

## About the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre

MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre is a unique partnership between the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA) and Dixon Hall, a multi-service agency focused on addressing poverty, social injustices and isolation across the lifespan, in Toronto's downtown East.

The MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre was established in 2021 through a generous gift from Suzanne Labarge. The Centre's goal is to leverage Dixon Hall's deep roots in the community and 100-year history of success providing services to people in need, with MIRA's extensive network of interdisciplinary experts in aging, to understand, implement and evaluate research and interventions that benefit older adults and their communities. Through collaboration, purposeful planning and engaging directly with the needs of our communities, the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre is working to empower people to live well, with dignity as they age.

The independent strengths of MIRA and Dixon Hall together create a unique and exciting value proposition. The distinct community to whom Dixon Hall provides services, combined with the leading-edge research model of MIRA has the potential to establish national best practices and respond to growing socio-economic pressures facing Canada's population of older adults, including social isolation and housing.

## Executive Committee

<b>Marla Beauchamp</b>	Director, MIRA   Dixon Hall Centre
<b>Mina Mawani</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Dixon Hall
<b>Christine Chow</b>	Director, Seniors and Children & Youth Services, Dixon Hall
<b>Parminder Raina</b>	Scientific Director, MIRA
<b>Ine Wauben</b>	Executive Director, MIRA



## Management Committee

<b>Marla Beauchamp</b>	Director, MIRA   Dixon Hall Centre
<b>Gésine Alders</b>	Research Coordinator, MIRA
<b>Nadia Jamil</b>	Research and Community Lead, Dixon Hall
<b>Sachi O'Hoski</b>	Translational Research and Evaluation Lead, Dixon Hall
<b>Jennifer Moxon</b>	Manager, Comprehensive Intake and Care, Dixon Hall
<b>Cindy Tse</b>	Manager, Senior Programs & Services, Dixon Hall

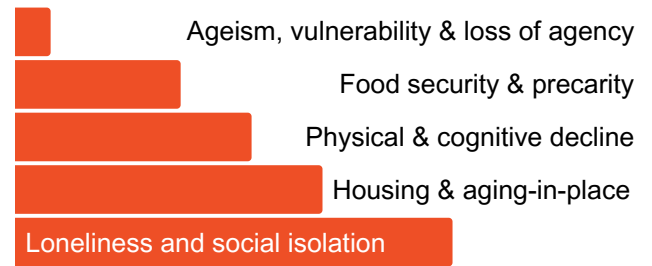
The MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre connects older adults with the services they need while practicing leading edge research and community engagement.

An important first step in developing research projects and programs that are community-driven was the **MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre Town Hall**, hosted in March 2023. Over 50 Dixon Hall staff came together to discuss the biggest challenges and opportunities facing the older adults they serve, where knowledge gaps exist, and their proposed solutions to benefit the community.

**From 250+ Post-Its emerged eight themes:**

- loneliness and social isolation
- housing and aging-in-place
- food security and precarity
- physical and cognitive decline
- technology access and competency
- system navigation
- ageism, vulnerability and loss of agency
- language and culture

A Town Hall follow-up survey asked staff to identify **ONE thematic area that was most important** to the older adults they serve.



A community-facing infographic was developed to share knowledge on the identified priorities, which **guide future MIRA | Dixon Hall initiatives**.



**Aging Priorities at the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre**

On March 28, 2023 the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre hosted over 50 Dixon Hall staff to discuss the biggest challenges and opportunities facing the older adults they serve, what they want to better understand and how we can envision knowledge and solutions to benefit the community. They had a lot to say – over 250 post-its!

**Challenges & knowledge gaps**

Here are the themes we saw:

- Loneliness, social isolation & emotional well-being
- Housing & aging in place
- Precarity, financial well-being & food security
- Physical and cognitive decline
- Technology access and competency
- System navigation
- Ageism, vulnerability and loss of agency
- Language and culture

**How might we...**

- identify those who are socially isolated?
- support older adults in navigating technology?
- make aging smoother and more successful?
- incentivize older adults to prioritize their health?
- leverage public health identify seniors' needs?
- coordinate strategies to help with addictions?

