

Creating an Intergenerational Hub at McMaster University:
Considerations for physical design and program implementation



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Executive Summary

As Canada's population is aging, there is an important opportunity to leverage the wisdom and strength of those who have contributed substantially to the social and economic fabric of our country. One way to ensure that these contributions are recognized long into the future is by providing opportunities to facilitate knowledge sharing with younger generations. This report, led by the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA), outlines necessary considerations for designing and developing a physical space and programming to enable interactions between university students and older adults. This model can be shared broadly with other communities around the country. To ensure that the design was informed by user preferences and needs, the project unfolded in three phases:

Phase I: The project team focused on understanding demographic trends in Hamilton, Ont., with particular focus on older adults and student populations in the neighbourhoods surrounding McMaster University.

Phase II: An environmental scan covered related initiatives, including student groups on campus and intergenerational programming by organizations in Hamilton.

Phase III: In this phase, the project team conducted focus groups with older adults in their local community. An online student survey that sought to further understand what intergenerational programming could mean to both of these populations was also incorporated.

Analysis of the data led to a series of findings that can be used to inform the design of an intergenerational space. These recommendations are summarized into three themes:

Travel and entry point to the space:

This theme focused on how older adults navigate the campus, including the impact of weather, signage and other potential barriers. Pathways to and from other parts of campus and transportation were seen as important, as were opportunities for social interaction along these travel pathways. This included seating both inside and outside. The design and accessibility of the physical entry point of the space was also seen as critical.

A shared space that encourages conversation, comfort, and collaboration:

This theme centered on enabling intergenerational connections through conversation. Ensuring that the space is designed to optimize hearing and sensory processing (e.g., vision, tactile, etc.) is essential.

Flexible design for multiple functions:

A range of activities is possible within the space. For example, activities such as cooking, sharing meals, indoor/outdoor gardening, games, music and classes/lectures could be implemented. With that in mind, the design must allow for flexibility, rearrangement and segmentation. It will also be necessary to provide space that will support administration, program planning and research.

Further details on each of these high level recommendations are outlined within the report. MIRA looks forward to partnering on this project as it moves from planning to construction to programming and use. MIRA commends the University for its generous contribution of this space to support an important educational, research and community engagement opportunity for McMaster and its surrounding communities.

The Opportunity



In 2016, McMaster University created the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA) to facilitate, amplify and disseminate leading-edge research in aging that is emerging from every University Faculty. McMaster has a long history of community-engaged research and education that can build knowledge, skills and capacity among its students.

McMaster joined the global Network of Age-Friendly Universities in October 2017 in order to learn from like-minded institutions. The University is actively seeking ways to implement the guiding principles of this network, which include fostering intergenerational relationships between older adults and students, among several other aspirations.

Given the exponential growth of Canada's aging population and the expected impact it will have on all sectors of society, it is critical that university students who represent the next generation of Canadian workers and citizens understand, and are prepared to meet, new needs. MIRA is well-positioned to support research and educational initiatives that bring these generations together.

In Western culture, growing old is often viewed through a negative lens. The aging process is associated with frailty, disease and loss of function. It is critical that these negative perceptions and biases are confronted and challenged. That is why younger and older adults should have the opportunity to come together to share experiences and engage in activities that promote understanding across generations.

Intergenerational activities are specifically designed to bring older adults and younger people together to interact, which has health and social benefits for both groups. University students are an important target group for cross-generational activities. Many will go on to work with older adults, while others will assume caregiving roles. However, not all students have sufficient exposure to this age group. Some identify feeling uncomfortable around older people.

The Opportunity



To this end, the University has provided MIRA with a physical space within a new residence under development for first-year students that will facilitate intergenerational connectivity. This space has great potential to serve as an activity hub for the community.

Over the past eight months, MIRA has consulted directly with older adults from Hamilton and with current McMaster students to better understand their perspectives when it comes to creating an intergenerational space to foster engagement and shared experiences. This report provides a brief overview of findings from this consultation process and is intended to guide the development of the layout of the space and the programming that occurs therein. It is important to note that during the course of completing this report, two major provincial initiatives that complement the impetus for the current project came to the attention of the team:

1. **Community hubs in Ontario:** A strategic framework and action plan 2015; follow up/ update released in 2016).
2. **Aging with confidence:** Ontario's action plan for seniors (2017).

Both reports emphasize the value of having space and access to programming that considers the needs of Ontario's aging population now and into the future. We are pleased to outline our project findings, which are closely aligned with these ongoing initiatives.

Phase I: Demographic Information



A brief demographic snapshot of Hamilton through the aging lens

Hamiltonians aged 65+: According to census data from Statistics Canada (2016), 17.3% of the Hamilton population is 65 years or older, which is higher than the national average (16.9%). In fact, for the first time in Hamilton and Canada, seniors outnumber those aged 0 to 14. By 2041, 25 - 30% of Hamilton's population will be aged 65 and older.

In preparation for this demographic shift, the City of Hamilton began implementing an Age-Friendly strategy in 2014, as outlined in a report by the Hamilton Council on Aging. While housing, transportation, and accessibility issues are emphasized within more than 100 recommendations that form the basis of the strategy, the underlying theme that ensures older adults are respected and their many contributions are considered, including volunteering, is emphasized. Capitalizing on such strengths is important. As such, the City of Hamilton has 25 registered retirement homes and 17 long-term care facilities. There are also 24 adult day programs in the city.

Hamilton's Ward One / Westdale neighbourhood

Hamilton's Ward One, or Westdale neighbourhood, is immediately adjacent to McMaster University. According to the last census (2011), this neighbourhood had a population of 29,515, of which almost a third of residents (10,145) were over the age of 50 (34%). This is slightly higher than 2006 (33%), but still lower than the City of Hamilton overall (36% in 2011, 33% in 2006). Within this neighbourhood, there are slightly more females than males. Most have a post-secondary degree (62%), and 84% speak English in the home. Recent immigrants make up 5.8% of the population. The average household income in this geographic area is \$67,302. According to Hamilton's Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC), Ward One is considered "somewhat walkable", meaning there is a need for motor vehicles to access amenities.

Phase I: Demographic Information



McMaster University has a student population (2016) of 24,475 full-time undergraduate students, of which 3,642 students live on campus and 22,073 live off campus (85.8%). In addition, there are 1,118 part-time students and 1,674 international students (6.5%).

