbourhood highlight the significance of familiarity and stability in supporting aging in place.

The North York Design Guidelines for Wilson Avenue (2004) promote pedestrian-friendly design that supports my senior participants' enjoyment of outdoor spaces and nature while aging in place. The Guidelines (2004) focus on improving the pedestrian environment by enhancing sidewalks, lighting, seating, and streetscapes connected to parks and key destinations. I did not specifically check whether my senior participants, who are aging in place in high-rise condos, use green spaces in their surrounding communities. Yet, I gathered that Maria and Nino enjoy spending time in the shared outdoor garden area of their building. In their different housing types, Daisy and Claudia also both enjoy gardening, underscoring the value of seniors having access to the outdoors and spending quality time in nature as they age in place. I also mapped the green infrastructure near the high-rise condo, with numerous street trees and areas with tree canopy (see Fig. 23).

Although the Community Services and Facilities Strategy (2025) advocates for integrated community spaces and services within high-rise developments, Maria mostly relies on nearby community amenities because her building only has one multi-purpose shared amenity space, which is the party room. The Strategy (2025) supports adaptable shared community spaces and combined services, such as libraries, recreation facilities, and other shared facilities, within high-rise developments and communities. However, my senior participants had limited access to these types of integrated services within their high-rise condo. Maria often visits a nearby community centre, which turns into a social gathering space where she plays bingo and enjoys treats. Fiona, the developer planner, advised that mixed-use development can contribute to the financial viability of projects because commercial uses, such as restaurants located at the base of senior buildings, can generate rental income while also offering residents with dining options and attracting members of the broader community. These types of multi-purpose spaces are reflected in Maria's community experiences, and Fiona supports incorporating them in senior buildings.

By comparing policy intentions with lived realities, this analysis identifies key gaps between age-friendly planning frameworks and the everyday conditions that influence seniors' capacity to remain in their homes and communities.

6.3 Challenges and Opportunities for the Aging Population

The findings reveal that aging in place in high-rise condominiums in North York, as well as in other housing types, presents both challenges and opportunities for aging seniors.

The findings demonstrate that housing design and the built environment can create accessibility challenges for seniors aging in place. Avery and Matthew both pointed out recurring issues, such as the lack of age-friendly features in condo units, seniors' declining driving abilities as they age, and the fact that organizations often put off accessibility improvements due to cost. During my on-site field observations and accessibility audit of Maria's condo, I saw that seniors' ability to move safely and independently is limited by missing buffers between sidewalks and streets, narrow walkways, poor lighting, and uneven or blocked paths. Maria's experience highlights how environmental barriers, along with lifestyle changes, affect seniors. She moved from a single-family home to a high-rise condo at age 54 because her house became too much to maintain. Daisy's experience also shows that relying on cars in her community and house features like a basement laundry continue to cause daily accessibility problems. These findings

support Phillipson's (2011) argument that poorly planned environments and limited access to services can harm seniors' well-being and restrict their mobility as they age.

Seniors who want to age in place in high-rise condos often face financial stress, social isolation, and safety concerns. Many seniors rely on fixed incomes, pensions, retirement savings, or home equity to afford their homes. Maria and Nino, whose household income is below $25,000, said they struggle to keep up with rising maintenance fees, electricity bills, and taxes. These financial problems can limit social activities, such as when Nino avoids the Yorkdale Shopping Centre because it is too expensive. Matthew pointed out that some high-rise condos, especially those in tower-in-the-park areas, make it harder for people to connect informally, which can increase loneliness. Daisy also feels disconnected from younger generations and finds it hard to connect with family because of travel distance and driving challenges. Safety is another concern, as field observations have found moderate robbery rates in parts of North York. Altogether, seniors' financial insecurity, social isolation, and safety concerns are interconnected and can make it challenging for them to age comfortably and independently and to stay connected in high-rise condominium communities.

