Homesharing Programs: A Promising Resource to Prevent Homelessness Among Newly Unhoused or Housing Insecure Older Adults in the United States

Angela K. Perone, Molly Calhoun, Susanna Curry, Luke Barnesmoore, Elizabeth Xanders Pinkis, Leyi Zhou, Justin Ellerby & Rosario Zepeda

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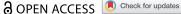
Angela K. Perone [a], Molly Calhoun, PhD, MSW[b], Susanna Curry, PhD, MSW[c], Luke Barnesmoore, MA[d], Elizabeth Xanders Pinkis, BS[e], Leyi Zhou, MSW[f], Justin Ellerby, MBA[g], and Rosario Zepeda, MSW[b]

[a]Berkeley School of Social Welfare, University of California, Oakland, California, USA; [b]Chico School of Social Work, California State University, Chico, California, USA; [c]School of Social Work, College of Health and Human Services, California State University, Sacramento, California, USA; [d]FrontPorch, Glendale, California, USA; [e]Department of Public Health, College of Health and Human Services, California State University, Sacramento, California, USA; [f]Berkeley School of Social Welfare, Universityof California, Berkeley, California, USA; [g]HomeShareAmerican River, NationalShared Housing Resource Center, South Burlington, Vermont, USA

ABSTRACT

Older adults are increasingly becoming unhoused, yet homelessness and housing precarity among older adults are often invisible. Housing insecurity also disproportionately impacts communities of color and women due to decades of exclusion from home ownership and wealth inequities. Many policies addressing homelessness tend to employ a crisis-centered approach, silo health and housing and offer few culturally responsive options for an increasingly diverse clientele. This commentary argues that nonprofit homesharing programs provide an undervalued and underused upstream tool that could potentially help prevent homelessness among older adults. Homesharing presents a promising model to address housing instability by matching home providers who have a spare room or space on their property with home seekers in exchange for rent and sometimes services. Building on established research and emerging studies on homeshare programs, this article outlines several strengths from homesharing and why this housing model deserves more attention from researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and funders. Homesharing offers a potential strategy to prevent older adult homelessness by blending housing and health. It also offers culturally responsive approaches to serve an aging population facing first-time homelessness, especially older adults who are low-income and those who identify as persons of color, sexual and gender minorities, and/or women.

CONTACT Angela K. Perone ✉ aperone@berkeley.edu 🖃 School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley, 120 Haviland Hall, Berkeley, CA 94709, USA

Introduction

Older adults comprise the fastest-growing group of people experiencing homelessness in the United States, representing nearly half of people who are homeless (Henderson et al., 2023). Among unhoused adults 50+ in California, about 41% experienced homelessness for the first time after the age of 50 (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2023; Kushel & Moore, 2023), and first-time homelessness among older adults is becoming a national trend (e.g., Henderson et al., 2023). Risk of homelessness among older adults is higher for communities of color, women, and LGBTQIA + communities, in part due to intersecting oppressions and structural inequities across the life course (e.g., Henderson et al., 2023; Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2023; Kushel & Moore, 2023; Wilson et al., 2020). The national housing affordability crisis and inflation are expanding the gap between fixed incomes and the cost of living (Henderson et al., 2023) and increasing the likelihood for first-time homelessness. An increase in health and caregiving needs can also compromise one's ability to pay for housing and/or remain in their home (e.g., Om et al., 2022; Pearson et al., 2019). Other factors such as a decline in social welfare programs, impact of natural disasters, and family relationship breakdowns or deaths of spouses or other loved ones can lead to individuals experiencing homelessness or housing precarity for the first time in older age (Beard & Bloom, 2015; Crane & Warnes, 2010; Kushel, 2012; Kushel & Moore, 2023). Emerging research on disparities in homelessness has called for new approaches in policy and practice that can help address some of these issues (e.g., Magid et al., 2022; Weldrick & Canham, 2024).

This commentary focuses on supported homesharing programs or high-touch nonprofits that have sustained engagement to ensure successful matches, which we distinguish from low-touch for-profit homesharing companies that are less engaged in ensuring successful matches and instead provide mostly platforms or forums to facilitate a match (e.g., Airbnb, Vrbo). We argue that supported homeshare programs present a promising model of prevention, intervention, and support to address rising concerns about housing insecurity and homelessness (especially first-time homelessness after age 50) – along with growing health and caregiving needs that can exacerbate homelessness concerns among older adults. Housing insecurity can include objective measures or a subjective feeling of security based on housing tenure, income, and affordability (e.g., Morris et al., 2017; Power, 2023). Building from the National Shared Housing Resource Center (2024)'s definition of homesharing, we describe "supported homesharing" to include formal shared living agreements in which two unrelated people live together and mutually benefit from the exchange of rent and/or services and support from a third-party nonprofit in facilitating and maintaining the match. In

supported homeshare programs, nonprofit organizations facilitate a connection between parties: a home provider (often an older adult) shares space in their home or on their property with a home seeker in exchange for money, services/support, or a combination of both (e.g., Magid et al., 2022; Perone et al., 2024).