Undergraduate student distribution across the University Faculties is as follows: 24% of total enrolment is in the Faculty of Science (6,051 students); 20% is in the Faculty of Engineering (5,190); 18% (4,595) is in the Faculty of Health Sciences; 17.2% is in the Faculty of Social Sciences (4,222); 10.4% is in the Faculty of Business (2,566); and 10.4% is in Faculty of Humanities (2,552).

McMaster University has 12 campus-based residences that are home to approximately 3,600 students. These residences range from traditional dormitories to apartment-style suites where students can live with up to four roommates. McMaster residence life also offers students the opportunity to choose to live in a 'living and learning' community. These communities include: women in leadership, alcohol-free, healthy active living, global perspectives, conservative, outdoor leadership, and 'Forge at Mac' Entrepreneurship.

As reflected in the growth of Hamilton's aging population, alongside an understanding of the surrounding neighbourhood and the student population at McMaster, there is a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on the space being offered within the new university residence that is under construction. This residence will provide a unique physical space that brings older and younger people together, which is timely given McMaster's commitment to being an Age-Friendly University. The next step is to catalogue the intergenerational initiatives that are already underway on campus and elsewhere.

Phase II: Environmental Scan

An environmental scan of current intergenerational initiatives at McMaster University and beyond

The project team conducted an environmental scan to identify intergenerational activities, initiatives and projects at McMaster University, as well as in Hamilton and the surrounding community. The select examples below align with the mandate and vision of the current project. By identifying such initiatives, the aim was to inform potential intergenerational programming and provide examples of how the physical space might be designed.



Phase II: Environmental Scan

Hamilton and Surrounding Area

Service/ Activity Provided	Organization Providing Service	Population Served	Goals/ Outcomes	Infrastructural Components Needed	Demand	Benefits of the Program
Intergenerational Food Garden and Cooking Program	Neighbour 2 Neighbour Centre	Older adults and youth	Provide opportunity for older adults and youth to engage in an interactive activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matching between older adults and student based on interest - Access to a cooking area (this program ran at the Sackville Senior Recreation Centre) 	The program housed under 20 matches between older adults and youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program specifically paired teens with older adults providing a solid foundation for mentorship for the youth. - The program was held at the Senior Centre, so it focused on older adults who already had access to the facility. As such, barriers such as transportation, were eliminated. - Program was run for eight weeks
School Visitation and Skip Streams	Seniors and Kids Intergenerational Program (SKIP)	Residents of long term care home in Brantford	Provide opportunity for elementary school students to spend time with older adults in participating facilities. Programming ranges from having simple conversation to completing interactive activities, such as art, together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participating senior care facilities - Transportation for elementary school children - Programmer at the seniors centre to facilitate activities 	20-30 students in a class go together to the seniors facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students travel to the place of residence of the older adults. - Physical space is set up to accommodate all needs of the older adults. - Residents can leave programming and return to their room if they are tired or no longer wish to participate. - Visits are one-off and not regular, thus making it difficult to foster meaningful relationships - There is a growing demand from participating schools, but the program faces difficulty finding senior facilities that are interested.
Technology Lessons	Gadget Guides	Older adults in the GTA	Provides an opportunity for older adults and youth to engage in an interactive activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program teachers knowledgeable in technology - Participating older adults homes or senior centres 	Groups of 5 - 20 older adults or single individual can take lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program teachers will come to the place of residence or seniors centre. - More instructional structure and exchange of skills as opposed to relationship building. - Run as a paid program through the company
Voices and Sights Workshops	Eva Rothwell Centre in partnership with Hamilton Youth Poets, St. Matthews Houses, Sherman Hub	Older Adults in the Hamilton Community	The program aims to bridge the gap between generations with a focus on art and storytelling. Teams of youth and seniors discuss lives. This workshop fosters opportunities to share experiences and develop mentor/ mentee relationships. Digital stories, once complete, are presented to the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mutual location where workshops can occur that is accessible to both older adults and students - Facilitator for the programming (i.e Hamilton Youth Poets) - Accessible furniture and round tables 	Participant numbers vary by workshop (10-20 people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The workshops run all summer long on Tuesdays and Thursdays, providing flexible opportunities for older adults and participating students. - Workshops begin with basic conversation and oral storytelling, allowing both generations to ease into the programming. - Not a lot of physical movement needed from older adults to participate in the activity. - The program has an emphasis on communication through the arts i.e poetry - The program is free.

Phase II: Environmental Scan

Service/ Activity Provided	Organization Providing Service	Population Served	Goals/ Outcomes	Infrastructural Components Needed	Demand	Benefits of the Program
Youth Employment Services Program	Flamborough Information and Community Services	Older adults in the Hamilton Region	The program aims to match older adults looking for assistance around the house with local youth looking for employment. The jobs range from lawn mowing, cleaning the house, buying groceries, and more.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Database where older adults can post requesting assistance - Coordinator that would match older adults with local youth 	Variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program has been in operation since 1978. - Summer commitment for youth, but option to continue work part-time in the school year. - Older adults receive inexpensive help and opportunity to get to know local youth. - Youth participating in the program have their first job and mentorship opportunities with older adults. - Screening completed by external organization to ensure proper matching of older adult and youth. - The program is funded by the Federal Government through the Canada Summer Grants Program.

McMaster University

Service/ Activity Provided	Organization Providing Service	Population Served	Goals/ Outcomes	Infrastructural Components Needed	Demand	Benefits of the Program
MacSeniors Exercise and Wellness Program	PACE (Physical Activity Centre of Excellence), McMaster	Individuals 55 years and older	Prolong mobility and independence in older adults by giving them opportunities to regularly engage in cardiovascular and strength training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership fee of \$40/month - Require a stress test and referral from a primary physician 	200 older adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program hours are flexible from 8 am - 7 pm. - Constant demand and program has existed for over 20 years. - The program is interconnected with research being conducted by current McMaster students and staff. - Personalized programs can be designed for seniors. - The program is centralized at the McMaster Athletics and Recreation facility.
Older Adults Board Game Night	HASSA (Health, Aging, Society Student Association)	Residents of long term care home St. Joseph's Villa	Provide an opportunity for students of McMaster to interact with older adults of the St. Joseph's Villa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lounge space with board games - Suitable furniture that meets the needs of the residents and accommodates for mobility devices 	15 - 20 residents and 10 - 15 students engage in the programming night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students travel to the place of residence of the older adults. - Physical space is setup to accommodate all needs of the older adults. - Residents can leave programming and return to their room if they are tired or no longer wish to participate - Simple recreational activity that facilitates dialogue between older adults and students.