When seniors have limited representation in policy planning due to a one-size-fits-all approach, the needs of seniors in high-rise condos are not fully met. This corresponds with Hammond et al. (2024), who argued that spatial ageism can occur through both intentional and unintentional biases in planning, excluding seniors from the built environment. Although seniors can participate in public meetings and consultations, their influence is limited by more powerful governance structures, in which planners can make recommendations but do not have the final say. Senior participation also varies because more organized or wealthier seniors may have greater influence, while lower-income or less visible seniors may be left out. This outcome is raised in the literature review, which discusses how intersecting inequalities shape spatial exclusion (Phillipson & Grenier, 2021, as cited in Hammond et al., 2024). Planning policies may worsen this problem by treating seniors as a single group, consistent with Ågotnes and Blix's (2025) argument that age-friendly approaches overlook the diversity of seniors' lived experiences. As a result, there is a gap between the goals of age-friendly planning and what occurs in practice, underscoring the need for greater policy recognition of the diverse experiences and needs of seniors aging in high-rise condos. Even if planning policies may not be able to individually address the needs of every demographic group, greater consideration of

aging-in-place needs can still strengthen the implementation of age-friendly communities and better support seniors' quality of life as they remain in their homes.

The findings show that future health and care needs bring both challenges and opportunities for seniors who want to age in place in high-rise condos. Senior participants said they would like to remain in their homes, but this may depend on whether their housing can adapt to their changing needs. Simple modifications, such as installing accessible bathroom amenities or hiring PSWs, can help seniors keep their autonomy while they age in place. Although LTC homes offer on-site access to medical care, social activities, and personal support that are important when seniors' health problems become more complex. These LTC advantages can still cause seniors to lose some privacy, independence, and control over their living area. I believe the challenge is not choosing between aging at home and relocating to a care facility. It is ensuring that housing and care systems are flexible, supportive, and easily accessible, allowing seniors to age in the setting that best meets their ongoing needs and preferences.

Regarding opportunities for the aging population, high-rise condos are practical aging-in-place options as they limit physical maintenance and offer seniors convenience, safety, and accessibility. Maria and Nino highlighted the advantages of elevators, accessible building features, security systems, maintenance services, and on-site amenities that promote daily living and independence within high-rise condos. Matthew confirmed that seniors living in condos are relieved of physically demanding chores such as yard maintenance and snow removal. These findings support Savage et al.'s (2025) argument that high-rise buildings can provide seniors with functional convenience, financial sustainability, and social connectedness. High-rise condos in walkable, transit-oriented communities can also help seniors age in place. Most senior participants noted that healthcare services, grocery stores, transport stops, and other everyday destinations were all within short walking or driving distance. Matthew verified that transit-oriented development can minimize reliance on cars, increase mobility, and bring essential services closer to seniors. These findings indicate that when high-rise condos are designed with accessible features and located in walkable, transit-supportive neighbourhoods, they can create supportive environments that allow seniors to maintain independence, stay connected to their communities, and successfully age in place.

High-rise condos can create strong opportunities for social and community connections, and resident participation that support aging in place. Shared spaces, such as party rooms and

gardens, serve as vital gathering points for seniors to socialize and develop routines. Maria's experiences demonstrate how her social life spans multiple venues, including the condo's shared spaces, community centres, and family gatherings. Nino highlighted similar everyday encounters with friends in the party room and the outdoor garden. Rory also mentioned how barbecues and Christmas parties in these shared spaces strengthen senior residents' social and cultural relationships. Natalie, who lives in a low-rise condo, has the best access to local services, such as shopping, healthcare, recreation, and a community shuttle service, compared to Daisy, who is aging in a single-family home and Claudia, who is aging in a bungaloft-backsplit. Senior participation and governance play a key role in building connection and inclusion. Maria and Nino both mentioned feeling heard during condo board meetings and having opportunities to provide feedback on building choices and events. As the president of the Board of Directors, Rory also encourages residents to take part in meetings and decision-making processes. Overall, social spaces and inclusive governance in high-rise condos can significantly foster connection, belonging, and active involvement among seniors.