Supported homesharing organizations, also referred to as "third-party arranged homesharing (TPAHS)," have existed in the United States for at least four decades. The National Shared Housing Resource Center identifies 53 homeshare programs in 18 states across the United States, but there may be more programs that are currently unlisted. There is wide variation in how supported homesharing organizations are structured and funded; some organizations are embedded in large institutionalized providers of aging services, while others are small, grassroots organizations that rely greatly on local community resources. There is limited research on the respective challenges and benefits of these structure and funding strategies in terms of how they navigate system fragmentation and evolving funding realities. However, existing research has found that homesharing program participants can benefit from companionship (Macmillan et al., 2018; Rekart & Trevelyan, 1990), an increased sense of safety from having someone else in the home (Labit & Dubost, 2016), assistance with daily tasks such as cleaning, cooking, shopping, and gardening (Macmillan et al., 2018; Rekart & Trevelyan, 1990; Sánchez et al., 2011), financial benefits such as support for utilities, mortgage, ability to hire home care, and affordable housing (Bodkin & Saxena, 2017; Macmillan et al., 2018; Rekart & Trevelyan, 1990). The constellation of these benefits can provide more independence and support for aging in place (e.g., Labit & Dubost, 2016; Martinez et al., 2020; Rekart & Trevelyan, 1990; Sánchez et al., 2011).

One of the principal roles of third-party nonprofits providing supported homesharing services is to provide significant investment in time and staff in facilitating and maintaining successful matches through questionnaires, background checks, individual and group interviews, Living Together Agreements, conflict resolution and mediation, and other support throughout the match (e.g., Magid et al., 2022; Perone et al., 2024). Most organizations match people together on factors such as desired level of cleanliness, noise, shared space, time spent together, etc. (Perone et al., 2024). Prior research suggests that, while most participants in homesharing do not need mediation to address relational or logistical challenges that arise between matches, those who do need the support indicate satisfaction with the outcome, which can include ensuring that the arrangement can continue or, less commonly, a re-match with a different person (Bodkin & Saxena, 2017; Labit & Dubost, 2016).

Older adults can be both home providers and home seekers, and in one study of supported homesharing organizations in California, older adults comprised the majority of both home providers and homeseekers (Perone et al., 2024).

Older adult home providers with limited incomes benefit from added financial resources to pay rising utility costs, taxes, and home maintenance (and sometimes mortgages or rising rents) and possible tasks/care support, whereas home seekers benefit from reasonable rents and stable housing (Perone et al., 2024). Given the rise of scams of financial abuse targeting older adults (Burnes et al., 2017), older adult homeowners and home seekers both benefit from support from a third-party nonprofit who can conduct background checks and provide other safeguards against fraud. The nonprofit's involvement helps create a safe and sustainable living arrangement for the home provider and the home seeker while providing continued support throughout the match (Magid et al., 2022; Perone et al., 2024). Once matched, the duration varies across homeshare organizations. Matches range from a few months to several years, but more importantly the success of homeshare matches is more about the design and purpose of the match. While some matches are designed to be long-term permanent matches, others are a prevention strategy that fills a need for home providers and provides a temporary solution for home seekers until permanent housing is found. Homesharing also provides and sustains affordable housing among already existing housing stock (Magid et al., 2022; Perone et al., 2024). We argue that this arrangement is an important tool for helping to prevent rising rates of homelessness, particularly among older adults experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Homesharing adopts an upstream, preventative approach to homelessness that integrates housing and health and incorporates long-established community-based approaches that expand options for culturally responsive housing (e.g., Fang et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2021) to serve the diverse needs of older adults seeking affordable housing and wanting to age-in-place or age-in-community. This commentary addresses three critical and interrelated issues in traditional homelessness response models: (1) a crisis-centered approach that (2) separates housing and health and (3) often lacks culturally responsive models to address homelessness among older adults. The paper concludes by presenting evidence and arguments about how homeshare models could help address these issues.