Phase II: Environmental Scan

Service/ Activity Provided	Organization Providing Service	Population Served	Goals/ Outcomes	Infrastructural Components Needed	Demand	Benefits of the Program
Senior's Walk	HASSA	Older adults of the Hamilton community	Provides an opportunity for students to interact with older adults while completing physical activities such as walking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walk held at Bayfront Park - Organizers need to have list of older adults interested - Pick a route that is accessible for older of all capacities of mobility 	Average is 10 students and 10 Older Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Location allows greater engagement with older adults living in different regions of Hamilton - Physical activity is beneficial for both students and older adults. - The route chosen for the walk is accessible for older adults and students who need accommodations.
McMaster Discovery Program	McMaster Arts and Science Program	Adults in the Hamilton community	The program aims to offer a free university level non-credit course to adults in the community who face barriers to accessing higher learning opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum for the Discovery course - Screening of applicants who are course instructors and participants - Pick a location accessible to adults 	20 participants with 50% being older adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program was run on the weekends at a local Hamilton library. - Participants and course instructors were screened to ensure they understood and were committed to fulfilling the goals of the program - Fostering of diverse intergenerational academic environments - Small program with 20 participants - Occured off campus
Fountains of Uke	IMHope, McMaster University 3MU3 Class, participating elementary schools and retirement homes	Older adults in participating retirement homes in Hamilton	The program aims to partner elementary schools with retirement homes in the local community. McMaster students in the Health Science 3MU3 class will facilitate a month long music engagement program in these retirement homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student music facilitators (Health Science 3MU3 Class) - Recruitment of elementary school students and older adults -common performance space in the retirement home 	- 20 - 30 older adults in the retirement home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - McMaster students facilitate the programming between elementary school children and older adults. - McMaster students run "sensitive senior" education piece before introducing elementary students to older adults. - Program runs for four weeks and engages multiple generations (youth, university students, older adults). - Course credit and community engagement opportunity is an incentive to participate in the program for the students.

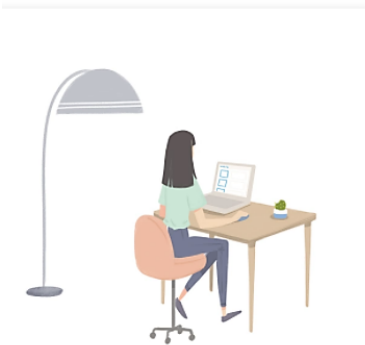
Phase II: Environmental Scan

Spotlighting Intergenerational Programs

The project team also identified some models of intergenerational experiences that are more deeply integrated, as highlighted below:

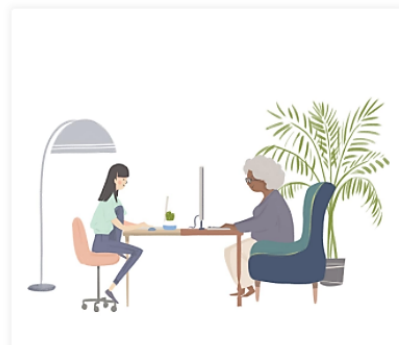
Home-share programs: Co-housing with University Students

How Nesterly Works



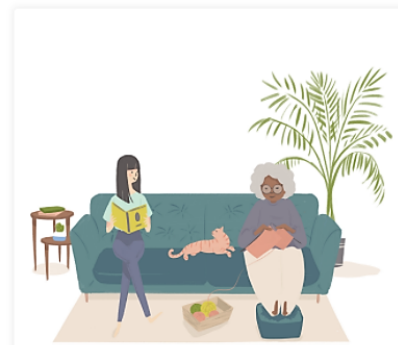
Create your Profile

Hosts and Guests post a bit about themselves and what they're looking for in a shared home.



Make a Connection

Guests search available rooms and reach out to Hosts. Community members interact securely through the platform to find the right match.



Confirm your Match

Once both the Host and the Guest decide to move forward, they sign a Nesterly Homesharing Agreement and pay securely through the site.

Program Name: Nesterly

Location: Boston, Massachusetts

Program Overview: Nesterly is a social enterprise startup that piloted an intergenerational home share project. Similar to a dating website, graduate students are matched with Boston homeowners. The home-share pilot matches households with spare bedrooms to students who are seeking an affordable place to stay during for the duration of their studies. This project was launched in response to Boston's growing aging population. It acknowledges older adults who have a desire to stay in their own homes, but who may need companionship and some assistance with household tasks. The initial pilot offered eight house pairings; but the program received over 80 applications, illustrating a high demand for this type of program.

Phase II: Environmental Scan

Meet the Ontario university students living with more than 100 seniors in care home



Meet the Ontario university students living with more than 100 seniors in car...

Several Western University students are getting the chance to live rent-free at a London retirement home in exchange for their time - and they're loving it.

cbc.ca

Program Name: Student live-in program

Location: London, Ontario, Canada

Program Overview: Three music students from Western University were given the opportunity to live in Oak Crossing London Retirement Home rent-free in exchange for daily musical performances. The student live-in program requires the participants to devote 10 - 12 hours of their week to practicing musical instruments or organizing recitals in the common areas of the retirement home. The model was adopted from a similar program launched in 2006 at Judson Manor, a retirement home in Cleveland, Ohio. The demographic of students living at the retirement homes are graduate/mature students aged 22 - 26 years old.

"I like it here so much I might never leave. The residents get to be brought into our lives ... and the young people get these mentors, these grandparent figures to connect with."

- Ivy Manouchehri, when asked by the CBC what it was like to live with more than 120 adults.



Phase II: Environmental Scan

A new campus residence opens just for seniors

Welcoming long-term care facilities onto campuses lets universities take a 'living research environment' approach to aging research.

By SHARON ASCHAEK | JAN 20 2016

Post a comment | Share    

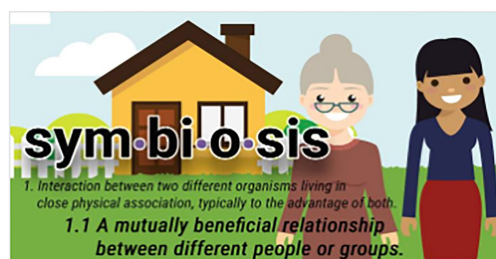


The new University of Waterloo long-term care facility features an indoor "main street."