While structural, financial, and social obstacles exist, well-designed high-rise and urban environments can considerably improve seniors' independence, connection, and quality of life.

6.4 Recommendations for Seniors, City Planners, Developer Planners, and Condominium Corporations

This subsection summarizes the study's findings and makes specific recommendations for seniors, city planners, developers, and condominium corporations to improve the practicality and quality of aging in place in high-rise environments.

Based on the findings from my data collection methods, some recommendations I would push for seniors wanting to age in place in high-rise condo buildings are to be more proactive in evaluating housing suitability and stability before and after moving into those kinds of buildings. This includes seeking and prioritizing buildings that already include age-friendly features that support long-term needs, such as step-free entries, walk-in showers, handrails, wider hallways, and accessible unit layouts. It is important not to assume that all new builds meet aging-in-place accessibility needs, as high-rise condos are typically not designed specifically for seniors; they are built for people of all ages. My findings on inconsistent accessibility features also imply that senior residents adapt to the building rather than the building adapting to them, making informed housing choice a key form of agency.

Rory even pointed out that the condo where Maria and Nino live is getting older, and its machinery and other maintenance systems may need updating. I recommend that seniors consider the building's structural repair needs when choosing a high-rise condo to age in, as repairs could increase maintenance fees and make aging in place unaffordable. Lastly, seniors need to get involved in condo governance, as well as in community planning and housing processes. By joining condo board meetings, resident associations, or public meetings and consultations, seniors can help influence decisions about maintenance, accessibility upgrades, and improvements to shared spaces. I encourage seniors to participate as much as they can to ensure their needs and opinions are heard.

City planners should increase age-friendliness within high-density planning frameworks, particularly in developing areas such as North York. Instead of relying solely on the Ontario *Building Code Act* (1992), planning approvals for new high-rise condo buildings should incorporate stronger age-friendly accessibility guidelines. High-rise condos should also be planned as part of a more all-around aging-in-place network, ensuring that seniors have easy access to key amenities such as grocery stores, healthcare services, public transportation, and community spaces. More promising integration of housing, transportation, and community service planning is critical for promoting mobility, safety, and independence while reducing social isolation for seniors. As housing costs climb, planners should collaborate with developers and policymakers to help make sure that seniors can continue to age in place in their homes and communities. This includes facilitating various housing types that seniors can age in, adaptable unit layouts, and a range of price points to improve affordability.

Developer planners should place greater emphasis on designing high-rise condos that support aging in place. Fiona noted that many developers do not specifically target seniors and often have a limited understanding of their housing needs. This results in common design features that create barriers for seniors and people with mobility challenges. I suggest developers construct buildings that suit people of different ages and mobility levels, rather than targeting only the general condominium market. Age-friendly shared spaces such as welcoming gathering spots, multipurpose rooms, and community gardens should be included, as they help seniors socialize. As more seniors move from long-term homes to high-rise condos, there is a growing demand for user-friendly, accessible housing. Developers should view aging-in-place designs as long-term investments that enhance market value and living conditions instead of unnecessary

expenses. Fiona also pointed out the benefits of flexible planning and optional services, in which residents pay a base price and choose additional supports based on their needs. I recommend this to all developers because it enables housing to better meet the needs of different income levels, health issues, and other support requirements, giving seniors more choice and control, and avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach.

Condominium corporations play a big role in whether aging in place is actually possible after people move in. My findings on condo governance and maintenance reveal that many accessibility upgrades depend not only on the original building design but also on condo board priorities and budgeting decisions. For that reason, I advise condominium corporations to regularly perform age-friendly accessibility audits of the building, as I did in my study, and ongoing accessibility checks to fix problems like inadequate lighting, elevator access, entryway design, signage, and snow removal, and then prioritize easy, inexpensive fixes that benefit residents' quality of life, including seniors. Condo boards should also improve communication and make decision-making more inclusive so that senior residents feel like their needs are being heard. As the president of the Board of Directors, Rory did an excellent job of giving seniors and other residents an extra touch and personal care, and her actions would be an ideal model for condominium corporations to follow. Finally, to assist with aging in place in a proactive rather than reactive manner, condominium corporations should establish reserve funds that cover future accessibility modifications, not just typical recurring repairs.

