

County of Renfrew



Seniors Housing Strategy Summary Report

December 2020



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Executive Summary

Over the last two decades, there has been a notable and steady increase in the number of seniors in our communities. This is not a unique phenomenon; as our population ages across North America, seniors – those 65 years of age or older – are continuing to grow as a share of our overall population. Seniors have differing needs and preferences when it comes to housing and this is especially true where supports are required to help maintain their independence. These supports can help seniors to age in place but more robust assistance is required when higher levels of need demand it. This can also precipitate the need for more specialized accommodations when elevated levels of care must be provided. Given the growing share of seniors in the local population and the housing needs that come with that growth, the County of Renfrew and City of Pembroke have undertaken the development of a Seniors Housing Strategy.

The strategy is intended to help guide the County in the various roles it has with regards to supporting seniors needs. Seniors are served by a range of local organizations and agencies which collectively make up a housing and supports system. So while the County is an important partner within this system, it is one of many stakeholders. This continuum of housing and supports provides a range of housing options and related services for seniors, depending on the level of independence that they enjoy. And while the system would ideally address the needs of local seniors regardless of how their needs change over time, the reality is that needs are not always met.

The study involved a comprehensive review and analysis of local seniors housing and support service needs. By examining data trends and tendencies, a number of emerging issues and gaps were identified in terms of both housing and supports. The growth in the seniors population will play an ever increasing role in Renfrew County, accounting for over one third of the population within 20 years. Seniors are trending towards smaller households that are more diverse in composition than in the past. However, current housing production is not reflecting this shift, leaving few middle market options, a lack of purpose-built rental housing and affordability issues for over 20% of seniors households.

Demand for long term care homes and retirement homes remains strong and point to the need for additional supply, as evidenced by notable waiting lists. Based on current level of need, roughly one third of those on the long term care wait list could actually be served at home through the use of additional supports instead of moving to a care home. There is a wide range of seniors supports and services available in the community to help seniors age in place but these too are subject to sustained demand. Community care programs and community support services are well-subscribed and as a result, waiting times can be encountered for home care and other more specialized services. These formal services are augmented by informal caregivers who help to provide invaluable assistance to their partners, family members or friends for little/no compensation.

The supply and demand analysis undertaken as part of this study was augmented by input from an extensive consultation process. Perspectives were solicited from a wide array of seniors stakeholders

in the community, including those directly involved with providing housing and supports and those who have a less direct but meaningful impacts on seniors outcomes. This feedback yielded a wealth of information on issues, gaps, priorities and opportunities from the perspective of these stakeholders. These perspectives pointed to:

- The lack of appropriate housing options for seniors and the desire to maintain independence
- The sustained demand for housing that addresses long term care needs
- A desire to broaden access to services in more rural locales
- Affordability concerns both in terms of housing and support service costs
- Challenges in the health care system due to staffing shortages and a perceived lack of coordination in the seniors housing and supports system

Stakeholders pointed to the need for more defined roles within the system and felt that the County had an important role to play in many areas. They also acknowledged a need to engage other partners in the system and to encourage collaboration, build awareness and improve effectiveness. A wide range of prospective solutions and opportunities were also identified by stakeholders, from more traditional responses to less conventional approaches. Scanning of options was undertaken as part of the study to help identify options which would be most relevant to seniors in Renfrew County.

Within this context, there are a number of influencing factors that were identified at the provincial, regional and local level which must be considered, whether in terms of recent legislation, policies and programs. Perhaps most critical among these is the transformation underway in the health care system and how this may affect delivery of services and supports to seniors regionally. There is a clear opportunity to help shape these responses as the transformation evolves. Locally, there are also housing policy and planning frameworks in place but opportunities exist to make these more responsive to seniors needs.

The County of Renfrew is a principal partner in the seniors housing and support system and has a range of levers at its disposal to help improve outcomes for local seniors. The County has a clear role in administering housing programs, providing long term care homes and delivering paramedicine services. It also has an important role in setting housing policies and encouraging a wider array of housing options through land use planning. The County can also facilitate the development of appropriate seniors housing using land, incentives and authorities at its disposal. There is also a facilitation role the County can play within the seniors housing and supports system, helping to advocate for health care realignment, promoting system effectiveness and encouraging community partnerships.

The Seniors Housing Strategy provides a unique opportunity for the County to articulate how it can contribute to solutions as a principal partner within the system. Based on the emerging issues from the study, a series of strategic directions were identified to help guide the strategy, namely:

- Expanding suitable housing options for seniors

- Improving on support options that enable seniors to age in place appropriately
- Increasing the supply of higher level care facilities within the county
- Creating the right environment to identify, facilitate and capitalize on opportunities
- Making the seniors housing and supports system more responsive and intuitive

A formal strategy has been developed in response to these directions. The Seniors Housing Strategy is comprised of five key strategy themes and 17 recommended actions as follows:

Strategy #1 – Expanding appropriate housing options that enable seniors to transition from their traditional homes

1. Align seniors housing strategies with complimentary goals and objectives of the County’s Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan regarding:
 - a. Maintaining housing stability
 - b. Ensuring an adequate supply and choice of housing for seniors
 - c. Improving coordination and capacity within the housing system
2. Pursue greater housing flexibilities with local municipalities in Official Plan, zoning and approvals practices
3. Foster knowledge transfer of housing innovations, age-friendly planning and accessibility practices with stakeholders in the community

Strategy #2 – Broadening the continuum of supports to help seniors remain at home safely

4. Advocate for and maximize use of program funding to support priority initiatives related to expanding/ enhancing:
 - a. Home and community care
 - b. Community supports
 - c. Home renovations/repairs
5. Expand paramedicine initiatives to seniors at home to help age in place, especially those on LTCH wait lists
6. Promote opportunities with stakeholders to establish or grow housing and service hubs in rural communities by leveraging available resources and services
7. Encourage and promote initiatives that maintain, attract and expand the local health care work force

Strategy #3 – Addressing sustained demand for assisted and Long Term Care housing facilities

8. Facilitate the creation of continuum of care campuses that promote affordable housing and care options by using lands adjacent to existing County LTCH facilities

9. Promote and leverage opportunities with community providers to better utilize residual spaces and to create additional care beds in other areas of the county
10. Advocate for additional respite care services to provide greater temporary 'slack' within the system

Strategy #4 - Leveraging opportunities that respond to seniors housing needs

11. Establish an inventory of municipally-owned and public sector lands appropriate for residential development
12. Promote and leverage private and community investment in seniors housing using land, grants and other financial tools
13. Continue to invest in and expand Community Housing units that meet seniors affordability needs
14. Encourage the expansion of affordable rental housing supply by engaging the private sector

Strategy #5 – Improving seniors' access to care and supports

15. Convene a community roundtable among stakeholders to advance the County's Seniors Housing Strategy and to promote system collaboration
16. Engage with the designated local Ontario Health Team to promote alignment and coordination of home and community care services that support better outcomes for local seniors
17. Facilitate information sharing among stakeholders to create a more responsive/ transparent system of services and supports for seniors

The Senior Housing Strategy is intended to help the County support better outcomes for seniors in terms of housing and related support needs. The actions identified cut across multiple areas of responsibility and would require coordination by an interdepartmental steering committee. And while many of the actions would involve activities that fall within the normal purview of departmental work plans, there are other actions that could oblige more substantive financial and resource commitments. For this reason, it is recommended that an implementation work plan be developed to help assign internal tasks, allocate resources and track progress for the Seniors Housing Strategy.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

Across North America, the need for appropriate housing and services continues to grow as our population ages and the share of senior citizens aged 65+ increases. The greater diversity in senior's households, their shifting need and the broader range of services that they rely on also influences their accommodation requirements. However, the housing choices seniors can make are limited by what's available to them and at what cost. These housing decisions are also influenced by the services and supports they need, especially when these services are not readily available to them.

Housing markets tend to be regional in nature and ideally, should reflect the needs of households in their catchment area. It follows then that different local responses are necessary to appropriately address different local needs. Within Renfrew County, there is a relatively modest population spread across an expansive rural geography, and within that population there are varying dynamics. With a higher than average aging trend, the County is expecting to see continued growth in the need for seniors housing for the foreseeable future at the same time when care home wait lists are increasing and limited new development geared to seniors is being built.

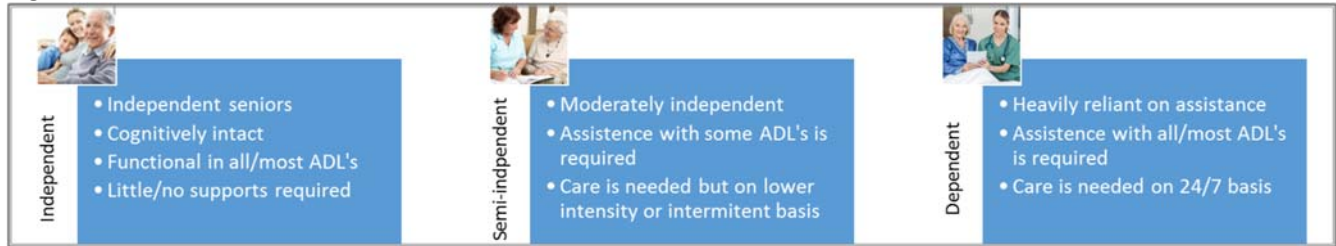
It is within this context that the County of Renfrew and City of Pembroke launched the development of a Seniors Housing Strategy in early 2020. The primary objective for the strategy is to expand housing options for seniors by looking beyond just the traditional 'brick and mortar' solutions and by exploring the continuum of care for seniors in the local community. As such, this examination goes beyond independent living and considers assisted living, supportive housing and community paramedic partnerships for in-home/virtual care as well as the possible expansion of Long Term Care (LTC) beds. Ultimately, the purpose of this strategy is to assist the County and the City in strategic decision-making and policy development as it relates to seniors' housing.

1.2. Context/background

As our population ages, so too does the impact that senior citizens have on housing and service needs. Apart from sheer growth, this aging also has other impacts due to the changing nature of households and evolving expectations around where and how seniors live. These expectations can be tempered by the accommodation choices available to them and the affordability of such choices. These housing decisions are also influenced by the services and supports seniors need as they age and the types of supports available to them. In most instances, there are mismatches in what the local market offers versus what seniors need.

As per Figure 1, seniors generally fall into one of three categories; those who live with a high degree of independence, those that require help to maintain their independence and those who are highly dependent on assistance on an on-going basis.

Figure 1



The housing and service needs of seniors spans this wide spectrum, depending on the levels of independence that senior households enjoy. These needs are not static and can change over time which can precipitate changes in housing or support requirements for seniors.

Given the rural nature of the county, with a sprawling geography and dispersed population, there are many challenges to meeting seniors needs in conventional ways. This strategy identifies the array of local seniors needs, the housing options available and the continuum of services required to address these needs. By better understanding the housing and service landscape as an inter-related system, more effective community-based solutions can be developed to facilitate better outcomes for seniors.

Within the seniors service sector, there has been considerable support growing for expanding options that help seniors age in place. This approach puts less emphasis on traditional institutions and instead places more emphasis on options that enable seniors to maintain independence in the community as long as possible, provided they are appropriately housed. Shifting this emphasis has repercussions both for the traditional way we think of housing for seniors and for the way we provide services to support this independence.

The County of Renfrew has a substantial partnership role in the seniors housing and supports system. As a primary seniors housing and service provider, the County/City operate the two largest LTC homes: Bonnechere Manor in Renfrew and Miramichi Lodge in Pembroke. These Homes also provide supports services out to the community to help address the needs of local seniors. The County is also the sole shareholder of the Renfrew County Housing Corporation (RCHC) and the designated Service Manager for housing and homelessness. Through funding from the sustainable infrastructure fund and the Provincial Investment in Affordable housing program (IAH), the County of Renfrew also used its Service Manager authorities to facilitate private sector development of 3 separate seniors housing projects (1 in Petawawa and 2 in Arnprior). In addition to these functions, the County also has land use planning and municipal regulatory authorities which it can strategically exercise to support seniors housing objectives. As a principal partner, it can also play an important role in helping to align the efforts of community partners to meet common goals for seniors.