Program Name: Shannex Retirement Complex and Nursing Home **Location:** UMoncton, New Brunswick

Program Overview: New Brunswick's first academic nursing home, le Faubourg du Mascaret, is an on-campus retirement complex that will provide opportunities for health professionals to gain hands on experience and conduct health research among individuals living in long-term care. The complex will also house the Collaborative Centre for Learning on Aging, which operates in partnership with the University to provide a diverse learning environment and unique opportunities for students in the Health Sciences. One of the key goals of this innovative complex is to prepare health professionals for a growing aging population and to identify issues in long-term care policy and practice. Moreover, the unique attachment of the nursing home to the University infrastructure gives clients the opportunity to access features of the campus that include: restaurant-style dining, a wellness gym, movie theatre, bowling alley, and landscaped outdoor space. Transportation is provided to residents to help them access programs.

A similar graduate-student led housing project called Symbiosis launched last March in Hamilton. It provides McMaster graduate students the opportunity to rent a low-cost room in exchange for modest help in the home of an older adult. The project will be evaluated in April 2018 with the feedback gathered from the pilot cohort who participated in the program.



 JUDI PATTISON | JUNE 6, 2017

New program helps local seniors and grad students make home a little sweeter

WANTED: Local Hamilton seniors and McMaster graduate students to be a part of new co-housing pilot program

"I think universities have to be more responsive to the needs of their communities. We have a significant aging population, and we're hoping to use our expertise and the facilities that will be constructed to advance research on aging."

- U de Moncton president Raymond Th  berge told University Affairs



Germany's 'multigeneration houses' could solve two problems for Britain

With the number of over-65s set to double and childcare more expensive than ever, *Mehrgenerationenhäuser* may be the answer



Program Name: Multigenerational House, "Mehrgenerationenhaus"

Location: Pattensen, Germany

Program Overview: Demographic trends for Germany leading to an increasing aging population caused governments to incorporate multigenerational houses as a key part of their strategic aging population plan. Mehrgenerationenhaus is a multigenerational house built in Pattensen, Germany, that holds a kindergarten area, a social centre for older adults and a live-in residence. While this house still follows the conventional model of having young people volunteer their time teaching older adults the basics of computers and mobile phones, what is unique is that the older adults also volunteer their time with young children. Pensioners offer a "rent-a-granny" service for older adult residents to read books to children once a week and to provide additional support for parents. Since 2003, intergenerational hubs have been rising in popularity. Currently, there are between 400 to 500 multigenerational infrastructural units in Germany.

Phase II: Environmental Scan

Program Name: Humanitas, Intergenerational long-term care facility

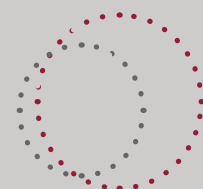
Location: Deventer, Netherlands

Program Overview: Humanitas is a residential care centre in the eastern riverside city of Deventer, Netherlands. Six university students live in the long-term care facility rent-free in exchange for 30 hours of volunteer work per month. Humanitas is an innovative intergenerational living solution born from a shortage of student room availability, rising rent and a fallout from the Dutch government cutting continuing-care costs for adults over the age of 80. The residents spend their free time teaching the older adults how to use e-mail, social media and Skype. The intergenerational living arrangement allows students to save 360 to 400 euros in rent on a monthly basis. The success of this project inspired other countries, such as France and the United States, to follow suit with their own intergenerational housing projects in the years following the pilot of Humanitas.



“The one-shot-only activity, where kids come into the long-term care facility, sing a song and then go home... that may be nice, but it’s not until they have a real relationship — which takes a lot of interaction — that it becomes meaningful”

—Matthew Kaplan, a professor of intergenerational programs and aging at Pennsylvania State University, told Citylab.



Phase II: Environmental Scan

Program Name: “One Roof, Two Generations,” Intergenerational housing project

Location: Lyons, France

Program Overview: The intergenerational housing project launched in Lyon, France, in 2015 is the result of a 10-year national initiative from the country to encourage older residents to rent their rooms to young professionals and students for free, or for affordable rates. In exchange for the low cost of living, the young renter would interact with their older adult hosts, assist occasionally with chores and help with cleaning and maintenance. The current project involves partnering with local universities in Lyon to match students to rooms available in a dozen independent residences that serve older adults. Initially, the aim of the project was to simply fill students on the top floors of these buildings as part of a national safety strategy to prevent older adults from living above a certain floor.

Intergenerational Living, Lyon, Rhône-Alpes, France



However, the housing project soon expanded to include a volunteer commitment from the students that ranged from having conversations with the older adults to accompanying them on walks. Currently, 1,000 apartments in the 12 city-owned residences for older adults are participating in the program, with a 100 apartments in these buildings set aside for students.

Intergenerational home-sharing has become popular in Lyon, France, as a response to social isolation experienced among older adults and as a way to confront the housing crisis experienced by students. At a dozen independent living residences for older adults, college students can pay discounted rent in exchange for socializing with older residents.

Another program in the same city connects older adults who live alone with students who need a place to live. The principle is simple: single older adults agree to open their doors to a student in exchange for services, such as helping to prepare meals, running errands, playing board games, teaching computer skills, and spending time together.

Phase II: Environmental Scan

Overall

The concept of intergenerational hubs began as cohousing projects in the Netherlands and France to help support the rising aging population of these countries. As can be seen through the structure of Humanitas and 'One Roof, Two Generations', success is derived when both parties gain some form of mutual benefit, such as reduced rent for students and additional support for older adults. Demand for programs like those listed here wasn't only driven by financial incentives, but, rather, by the opportunity to engage, learn and establish relationships with older adults. These benefits proved to be something younger generations were actively seeking.

Most of these programs brought the younger generation to the older adults. However, MIRA's intergenerational project will aim to establish a shift in this structure. Students will live in the joint intergenerational hub/residence complex, and older adults from the community will be required to come to campus to engage in programming. There are both benefits and drawbacks to this approach, and MIRA will consider these perspectives in the implementation of initiatives within this space.