These recommendations emphasize that effective aging in place in high-rise condominium buildings requires collaborative effort across individual decision-making, urban planning, development practices, and condominium governance.

7. Conclusion

This study examined how high-rise condominium buildings and their surrounding communities support or hinder seniors' ability to age in place, finding that both the built environment and the community context influence seniors' experiences of aging in place. The findings highlight the factors that make aging in place feasible, with particular attention to high-rise condos as a suitable housing setting for North York's aging population. Senior participants expressed a strong preference for remaining in their homes, with those living in high-rise condos

reporting high levels of satisfaction, a sense that nothing was missing from their current living environment, and no desire to relocate.

My findings revealed that the high-rise condo building in North York offers senior residents strong mobility and access to nearby services. The surrounding community supports multiple modes of transportation, allowing seniors to continue driving for as long as they are able while also providing opportunities for walking, access to public transit, and Wheel-Trans services. The building offers many age-friendly features that support aging in place, including accessible elevators, underground parking, spacious balconies, functional shared spaces, secure entry systems, and practical unit layouts. However, some accessibility challenges include narrow hallways, inadequate lighting, and the need for home modifications as residents age and experience changing health and physical needs. This condo is well-suited to supporting seniors who wish to age in place, especially those who are still active; however, some modifications and in-home support services may be required to accommodate residents as their needs evolve.

The senior participants aging in place in their condo perceived their living environment as safe, particularly due to the building's security features, including cameras, key fobs, and a visitor dialling system. The findings also indicated that building maintenance was not a concern for residents, reducing these responsibilities and associated burdens as they age. Participants reported feeling welcomed and included within the condominium community, with numerous opportunities for social interaction. They also felt that their voices were considered in condo board decisions and that the condominium corporation was effectively managed. Senior residents had access to nearby green spaces, including an on-site outdoor garden, street trees, and a local park. Despite these benefits, affordability and financial sustainability remained the most significant challenges, particularly for low-income seniors. Many seniors struggled to live on their pensions while managing rising expenses, highlighting the need for greater government support. The developer planner also advocated for more flexible planning and operational services to better respond to seniors' changing needs.

My research contributes to the field of urban and social planning by strengthening the understanding of how high-rise condo buildings can support aging in place. It also highlights gaps in how age-friendly planning and aging in place are discussed. The scholarly literature and planning policies tend to take a broad, one-size-fits-all approach that does not specifically address seniors' lived experiences of aging in place in condos and often treats seniors as a single,

homogeneous group. The findings show that seniors' ability to age in place depends on interconnected factors, including proximity to services, age-friendly building design, accessibility, social connections, condominium governance, and affordability. Although age-friendly planning frameworks acknowledge these factors, less is known about how seniors experience and perceive them within high-rise condo environments. By exploring seniors' lived experiences, my study fills a gap in understanding how high-rise condos and their surrounding communities support or hinder seniors' ability to age in place.

This study provides grounded and comprehensive insight into the factors that influence aging in place in dense, high-rise environments by interpreting seniors' experiences through multiple theoretical lenses. Future research could compare seniors' experiences across different housing types in greater detail, examine the long-term effects of condo governance and management processes on seniors' everyday lives, and explore how changes in seniors' health and mobility shape their ability to remain in their homes. With a broader scope and more data to analyze, future research could provide more robust findings and further recognize condos as a viable housing option for seniors who wish to age in place. Research could also compare approaches used in different municipalities to better understand how planning systems affect age-friendly housing and communities. This could entail assessing how municipal policies, development practices, and community services support or create challenges for seniors' experiences. These future research directions would help identify how planning, the built environment, community setting, and condo governance work together to create more age-friendly environments that support seniors throughout the aging process.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions for Seniors Living in High-Rise Condos