However, the County is not the service system manager for seniors and supports. Rather, they are a principal local partner, working alongside a cadre of community housing and support service providers to improve outcomes for seniors households. This distinction is important because it influences how the County approached development of this strategy. The recommended actions

herein are intended for the County and by the County, recognizing that management, coordination and funding of health care are the responsibility of other primary partners in the system.

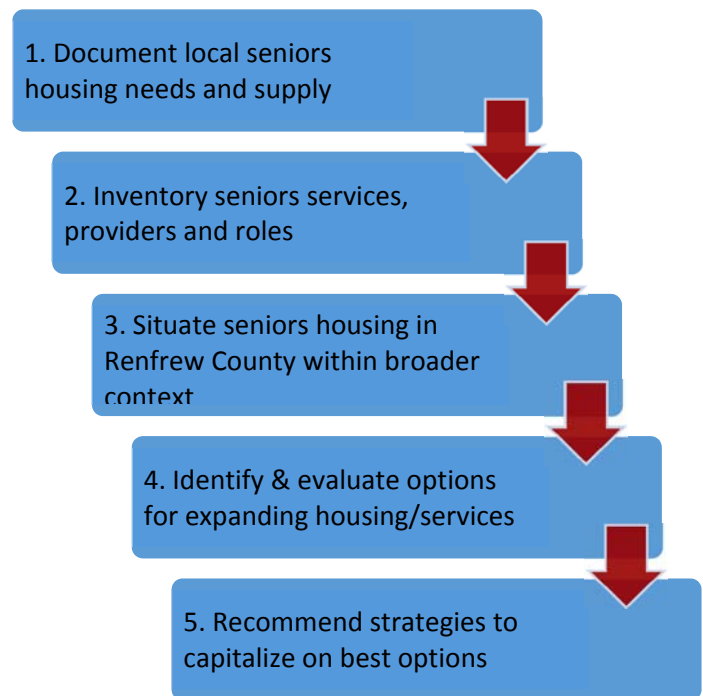
At the same time, there are significant changes occurring in the broader health care system which could very well impact on local approaches and the resources available to address needs. And while these regional and provincial implications are uncertain, it's clear they will have an impact on the ability of the local system to respond to seniors needs in the future. The County and the City are seeking to map out prospective options that can generate better housing and support outcomes for seniors by developing a Seniors Housing Strategy now.

1.3. Study approach

In order to develop the Seniors Housing Strategy, a multi-step process was undertaken, as shown in Figure 2. This initially involved documenting needs in terms of both housing and support services using data analysis, scanning of reports and gathering of information through community stakeholder consultations (Steps 1 & 2).

The various roles of the County were also situated within the broader housing and support services framework as part of the study, having regards for the many connections and partners within the system. This helped to position actions the County could and should take in its facilitative role as a principal partner in the system (Step 3). Housing and support service options were identified and evaluated in Step 4. As a result, recommended strategies were formulated and framed in Step 5.

Figure 2



Data analysis

During the course of the study, various data was sourced and analyzed in order to help inform current and projected future conditions. In the case of housing, Census data from Statistics Canada was used extensively to assess socioeconomic trends and housing characteristics related to population, households and housing stock. This was augmented by CMHC data related to housing market trends and indicators. In terms of service and support needs, a number of custom data sets were provided via the Champlain LHIN to help inform population health characteristics, trends in care and levels of service. Given the range of sources, datasets, geography and reporting periods, there were considerable challenges in aligning results consistently. For these reasons, there are instances where information gaps were encountered and inferences had to be drawn. To help establish a fulsome

picture of local needs and resources, this data was further augmented by published reports, stakeholder consultations and environmental scanning of additional information available in the public domain. An inventory of housing and service providers was also developed during the course of the study to help document local conditions.

Consultations

Consultation was an important facet of the review process, helping to ensure that stakeholder insights were considered, issues were validated and opportunities identified. This approach was especially helpful where data gaps were encountered or where additional insights were required to help interpret emerging issues or trends. During the study process, stakeholder input was solicited from a wide array of community stakeholders using a variety of consultation techniques. Given the timing of the study and the public health issues associated with COVID-19, traditional consultation techniques involving in-person interactions were not possible. While this created challenges for stakeholder participation, the extensive use of video conferencing and telephone interviews did facilitate the provision of important input for the study.

During the study, the consulting team reached out to a wide range of community stakeholders, gathering information from local municipalities, sector organizations, housing providers and many community agencies. The stakeholder consultation process involved:

- *Key informant interviews* – One-on-one phone interviews with individuals having key knowledge about seniors issues in the community
- *Focus groups (held virtually)* – Two group sessions were held with individuals representing a cross-section of organizations and agencies that provide services to seniors
- *A community roundtable (held virtually)* – One group session was held with individuals representing community-based organizations and agencies that have an interest in senior issues
- *Project mailbox* – A virtual mailbox was also provided on the County’s web page, giving members of the public an opportunity to share their thoughts, concerns and ideas regarding seniors housing

In addition to these consultations, a County Council questionnaire was also administered to elected officials in lieu of an in-person workshop session. These results were integrated within the broader community feedback.

In order to gather a range of feedback and insights, questions were posed to stakeholders around six general areas as follows:

1. What are the current or emerging needs related to seniors housing and support services that you see in the community?
2. From your perspective, what gaps or priorities are most pressing and where within the Renfrew County service area?

3. What opportunities do you see to better address the housing and support needs of seniors, either through conventional or non-conventional approaches?
4. What role do you see for the County in helping to address these needs/gaps?
5. What role should community partners and the private sector play?
6. Where should efforts and resources be focused in order to get the best outcomes for seniors?

Findings from these consultations were used to inform the background analysis and help shape the strategy. A detailed summary of the various consultation exercises can be found in the Technical Appendix report.

This report

As a summary document, this report provides the results of the background analysis on seniors housing and supports. For seniors, housing and supports are inherently linked, but both are discussed individually to help better frame the factors that influence them. This report also frames the current service system for seniors, examining the County's current role and community aspirations within the context of regional and provincial influences. Based on these findings, options for addressing seniors housing needs are explored by examining opportunities and practices, both locally and beyond. The report concludes with recommend strategies and actions to help advance a Seniors Housing Strategy for the County as well as considerations for implementation.

While this report sets out recommended strategies, there was a considerable volume of background work which informed its development of the strategies. Given the breadth of analysis and investigation that was undertaken during the study, this background material has been consolidated into a separate reference document. As a companion report, the Technical Appendix provides more detailed information on data analysis, a housing and service inventory, stakeholder consultations and opportunity scanning.

2. Seniors Housing

Seniors needs, in terms of both housing and supports, are a reflection of the level of independence they enjoy. As they become more dependent on supports and services, this can have a profound effect on the housing accommodations they require to best suit their needs. By situating housing and support needs in relation to their abilities, it's possible to generate a system view of seniors housing and supports as a continuum. The discussion that follows frames seniors housing and support needs in terms of three levels of independence which can be generally described as follows:

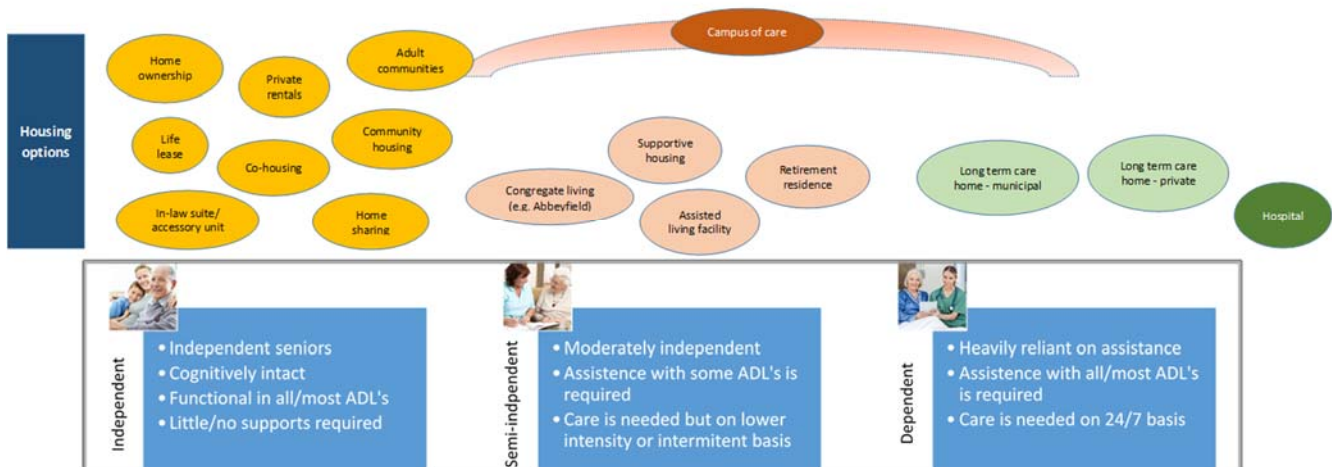
- *Independent* – Seniors who are able to live independently with minimal or no supports
- *Semi-independent* – Seniors who require supports but whose needs are not considered essential on a 24 hour-7 days a week basis
- *Dependent* – Seniors who require supports on an on-going, 24 hour-7 days a week basis

It's important to note that the needs and preferences of seniors can change over time, so where they find themselves on the continuum can also change, whether towards more supported environments or more independent option. That said, the continuum is a useful tool for understanding the breadth of options that collectively make up the system of housing and supports serving seniors.

2.1. The housing continuum

Within the housing market, there are a wide variety of options in terms of type, tenure, price and location. Access to these options is influenced by many factors including household needs, income and preferences. In the case of seniors, these needs may also include services and supports, depending on the level of independence that they enjoy. Figure 3 illustrates various options based on levels of independence.

Figure 3



Seniors who are independent have a range of housing choices and in the case ownership, they may include traditional home ownership, condominium or other equity-type arrangement (e.g. life lease). Options also exist in the rental market, whether through private rentals, accessory suites or more

affordable community housing alternatives. Accommodations such as co-housing, in-law suites and home sharing are also options for seniors who prefer a more shared style of housing.

For seniors who are semi-independent, housing options tend to be in a more congregate setting where access to some level of support is available on-site as needed. These shared arrangements are borne out of necessity for supports and can include options like congregate living, supportive housing, retirement residences and assisted living.

In the case of seniors who are dependent on a sustained level of supports, accommodation options are more limited. Long term care homes (LTCH), whether publicly or privately owned, are the principal options for seniors in this situation. Where care requirements exceed LTCH capabilities, seniors can end up residing in hospital for short or more extended periods of time.

While the continuum is a way to situate seniors housing options, there are other forms of housing that exist which do not neatly fall within these categories. For example, self-contained campuses of care can provide a spectrum of housing options within their facilities. One of the primary purposes of this approach is to minimize housing impacts on seniors as their support needs change over time. This concept of 'aging in place' is a central to the campus concept as it seeks to sustain accommodations despite changes in support needs over time.

2.2. Supply and demand for seniors housing

To better understand the local housing landscape for seniors, a more detailed examination of trends and tendencies was undertaken. To do this, a review of seniors housing needs was conducted by examining population, households, income and affordability trends. A review of housing supply trends was also undertaken to better understand type, condition and tenure of the current housing stock as well as production trends and market tendencies. Based on this analysis, local gaps and emerging issues in seniors housing were identified. Summary results of this analysis are provided below but additional data tables and reference material can be found in the Technical Appendix report.

