September 29, 2026

Re: Making Barrie an Age-Friendly City, an Evidence Brief

On behalf of the NORC Action Coalition, a network of research centres across Canada, we are sharing with you some new data and evidence-based ideas that can improve the quality of life for Barrie's older adults.

Barrie's population is rapidly aging; people aged 65 and older represented approximately 16% of the city's population in 2021 and this is expected to increase in the upcoming years.

Our research highlights a critical opportunity to serve this demographic through Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), which are buildings or neighbourhoods that were not specifically designed for older people but where a high proportion where older people have chosen to live.

Key Data:

- Approximately one in seven older people in Barrie lives in a NORC.
- There are 35 NORC buildings in Barrie, which are home to a total of 3,380 older adults. This represents a **46%** increase compared to just four years earlier.
- This growth is likely driven by financial pressures to downsize, rising costs of living, and desire to live in proximity to amenities. According to NIA's 2025 Ageing in Canada survey, 81% of older Canadians prefer to stay in their home or a smaller home for as long as they can.

High concentrations of older adults in specific locations allows cities to deliver efficient, effective, and highly targeted services. Supporting ageing in place keeps residents independent longer, improves health outcomes, and reduces financial pressure on municipal and provincial services.

Policy Ideas for Your Platform:

While the City of Barrie has long recognized the importance of creating an age-friendly city, its actions have not kept pace. Barrie's Age-Friendly Community Plan, released in 2016, is now a decade old. We understand that efforts are underway to update the plan. As you build your platform, we invite you to put forward a vision for an age-friendly city with the following elements:

1. **Update the Seniors Strategy:** Create a new seniors strategy for Barrie for release in 2027 to advance aging in place and supports NORCs
2. **Improve Pedestrian Safety:** Make getting around the city safer for older adults, by reducing vehicular speed, ensuring pedestrian crossing signals are sufficiently timed, and prioritizing snow clearance around NORCs
3. **Enhance Neighbourhood Walkability:** Make neighbourhoods more walkable for older adults, especially around NORC buildings, by installing more benches in public spaces, and adding additional bus stops in areas with a high concentration of older adults

4. **Tailor Community Supports:** Ensure that the city's social, recreational and cultural activities are designed with older people in mind, and that those living in NORCs can easily access them
5. **Target Health Services:** Offer public health services, such as flu shots, onsite in NORC buildings to improve uptake and accessibility

These are just a few simple ideas to help get the City of Barrie started on its journey towards an age-friendly city with NORCs as major nodes. If you wish to learn more about these and other ideas, feel free to reach out to us at norcinnovationcentre@uhn.ca and we'd be pleased to set up a meeting.

Good luck with your election campaign.

Sincerely,

NORC Action Coalition, includes members from the following organizations: *Queen's University, National Institute on Ageing, NORC Innovation Centre, Oasis National, The Waltons Trust & Women's Age Lab*