Phase III: Results

Results from focus groups with older adults and online surveys with students

The intent of the focus groups that were conducted with older adults and McMaster students was to gather insight into the design of an intergenerational space on campus, and the type of programming that should be considered. A brief summary of the protocol undertaken and corresponding findings for each age group is provided below. Ethics approval for this project was obtained from the Hamilton Integrated Review Ethics Board (HiREB).

Focus groups with older adults

Using the information gathered in Phase II (Environmental Scan), a series of focus groups with older adults was organized in Hamilton to explore their perceptions of interacting with young adults in this context. Older adults were recruited through various organizations, including the McMaster University Retirees Association (MURA), as well as individuals who had previously participated in research and/or educational initiatives on campus. All focus groups were held at the University, with the exception of one group that was conducted with residents at Shalom Village.

A structured protocol was used for conducting the focus groups. The same facilitator moderated each group, with the help of an assistant who also recorded participants' comments. Each group consisted of five to ten participants. The research team developed a series of semi-structured questions.

The aim of these questions was to explore the experiences of focus group members with young adults, and how the planned space at McMaster University might support such intergenerational interactions (see Appendix A for the list of questions). Before each focus group session, written consent was obtained from participants. No remuneration was provided to the participants with the exception of parking reimbursement. All focus group sessions were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. The 22 participants (10 males; 12 females) provided demographic information and listed their personal interests and involvement in organized activities. Participants ranged in age from 70 to 95 years old.

When participants were asked to rate their comfort level interacting with University aged students on a scale of one (not being comfortable at all) to 10 (very comfortable), the average response was 8.77, indicating that most participants were very comfortable. Only one participant responded with a score lower than seven. Results generated from the Interest Checklist indicated that participants were diverse and varied. Activities of interest included music, social discussions and lectures, singing, games, plays, and writing. Many of the activities listed by participants involved exercise, such as walking, dancing and gardening.

Following a review of the transcribed data, key themes that emerged from the focus group discussions were identified. The next section details these themes alongside direct quotes that exemplify the perspectives of older adults with regard to intergenerational interactions.

Phase III: Results

“Enthusiasm. Energy. Engaged. Fun. Alive. Bright. Refreshing. Intelligent. Quick.”

These are just some of the words used by older adults in the focus groups to describe their interactions with young adults. The participants expressed how much they enjoyed their interactions with young adults, particularly when they were conversational in nature. Many described how their experiences with young people made them feel hopeful about the future. A few of the older adult participants expressed concern about how they might be perceived by the students during such interactions. There was a fear that they would make a negative impression or “be a bit boring to them.” Many emphasized the importance of ensuring that the impetus for cross-generational dialogue came from a need expressed by the students. There were a number of suggestions that emphasized the importance of intergenerational interactions starting on the right foot. Participants indicated that having conversation starters or talking points to break the ice would be critical. As such, results from the focus groups with older adults highlighted that the intergenerational hub in question must be designed to feel welcoming from the point of initial entry through to the shared activities and experiences that occur within the space. They saw the hub as an opportunity to facilitate a sense of social cohesiveness across generations.

“I’m all about the conversation.”

Art, sharing food, cooking, discussing current events and learning to use technology were raised as potential means of bringing the generations together. The participants saw the activities as a means through which to draw different age groups together thereby making deeper connections and social interactions possible. Across all of the focus groups, older adults expressed interest in learning more about different cultures, which they saw as particularly relevant to international students who attend McMaster. For some participants, interest in these students came from past work-related roles. A participant described how she and her husband had welcomed more than 50 international students into their home while she was a professor at McMaster. This participant, along with others, suggested cooking activities and sharing meals as an important way for students and older adults to connect in the space. Many were excited about the prospect of learning more about different cultures and ways of life. The importance of connecting and learning about one another was even perceived as having benefits beyond the older adult-student dyad.

“There is hope for the world. They are all interested in helping and caring for people.”

“I think with young people you need to do a lot of listening because you are learning too, their interests, and what they are open to.”

Phase III: Results



While physical exercise, such as hiking or walking, was of interest, some participants expressed concern about their ability to participate in such programs due to their current health status. Others, however, saw the potential of the hub as a means to catalyze connections to programs already in place. The Physical Activity Centre of Excellence (PACE) on campus was identified as one such example. Music concerts, plays, art exhibitions, and other events at the University were seen to offer an array of possibilities for intergenerational interactions and corresponding activities.

“Once you are connected to a student, they’ll tell you their life story and that’s what I think we have to give. We have life experience.”

“I have a real interest in other people... either their ideas or beliefs around culture.”

“The older adults in the exercise program PACE love the energy of the students and being cared for; but also, interestingly enough, the older adults begin to form social groups of their own.”

Phase III: Results

“The Real Campus Scourge”

“The real campus scourge” was the title of a recent New York Times article raised by an older adult in one of the focus groups. * Participants in the focus group discussed the article, which highlighted the loneliness and isolation experienced by students who are new to the University.

The older adult’s concern was supported by others in his group — many felt that young adulthood can be a challenging life stage. A participant referred to this stage and the associated challenges as “drifting,” meaning some students may feel lost and need help and guidance in their careers and other areas.

The perceived strength of the hub was that the interactions that occur in the space will extend beyond each age group’s usual peer groups. The proposed space was seen as a unique, yet safe opportunity for the generations to come together and learn more about each other and themselves.



[Students] get into a situation like [University] and the sense of not being able to connect with anybody is overwhelming; and that of course dovetails into mental health [problems]. [The students] have got nobody to talk to.”

“[Young students and older adults] will have people to talk to that are not from their generation. I think that’s immensely important.”

* <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/02/opinion/sunday/college-freshman-mental-health.html>

Phase III: Results



Perceived challenges in accessing the hub that were identified by older adults

The intended design of the intergenerational hub must be considered in light of potential challenges that were identified by the older adults in the focus groups. Awareness of programming, as well as the ability to physically access the space in question were some of the major issues identified.

Participants in the focus groups indicated that transportation, including parking personal vehicles, was important; but they recognized that this need could change with the development of Light Rail Transport (LRT) and other planned shared transportation options. They noted that some of the older participants in the hub are likely to have mobility issues. With that in mind, well-lit, safe walking routes to and from public and private transit are very important.

Weather was also a safety consideration, as rain and snow can cause challenges to mobility. Signage was also seen as key, particularly with regard to new visitors to campus. When it came to raising awareness about the space and the programming, participants suggested using multiple methods of connecting with older adults in the community, including public libraries, seniors' groups and centres, newsletters, bulletins, and social media.