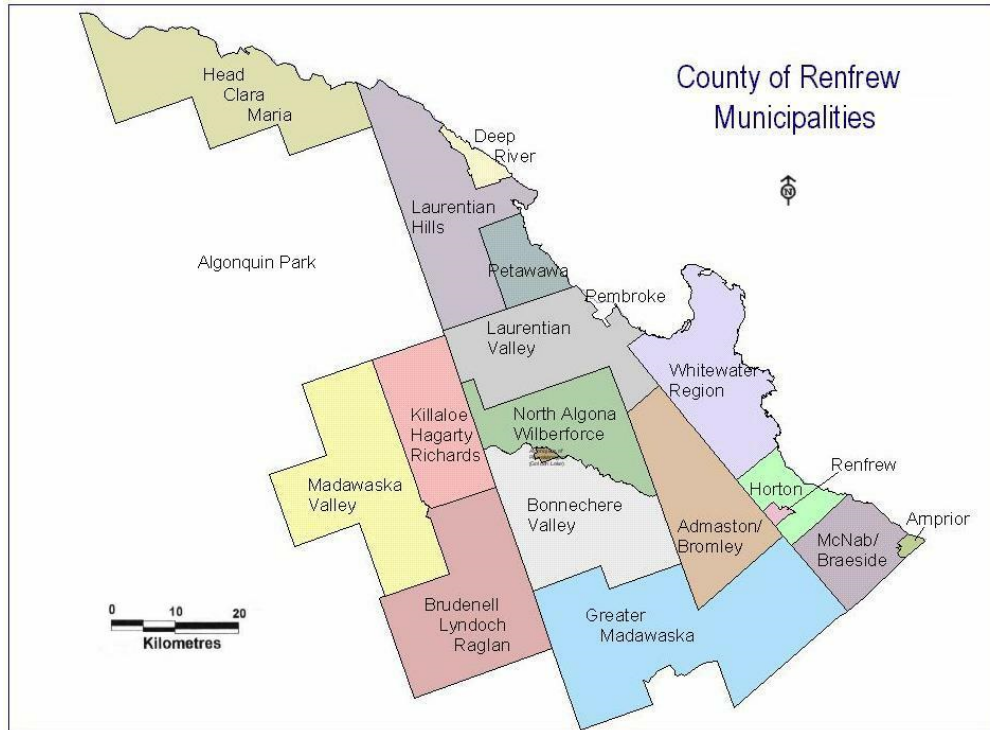
2.2.1. Housing needs

By examining population, household and income characteristics, it is possible to characterize housing need within the community. When measured against housing supply, it is then possible to determine where needs are not being met within the housing market.

Population

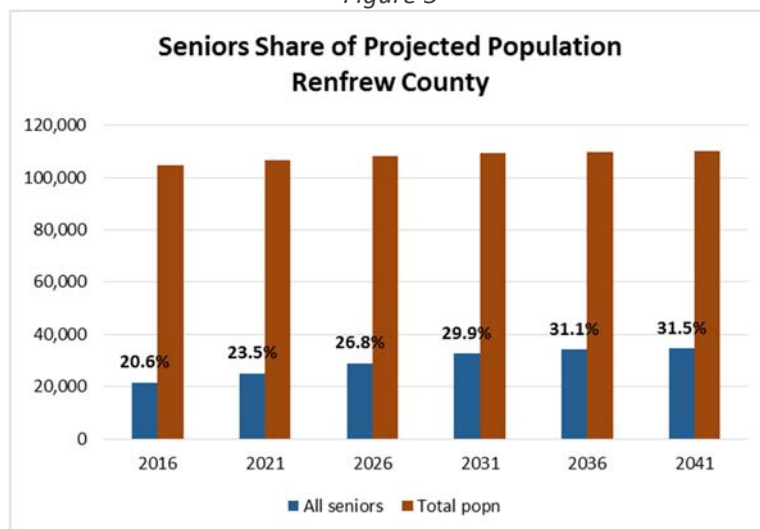
Renfrew County is comprised of 17 municipalities and together with the City of Pembroke covers some 7,440 square kilometers in area (see Figure 4). Geographically, the County stretches from the City of Ottawa and Lanark County northward past Algonquin Park and from the Ottawa River westward to the edge of Hastings County. Within this expansive geography are several notable population centres (Pembroke, Renfrew, Arnprior and Petawawa) as well as a number of smaller settlements and a large rural area.

Figure 4



The current population of the County is roughly 102,000 and over the last 15 years, population growth has been fairly modest, averaging 0.5% annually. Over the next 20 years, growth is projected to remain quite modest, averaging less than 1% annually. Seniors currently account for just over 20% of the population (21,300 individuals) which is higher than the Provincial share (16.7%). Within 20 year, this share is expected to reach 28.5%, primarily due to the general aging of the population. During this period, the number of seniors is projected to increase in actual terms by 8,000 to 10,000, and a large share will be in the 75+ age group.

Figure 5



Recent growth trends indicate differences in where growth happens, with the most growth occurring in southern municipalities and Petawawa. By contrast, there is a net loss of population in a number of municipalities that lie in the central and west areas of the County. Seniors are prominent throughout

the County but are found in higher concentrations in the larger population centres and this trend is expected to continue going forward. For about half of the municipalities in the County, seniors will make up over 35% of the local population within the next 20 years. In real terms however, there is expected to be a gradual decline over time in the number of seniors living in more rural areas of the County.

Households

While population is a key indicator, the composition of households is an equally important determinant of housing needs. There are currently more than 12,600 senior-led households in the County and this number is expected to increase as the seniors population increases. Roughly half of these households are couples, although there are a modest number of senior households who have children at home. More than 30% of the seniors population live in non-family households and most of these seniors live alone (almost 85% or 5,100). For older seniors (75+), the share of those in non-family household is higher. In terms of living arrangements, those seniors living with relatives accounts for only 575 individuals and this figure only marginally increases for older seniors age groups.

In light of these trends, senior households tend to be smaller in size, averaging 1.7 persons per household. When compared with population rates, households in the County are increasing faster than population, signaling that the composition of households is changing. These trends in households have a direct impact on future housing needs for seniors.

Income

Household income has a direct impact on the housing choices that a household can exercise and in that regard, is an important indicator. Median and average household incomes in Renfrew County are consistently lower than provincial figures. In 2016, the County median was \$67,683 and the average was \$79,574. These figures have only moderately changed since the last Census period (12-13% since 2011). Seniors households will typically have lower incomes as compared with other age cohorts due to their retirement from the labour market and tendency towards more fixed sources of incomes (e.g. pensions, RSPs, annuities, etc.). As a consequence, some seniors rely heavily on social assistance to help augment their basic Canada Pension Plan payments or incomes. This assistance can include federal sources such as Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), and Provincial sources such as Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS).

Affordability

These trends in income have a direct influence on seniors housing affordability – the means they have to access housing options. Affordability is typically measured by assessing income versus housing costs. Where a household spends 30% or more of its gross income on shelter, that household is deemed to have an affordability problem. In Renfrew County, more than 21% of seniors have an

affordability issue and over 26% are in core need¹. For older seniors (75+) these proportions are higher. Seniors affordability trends are overall, fairly consist with the experiences of non-senior households

However, affordability does impact households differently depending on their housing tenure. This is especially true for seniors as more than half of senior renters in the County (56% or 1,300 households) have affordability issues which is notably higher than non-senior renters (38%) and considerably higher than senior owners (13%). These affordability issues are more pronounced for older seniors (75+), both for renters and owners. It is worth noting that of the 2,300+ senior renter households, about 20% live in subsidized housing and in that regard, have affordable accommodation.

2.2.2. Housing supply

Having examined housing need indicators, it's also import to look at supply indicators to understand how well the market is responding to needs.

Dwelling type and condition

In Renfrew County, the majority of the housing stock is single detached homes (77%) or low rise apartments (10.5%). Accordingly, most seniors in private households tend to live in single detached homes (78.3%) or low rise apartments (12.6%). For senior owners, this trend is very pronounced as 91.3% reside in single detached homes. For senior renters, the trend is also noteworthy as 68.4% reside in apartments while the remaining households reside in less traditional rental forms. There are substantially fewer older seniors (75+) living in private households, suggesting a shift to other living arrangements like congregate/ institutional living.

Despite its age, the housing stock in the Country is in relatively good condition. Almost half of the stock was built before 1970 (i.e. more than 50 years in age) but less than 10% of dwellings are deemed to require major repairs. Interestingly, those dwellings occupied by seniors tend to be in slightly better shape than the overall stock. Given the high rate of ownership among senior and the lower incidence of affordability issues for owners, this condition is welcome news for most but not all seniors.

Tenure

Home ownership is very pronounced among households in Renfrew County (75%). This trend is higher among seniors as 81.6% are owners and of those, most do not have a mortgage (75%). Senior renters account for the balance of households (18.3%) and most live in market rent housing (80.2%). For older seniors (75+), the share of ownership is slightly lower while the share of renters is slightly higher. It is worthwhile noting that over 40% of all rented dwellings in the County (4,300+ units) are in non-traditional forms such as single or semi-detached houses. Because these forms are not purpose-built,

¹ Core need is a measure that has historically been used to assess housing need based on three parameters; affordability, suitability and adequacy. While CMHC has since discontinued use of this measure, it has relevance in comparing historical housing needs.

they can be more prone to conversion back to ownership. The high reliance on these non-traditional forms means there is less tenure security for renters who live there, including seniors.

Ownership market

Based on recent sales activity, there has been a continued escalation in house prices and in particular, a high demand for waterfront property. A lower inventory of available homes, sustained demand and low interest rates is creating upward pressure on house prices – a trend that is being seen provincially. And while there is some uncertainty in the market due to COVID-19, these price trends are showing no sign of changing. Interestingly, dwelling values for older senior owners (75+) tend to be lower than average which may be indicative of older housing stock.

Rental Market

In the rental market, upward price trends have also been noted and rents have been increasing faster than the rate of inflation. Based on most recent County-wide figures², average market rents are as follows:

- Bachelor - \$570
- One bedroom - \$707
- Two bedroom - \$838
- Three+ bedrooms - \$926
- Overall average - \$786

While these figures reflect County-wide averages, there is considerable variance within the local market. These figures show higher rents in the south part of the County. However, these figures only reflect purpose-built rental units and as previously noted, at least 40% of the rented stock in the County is informal in nature.

Likewise, most current vacancy rates for purpose built units across the County is in the order of 2.2%, trending downward from prior years. As with rents, there are considerable local variations in vacancy rates. A balanced market is considered to be 3% and where vacancy rates are higher, the market is considered oversupplied and where lower, the market is considered undersupplied. While the data for the purpose built market is limited, the downward trend in vacancy rates suggests that the market is undersupplied. The fact that market rents are increasing at above-average rates at the same time further signals that supply is not keeping pace with demand. The sizable component of non-traditional units in the rental stock further underscores this trend.

Production trends

New housing construction has continued County-wide at a moderate rate, averaging about 125 new start per year over the last 5 years, although there has been a recent upturn in annual figures. However, the majority of this housing production has been single detached homes. Few ownership options are coming on-line in terms of semi-detached, row or townhouse forms which tend to more

² Rents are based on a custom tabulation by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MMAH) using CMHC Rental Market Report data for 2017.

affordable. In addition, very little in the way of condominium development has occurred. In terms of purpose-built rental units, production has been historically quite modest. In the past few years, there has been a moderate increase in activity but it's unclear if that trend will continue.

Community Housing

Within the rental market, there is a component of housing stock that is inherently affordable. Community housing primarily provides units with rents that are geared to household income, although it also offers some units at rents just below market levels. Across the county there is a total inventory of about 1,300 units, 978 of which are operated by the Renfrew County Housing Corporation (RCHC) and the balance being operated by six different community housing providers. More than 100 of these units are specifically dedicated for seniors, although seniors do have access to all units based on standard eligibility criteria.