1. How long have you been living in your high-rise condo?
2. Do you live alone or with others? If you live with someone, what kind of relationship do you have with that person?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is your racial or ethnic identity?
6. What is your approximate average household income?
    a. Under $25,000
    b. Between $25,000 - $49,999
    c. Between $50,000 - $74,999
    d. Between $75,000 - $99,999
    e. Over $100,000
    f. Prefer not to say
7. Why did you move to your high-rise condominium? Before that move, what type of home did you live in (for example, single-family home, apartment, townhouse), and what type of neighbourhood was it in?
8. Do you feel safe and appreciated in your home and community, and how are your relationships with people in your building or neighbourhood? For example, friends, neighbours, or staff in your building.
9. Can you tell me about your daily routines in your condo building? For example, places you go, activities you do, or people you see regularly.
10. Do people get along in the building? Can you share an example of a time when you felt welcomed or uncomfortable?
11. Which shared spaces in the building do you use outside your unit, and how often do you go there? How often do you go out of the building in general? Do you use the building's outdoor areas, and how often?
12. Where do you go in the neighbourhood? How far are those places, and how do you get there? Do you try to go to places where there are people who have a similar background to you, or not?

13. How do you usually get to important places, like grocery stores or doctor's appointments? What makes it easier or harder for you to get around?
14. Does your high-rise condo have the age-friendly features, help, and accessibility you need as you get older? What do you think is missing?
15. Are you a member of the condo board? Do you get involved in city, provincial, or federal politics at all?
16. Do you feel you have a say in decisions that affect your home, like maintenance, rules, or neighbourhood issues? Have you ever shared your ideas with the condo board or attended meetings? Why or why not?
17. How much control do you feel you have over your living space, both inside your unit and in shared areas? Can you give an example of a time you felt included or excluded in building decisions?
18. As you get older, what problems do you face in this condo? What changes to the building, costs, services, or community could make it easier for you to live here comfortably?
19. Any other information you wish to share?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Seniors Living in Other Housing Types

1. What type of housing do you live in now? For example, a single-family home, bungalow, townhouse, retirement home, or co-operative housing.
2. How do things about you—like your age, gender, income, culture, or language—affect your daily life at home and in your community?
3. Who do you live with, or do you live alone? How does this affect your daily routines or independence?
4. Do you feel connected to your family, friends, neighbours, and people in your community? What helps you stay connected, and what makes it harder?
5. Does the design or layout of your home meet your everyday needs? Are there features that make things easier or more difficult as you get older?
6. What local places—like grocery stores, public transportation, doctors, or community programs—help you live comfortably where you are?
7. Have things like cost, housing policies, or changes in your neighbourhood affected your ability to stay in your home as you get older?

8. Do you feel you have a say in decisions about your housing, like building rules, maintenance, or neighbourhood planning? Why or why not?
9. Would you consider aging in place in a high-rise condo building as you get older? Why or why not? If you can compare, how do you think that might be different from living in your current home?
10. How do you think everyday tasks might be different in a high-rise condo, if you can compare? For example, things like using elevators, walking through hallways, using common areas, or dealing with noise.
11. What do seniors need to feel appreciated, supported, and able to live comfortably and independently, no matter what kind of home they live in?
12. Any other information you wish to share?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for a City of Toronto Planner (Strategic Initiatives)

Please tell me some basic professional background information, including your role and years of experience.

1. What is your experience planning for seniors in high-rise condominiums? Can you tell me about that experience? What factors do you consider when planning for seniors, and how do you think your decisions affect their daily life, safety, or social connections?
2. How do you think seniors' access to condo living is influenced by intersecting identities, such as age, gender, income, disability, or cultural background?
3. How do development pressures and market forces influence the availability and types of high-rise condo housing options for seniors?
4. How do planning policies address seniors' age-friendly functional needs within dense urban environments?
5. To what extent do municipal planning processes ensure that seniors have a voice or representation in decisions related to high-rise condo developments?
6. What barriers do you see that prevent seniors from having equitable access to high-rise housing?
7. How do zoning by-laws, design guidelines, or community planning processes consider seniors' social connectedness, sense of belonging, and well-being?
8. Do you believe that the diversity of seniors' lived experiences and abilities is recognized and considered in current planning practices?