Since some older adults may consider the prospect of coming onto a university campus intimidating, those in the focus groups emphasized the importance of having the space and corresponding programming designed with this type of end-user in mind. Being paired up with peers was seen as a potential solution.

Online Survey with McMaster University Students

Survey Distribution:

An online survey was created and distributed to McMaster students to learn more about their perception of older adults and the potential of a shared space for intergenerational interactions. An emphasis was placed on surveying students who had lived in residence during their first year, as this space will be integrated with a planned student development on campus.

The survey was also distributed to students in the Department of Health and Aging, where curriculum focuses on issues specific to the aging population. International students were also asked to complete the survey. All respondents who completed the full survey were entered into a random draw for a prize from the campus bookstore, with the prize generously provided by Kevin Beatty, M.Ed., Director, Housing and Conference Services at McMaster University.

Phase III: Results

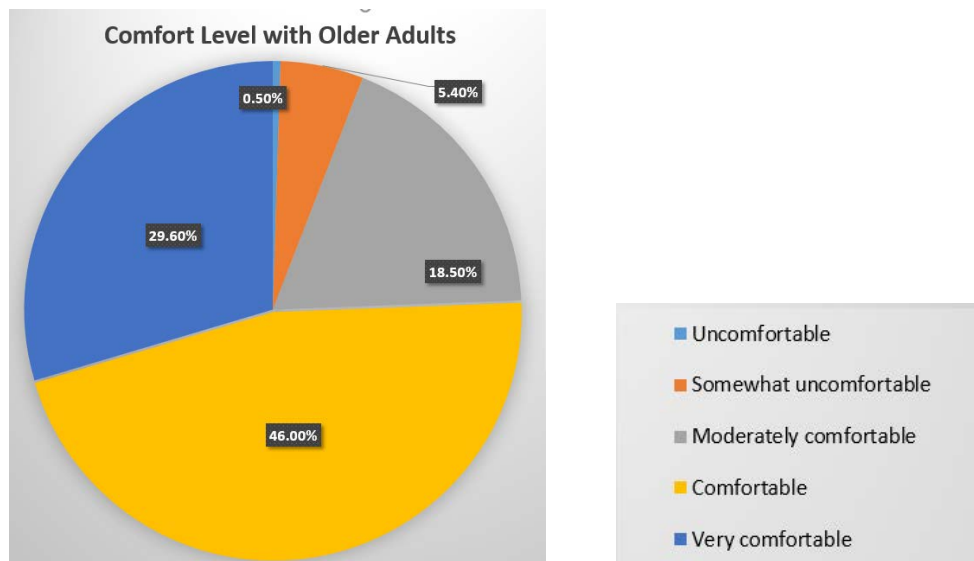
The survey was organized into three sections and took less than 10 minutes to complete:

1. Demographic data of the respondents (gender, Faculty, program);
2. Past experiences and comfort level with older adults;
3. Exploring the perceptions of participating in intergenerational activities.

Results:

A total of 504 students completed the survey, of which the majority were female (70%). Most respondents were in either their second (51.6%) or third (36.6%) year of study. Key findings from the analysis are provided alongside examples and direct quotes from the survey responses.

For the majority of students, interactions with older adults came from personal experiences and were mostly positive. The figure below illustrates how respondents rated their comfort level with older adults. Many respondents had similar types of experiences with older adults. While most of the examples were with older relatives and other personal interactions, the sense of enjoyment that came from the exchange of ideas was emphasized.



Providing guidance, listening, and understanding of one another was a recurring theme highlighted by students in reference to intergenerational interactions. Many enjoyed speaking with older adults because "they were open to conversation" and were "intelligent, interesting people." The following example was shared by one respondent:

"The last significant interaction I had was with my grandfather. We sat and talked around dinner time for about an hour or more. I always liked to talk to him because he had very interesting stories and always made me laugh. This interaction was particularly positive because I know whenever I talk to him... I forget about things that are stressing me."

Phase III: Results

Most students indicated they have more than three hours a week to participate in extracurricular activities

Participants were asked to estimate the amount of time they could spend on extracurricular activities per week. Most (n=207/504; 44%) indicated they spend three to six hours, although some students (n=60/504; 12%) indicated they spend more than nine hours per week on extracurricular activities. The types of activities listed by respondents were extensive and varied. These included organized activities, such as intramural and varsity sports, working and/or volunteering in a lab or in a retail store, participating in activities that were less organized, such as hanging out with friends, watching television, and/or helping parents with household activities at home.

The majority of survey respondents indicated they were interested in participating in activities with older adults, but most were unaware of such opportunities on campus.

When asked if they currently participated in any activities on campus with older adults, the majority of students surveyed (n=306/360; 85%) indicated they did not. Most respondents (87%; n=260/299) reported they were not aware of such opportunities on campus. However, almost 70% (n=212/304) indicated they would be interested in participating in these types of activities if they were offered.

For those who were aware of activities but did not participate, some experienced challenges when they tried to get involved. For example, one student stated “I did try to participate but unfortunately the positions to volunteer filled up quickly.” Others echoed a similar sentiment. Academics and other scheduled activities made it challenging to be involved.

“There is not enough time between sport and school to volunteer,” said one respondent. Those who wanted to participate saw these activities as a potential way to further their level of knowledge about aging, as well as advance skills specific to a chosen career path, such as research and clinic-related skills.

The McMaster students provided many suggestions for intergenerational activities. Across all of these activities, the importance of listening and speaking was emphasized.

Many respondents indicated that they were interested in hearing about the life experiences of older adults. The range of activities of interest included music, art, dinner, coffee, classes, board games and movies. One respondent summarized that ensuring the space was designed to make such interactions possible was important.

“[Everyone needs to] feel at home. Everyone should feel respected and safe.”

“I would like to have conversations about their lives and opinions on current events in the world. I’d also be interested to see what they like to do or what they’ve done with their careers.” - McMaster Student

“Honestly, anything such as board games, getting coffee, watching a movie.

Interacting with [older] adults is similar to hanging out with those in my age group.”
– McMaster student

Recommendations



Using information gathered through our environmental scan as well as data obtained from the focus groups and online survey, a number of key recommendations emerged that should be considered when designing the space for an intergenerational hub on McMaster's main campus. Each recommendation has been framed as a theme. Within each theme, specific examples of how these recommendations might be reflected in the physical design of the space are provided.