Given increases in market rents and a tendency to lower average incomes, demand for these community housing units remains high. Waiting lists have continued to grow over the last five years and with a decline in unit turnover, it is taking longer for those on the wait list to get a placement. While this is a primary form of housing assistance for households in need, there are other options available for seeking assistance including rent supplement assistance, home renovations grants/loans, etc³. However, there continues to be high demand for these alternative forms of assistance and funding for these initiatives is limited

Seniors-oriented housing:

Apart from typical market, community or other special needs housing, there are forms of housing which are specifically geared to seniors. These housing facilities include structured services/supports and cater to seniors with higher care needs.

Retirement homes provide accommodations as well as basic services to assist residents, available on both a package and a la carte basis. Services and amenities vary considerably as do prices for this form of accommodation. In Renfrew County there are a total of 12 retirement homes, situated in 6 communities, all of which are private operators. It is estimated that some 855 beds/units are provided through these facilities.

For seniors with more elevated care needs, long term care homes (LTCHs) provide accommodation, services and 24/7 nursing care. Like retirement homes, services and amenities will vary considerably by home. Likewise prices will also vary, although there are subsidized beds available to eligible households. Within Renfrew County, there are 9 LTCH facilities that provide some 782 long term care beds in 6 different communities. Two of these facilities are owned/operated by the County. There are an additional 72 LTCH beds planned or under development. These include:

- The Grove (Arnprior) – expansion from 60 to 96 beds (net 36 new beds)
- Marionhill (Pembroke) – expansion from 131 to 160 beds (net 29 new beds)

³ Other assistance programs include Ontario Renovates, Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit, emergency minor home repair, and the homelessness prevention program (often use by seniors for utility arrears).

- Valley Manor (Barry's Bay) – redevelopment from 89 to 96 beds (net 7 new beds)

2.3. Gaps/emerging issues in housing

Based on the analysis of housing needs and current supply trends, there are some notable issues that seniors face. While overall population will only grow modestly, the number of seniors in the county will continue to grow over the next 20 years due to the general aging of the population. This will create an on-going demand for suitable housing options both in larger population centres in and in areas beyond where the share of seniors will continue to increase above 35%. Despite this need, the production of new units is not yet reflecting this shift as there are limited middle-market and rental housing options coming on line. There is also a lack of purpose-built rental housing, as reflected by lower vacancy rates and rising rents. This has resulted in limited housing options for seniors wanting to downsize or rent.

Given the gradual increase in single person senior households and a general trending to smaller household sizes, there is a need for new housing supply to better address these needs. Affordability is also a concern for a number of seniors, especially those who are renters, and these issues tend to be even more pronounced for older seniors (75+). Lower average incomes, growing social assistance caseloads and longer wait times to access community housing further underscore this need. For those seniors needing access to special needs or care-oriented housing, there are also issues. The supply of special needs housing is limited and while there are a range of retirement and long term care homes in the county, demand for this accommodation remains high. While additional beds are coming on-line, these represent a modest increase to the overall supply. There is also a tendency for these beds to be concentrated in larger population centres within the county. Affordability concerns also exist, especially for retirement home options. Additional care-oriented housing supply will need to increase to respond to these gaps, having regard for price and location.

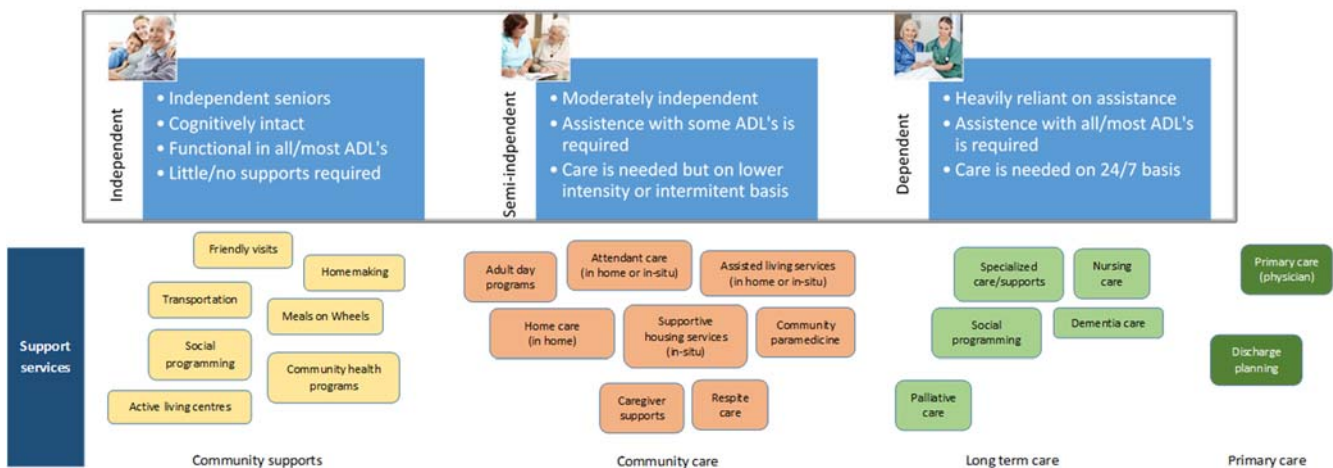
3. Seniors Services

Like the housing market, there are a wide range of related supports and services available in the community to help sustain quality of life. These are particularly relevant to seniors who tend to require differing and more intensive levels of support for activities of daily living (ADLs) as they age. As the intensity of these supports increase, they are intrinsically linked to more specialized housing options because the supports are needed help to maintain a stable living environment. While demand for seniors services is primarily a product of a households need for supports, demand can also be influenced by preferences or the availability, accessibility and affordability of services/supports.

3.1. The continuum of care

Like housing, supports and services for seniors correlate with the level of independence that they enjoy. These supports cover a broad spectrum, ranging from modest living enhancements to intensive, on-going levels of care for those who are entirely dependent. By situating these support options along a continuum, it is easier to visualize the range of service options that are typically available in relation to level of independence (see Figure 6).

Figure 6



Seniors who are independent have a range of support options which are primarily geared to enhancing their quality of life. These community supports include services geared to social programming or healthy/active living. Additional supports in the form of friendly visits, meals, homemaking and transportation are also available. These are supports which seniors can choose to access and are intended to help maintain their independence.

Seniors who are semi-independent require more intensive forms of care that can be provided in-home or in designated settings in the community. These community care options range from adult day programs to home care, attendant care or assisted living services provided in-home. These services may also be offered as part of a designated facility in the community such as supportive housing, group homes or assisted living facilities and retirement residences. Services are also available to support caregivers who provide informal care/supports to family members or friends.

Seniors who are dependent require significant levels of care on an on-going basis. For this reason, services are most commonly offered within a long term care environment. Nursing care, specialized supports (e.g. dementia care) and social programming are typically provided in response to the elevated needs of residents. Palliative care options also fall within this category, whether offered in a community or facility settings. In certain instances, seniors may require higher levels of care through hospitalization in a primary care environment. Discharge planning and respite care services are provided to these seniors to assist in their transition back to the community when/if they are able to do so safely.

It is important to note that the support needs and preferences of seniors can change over time, so their position on the continuum can also change. Because care needs tend to increase over time for seniors, this typically means accessing more intensive services over time as they become more dependent. However, a range of community supports and services are provided to help seniors maintain their independence by aging in place.

3.2. Seniors services and local needs

To better understand the network of local supports and services available for seniors, a more detailed examination of trends and tendencies was undertaken. To do this, a review of seniors support needs was conducted, examining population health characteristics, tendencies and performance metrics. A review of current supports by service category was also undertaken to determine how these align with seniors needs. Based on this analysis, local service gaps and emerging issues in seniors supports were identified. Summary results of this analysis are provided below but additional data tables and reference material can be found in the Technical Appendix report.

As part of this study, a housing and service inventory was developed based on publicly available information. The inventory identified at least 22 different agencies providing services in 36 different locations throughout the county. The inventory also documented the broad range of services and supports these agencies deliver to help seniors age in place. This inventory can be found in the Technical Appendix report.

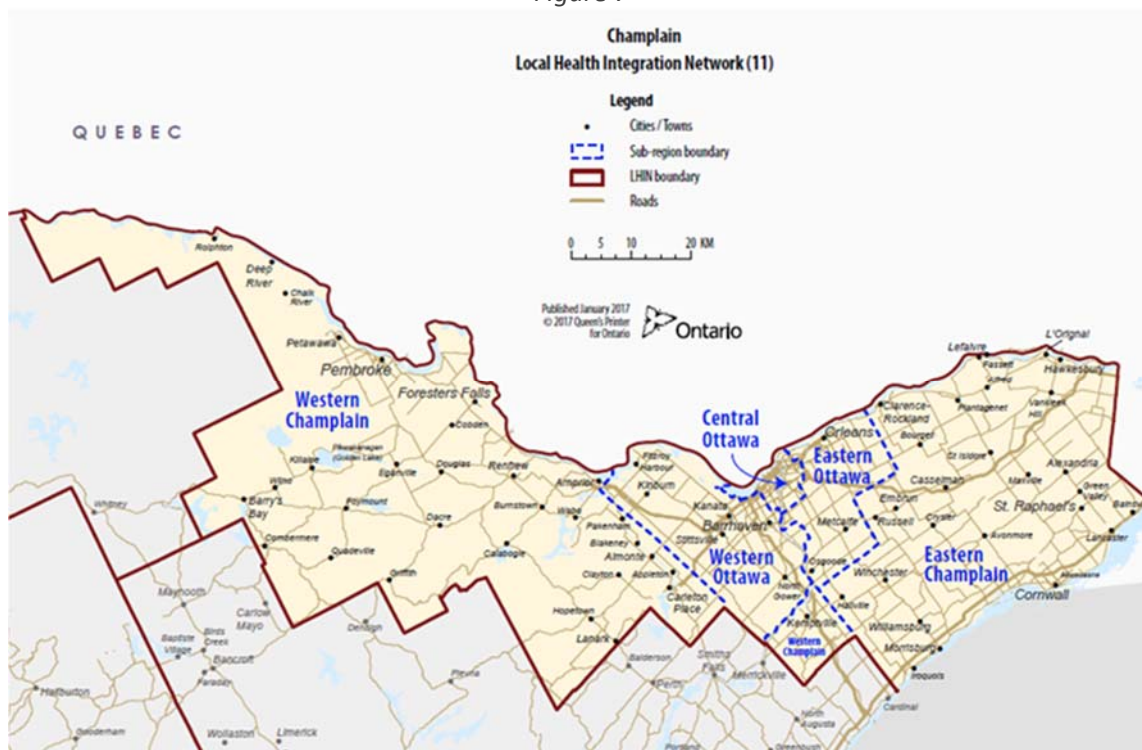
3.2.1. Support needs

Support needs for seniors can more readily be described based on the service categories they fall under. However, an examination of general population health characteristics can help to illustrate the need for these services. Unlike housing data, health needs and trends are largely reported on the basis of Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) boundaries. These LHIN territories cover broad swaths of area and encompass many jurisdictions but do not readily align with discrete municipal boundaries. As such, comparing data at the County level presents a number of changes.

Renfrew County lies within the Champlain LHIN service area. This LHIN area runs from the Quebec boarder and Ottawa River in the east to the St Lawrence River on the south and northward past Algonquin Park (see Figure 7). Along its western boundary, the LHIN includes parts of Leeds Grenville and Lanark counties and all of Renfrew County. This western part of the LHIN comprises the Western

Champlain sub-region, which is a discrete reporting group for LHIN data. While Renfrew County accounts for about 75% of the population of this sub-region, there are other jurisdictions wrapped into this data, including places like Carleton Place, Kemptville and parts of Lanark County. The LHIN also breaks down the Western Champlain sub-region into smaller sub-sub regions but does not regularly report data at this level of geography⁴. This makes extracting or comparing health-related data for Renfrew County quite challenging.

