



INTERGENERATIONAL HOMESHARE

We created affordable housing opportunities for renters while helping local older adults and communities.

PAGE SECTIONS

The pilot program was a partnership between:

the [Age Strong Commission \(/node/106\)](#)

the [Housing Innovation Lab \(/node/10791\)](#), and

the City's selected vendor, [Nesterly \(<https://www.nesterly.io/>\)](https://www.nesterly.io/).

Credit: Housing



WHY WE DID THIS

According to US Census Data, seniors are the fastest-growing part of Boston's population. The [AARP has also reported](https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/livable-documents/documents-2017/USCM-AARP-Aging-Report-1-17-17.pdf) (<https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/livable-documents/documents-2017/USCM-AARP-Aging-Report-1-17-17.pdf>) that nearly 90% of older homeowners want to stay in their homes. But, they face challenges, including:

social isolation

declining incomes, and

home maintenance.

In 2017, research [published by Trulia](https://www.trulia.com/research/boommates/) (<https://www.trulia.com/research/boommates/>) estimated that more than 3.6 million rooms in the US were unoccupied and had the potential to be rented. Researchers estimated that graduate students could save up to \$24,000 each year by renting a room rather than a one-bedroom apartment, and concluded that there were more than 38,000 spare bedrooms in the homes of Boston baby boomers.

THE EXPERIMENT

Our hypothesis? By matching older adults with people looking for rooms to rent, we could open up new affordable rental units and create sustainable living environments that support residents as they age.

During the pilot, Nesterly and the City worked to bring this innovative housing solution to Boston. There was strong demand for the program; working with local organizations and schools, Nesterly received more than 80

applications in only three weeks. Applicants worked with Nesterly to find matches that also helped build a stronger community. The pilot resulted in eight successful matches in Boston and surrounding cities.

RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

RESULTS

The pilot project exceeded our expectations. It showed that homesharing is a valuable and viable option for increasing affordability and social connectedness. The matches were able to help offset some of the high rental costs. They also supported each other, both emotionally and physically, through everyday interactions. We measured success by evaluating interest, affordability, and social benefits:

INTEREST:

There was significant interest in the pilot program. Eighty people applied (30 hosts and 50 guests).

A total of eight pairs were matched with no issues during this pilot. Eighty-nine percent stated they would recommend this program to others.

AFFORDABILITY:

During the pilot, the homeshare average rent was \$700.

Some guests saved \$100 - 150 by helping the host with basic tasks within the house. These included small errands and help with pets.

SOCIAL BENEFITS:

Nearly 50 percent of hosts were single women. Mostly all the hosts were around retirement age and needed basic services. These included help with their dog, shopping and cooking.

Our matches showed us there are benefits to homeshare beyond just the financial benefit. Our matches have grown into fulfilling relationships.

QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS

"I like being able to feel as though I'm helping in another way. His PhD program might have been a reach if he had to pay for a room alone, but now there is another alternative." - Host

"I'm an empty-nester, and he brings a presence into my home that makes it feel so much more alive and full. We're cooking dinner together and I'm showing him Roxbury's beautiful architecture." - Host

LESSONS LEARNED

The homesharing environment brings people from different generations together to better support each other. That's true whether it's social, financial, or anything in-between.

INTEREST:

A diverse group of hosts were interested in the homesharing pilot. But, many who expressed interest needed help getting the physical space ready for a guest.

There's an opportunity for expanding. We can organize volunteers to help hosts who are interested in homesharing get their home ready for guests.

AFFORDABILITY:

Graduate students were enticed by the idea of paying a subsidized rent. It was so well received that the nesterly website now has over 1,000 people. But, there are many more guests than hosts on the platform.

There's opportunity for expanding. Marketing the opportunity to host will be important to helping the program scale.

SOCIAL BENEFITS:

Through this pilot, older adults living alone now had a new connection in the community and means for social interaction. This has the potential to improve their overall quality of life and health. But, some older adults or their families expressed hesitation and fears about opening their home to a stranger.

There's opportunity for expanding. We can host workshops and share information about best practices for safe and happy homesharing.

TECHNOLOGY:

Having a website to safely and smoothly find the right match creates opportunity for scale. But, older adults who are not digital natives or may have disabilities could struggle with the application.

There's opportunity for expanding. We can provide services to walk older adults through the application and help them find the right match for their home.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN HOMESHARING?

The Shared Housing Institute has created a number of resources to support homesharing, including guides to help with finding roommates, conflict resolution, and building community. All of these resources are publicly available on their [website \(\)](https://www.sharedhousinginstitute.com/shared-housing-resource-guide-1).

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

[MAYOR ANNOUNCES INITIATIVE TO BUILD MORE EQUITABLE, RESILIENT CITY](#)

(</news/mayor-walsh-announces-initiatives-build-more-equitable-resilient-city>)

[CITY ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF INTERGENERATIONAL HOMESHARE PILOT PROGRAM](#)

(</news/city-launches-intergenerational-homeshare-pilot-program>)

[BOSTON GLOBE: HOMEOWNERS COULD HELP EASE CITY'S RENTAL CRUNCH](#)

(<http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2017/10/02/homeowners-could-help-ease-city->

[BOSTON HERALD: HOUSING PILOT TO PAIR EMPTY NESTERS, STUDENTS](#)

(http://www.bostonherald.com/news/local_coverage/2017/09/boston_housing_pilot_to_pair_empty_nest

[BOSTON HERALD: HAVE AN EMPTY ROOM? CITY INITIATIVE WANTS A GRADUATE STUDENT TO...](#)

(http://www.bostonherald.com/news/local_coverage/2017/09/boston_housing_pilot_to_pair_empty_nest

[CO DESIGN THE AIRBNB FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS HERE](#)

(<https://www.fastcodesign.com/90151804/the-airbnb-for-affordable-housing-is-here>)

[BOSTON.COM: HAVE AN EMPTY ROOM? CITY INITIATIVE WANTS A GRADUATE STUDENT TO REN...](#)

(<http://realestate.boston.com/news/2017/09/28/empty-room-house-can-let-graduate->

[CITY LAUNCHES INTERGENERATIONAL HOMESHARE PILOT PROGRAM](#)

(</news/city-launches-intergenerational-homeshare-pilot-program>)

OUR PARTNERS

[NESTERLY INC](#)

WHO'S INVOLVED:

AGE+


[**AGE STRONG COMMISSION**](#)
[617-635-4366](#)

(</departments/age-strong-commission>)



HOUSING
[617-635-3880](#)

(</departments/housing>)



[**NEW URBAN MECHANICS**](#)
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SOURCE_ENTITY_TYPE=NODE&SOURCE_ENTITY_ID=31511)

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[**CONTACT US**](#) (</DEPARTMENTS/MAYORS-OFFICE/CONTACT-BOSTON-CITY-HALL>)

[**JOB**](#) (<HTTPS://WWW.BOSTON.GOV/CAREER-CENTER>).

[**PUBLIC RECORDS**](#)
([HTTPS://BOSTONMA.GOVQA.US/WEBAPP/_RS/\(S\(DEN310HNRPQZ2RZH5LGBGSBY\)\)/SUPPORTHOME.A](HTTPS://BOSTONMA.GOVQA.US/WEBAPP/_RS/(S(DEN310HNRPQZ2RZH5LGBGSBY))/SUPPORTHOME.A)
[**LANGUAGE AND DISABILITY ACCESS**](#) (<HTTPS://WWW.BOSTON.GOV/DEPARTMENTS/LANGUAGE-AND-COMMUNICATIONS-ACCESS/NOTICE-ACCOMMODATIONS>).