A warm and welcoming atmosphere

Design Focus: Travel and entry point to the space

As detailed below, the feeling that is evoked from the initial point of entry to the actual programming is critical. Given that the aging process can be associated with many health-related changes, older adults who use the hub are likely to experience a range of issues, including mobility, vision, auditory, and other challenges that can impact how they process sound, light, and move within the space (i.e., balance, stability). It is important that these challenges are considered with respect to the overall design of the hub itself, and how an older person might make their way to the entry point to the space.

Older adults are likely to use multiple modes of transportation to access the space, including public transit (future LRT/buses), and/or cars. Some may be dropped off by a caregiver at the space or share a ride with another user. It is important to consider common pathways that older users will walk or wheel to the space using walkers, motorized scooters or otherwise. These pathways are also opportunities for social interaction where one can sit with others both inside and outside of the residence. Green space, such as trees, flowers and gardens, should also be a consideration. Outdoor space that can provide natural shade when needed and protection from the elements (i.e., sun, rain, wind, snow) will be necessary.

Recommendations

Upon entering the space, the welcome area should be set up in such a way that users can see what activities are already under way. For example, it might be possible to see chairs set-up in one area, and a user might intuitively know that that is where they need to go. Other examples include the ability to see a group of people so that the visitor may be enticed to join. In this way, there is both formal and informal programming and the flow of the space from entry way to the programming is clear. It is also important to remember that users of the space, both young and old, may have jackets, backpacks, shoes and mobility aids, such as walkers, canes and wheelchairs. As well, some may choose to change their outerwear or keep shoes at the space, so storage of such items may need to be considered at this entry point.

Safe negotiation of the space is a crucial factor in its design, as is the ability to process both light and sound in the space. As noted earlier, these factors must be considered in the design of all areas within the space, but is particularly important at the entry point of the hub. Plants and greenery can be important with regard to ensuring users feel comfortable and at ease as they connect and converse with others.

Creating a safe space for conversation and forming connections

Design focus: A shared space

Findings from both the focus groups and surveys emphasized the importance of being able to connect across generations through conversation. Ensuring the space is physically designed to enable such personal interactions is crucial – particularly with regard to auditory accessibility, so that the exchange of information between the listener and the speaker is optimized.

Within the space, it is possible that there may be times when there is a large group activity occurring concurrent to smaller group interactions and conversations. This means the large group activity could be partitioned off (e.g. glass classroom). Older adults talked about the importance of listening to the students and getting to know one another. The physical space should be designed in such a way to encourage this type of interaction and connection.

An additional consideration for the space might include moveable and extra lighting as some older users may have visual-related impairments. Effective lighting could improve how users see and interact with items during shared activities. Ensuring that there is adequate lighting can also make the space feel more comfortable, particularly in the evening.

Ensure the design is both flexible and fun

Design Focus: A space that serves multiple functions

A range of activities were suggested by participants to support older and younger people coming together. Technology, in particular, was raised as a potential activity where young people may be able to help older adults. Many of the suggestions involved small group, table-top activities (e.g., board games, puzzles, photographs); some involved larger discussions (e.g., art/current events, music, cooking), all of which could entail the set-up and need for specialized equipment.

Sharing a meal, coffee, and tea were seen as potential activities over which users of the space could bond. Many raised the notion of outdoor activities, such as walking or gardening, although some older users raised concerns given their varying health statuses. Having multi-functional indoor spaces where furniture can be moved and changed seemed important, as did being able to partition large and small group activities with dividers, for example. Ensuring there is adequate storage for chairs and/or tables is important to facilitate easy set-up and take-down. The space should also be designed to support individuals with various mobility needs. As such, chairs and tables must be designed for comfort as well as safety (i.e., an older person can move safely from sitting to standing, and not trip over chair legs).

Recommendations

Based on the activities suggested, having administrative space where programs can be planned and organized was identified as essential. There was also some discussion about the space also serving as a potential way for older users to access health-related resources or medical screening, although such activities were discussed among the project team and not mentioned during the focus groups with older adults.

Some of the student responses to the survey indicated that they saw the hub as a potential opportunity to get additional volunteer experience and/or career training. In such cases, it would be necessary to have a private room where these experiences could occur and, correspondingly, be discussed with mentors or educators. These private rooms could also be used by researchers to conduct interviews, for example.



Conclusion

Conclusions, reflections and final thoughts

This report represents the efforts of the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA), in partnership with Facility Services and Housing Services, to strategize around a unique opportunity that has been offered on campus to create an intergenerational space. The design of this space, as reflected in the recommendations, must not only consider the physical set-up and functionality, but also the social interactions and programming. While older adults may experience changes in their health-related abilities, younger individuals who live in the residence can also have many mental and physical challenges. The location and design of this intergenerational hub has potential to benefit both populations.



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Appendices

Appendix A: Older Adult Focus Group Questions

Section 1: Exploring your past experiences with young adults

1. What type of experiences have you had interacting with young adults (18-25 years of age)? Please think back to examples that can include your personal experiences (i.e. family, volunteering, career, etc.)
2. What was your last significant interaction that you had with someone aged 18-24? Why was it significant? How would you describe this interaction?
 - Please identify the best thing about your interaction with the younger adult?
 - Please identify how you think this interaction could have been improved?
3. When you are interacting with young adults, what do you enjoy most about your interaction with them?
4. What, if anything, did you find challenging about your interaction with young adults?

Section 2: Participating in Activities with University Students

1. What do you think about activities that would bring people like yourself and university students together?
2. What suggestions would you have for doing activities with university students?
3. If such activities with university students were available, what challenges do you foresee that might prevent you from attending or participating in these types of activities?
 - How do you feel about meeting new people at these types of activities?
 - How might you get to these activities? (i.e. transportation)?
4. What would be the best way to let you know about activities and programs that are happening on campus with university students?

Closing Question

Suppose the university president came and told you that university students were very interested in interacting with older adults from the community, and the university president has asked for your advice on this matter. What advice would you give to the president?

- Would you tell him it's a good idea? Why, or why not?
- Is there anything the president should worry about when it comes to older adults and university students interacting?

Is there any additional information you would like for us to know at this time?