Figure 7



Population Health characteristics

In examining Champlain LHIN datasets, the Western Champlain sub-region has the lowest population density and growth, a higher share of seniors and seniors living alone, and has a more aged population profile when compared to other sub-regions. It also has a higher share of indigenous population, a lower share of recent immigrants and a very high tendency towards English as a primary language. LHIN data also indicates tendencies towards lower incomes and lower educational attainment within the Western sub-region.

By examining Champlain LHIN data at the sub-sub region level, similar trends are noted for those sub-sub areas which comprise Renfrew County. These figures show a higher proportion of seniors, more seniors living alone and more with low incomes when compared with other sub-sub regions. Higher unemployment and lower educational attainment were also noted. From a health perspective, there is a lower rate of falls among seniors in the County but a higher rate of emergency room visits for chronic conditions. Renfrew County has a higher than average rate of emergency room visits for less

⁴ Within the Western Champlain sub-region, there are 6 sub-sub regions, 3 of which together comprise Renfrew County. These sub-sub regions are North Renfrew County, South Renfrew County and Arnprior McNab, Breaside.

or non-urgent needs and for conditions deemed best managed elsewhere. One potential reason for this is the high rate of individuals in the county who do not have a primary care physician (+/- 20%).

3.2.2. Supports and Services

Renfrew County is currently served by 5 hospitals and a myriad of other agencies including:

- 14 Community support service agencies
- 11 Mental Health/addictions agencies
- 8 Family Health team locations
- 2 Community Health Centres

These resources are augmented by telehealth services and a paramedicine program which enables home visit checks by paramedics as part of their community services. With the onset of COVID-19, a specialized pilot program was launched to help support the creation of swabbing centres. This Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (VTAC), enabled early, remote assessment of needs and referrals to appropriate resources, thereby reducing unnecessary visits to emergency departments at local hospitals. This pilot program has been highly successful and there is support in the community for extending this on a more permanent basis to help manage medical intake and support seniors care.

Following is a summary of seniors supports organized by category and reviewed in terms of needs and available services. A more detailed inventory of services by provider and facility can be found in the Technical Appendix report.

Long term care homes (LTCH) Beds and wait list:

As previously noted, there are currently 782 LTCH beds in the county, the largest share of which are located in Pembroke and Renfrew. An additional 72 new beds (net) are coming on line in Arnprior, Pembroke and Barry's Bay. Despite this supply, there is a current waitlist of 844 clients (1st choice)⁵. Demand is greatest for 'basic' beds (80%) and for beds located in Pembroke and Renfrew, especially those at County-owned facilities.

Placement rates from LTCH beds are measures based on the number of days it takes to be placed at the 90th percentile (i.e. based on the experience of 9 out of 10 applicants). Current placement rates are in the order of 1,000 to 1,400 days for 'basic' beds meaning that in addition to sizable wait lists, there can also be considerable waiting periods. Within the county, Deep River appears to have longest wait times (and fewest beds). The overwhelming majority of those on the wait list are currently residing within the Western Champlain sub-region and there are few applicants from outside the Champlain LHIN service area. Placement is done on a priority basis using a scale from 1 (urgent) to 5 (non-urgent). Almost 84% of all placements are under Priority 4a (community high need, ALC or LTCH transfer to 1st choice). More than two thirds of those on the wait list have high/very high needs based

⁵ Applicants for LTCH may select up to 5 homes and different bed types where available (basic, semi-private and private). While the current wait list statistics for LTCH homes in the county reflects a total of 1,375 applicants, this total includes multiple wait list choices.

on MAPLE score assessments. The remaining one third have lesser needs and could be reasonably accommodated with services at home, thereby deferring their need to access LTCH beds.

Retirement Homes

Retirement homes are operated by private owners, providing accommodation and a wide range of services to seniors and adults. There are 12 homes across the County that range in size and scale, providing a total of 855 beds/units. These homes are located in 6 different communities but are most evident in larger population centres. There is a significant concentration of beds/units in Pembroke (5 homes, accounting for roughly 54% of all beds/units).

Costs for these services vary by operator, by accommodation offered and by services used. As private operators, fee information is not readily accessible unless made available in the public domain. Based on typical regional costs, average monthly fees for accommodation and services can range from \$2,800 to over \$5,000⁶. Stakeholders indicated concerns about the affordability of this accommodation for seniors and the need for more affordable forms of this type of housing.

Community Care Programs

This suite of programs includes services delivered both in-home or in designated facilities. There are a wide range of funded care programs with a variety of available support services, from basic assistance to more forms of complex care. Prospective clients can be referred and admitted for multiple programs or services. Roughly 80% of all clients that are currently referred are admitted to funded programs. Most common reasons for non-admittance included inability to determine eligibility, client/family refusal of service or ineligible local service. Of those referred, only about 37% are considered chronic or complex, which suggests there is a continued ability to support aging in place through community care programming. Home care is the most referred program within the county, although other top service referrals were for nursing, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. In the case of seniors, top service referrals are similar with nursing, physiotherapy and personal support.

⁶ Based on CMHC's 2019 Seniors Housing Survey, costs vary depending on unit size and service packages but overall average costs for Eastern Ontario were in the order of \$3,200 per month.

The Home Care Program is the most subscribed among the suite of Community Care programs. There were over 4,300 home care clients in 2019/20 within Renfrew County (all ages). The majority of these clients were seniors and most senior clients are located in the North Renfrew sub-sub area (+/- 50%). In terms of wait times, about 57% of clients received service within 5 days. Median wait times were 4 days but wait times of 50 days were experienced at the 90th percentile (i.e. for every 9 out of 10 individuals). So while many recipients get services within a week, there are some that have extended waits. Within Renfrew County, higher client counts are in the north (about 50%) despite generally shorter wait times.

In-Home Care (typical services):

- Nursing
- Personal support such as bathing and getting dressed
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational therapy
- Speech-language therapy
- Social work
- Nutritional counseling
- Medical supplies and equipment
- Information about and referral to additional health and social services in the community

Community Support Services

Another suite of programs, geared more towards semi-independent or independent households focuses on community supports. These programs encompass both supported living options as well as community-oriented services.

In the case of supported living programs, these services are delivered by agencies in the community on site and include:

- Adult Day Programs
- Assisted Living Services
- Supportive Housing
- Short Stay Care (Respite)

While the majority of costs for these programs are funded, there are nominal user charges for some services. Waiting list data is limited but based on LHIN reports, there are minor wait times as follows:

- Adult Day Programs – 2 clients currently waiting (out of 9 agencies in total)
- Assisted Living/Supportive Housing – 25 clients currently waiting

In the case of support in the community programs, these services are delivered directly to clients in the community by local agencies. While program funding does assist in covering costs, there typically are modest user charges for these many of these services which include:

- Meal delivery and dining programs⁷
- Homemaking and home help
- Transportation services
- Community dining
- Friendly visits

⁷ The Meals on Wheels program in parts of Renfrew County has recently been consolidated under Carefor, serving mainly the Pembroke and Petawawa areas.

No centralized wait lists are maintained for these programs. Instead, these are managed locally by providers. Indications are that wait times are uncommon and that where they occur, these are short term occurrences during peak periods.

Caregivers

In addition to the formal system of services and support, it is important to note that many senior households benefit from informal caregiver services such as partners, family members and friends. These supports are often the first layer of assistance in maintaining a quality of life that enables seniors to age in place. Where seniors do not have the benefit of this assistance or where these caregivers are unable to continue providing assistance, a greater reliance is placed on the formal support system which may or may not be able to adequately address these needs.

While these informal supports do not have a cost to seniors per se, they do impact on the caregivers providing the supports. This can be especially challenging for aging partners in senior households who own needs may increase over time. There is recognition of this less visible resources within the support system and there are some programs geared to supporting caregivers by offering things like respite care. That said, it must be recognized that where these informal supports are unable to address needs, there would be increasing pressure on the formal system to fill this void. The absence of supports can then lead to things like unwarranted hospital visits or premature admissions to LTCH, placing additional pressures on the health care system. Of greater concern is where support needs go unmet, leading to more serious deteriorations in health for seniors.

3.3. Gaps/emerging issues in seniors services

In Renfrew County, there are a wide range of available supports and services that are geared to assisting seniors. Generally speaking, the population health in the county is consistent with other rural areas found in the Champlain LHIN. In the case of most service and supports, the county has better than average service levels when compared with the Champlain LHIN as a whole.

There is a considerable supply of LTCH beds in the community and additional beds under development. However, a substantial wait list for beds still exists and there are lengthy wait times for accessing these beds based on typical placement rates. The beds also tend to be concentrated in larger population centres. Given the assessed needs of those on the LTCH wait lists, about 30% have lower priority needs and could be served at home with suitable supports. The supply of retirement homes beds in the county is also considerable but again, these tend to be concentrated mainly in larger centres, especially Pembroke, and there are barriers to affordability.

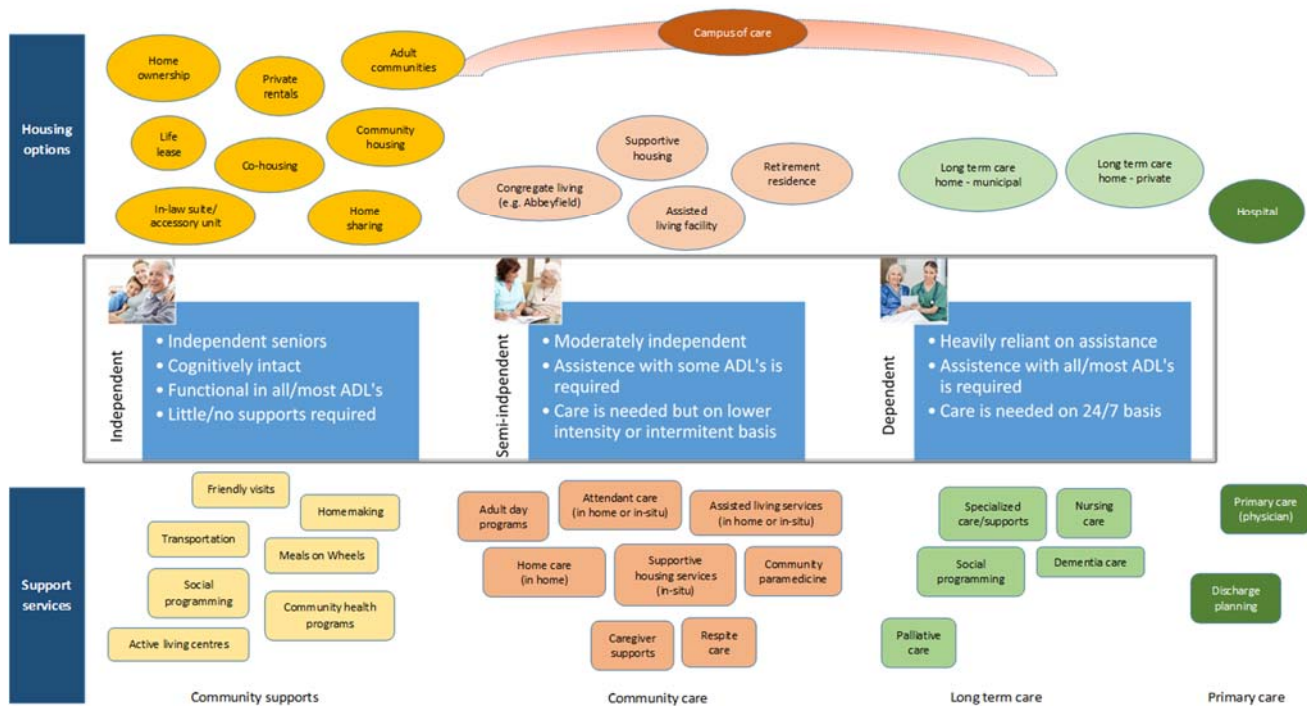
Residents of the county consume considerable community care services, especially seniors. The most common program within this suite of services is home care. Average wait times for many clients is considered satisfactory but there are some clients who encounter extended waits for service. Supported living programs are more modest in scale and there are limited options available within the county to address needs. Community support programs are well-subscribed and typically do not

encounter wait times, although data is not centrally maintained for the service group. While there is a spectrum of formal services available, there is a high reliance on caregivers in the community to help maintain independence. Where these informal supports are not sustainable or unavailable, it falls to the formal system of supports and services to address these needs.