**If I could run any program or service for older adults...**

- "go-along service, escorting clients to appointments, groceries"
- "multiple generations cooking together, teaching about culture and traditions"
- "a mobile food, service and care clinic"
- "a senior and youth co housing program"

**Which of the following roles or experiences do you identify with?**

- 7 I am an older adult
- 9 I am a caregiver to an older adult
- 22 My work or research is connected to aging or older adults
- 24 I provide service directly to older adults
- 30 I have older adult friends or relatives

**Great programs & services are...**

- Culturally competent
- Affordable (or free!)
- Accessible with transportation
- Fun and not "Lurcol"
- On weekends sometimes – people get lonely

**Areas for advocacy**

- Increasing PSW jobs and salaries
- More hospital beds and healthcare workers
- More community services and spaces
- Sidewalk clearing can enable mobility

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One such initiative is the formation of a **Community Advisory Group** of 12 older adult clients from Dixon Hall. The group provides feedback for and participates in programs, projects and events; they are champions for research and advocates for change.

This valued perspective enriches our initiatives, and provides engagement and leadership opportunities for older adults to be voices for change.

## Major Initiatives at the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre

### McMaster Monitoring My Mobility (MacM3)

MacM3 is the largest cohort study of its kind, tracking the everyday mobility and health trajectories of older Canadians. We are monitoring the mobility of over 1,500 older adults (including 344 participants from the Dixon Hall catchment area) for at least 2 years using wearable technology. We are measuring key outcomes such as life-space mobility, trip frequency and mode, sedentary behavior, and step counts. This novel and interdisciplinary study aims to provide valuable insights into late-life mobility decline and lay the foundation for developing tools and strategies to help older adults and their caregivers self-manage their mobility as part of their overall health.



The co-designed, community-based EMBOLDEN research program aims to make important contributions to improve the physical mobility and social participation of older adults, and facilitate connections with community programs in neighbourhoods with significant health inequities. We will build on local assets and address community needs, service gaps, and the barriers older adults face, to promote physical and community mobility in older adults who may experience difficulties participating in community programs and live in areas with limited resources to promote optimal health.

### CP@clinic Healthcare Professional at Clinic (HCP@clinic)

Healthcare Professional at Clinic is a new community services based iteration of the Community Paramedicine at Clinic (CP@clinic) program being developed between McMaster University researchers and Dixon Hall. The program is designed to improve older adults' health and quality of life, reduce their social isolation, connect them with primary care, and community resources, and reduce the economic burden of avoidable 911 calls.



## Knowledge Mobilization at the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre

We invited researchers at McMaster University to plan a knowledge synthesis exercise geared towards the challenge and knowledge gap areas identified at the inaugural MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre Town Hall.

The funded projects include a project focusing on “Dixon Hall’s Rooming House Initiative: Scoping the Design and Implementation of Social Housing in Ontario to Inform Priorities and Practice” and a project examining “The Promotion and Sustainability of Digital Literacy Skills for Marginalized Older Adults.”

### Snacks & Science

This interactive lecture series for clients, staff, caregivers and partners of Dixon Hall features presentations by McMaster researchers followed by facilitated discussions applying the information to the Dixon Hall context.

Topics have included dementia friendly spaces, building communities for better aging, social isolation, loneliness and well-being, and movement through aging.

### AgeHub

An online knowledge-sharing forum providing service providers who work with older adults access to evidence-based resources for programming and evaluation.

Bridging knowledge and practice, AgeHub will provide a framework for program development, implementation and evaluation through a user-friendly, free, online toolkit; a community of practice for organizations serving older adults that will include curated, evidence-based resources; and knowledge mobilization events such as workshops and training.

## The bottom line

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MIRA leverages an unmatched depth of expertise and resources that can bolster the impact of, and add efficiency to, existing programs for older adults. Dixon Hall has nearly a century of experience providing social services in areas related to food insecurity and community engagement in Canada’s most densely populated high-rise community and in one of Toronto’s most diverse neighbourhoods.

The MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre represents a flagship example and a primary resource for live updates and reactions to government initiatives impacting older adults, housing, immigration, and poverty. Work with the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre represents an opportunity to link federal operations and funding to tangible outputs that make a real-world difference in the lives of Canadians living in Toronto and beyond.