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The Neighbours Project seeks to improve seniors' wellness through community connection.

Who are we? Health Commons is an innovation lab (housed at Sinai Health) that is rooted in two critical beliefs: (1) Health inequities are not inevitable, but the result of faulty systems that were not designed with diverse people's needs and experiences in mind, and (2) community knowledge is key to unlocking the solutions required to address these inequities. Read more about us [here](#).

What is the Neighbours Project? The goal of the Neighbours Project is to improve social connection, access to community services, and healthy living for seniors (55+) in two Toronto neighbourhoods: North York and Downtown East. We work closely with community members and trusted partners to co-design and implement initiatives that enhance seniors' health and wellness. We believe it is important to integrate these initiatives into peoples' day-to-day living through a focus on the aging experience and quality of life for seniors. We most recently wrapped up in North York, where we learned about three elements which are core to achieving this goal:

1

Amplifying
existing services, programs, and resources in the neighbourhood that are seniors-specific

2

Facilitating
coordination of partnerships across organizations and sectors to improve service capacity through deepened engagement in the neighbourhood

3

Collaborating
with trusted community partners to co-design and implement innovative, hyperlocal solutions that fill community-defined gaps

In North York, as part of an ongoing COVID response, the Neighbours model is rooted in virtual and in-person workshops and 1-1 service navigation support. As we move into Downtown East, we will co-design a distinct model that is unique to this neighbourhood.



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THE CORE VALUES THAT GUIDE THIS PROJECT

Community

We work with community members and trusted partners to define what is important **and we genuinely listen** to what seniors are experiencing, feeling, needing, and hoping for. We know this is not about us or what we want and need - it is about community.

Caring relationships

We nurture multi-sectoral and community relationships from a place of **deep care, reciprocity, and thoughtfulness**. We show up in the spirit of collaboration and do what makes most sense from the perspective of the communities we are serving.

Novelty & creativity

In North York we learned that novelty is important to seniors - they want to **try something new, meet someone new, and learn something new**. This has anchored our thinking as we explore creative ways to meet these needs in contexts where resources or partnerships are limited or are highly saturated.

WHAT HEALTH COMMONS OFFERS THROUGH THIS PROJECT

Convening & facilitating

Bringing people together around shared goals and **asking the right questions** - in the right way - to surface and co-create meaningful solutions and learnings.

Access to resources

Offering forward the skills, capacities, learnings, and relationships that we carry and have access to, however they can support the needs and priorities of the community.

Community innovation & design thinking

Building new tools, resources, and models that respond to hyperlocal community needs and gaps, and that can be integrated into broader systems and networks. We co-design, test, and scale solutions that reduce or remove barriers that people face when accessing the things they need to be well (i.e., their social determinants of health). We are dedicated to changing the status quo when it is not working.

Asset mapping

Mapping out and **deeply understanding what exists**, what makes these assets valuable (or not) to people, and **where gaps exist** and how to fill them with something that works.



LET'S WORK TOGETHER!

We have wrapped up in North York and are exploring what this work will look like within Downtown East. If you would like to learn more about us and how you can be a part of this project in Downtown East, we would love to hear from you!

Click our names to email us:

[Saman Itikhar, Project Manager](#)

[Zoya Jiwa, Project Manager](#)

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Sign up for our [newsletter](#) to learn about the exciting things happening within the project as we wrap up North York, including a playbook for hosting health fairs, what the neighbours model looks like in this neighbourhood, and stories from seniors and community partners about the journey we are on together.

WHAT IS OUR PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN EAST?

We are putting a call out for local partners in Downtown East who are improving seniors' wellness through access to local programs, services, and resources that focus on social connection, nutrition, and active living. We will start by hearing from the community and partners what is available within Downtown East, where there are gaps or opportunities, and where the Neighbours Project can help to fill them.

WHO WE HAVE WORKED WITH SO FAR