4. The Service System

When considering seniors accommodation needs, it's clear that there is an intrinsic link between housing and support services. This link may be less pronounced in the case of independent seniors but grows more and more evident as seniors become dependent on supports and services to maintain their quality of life. By mapping both seniors housing and supports in a single continuum, it is possible to better visualize these interconnections as a system (see Figure 8).

Figure 8



Mapping the system of housing and supports in this way also helps to situate where those involved in the provision of housing and services connect within the system. As with any system, it is important to visualize the bigger picture in order to understand the system components. For delivery partners, it is critical to understand roles, relationships and linkages. This can help to foster collaboration and effectiveness among service partners. For consumers or their advocates, it is also important to see the system mapped and understand how to navigate it in order to best address their needs. Perhaps most importantly, this systems approach can help to align stakeholders around a common framework where there is no one single partner managing the overall system. In the case of seniors housing and related services, it is this network of partners from many intersecting disciplines that is responsible for addressing community needs. While certain partners may have more prominent roles, it is the collective alignment and efforts of these partners that result in how well seniors needs are met locally. The following sections discuss these roles, relationships and priorities in greater detail.

4.1. County role in seniors housing

The County of Renfrew has a substantial role in facilitating housing outcomes for seniors in the community. However, this role actually involves a number of disciplines, each with varying degrees of connection. To be clear, the County is not responsible for managing the seniors housing and supports system in the same way it is legislatively obliged to manage the Housing and Homelessness system. The County role is less defined in the case of seniors housing and supports, primarily because of the overarching responsibility within the health care sector for funding dedicated seniors facilities and community care.

That said, the County has a number of important roles that intersect with the seniors housing and supports system. These include:

- *Service system manager for housing and homelessness* – Under Provincial legislation, the County is a designated a local Service Manager and in that role, is responsible for funding and administration of community housing. This function also obliges the creation of a plan to address housing and homeless issues through local policies and initiatives. A structural part of this function also involves the delivery of senior government funding programs for things like affordable housing development, renovation and repair programs, and initiatives aimed at eradicating homelessness. Within this role, there are considerable intersections with seniors housing needs.
- *Affordable housing provider* – The County also has an active role in the provision of housing as the largest owner and landlord of community housing in the county. Renfrew County Housing Corporation, a County-owned corporation, manages 978 units in 9 communities across the region (excluding rent supplements). In addition to providing affordable accommodations for seniors and families, these RCHC assets also provide leveraging opportunities for revitalization and new housing development.
- *LTCH owner/operator* – The County owns and operates two of the largest long term care homes in the region, situated in Pembroke and Renfrew. These facilities provide 338 beds for seniors requiring care in a 24/7 environment.
- *Support services provider* – In an affiliated role, the County also delivers a number of community health and support programs to seniors in the community from its LTCH facilities.
- *Paramedicine provider* – Through its Provincially-mandated role as a provider of paramedic services, the County delivers emergency medical services. Given the rural and remote nature of its service area, the County has expanded this role to include community paramedicine outreach services to residents, including seniors. This role has recently expanded through a pilot initiative to include services for seniors with special requirements and awaiting placement in LTCH facilities.
- *Land use planning* – Under the auspices of the Planning Act, the County is a regulator of land use, establishing housing and land use policy for the service area via its Official Plan. The County also provides support to a number of local municipalities in land use policy and approvals. In this role, the County has the ability to foster regulatory policies that help to provide, protect and promote housing options for seniors that are appropriate and affordable.

- *Development facilitator* – Under authorities in the Planning Act and the Municipal Act, the County also has the ability to use municipal tools to create a more conducive development atmosphere. Using an economic development lens, the County has the ability to leverage land, services, taxation and approvals authorities to support housing objectives for seniors. In this way, it can act as a development catalyst to help spur innovative and affordable housing solutions.

When considering the development of a Seniors Housing Strategy, one of the more relevant initiatives that the County has taken to date is the creation of a Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan. Recently updated last year, the recommendations in this plan are highly relevant to the issues that have been identified in this report regarding seniors housing and support needs. The recommended actions and initiatives in the plan also tap into the various roles described above that the County can play to facilitate housing solutions. A yearly report card on housing and housing programs is also produced which tracks progress on key housing indicators.

The County clearly has a number of important roles it can play within the seniors housing and supports system. As a facilitator, it can use its authorities and levers to help effect positive outcomes, collaborating with system partners and stakeholders. However, the health care sector has a more fundamental role in funding, supporting and guiding the system. To be effective, the system relies on its constituent partners to work collaboratively and with focused intent. In the absence of a designated system manager, this collective leadership among partners is critical factor for success.

4.2. Community perspectives and aspirations

Community stakeholders play a significant role in the system of housing and supports that serve seniors. During the study process, a range of consultations took place with a variety of stakeholders to solicit their views on issues, opportunities, roles and priorities with regards to housing and supports for seniors. These individuals represented a broad cross-section of views, including housing providers, care and service providers, community agencies, health service administrators, municipal officials and seniors advocates. While participation was tempered by the impact of COVID-19, the feedback provided through these sessions was thoughtful and robust.

Feedback from stakeholders highlighted a number of issues as summarized below. A more detailed summary of stakeholders and their feedback can be found in the Technical Appendix report.

Needs/Gaps

Stakeholders were asked to identify the most significant needs/gaps in the housing and supports system for seniors

- There is a lack of appropriate housing options for seniors who want to move/downsize from their traditional homes
- Given the choice, seniors want to remain in their home as long as possible rather than moving to a care facility but to do that, they need a wider suite of supports and services

- Demand for assisted and LTC-type housing facilities continues to be significant and there is a desire to see more of this type of housing, including areas outside large population centres
- Challenges continue to exist in the local health care sector due to a lack of primary care physicians and a general shortage of qualified staff
- Affordability continues to be a challenge for senior households, both in terms of the cost of housing and the costs to access necessary services and supports
- Transportation continues to be an issue for seniors who need to access basic services, shop and attend medical appointments, especially for those in more rural/remote locales

Opportunities

Stakeholders were asked to identify opportunities or innovations to help expand housing and support options for seniors

- Additional investment in affordable rental housing is required and the private sector needs to be more involved given limited recent rental development
- There are opportunities to use surplus lands for senior housing and to explore creative partnerships to develop facilities where a range of services are available in one location (e.g. continuum of care campuses)
- There occasionally are vacant spaces in retirement homes and there may be opportunities to utilize these spaces for higher care needs on a temporary basis.
- Having more services where seniors are would make them accessible and reduce reliance on transportation – creating or building on service hubs in more rural areas is a way to do this
- Similarly, paramedicine initiatives have proven successful in bringing services to seniors at home in more rural locations and this could be expanded to help them age in place
- While there are a range of agencies providing services and supports, there is a general lack of awareness about them
- Likewise, clarifying and coordinating the roles of these agencies would help the system to be more effective
- There are a number of interesting initiatives being tried in local jurisdictions but sharing of this knowledge is piecemeal – expanding awareness of successes and innovations would be useful

Roles within the system

Stakeholders were asked to identify roles they felt were most appropriate for various stakeholders within the system

- They felt the County had a number roles it could play to help support the system by:
 - Being a leader in setting a vision
 - Acting as a housing catalyst using incentives like surplus land
 - Using the policy levers it has a land use regulator
 - Advocating to senior government for suitable funds/programs

- Being a facilitator in connecting partners
- They acknowledged that community-based agencies and stakeholders had an important role to fulfill in making the system more effective
 - Collaboration and leveraging among community partners is critical
 - Improving system awareness and navigation is essential both for stakeholders and for consumers of seniors services
 - They indicated a clear desire to get the private sector more engaged in solutions by building bridges to create awareness, foster partnerships and spark meaningful investment

Priorities for action

Stakeholders were asked to identify what actions could have the most significant impact in addressing seniors needs

- Stabilizing and supporting people where they are
- Expanding housing options that are appropriate and affordable
- Broadening LTCH, retirement care and home care capacity
- Extending services to rural locales via service nodes, paramedicine, etc.
- Coordinating system planning
- Allowing flexibility in the system to accommodate temporary needs
- Engaging the community and private sector in solutions

As stakeholders in the system, the views expressed are important voices to consider in moving towards a system that is more responsive to community needs. Many of the observations made are consistent with the trends and analysis discussed in earlier parts of this report. As the Seniors Housing Strategy is formalized, it will be important to continue community dialogue to build support and focus efforts on key priorities.

4.3. Provincial, Regional and Local influences

Beyond community stakeholders, there are government and affiliated agencies which can impact on the system of housing and supports that serve seniors. Whether directly or indirectly, the actions that these system influencers take can have consequences on the local system, intended or not. The level of engagement by these influencers can also impact on implementation of the Seniors Housing Strategy by the County. Following is a brief discussion of influencing factors.

Provincial level

The Province of Ontario has responsibility in a number of areas that impact on seniors, whether through legislation, standards, programs or service delivery. The Province's actions in a few notable areas has the potential to impact on the Seniors Housing Strategy:

- *LTCH reforms* – Prior to COVID-19, the government had launched initiatives to bolster the supply and quality of long term care beds across Ontario and three projects within Renfrew County received funding commitments in that regard. With the advent of COVID-19, it is anticipated that more structural reforms may occur regarding how services are delivered through LTCH facilities and to seniors in the community. This could have a direct impact on the County as an LTCH operator.
- *Modernization of Community Housing* – Over the course of the last two years, the government has signaled its intent to modernize the community housing framework that is embedded in legislation (Housing Services Act). Certain steps have been taken to provide greater flexibility to Service Managers and to clarify post-mortgage relationships between the Province, Service Managers and community housing providers. However, implementing regulations that define the exact nature and extent of these changes have yet to be tabled. These changes could impact on funding, administrative flexibility and obligations with regards to the County, RCHC and local community housing provider.
- *Planning Act and housing-related legislative amendments* – With the enactment of Bill 108 in 2019, the government amended a range of legislation in an effort to facilitate and streamline housing development. These changes involved a number of housing-related themes including additional residential units, inclusionary zoning, development charges and community benefit charges. Municipalities are now expected to have regard for or implement the requirements of these statutes within their local planning regime. These will have implications on planning functions and municipal charges both for the County and local municipalities in the service area.
- *Integrated seniors strategy* – The government has been working on developing a strategy that takes a more holistic approach to seniors by collaborating across ministry areas of responsibility. This approach is welcome by stakeholders who have continued to underscore the challenges that the current silo approach has fostered. The underpinnings of this strategy were set out in a 2017 policy paper entitled “*Aging with confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors*”. The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility is helping to facilitate its completion and while a release date for this strategy is unknown, it could have positive implications if it fosters more collaborative solutions across Provincial ministries.

Regional level

At the regional level, there are key changes in the administration and delivery of health care services that have the potential to significantly impact on care and supports for seniors. While these generally involve the provincial health care system, they fall within the purview of regional agencies/ authorities.

- *Business transformation of the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)* – In the last few years, there have been marked shifts in the delivery of health services by LHINs. Initially, this involved the retraction of Community Care Access Centres into the Champlain LHIN structure, resulting in changes to home care administration. Within the last year, the province announced consolidation of the LHINs around the province into a handful of large administrative units. As

this process continues, there is considerable uncertainty about changes that may occur to funding, delivery and administration of health care as a result of these service consolidations.