Appendices

Appendix B: Older Adult Focus Group Demographic Information



Introduction

The McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA) is interested in setting up experiences for older adults to interact with university students. We are holding a focus group with you because we hope to learn more about your experiences with young people and the kinds of activities you might be interested in doing with university students. First, we would like you to provide us with some information about yourself and your interests.

Section 1: Demographic Information

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Rate your comfort level with interacting with university students on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not comfortable at all and 10 is extremely comfortable:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please explain why you answered this way:

Appendices

With regard to your everyday life, please list the types of organized activities you currently participate in on a regular basis in your community (e.g. book club, art class, exercise group etc.):

Are you currently participating in any organized programs? **YES** or **NO** (Circle the most appropriate answer)

If YES, who is hosting the programming? (i.e., name of the organization)

Appendices

How much time do you have available on a daily basis to participate in organized activities? (Please answer even if you do not actually participate in these types of activities, as we are interested in knowing what time you would have available.) Circle the most appropriate answer.

- 0-2 hours per day
- 2-4 hours per day
- 4-6 hours per day
- > 6 hours per day

If you would like to comment on why you chose that answer, feel free to use the space below:

What time of day are you most available to participate in organized activities? Circle the most appropriate answer.

Morning / Afternoon / Evening

If you would like to comment on why you chose that answer, feel free to use the space below:

Appendices

Appendix C: Interest Checklist

Name: _____

Date: _____

INTEREST CHECKLIST

Please place an [X] on all the interests that apply to you in the list below:

Gardening/Yardwork		Sewing/needle work		Playing card	
<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign languages		Church activities		Radio	
Walking		<input type="checkbox"/> Car repair		Writing	
Dancing		<input type="checkbox"/> Golf		<input type="checkbox"/> Football	
<input type="checkbox"/> Listening to popular music		Puzzles		Holiday Activities	
Pets/livestock		<input type="checkbox"/> Movies		Listening to classical music	
Speeches/lectures		Swimming		Bowling	
Visiting		Mending		Checkers/Chess	
Barbecues		Reading		Traveling	
Parties		Wrestling		Housecleaning	
Model building		Television		Concerts	

Appendices

Pottery		Camping		Laundry/ironing	
Politics□Table games		Home decorating		Clubs/Lodge	
Singing		Scouting		Clothes	
Handicrafts		Hairstyling		Cycling	
Attending plays		Bird watching		Dating	
Auto-racing		Home repairs		Exercise	
Hunting		Woodworking		Pool	
Driving□		Childcare		Tennis	
Cooking/Baking		Basketball		History	
Collecting		Fishing□		Science	
Leatherwork		Shopping		Photography	
Painting/Drawing					
Additional interests:					

Appendices

Appendix D: Learning Together Survey Questions

Section 1: Student Demographic Information

Age:

Gender:

Program:

Year:

How much time do you have on a weekly basis to engage in extra-curricular activities?

- 0-3 hours
- 3-6 hours
- 6-9 hours
- > 9 hours

Please rate your comfort level with older adults and describe why you chose that specific level.

- 5 = Very Comfortable
- 4 = Comfortable
- 3 = Neither Comfortable or Uncomfortable/ Moderately Comfortable
- 2 = Somewhat Uncomfortable
- 1 = Uncomfortable

Section 2: Past Experience and Comfort Level with Older Adults

In this section, we will be asking you to reflect on your past experiences and describe your overall comfort level when interacting with the older adult population.

1. What general experiences have you had interacting with older adults (>65 years of age)?

- Personal experiences (e.g. grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbours) Volunteering (e.g. senior home, hospitals)
- Experiences during academic learning (undergraduate research study, professional training, course curriculum)
- Other
- None

2. Think back to your last significant interaction that you had with an older adult (>65 years of age). How would you describe this interaction? Please share what made this interaction particularly positive or negative experience for you.

3. How do you feel about being around older adults?

Appendices

Section 3: Participating in Activities with Older Adults

Now we are going to ask you to reflect on activities you see yourself doing with older adults.

1. Please list the types of activities you do outside the classroom (e.g. working at a retail store; volunteering at the hospital; playing intramural sports)?
2. Do you participate in any activities on campus with older adults? YES/NO
3. If participant answered Yes for question 2) Please name the specific activity and describe the nature of the role you have.
4. (If participant answered No for question 2) Are you aware of these opportunities to engage with older adults on campus? YES/NO
5. (If participant answered No for question 4) Why did you choose not to participate in these activities?
6. Would you be interested in participating in activities with older adults?YES/NO.
7. (If participant answered Yes for question 6) What type of activities would you be interested in participating in?

Closing Question

Suppose the university president came and told you that older adults were interested in interacting with students? What advice would you give the President?

Is there any additional information you would like for us to know?

Appendices

Appendix E: Project Stakeholders and Consultation Body

Stakeholders Involved/Consulted

1. **McMaster Institute for Research on Aging**
2. **Residence Life:** Involved in the distribution of the survey to all students who lived in residence over the past five years.
3. **McMaster Facilities Services:** Involved in the design process of the intergenerational space.
4. **Shalom Village:** Involved in allowing the project team to host a focus group in the building where residents were asked to share their thoughts about students and cross-generational activities.
5. **International Student Services:** Involved in the distribution of the survey to all international students through the monthly newsletter.
6. **McMaster Health & Aging Department:** Involved in the distribution of the survey to all students enrolled in the Health & Aging Department.
7. **McMaster University Retirees Association:** Involved in the recruitment of older adults who were participants for the focus groups.
8. **McMaster Health & Aging Society:** Involved in providing feedback about current cross-generational programming run on and off-campus. The executive discussed benefits and limitations of programming and how this space would align with their current program offerings.
9. **Professor Anju Joshi's Discussion Group:** Older adults who regularly come on campus to engage in discussion sessions with Professor Anju on the topic of building an age friendly campus.

Appendix F: Scope of the Environmental Scan

The following outlines the scope of the environmental scan:

1. Internal Environment (McMaster University)
 - Department of Health, Aging, & Society
 - McMaster Student Clubs
 - McMaster Alumni Association
 - McMaster University Retirees Association
 - McMaster Athletics and Recreation i.e. PACE
2. External Environment (Greater Hamilton Area):
 - Hamilton Public Library
 - City of Hamilton Senior Club Programs
 - Hamilton Council on Aging
3. General Environment (no limitations on scan)

