



Understanding What's in the Neighbourhood

Exploring Your Neighbourhood

As a resident in your building, you already know a lot about your neighbourhood—but there's always more to discover! **As an Ambassador—you're a connector, a listener, and a leader.**

By getting to know your neighbourhood and neighbours better, you're helping to create a stronger, more supportive community for everyone. This tipsheet will help you explore your community with fresh eyes to understand what its **strengths, resources, and potential barriers** are and how they can impact the quality of life of older adults in your NORC community.

Here are some steps you can take to learn more about the ways your community can support aging in place. Try a few of these steps or all of them – you can choose your own adventure, based on what you think would be most useful.

1. Start with What's Strong

What do you already love about your community? Think about the people, places, or services that make your neighbourhood feel welcoming and safe. These are your **assets**—and they're a great starting point for understanding the ways your community directly supports aging in place.

2. Learn from Your Neighbours

Talk to the people in your building. Ask where they like to go:

- Which grocery store do they shop at?
- Do they have a favorite café or park?
- Are there places they avoid, and why? You can even join them on an outing—this helps you learn about **accessibility barriers** and preferred walking routes firsthand.

3. Explore the Neighbourhood

Head outside and see what's nearby! Walk to:

- Parks or green spaces
- Community and healthcare centres
- Grocery stores, pharmacies, or malls
- TTC stops or subway station
- Fitness or wellness spaces

As you walk, **notice how accessible** everything is:

- Are sidewalks wide and even?
- Are there benches to rest?
- Are crosswalks safe?
- Is it easy to find ramps or elevators?

4. Step into Community Spaces

Visit local spots like libraries, community centres, recreation centres, coffee shops, or malls. Ask yourself:

- Is this space friendly and welcoming?
- Are there notice boards with local events?
- Is it easy to get around with a walker, cane, or scooter?

At libraries and community centres, chat with staff:

- Do they offer programs for older adults?
- Are events affordable or free?
- Can staff come speak to your group in the building?

5. Find Community Partners

As you explore, keep an eye out for places or people that might want to **partner with your NORC**. For example:

- A librarian who could offer tech help or help animate a book club
- A gym that offers gentle fitness classes
- A café that could host a seniors' coffee morning
- A community healthcare centre that has programming for older adults that could offer educational sessions

Ask staff:

- “Who else should we talk to?”
- “Do you work with other organizations that have programs for older adults in this neighbourhood?”

You might discover **networking opportunities** that could benefit your community. For tips on how to network with community service provider organizations, also check out our **Communicating with Service Providers Tip Sheet**.

Next Steps:

As you discover and gather information about your neighbourhood, a good practice is to document what you learn. You can share your observations and connections with your Ambassador group and neighbours. This information can help shape the decisions your group makes about the kind of aging in place programs and connections that are most meaningful for your community's quality of life.