- *Formation of Ontario Health Teams (OHTs)* – As a direct result of LHIN restructuring, a more localized administrative structure is being instituted at the local level across the province. As a conglomerate of local health stakeholders, it is intended that these teams would provide a more flexible and responsive service framework for administering local health care. To date, an OHT has not been identified for Renfrew County but as with the transformation of the LHIN, there is considerable uncertainty about the future of how services will be funded and administered within this new regime. Given the lack of clarity stakeholders have cited in the current seniors housing and support system, there is an opportunity to help resolve these concerns by working with the OHT to help shape effective local service delivery.
- *Virtual Triage Assessment Centre (VTAC)/paramedicine initiatives* – Local partnerships launched this year as a result of COVID-19 have advanced the notion of virtual care in the community. While paramedicine initiatives were already in place, these have yielded new pilots including paramedicine directly targeted to those seniors in the community awaiting placement in LTCH facilities. With the expansion of initiatives like this, it is possible to extend the impact of seniors care and supports further out into the community, especially for those less mobile.

County level

While the County roles in seniors housing and supports have been previously identified in Section 4.1, there are some specific county-level policy considerations that the Seniors Housing Strategy will need to continue having regard for:

- *County Strategic Plan* - The County's strategic plan sets out a clear direction for priorities and guides the actions of the organization within the five year horizon. The current plan underscores the importance of advocating for issues of importance to the community.
- *Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan* – Revised in 2019, this plan is highly relevant to the objectives of the Seniors Housing Strategy. Coordinating recommended actions by the County and community stakeholders will help to ensure non-duplication of efforts.
- *Service Delivery Review* – An internal corporate process is currently underway to re-examine delivery of County services. Depending on the outcome of this review, there may be implications for the Seniors Housing Strategy, given that these recommendations impact across services areas within the corporation.

Municipal level

Local municipalities are responsible for zoning and local land use approvals which can have a direct impact on housing development. When making land use decisions, municipalities must also have regard for the County's Official Plan (in most cases) or their own Official Plan policies (in the case of larger local municipalities) as well as the Planning Act. Given that housing markets are regional in nature, it is important to have a consistent local policy regime in order to encourage a range of

suitable housing options and attract residential investment. Coordinating land use planning policies related to housing at both the County and local level can go a long way to achieving that goal.

4.4. Implications for the local service system

Based on stakeholder consultations and an examination of system influences, a number of challenges have been identified which could impact seniors housing and supports on a system-wide basis. In developing strategies for seniors housing, due consideration must be given to overcoming or managing these challenges.

Housing-related issues

- Limited program resources to foster housing development at the most affordable levels
- Lack of investment or interest to address gaps within the private housing market
- Uncertainty around the impacts of modernization on community housing
- Addressing housing needs equitably across a wide and diverse geographic service area
- Disparity in land use policies to support a range of housing options across local municipalities

Support and service-related issues

- Concentration of certain services/ facilities within larger population centres of the county
- Inability to correlate functions, resources and outcomes across the support system
- Lack of overall system coordination and clarity in leadership
- Uncertainty in the health care sector due to evolving administrative and delivery structures
- Inconsistency and availability of local-level data to support system planning

5. Expanding Seniors Housing and Services

5.1. Setting a strategic direction for the County

The primary objective for the Seniors Housing Strategy at the outset of this study was to expand housing options for seniors by looking beyond just the traditional 'brick and mortar' solutions and by exploring the continuum of care for seniors in the local community.

Based on the background analysis and stakeholder consultations undertaken, a number of issue themes have emerged:

- There is a lack of appropriate housing options for seniors and the gaps in the market make it difficult for them to move on from their traditional homes
- Seniors prefer to remain independent at home despite their changing needs but require a wider continuum of supports to enable that
- There is continued demand for facilities that provide elevated levels of care to seniors (e.g. assisted living, retirement homes and LTCH facilities)
- While a number of opportunities exist for responding to seniors housing needs, taking advantage of these opportunities can be challenging
- Within the seniors housing and supports system, there are service coordination and navigation issues which hamper seniors access to care and supports

While solutions to these issue themes must be found within the seniors housing and support system, the Seniors Housing Strategy does provide a unique opportunity for the County to articulate how it may contribute to these solutions as a principal partner. Based on the emerging issue areas, a series of strategic directions have been identified to help frame the strategy. These include:

- Expanding suitable housing options for seniors
- Improving on support options that enable seniors to age in place appropriately
- Increasing the supply of higher level care facilities within the county
- Creating the right environment to identify, facilitate and capitalize on opportunities
- Making the seniors housing and supports system more responsive and intuitive

5.2. Opportunities for expanding seniors options

A primary mandate of this study is to seek options for expanding the supply of housing options for seniors by looking beyond traditional solutions. Based on current practices, background analysis and stakeholder feedback, a number of potential opportunities were identified for expanding options. By using both traditional and less conventional tactics, these opportunities have the potential to improve housing and support outcomes for seniors. Following is a discussion of these opportunities.

Build on the work of the Ten Year Housing & Homelessness Plan – In 2019, the County adopted a revised Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan. Based on a detailed analysis of the housing market, a series of actions were identified to help address gaps in the housing and homelessness system. A number of these actions are highly relevant to seniors issues in terms of expanding

affordable housing options, leveraging municipal tools and promoting a more integrated system approach for responding to needs. Rather than duplicating efforts, the Seniors Housing Strategy can align, build on and complement these actions.

Maximize the use of program funding – As a designated Service Manager for a range of social services, the County has a direct role in administering senior government programs. This includes funding for homelessness services, housing assistance, home renovations, community housing and affordable housing development. Within the seniors support system, there are also a range of programs and services available for care services and supports. Fully utilizing these program resources can have a significant impact on addressing local needs. Strategically leveraging them in concert with other tools and resources can amplify this impact.

Extend services to the community – Through its paramedic services, the County has been an innovator in extending services to seniors in the community. The paramedicine program has had a particular impact in addressing these needs in more rural areas where services and transportation may not be as readily available or accessible. The use of the VTAC partnership during COVID-19 has only underscored the value of this approach. A new pilot program to help support seniors awaiting LTCH placement has also just been launched. Building on the success of these initiatives, there are opportunities to more permanently extend services and supports for seniors into the community.

Leveraging municipal and community properties – One of the primary tools municipalities have to foster development is land. While the County owns a number of properties, it's not clear how suitable these parcels are for addressing housing needs. Developing a formal inventory of properties would help to identify lands most appropriate for this purpose. The County also has the opportunity to directly leverage RCHC's considerable housing assets to preserve and expand the supply of affordable community housing. Local municipalities, public agencies and community partners may also have surplus properties which could be suitable to support housing objectives. By collaborating with these partners and strategically leveraging properties, there could be a significant impact on creating additional housing options for seniors.

Expand existing facilities to create continuum of care campuses – In a number of jurisdictions, continuum of care campuses have been or are being developed to address local seniors housing and care need. Typically situated on larger tracts of land and anchored by LTCH or retirement facilities, these campuses provide an array of housing options and continuum of supports in a community-like setting. This design is purposeful in promoting aging in place by enabling seniors to access differing levels of care as their needs change, all without leaving their community. These campuses also promote socialization as a way to mitigate the isolation that seniors can experience, especially those living alone. The County has potential to expand senior housing options adjacent to its two owned LTCH facilities, either on land it owns or through strategic partnerships. By facilitating the development of campus of care facilities at these locations, the County could build on services already offered by the LTCH facilities and expand housing options for senior in these communities.

Establish/expand service hubs – Because campuses of care provide a wide array of accommodations and services, these large tract developments tend to be situated in more established population centres. In more rural settings, there is less of a population base to support campuses like this. However, there are many examples of hubs or nodes in smaller locales that act as focal points for local services and supports. One local example is the North Renfrew Long Term Care centre in Deep River which provides services at and out to the community through its facility. Facilities like this tend to form around a critical service mass and can be anchored by a range of potential community partners, whether housing providers, community agencies, care facilities or support service organizations. Regardless of the anchor, these hubs can have a beneficial impact by establishing a focal service point in more rural communities. Creating or expanding these hubs can also help to extend services seniors might otherwise have to seek in larger population centres.

Create a more attractive development environment – Municipalities are charged with the responsibility to regulate land use under the Planning Act. They exercise these duties through a regime of local policies, plans and approvals processes involving Official Plans, zoning bylaw, site plan control, etc. While these tools are regulatory in nature, they also can be used in more encouraging ways to help foster outcomes that are of benefit to the community. This is especially true in the case of housing where there are opportunities to protect, promote and encourage development that addresses local needs. Given the various jurisdictions involved at the County and local level, having clarity and consistency around housing policy helps to create a more attractive development environment, one that can foster better housing outcomes for seniors.

Use municipal tools to incent development – In addition to land use regulation and property, municipalities also have other tools at their disposal to help facilitate housing development. These can include development tools like community improvement grants, brownfield incentives and inclusionary zoning. These can also include financial tools like fee waivers, development charges exemptions, community benefit charges and property tax relief. Under the Municipal Act, municipalities may also use capital facility authorities to help facilitate the development of community facilities such as affordable housing. Strategic use of these tools, when coupled with supporting land use regulation and property, can help the County and local municipalities to spur development that better meets housing needs for seniors and the broader community.

Build on community partnerships – The seniors housing and support system is highly reliant on the collaboration of partners to help address local needs, especially given that there is no single entity charged with managing the overall system. There are clear challenges to this collaboration, due to the fragmented nature of funding and accountability structures that exist across both housing and health care sectors. This is especially true for seniors services which intersects between the two sectors. Expanding on existing relationships and building new ones is an important way to bridge this divide. This is especially true for the private sector where there are increasing call to expand the housing discussion with them. As a principal partner, the County has an important role in advancing these partnership discussions.

Influence local health system realignment – There is also a unique opportunity to foster improvement in the local health care system. Through LHIN consolidations and the formation of

Ontario Health Teams (OHTs), there are changes coming in the way health care services and funding are delivered. In light of the fragmentation that currently exists within the system, these changes could present a welcome opportunity to clarify, organize and improve the system for the benefit of both stakeholders and service consumers. This is especially true for seniors in the case of community care and supports. As a principal partner in the seniors housing and supports system, the County has an important opportunity to influence service delivery changes through the designated OHT.

Work towards a more responsive/transparent system – As noted, the seniors housing and supports system does not have a single entity charged with managing the overall system. The fragmentation in the current system has made it difficult for partners to connect and collaborate. It has also created challenges for seniors and their advocates to navigate the system. Improving system awareness, access and effectiveness would make it more responsive to seniors needs. Health service realignment provides a unique opportunity to help clarify the system for the benefit of stakeholders and service users alike. That said, coordination and clarity can and should be facilitated by partners within the system regardless. The County, as a principal partner, is in a unique position help advance this dialogue through the Senior Housing Strategy.

5.3. Other possible options/opportunities

In addition to the range of opportunities already cited, there are additional options which could be pursued by individual partners to expand seniors housing options. These were identified through scanning and reflect some options raised through stakeholder consultations. While there are certainly a wide range of possibilities which could pursue, some of the more relevant examples are summarized here. More detailed descriptions of these and other options are provided in the Technical Appendix report.

Life lease housing – Typically operated by non-profit organizations, life lease housing is an equity-based model geared to seniors where a person essentially buys an ownership interest in a housing unit. In addition to the one time equity payment, they pay an on-going monthly fee for maintenance and services. Where the purchaser passes on or moves out of the facility, the ownership interest is purchased back by the corporation on a reduced pro-rated basis. Life leases are usually attractive to seniors who have equity and are looking for a smaller home without the maintenance responsibilities of owning a home.