9. How does the municipality balance private development interests with social needs, such as seniors' ability to age in place?
10. What changes to planning practices or policies could enhance seniors' ability to age in place within high-rise environments?
11. Any other information you wish to share?

Appendix D: Interview Questions for a City of Toronto Planner (Transportation Planning)

Please tell me some basic professional background information, including your role and years of experience.

1. What is your experience planning transportation systems or mobility infrastructure that serve seniors living in high-rise condominiums?
2. What mobility-related factors (e.g., transit access, walkability, pedestrian safety, accessibility) do you prioritize when planning for seniors in these environments? How do you think these transportation decisions affect seniors' daily life, independence, safety, or social connections?
3. How do you think seniors' access to condo living is influenced by intersecting identities, such as age, gender, income, disability, or cultural background?
4. How do development pressures influence transit-oriented development and the location of high-rise condos, and what does that mean for seniors' mobility and access to services?
5. How do transportation policies and infrastructure planning address seniors' age-friendly mobility needs within dense, high-rise environments?
6. To what extent do municipal planning processes ensure that seniors have a voice or representation in decisions related to high-rise condo developments?
7. What barriers do you see that prevent seniors from having equitable access to high-rise housing?
8. How do zoning by-laws, design guidelines, or community planning processes consider seniors' social connectedness, sense of belonging, and well-being?
9. Do you believe that the diversity of seniors' lived experiences and abilities is recognized and considered in current planning practices?

10. How does the municipality balance private development interests with social needs, such as seniors' ability to age in place? What changes to planning practices or policies could enhance seniors' ability to age in place within high-rise environments?
11. Any other information you wish to share?

Appendix E: Interview Questions for a Developer Planner

Please tell me some basic professional background information, including your role and years of experience.

1. Are seniors considered to be an important market segment for condos? Have you been involved in working to make a condo building more age-friendly? What is involved, in your opinion?
2. In what ways do demographic differences among seniors (such as income, mobility, or cultural background) influence developers' decisions?
3. How do economic constraints, profitability, and market demand shape the high-rise housing options available to seniors?
4. How can you assess whether building design features created by developers enhance or limit the cognitive and physical capacities of senior residents?
5. To what extent are senior citizens consulted or involved during the design and planning stages?
6. How do developer firms address affordability and accessibility in senior-oriented or senior-inclusive housing developments?
7. How do you think the outcomes of senior housing are influenced by internal or external power dynamics, such as municipal approvals or investor expectations?
8. Do you consider how building layout and amenities affect seniors' daily routines, mobility, social relationships, safety, or well-being?
9. What role does cultural recognition (for example, diverse norms or language needs) play in developers' decisions regarding design or amenities?
10. In your opinion, what design or development strategies could strengthen seniors' ability to age in place in high-rise condominium buildings?
11. Any other information you wish to share?

Appendix F: Interview Questions for a High-Rise Condo Board Member

Please tell me some basic professional background information, including your role and years of experience.

1. What types of people sit on the condo board? Are any residents included, and do senior residents have much say in board decisions?
2. How would you describe seniors' experiences and daily life in the condo building? How do seniors get along with other residents of different ages or household types?
3. How do things like mobility limitations, social or income status, or cultural background affect seniors' participation in condo life?
4. How do financial factors—such as maintenance fees, reserve funds, or renovation budgets—influence decisions that affect senior residents?
5. How do building policies and design consider the physical abilities of senior residents?
6. In your opinion, what problems do senior residents face when using shared areas, services, or resources in the building?
7. How does the condo board deal with situations when seniors' needs do not fit the building rules?
8. How do you plan for future building changes or improvements that meet the needs of seniors?
9. What support is available in the condo building to help seniors age in place?
10. What changes in governance, policy, or building management would best enhance the quality of life for senior residents living in high-rise condominiums?
11. Any other information you wish to share?