

Housing for Older Adults – All the Options Under the Sun

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There are as many different kinds of housing for older adults in Saskatoon as there are different kinds of older adults. When you start to consider a move from your own home, it can be a learning process to know what your options are.

This article will discuss different kinds of housing options for older adults in Saskatoon, factors to consider, and key organizations to talk to.

Types of Housing

There are four main types of housing for older adults, with endless variations inside those categories.

Special Care Homes are publicly-funded residences for people who require assistance with most aspects of their daily life. We used to call them 'nursing homes'.

To get into a special care home, you need to be assessed through Client/Patient Access Services (CPAS), a department of the Saskatoon Health Region. CPAS will assess your care needs and determine whether you qualify for long-term care, or whether your needs might be met in other ways. Costs related to living in special care are standardized across the Province, and based on your income.

Personal Care Homes are licensed private businesses, usually located in a residential neighbourhood. They usually have four to ten residents, and staff available all day and during the night. People who live in personal care homes usually need some assistance with daily living. If you have a health change that means you can no longer live in your own home, personal care homes are often a first option. If your health needs progress while in a personal care home, you may need to move from there into long-term care. There is a wide variation in services between personal care homes, and costs vary from place to place.

When it comes to **Enriched Housing** or **Assisted Living**, there is an endless variation in types of facilities and services. Think of enriched housing and assisted living as living in an apartment with 'extra'. That 'extra' could be three meals a day or one meal a week. It could be hairdressing in the building every few weeks. It could be laundry, housekeeping, an emergency response system, religious services in-house, or organized activities. Some assisted living residences are very small. Others are big apartment buildings, where 300 people live together and gather in common areas when they want to. Costs vary, and some enriched housing complexes have long waiting lists.

Apartments and Condominiums also come in all shapes and sizes. In this type of housing older adults live very independently, and might even own their own space. This type of residence will have a full kitchen, and laundry facilities in the apartment or on the same floor. Many independent apartment buildings have no staff available at night but do provide some added services for their residents, such as vegetable gardens, RV parking, grocery opportunities, or religious services. Some residences are run by not-for-profit organizations, while others can be cooperatives.

In **Multi-care Complexes**, you can 'age in place'. Think of a special care home connected to enriched housing and to an apartment building. You could start in the apartment building, and then as you need enriched services you could have meals provided or receive other assistance. When you need even more care, you could move into the special care home. This sort of complex can be nice for older couples where one needs more care than the other: if it turns out that they cannot live together in the same room, then at least they can be in the same complex for easy visiting.

Where Do You Start?

The Saskatoon Public Library links to a number of senior's housing resources on their website, which makes it a great place to start. From here, you can find lists of Personal Care Homes, Special Care Homes, and Enriched and Assisted housing options.

If you are considering residences that provide care, talk to the friendly folks at CPAS (Client/Patient Access Services). They can help you to clarify what sorts of supports you need in your daily living, and can help you focus in on housing options. They have lists of housing for older adults, with contact information for each building. Their lists are often on the Internet, so you can read or print the list from your home computer.

The Saskatoon Council on Aging (SCOA) is a good first place to start when doing research on housing for older adults. Staff and volunteers at their information centre can provide you with information and support.

Planning Before You Need to Plan

The trickiest thing about making a housing change is the timeline. If you suddenly decide you want to move, your preferred place may not have a spot for you when you want it.

It might be prudent to do your research before you need it. If you always think, "Hey, I would like to live in that building someday when my time comes to downsize," then phone that building now. Ask them about their waiting list. Ask them how to apply, and if you can come for a tour. Talk to people who already live there. If their waiting list is six years' long, maybe you want to apply now and get on the list instead of putting it off. Some buildings will allow you to defer a few times, if they call you and you are not ready. Others will not want you to go on their waiting list until you are serious about moving.

You may choose to live in your own home for a long time, or you may choose to downsize soon after retirement. Everyone is different. Knowing your options and how the system works can help you to clarify what you want to do. For further information, call the Saskatoon Council on Aging at 652-2255.