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Adina Lebo, who lives in an apartment at Bay and Bloor, is hoping to “age in place” — something experts say is easier to do in Toronto’s downtown neighbourhoods than in the suburbs. JIM RANKIN/TORONTO STAR

## IT'S TOUGHER TO AGE IN THE SUBURBS

**In the fifth instalment of the One Toronto series, the Star looks at the changing age demographics of the city, and why the suburbs can be a harder place to grow old**

**May Warren** STAFF REPORTER

*As Premier Doug Ford's decision to cut council almost in half reignites talk of the urban-suburban divide, the Star finds the old differences aren't what they used to be. In a new occasional series, One Toronto, we take a look at what divides us and what we share, no matter where the ward lines fall.*

In her apartment building at Bay and Bloor, Adina Lebo has neighbours that include a young couple and a 94-year-old woman. The older woman needs a hand with her groceries. The couple needs someone to check in on their cats when they're away.

“We all help each other,” said Lebo, who is in her late 60s. “It’s way better for the health of everybody to have people of all ages around.”

It’s the kind of arrangement Lebo wants to keep as she “ages in place” downtown, hoping to stay in her community, where she can easily get to coffee shops,

grocery stores and a movie theatre. The Star is taking a look at the old fault lines of amalgamation and re-examining where the city is divided and united.

Toronto, like Canada, is getting older, but the city’s suburbs are aging faster than downtown. The problem, experts say, is that the suburbs, especially the former municipalities of Scarborough and Etobicoke, have largely been designed around driving, and can be more difficult places to age in place.

“The size of the demographic change that we’re going through is unprecedented,” said Glenn

Miller, a senior associate with the Canadian Urban Institute. That change, he said, leaves the

**“WE ALL HELP EACH OTHER.”**

Downtown Toronto resident  
Adina Lebo

megacity with the challenge of redesigning the suburbs to let an aging population stay indepen-

dent longer.

Ideally, a senior should be able to move from a more isolated detached home into an apartment in walking distance to groceries and a recreation centre — without having to leave their neighbourhood, “so that they can age actively and gracefully and perhaps avoid the need to move into long-term care eventually,” he said.

As a whole, the city is following the same trend as the rest of Canada, which saw the percentage of adults over 65 rise to 15.7 per cent in 2016, up from 11.4 per cent in 1996.