Cluster housing - Cluster housing (also termed village communities) is a development where small homes are situated in groupings in close proximity to each other to form a small community or village. Residents typically rent the homes and share services that are available to those in the community. Through this clustering, services can be delivered to a number of households in an efficient way. This approach is well-suited to seniors seeking services and social interaction.

Shared housing - Shared home ownership is one option for seniors who are independent but who would benefit from having assistance with shopping, meal preparation and general housekeeping. This option is most appropriate for seniors who would like to own their own home but seek the benefit and socialization of a small group living environment. As a shared responsibility, all

residents have a role in making decisions and paying expenses (e.g. utilities, taxes, insurance, general household costs). Owners have their own rooms and share common areas like washrooms, the kitchen, dining room and living room. A variant of this approach is co-housing where like-minded seniors band together to live in a community setting as individual owners but with some form of shared common space dedicated to and owned by the collective.

Abbeyfield – Abbeyfield Homes are based around a chapter model of an international movement. These non-profit homes are typically established by converting older, larger homes into a congregate group living environment. Residents have their own private room but share common areas such as the kitchen, dining room and living room. Housekeeping and meals are provided by a house manager and costs (including accommodation, meals and housekeeping) are shared by residents. Seniors who choose this model like the affordable group living environment and sense of stability that it provides.

Home Sharing – Home sharing is where a home owner provides housing to housemate in exchange for rent, assistance with housekeeping or light maintenance. In some jurisdictions, matching services are provided to help connect interested seniors with prospective renters. Seniors who favour this model appreciate the financial support and companionship that it can provide.

Tiny homes - Tiny homes are small, single detached homes that typically have a footprint of less than 400 sq. ft. Because of this size, they tend to be less expensive to build, heat, cool and maintain than typical housing. This size also promotes affordability because the land required to accommodate them is substantially reduced. Typically, multiple home will be clustered to maximize land savings and in this configuration, homes are most commonly rented.

6. A Seniors Housing Strategy

The Seniors Housing Strategy is focused on the roles the County can pursue based on the various levers and authorities at its disposal. While the County is a principal partner in the seniors housing and supports system, is one of many partners who are collectively responsible for meeting local seniors needs. By working collaboratively with a common sense of purpose, all partners can contribute to better outcomes for seniors in the community.

Five overarching strategies have been established to help guide County actions:

- **Strategy #1** – Expanding appropriate housing options that enable seniors to transition from their traditional homes
- **Strategy #2** – Broadening the continuum of supports to help seniors remain at home safely
- **Strategy #3** – Addressing sustained demand for assisted and Long Term Care housing facilities
- **Strategy #4** - Leveraging opportunities that respond to seniors housing needs
- **Strategy #5** – Improving seniors’ access to care and supports

Each of these strategy areas are discussed in further detail including rationale, approach and recommended actions.

6.1. Recommended directions/actions

Strategy #1 – Expanding appropriate housing options that enable seniors to transition from their traditional homes

The local seniors population will grow dramatically over the next 20 years due primarily to aging of the population. There are limited middle-market and rental options in the current market to address the needs of this growing segment of the population. Recent production trends continue to cater to more traditional forms of single detached development, offering little to seniors who wish to downsize from their current accommodations. There are also clear affordability issues for a number of seniors in the community, especially renters.

Expanding the range of housing options for seniors that are both appropriate and affordable is critical to addressing these needs. Actions have been adopted in the County’s Housing and Homelessness Plan which specifically support affordable and rental housing and these should be should be pursued. Creating a more attractive development environment at the County and local level can also help expand housing options for seniors. This can be achieved in part by providing greater flexible in land use policies and supporting alternate housing forms through the development approvals process. Promoting innovative options and sharing these innovations with community stakeholders is another additional way that housing options can be expanded.

Recommended actions

1. Align seniors housing strategies with complimentary goals and objectives of the County’s Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan regarding:

- a. Maintaining housing stability
 - b. Ensuring an adequate supply and choice of housing for seniors
 - c. Improving coordination and capacity within the housing system
2. Pursue greater housing flexibilities with local municipalities in Official Plan, zoning and approvals practices
 3. Foster knowledge transfer of housing innovations, age-friendly planning and accessibility practices with stakeholders in the community

Strategy #2 – Broadening the continuum of supports to help seniors remain at home safely

There is a continued high demand for a range of seniors services throughout the community and this need will grow as the seniors population increases. While seniors have a preference to maintain their independence and age in place, they may have increasing support needs over time as they become less independent. The affordability of these support services can also pose issues for some senior households. These support issues are compounded by the fact that there is shortage of trained health care staff throughout the sector. There is also a deficiency in primary health care practitioners in the community.

Promoting and advocating for services that stabilize and support people at home or in their community is an important initial first step. Broadening home and community care capacity is an integral next step in helping to support seniors as their needs change. Supporting initiatives that sustain and grow the health care workforce must be considered within this capacity conversation. For those seniors living outside of larger population centres, extending care services to these more rural locales using paramedicine and other service alternatives can support their aging in place. For seniors awaiting admission to LTCH facilities, addressing these service needs in-home can also help to delay their need to access LTCH facilities. Fostering the creation or expansion of nodes/hubs in more rural areas can also be a way to extend service access points.

Recommended actions

4. Advocate for and maximize use of program funding to support priority initiatives related to expanding/ enhancing:
 - a. Home and community care
 - b. Community supports
 - c. Home renovations/repairs
5. Expand paramedicine initiatives to seniors at home to help age in place, especially those on LTCH wait lists
6. Promote opportunities with stakeholders to establish or grow housing and service hubs in rural communities by leveraging available resources and services
7. Encourage and promote initiatives that maintain, attract and expand the local health care work force

Strategy #3 – Addressing sustained demand for assisted and Long Term Care housing facilities

While there is a substantial supply of LTCH beds in the community, waiting lists are sizable and wait times for placement can often be measured in years. Retirement homes are also in demand but affordability is a clear issue for many seniors and there can be vacancies in these facilities from time to time. There are also limited spaces for providing respite care within the system which is critical in hospital discharge planning and for caregiver support.

Expanding affordable LTCH, retirement home and assisted living options within the county would help to address the sustained demand that exists for those in need, especially as the seniors population grows. However, utilizing any existing residual bed capacity - even temporarily – should also be considered. Making use of these spaces may enable the creation of service ‘pockets’ but there must also be a conscious effort to expand respite care services within the broader system. Building strategic relationships with community and private sector partners could lead to additional opportunities and better leveraging of available resources.

Recommended actions

8. Facilitate the creation of continuum of care campuses that promote affordable housing and care options by using lands adjacent to existing County LTCH facilities
9. Promote and leverage opportunities with community providers to better utilize residual spaces and to create additional care beds in other areas of the county
10. Advocate for additional respite care services to provide greater temporary ‘slack’ within the system

Strategy #4 - Leveraging opportunities that respond to seniors housing needs

There is limited production of appropriate new seniors housing despite sustained needs. In the absence of sector leadership and planning, there remains a gap in accessing the resources necessary to expand seniors housing solutions. There is also an inability to act on opportunities in a timely way when they arise if the necessary preparation and planning has not been done. This reactive approach makes it very difficult to capitalize on opportunities to facilitating seniors housing.

Taking more proactive steps to encourage seniors housing solutions is critical but this means being prepared to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. There are a range of municipal tools and incentives that the County can use as a catalyst to development including land, fee relief and taxation. RCHC assets can also be leveraged to help preserve and expand the supply of affordable community housing for seniors. In order to maximize their impact, these tools and resources need to be defined and aligned. Expanding community and private sector partnerships can also provide a means to cultivating development opportunities. Employing economic development tactics in conjunction with these tools and relationships would help to attract prospective new partners and new opportunities.

Recommended actions

11. Establish an inventory of municipally-owned and public sector lands appropriate for residential development
12. Promote and leverage private and community investment in seniors housing using land, grants and other financial tools
13. Continue to invest in and expand Community Housing units that meet seniors affordability needs
14. Encourage the expansion of affordable rental housing supply by engaging the private sector

Strategy #5 – Improving seniors’ access to care and supports

The coordination of care/supports among providers was cited by stakeholders as a concern. Lack of awareness of programs/services was also indicated by stakeholders, as was the difficulty of clients in navigating the support system. This can impact access to services, whether due to transportation or otherwise. These coordination and navigation issues are further impacted by the period of transition that the local health care system is in. The absence of clear direction and leadership in service system management can create further challenges.

The County is not the seniors housing and support system service manager but it is a principal partner. Engaging with the designated OHT and with other principal partners to clarify roles within the health care service system could improve overall effectiveness, coordination and outcomes for seniors. The County can also improve the seniors housing and support system by working collaboratively with community stakeholders and the private sector to advance the Seniors Housing Strategy. Broadening awareness about seniors resources in the community and finding alternative ways to address transportation needs would also help improve access to these services.

Recommended actions

15. Convene a community roundtable among stakeholders to advance the County’s Seniors Housing Strategy and to promote system collaboration
16. Engage with the designated local Ontario Health Team to promote alignment and coordination of home and community care services that support better outcomes for local seniors
17. Facilitate information sharing among stakeholders to create a more responsive/ transparent system of services and supports for seniors

6.2. Pursuing the strategy

The Seniors Housing Strategy provides a range of recommended actions where the County can help to expand seniors housing options. These actions involve a variety of functional areas across the organization including health, housing, planning and economic development. They also involve engagement with external partners, community stakeholders, the private sector and the broader community. As such, moving the strategy forward will involve a significant amount of coordination and communication.

Many of the proposed actions in the strategy involve activities that would fall within the normal purview of departmental work plans and will be on-going. As such, it is expected that there may be a modest impact on resources to effect these recommendations. Likewise there are some actions that will involve coordinating efforts across departments and these may not as easy fall within existing work plans or budgets. There are still other actions that could have substantially larger impacts in terms of financial or other resources. These include offering of land, fee relief, taxation and other inducements to help facilitate seniors housing development. Timing, staging and resource allocation for these activities will need to be defined as part of implementation planning.

Given the wide range of potential impacts, it would be prudent to develop an implementation work plan for the strategy which is informed by County staff. This plan could help to clarify the level of effort required to implement the strategy, the necessary resources required to advance specific actions and the anticipated timing/staging of these actions. As part of this process, it will be critical to consider the recommendations of the County's Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan. This will help to ensure there is no duplication of effort as it relates to County staff. Dialogue with community stakeholders will also assist in clarifying those activities where external partners are involved.

6.3. Implementation factors

The Seniors Housing Strategy sets out broad objectives and recommended actions to help expand housing options for seniors. Because the strategy involves a number of functional areas within the corporation, it is recommended that an inter-departmental steering group be tasked with guiding implementation. This will help to ensure carriage and coordination for those actions that involve multiple internal stakeholders. The steering group would also help to inform the external-facing aspects of the plan by creating a consistent framework for interfacing with community partners and stakeholders.

To help advance implementation of the Seniors Housing Strategy, the following steps are anticipated:

1. Establish an inter-departmental team to steer strategy implementation
2. Develop an implementation work plan
3. Dialogue with community partners on strategy implementation
4. Allocate internal tasks to functional areas of responsibility within the corporation
5. Develop a centralized reporting tool for tracking progress
6. Convene regular team meetings to track strategy progress

To ensure the success of the strategy, it will be important to:

- Allocate sufficient resources to implementation efforts
- Have accountability mechanisms in place to help measure impact and monitor progress
- Engage community stakeholders to coordinate efforts and gather feedback

Technical Appendix

This summary report provides highlights of analysis, consultations and investigations that were used to arrive at recommended strategies. More detailed information and documentation was generated during the study process which is relevant to the findings. Given the detail and breadth of this information, it has been compiled in a separate document as a Technical Appendix. This companion document includes:

- Part A - Need and demand data charts
- Part B - Housing and services inventory
- Part C - Compendium of seniors housing options
- Part D - Summary of stakeholder consultation feedback
- Part E - Community consultation list of invitees

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