

Understanding Elder Care Housing Options – A Primer

Like every industry, the seniors' housing business has its own vernacular. The terms can be confusing and often they are used interchangeably and incorrectly. More recently, media reports related to the COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care homes have led to further confusion and misconceptions. As a first step, it's important to clearly understand the different seniors' housing options so you can focus on what is needed for your family member's specific needs.

A chart at the end of this primer provides a guide to costs, services and amenities. While these will range from province to province, it's a good starting point for your elder care discovery journey.

55+ COMMUNITIES

These are apartment buildings/detached home communities that cater to seniors in their design, amenities and programming. People live independently and benefit from programming services and living within a community of people at the same life stage.

A sub-set of this category is what is known as "life leases" – retirement condos/buildings where a person buys a right to occupy/leasehold; what happens when they leave/pass depends on the terms for each lease. With a life lease, the owners can control and specify that all residents living in the building have to be 55+ years or older. The actual owner on title can be of any age e.g., the son or daughter can purchase this in their name, but the occupant has to be of a certain age.



RETIREMENT HOMES

Retirement homes offer accommodation and care services for seniors living in a community. These residences may be independently owned single locations or part of a corporate operator such as Amica or Chartwell; government funding is not typically provided, although funding differs from province to province. For example, in Quebec there are tax incentives, while Alberta has Designated Assisted Living (DAL) funding. Residents have their own suites and can create their own schedules; there's a monthly rent; fee-based add-on care packages or a la carte services are available as needed. Many retirement homes offer graduated levels of care, delivered on separate floors or buildings but within a complex or village. They range from Independent Living/Independent Supportive Living to Assisted Living to Memory Care options.

- The **Independent Living/Independent Supportive Living** option provides housing in a retirement home. Most services are a la carte, with meal plans, personal care needs, or housekeeping available. Some high-end properties have restaurant options – from pubs and fine dining to chef stations – along with comprehensive activities, such as tours, lectures, exercise classes and so on. "My mom and dad describe their retirement community as 'a cruise ship on land'," one Newport client told us.



- **Assisted Living** is a step up in care, and includes more help, with attendant costs. Individual care is typically purchased for a set number of hours per day and could include help with activities of daily living, such as: getting up in the morning, bathing, housekeeping and laundry. Different retirement homes cater to different segments of the seniors’ market, from affordability to upscale, minimal care to higher acuity. “This generation of baby boomers prefer options and want the flexibility to make their own choices for both the quality of care and quality of accommodations depending on their needs,” explained Melody Lo, Senior Vice President, RFA Capital, an owner/manager of retirement homes in Ontario and Quebec in which Newport is an investor. Increasingly, developments are being built to cater to these preferences, with more amenities and more suite options. It should be noted that, when choosing an Assisted Living residence, not all homes accommodate wheelchairs or two-people transfers. The level of physical assistance required is an important factor to consider.
- **Memory Care** is the right option where the care need is great and specialized: the person is not able to take care of their daily living activities and is failing cognitively. “A good indicator is when they

can’t find their way back to their suite, for example,” explains Devin Froislie, General Manager of Villagia in the Glebe in Ottawa. “During COVID we had to move several people from independent living into memory care due to cognitive decline. Their families have been grateful because we advocated for the resident when the family couldn’t be present.”

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES

A long-term care home, (LTC) sometimes called a nursing home, are government-subsidized centres that provide 24/7 supervised care for the aged. LTC homes may be municipally owned and operated (e.g. Lakeshore Lodge or Kipling Acres in Toronto’s west end), they may be corporately owned and operated (e.g. Extendicare, Chartwell) or less commonly by not-for-profit organizations (e.g. Belmont House in mid-town Toronto). In all cases, government funding makes LTCs a more affordable option than private care funded by individual residents.

STAY-AT-HOME OPTION

An emerging trend is that more elderly people are electing to stay at home longer. Technology is enabling this with monitoring systems, and governments are making in-home support services available. For those

with the means, there is an abundance of private services available to help seniors live at home but there is often a point at which the stay-at-home option – even if the home is fully paid for – becomes more expensive than a retirement home.

Determining whether this is the right long-term choice depends on many factors: the elderly person’s personality, family and social support system, mobility and transportation, housing situation and other factors. As we’ve seen with the pandemic, if isolation sets in,

it can have a deleterious effect on the physical and mental health of seniors. It can also take a toll on family members who may not be able to sustain the level of support required for seniors to remain independent.

This customised service comes at a price. Seniors may pay approximately \$15,000 per month for 24/7 care in a major urban centre. Supplementary in-home specialized services such as occupational therapy, social work or speech therapy would add to these costs.

ELDER CARE HOUSING OPTIONS

Segment	Seniors Apartments	Independent Living	Assisted Living	Memory Care	Long-Term Care
Average One Bedroom Rent	\$2,800	\$5,000	\$6,275+	\$7,275+	\$6,500*
Shelter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transport & Laundry		✓	✓	✓	✓
Meals		✓	✓	✓	✓
Basic Core Service		✓	✓	✓	✓
ADL Care Specialist			✓	✓	✓
Specialized Memory Care				✓	✓
Long-term Chronic Care					✓
Average Unit Size (square feet)	735	671	392	258	290

Source: Cushman & Wakefield

* The LTC figure includes government subsidies. The out of pocket for a senior could be less than half, depending on the province.

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