Traditional approaches to homelessness for older adults

Homelessness programs often incorporate a crisis-centered response model

Traditional responses to homelessness have centered on crisis management with reactive approaches. Despite significant increases in income inequality and homelessness in recent decades, the United States' service sector has grown to be a large-scale, major network of crisis-response services that have become piecemeal and less systematic (Padgett et al., 2016). The predominant crisis-response model aims to incorporate outreach with a coordinated entry program to seek out and provide services to those experiencing homelessness, with some prevention when available.

Ultimately, the goal is to provide transitional or permanent housing through Housing First approaches such as permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing – models that focus on long-term housing with the inclusion of varying levels of supportive services for those who are unhoused (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2023; Nourazari et al., 2021; Padgett et al., 2016). Yet, many of these programs are also based on the development and availability of affordable and accessible housing, which is in short supply (e.g., Colburn & Aldern, 2022). Additionally, there are serious deficits in the services offered to support the complex needs of people who are unhoused (Nourazari et al., 2021).

A major challenge to the current approach is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition of homelessness, which restricts the provision of many of its funded public programs and services only to those deemed to be "literally homeless" (Congressional Research Service, 2017). Moreover, individuals must be homeless for over a year and have a physical and/or mental health disability to be considered "chronically homeless" before becoming eligible for more intensive interventions (U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, 2025). Therefore, this standard promotes a reactive response delivered only after a trauma-induced decline of mental and physical health, rather than allowing for a proactive and preventative approach that centers those most impacted.

The invisibility of those who are at greatest risk of experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness adds to the current crisis-centered approach. There are practical methodological challenges to estimating the total number and makeup of the population experiencing homelessness. For example, up until the last decade, the Latine community tended to be underrepresented in homelessness counts (Chinchilla & Gabrielian, 2019). However, research has shown that this community is more likely to be underestimated because Latine communities have relied on multigenerational cohabitating homes and other social networks rather than public services (Chinchilla & Gabrielian, 2019). Additionally, older adults, the fastest growing age cohort in the United States, have experienced significant decreases in financial stability over the last two decades and face the highest risk of becoming unhoused (Kushel, 2020; Kushel & Moore, 2023; Pearson et al., 2019). Therefore, current models of crisis intervention are often missing significant populations, particularly if they are not seeking out public services and/or have found other temporary solutions.

Housing is often treated separately and distinctly from health

Housing has long been considered a social determinant of health (e.g., Dahlgren & Whitehead, 1991; Koeman & Mehdipanah, 2021; Rolfe et al., 2020). Inadequate or poor-quality housing can negatively impact health and wellbeing. For example,

among older renters, those who have high housing cost burden (who spend more than 50% of their income on housing) were more likely to develop new limitations in activities of daily living (ADLs) (e.g., bathing, eating, walking) or instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) (e.g., cooking, managing chores and cleaning, grocery shopping) compared to renters spending less income on housing (Jenkins Morales & Robert, 2022). And paying an in-home aide or relocating to another housing option with care assistance may be out of reach, as many life plan, retirement, or assisted living communities that provide assistance with IADLs are financially unattainable for many older adults (e.g., Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2023).

Until recently, very little formal integration has occurred among agencies providing services or support for health or housing. In 2021, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and HUD made significant strides in bridging that gap by developing a multi-agency partnership to better coordinate housing and community services, including health-related services for people with disabilities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021). This partnership included the Administration for Community Living, Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. This partnership established the Housing and Services Resource Center to coordinate services among people working in organizations and systems that provide supports for housing, homelessness, health, independent living, and other supportive services to help people maintain stable housing (Administration for Community Living, 2024). States have also recently created new opportunities to bridge health and housing. For example, California's new CalAIM program is a multi-year plan to transform the state's Medi-Cal program to integrate and improve care for people with some of the most complex needs, including older adults with disabilities and those experiencing homelessness (California Health Care Foundation, 2021). CalAIM will allow Medi-Cal managed care plans to combine clinical care with nonmedical services like housing supports (California Health Care Foundation, 2021).

While laudable, these new efforts address only a small fraction of the need and underscore the importance of supporting a variety of housing models that can bridge health and housing needs for older adults, including preventing older adults with rising care needs from becoming newly homeless. Moreover, this new coordination was sparked, in part, from the urgent and unprecedented crises presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, which opened new opportunities for cross-collaboration and funding (e.g., Calabro et al., 2020). Such opportunities include programs like CalAIM, which the California Department of Health Care Services launched in January 2022 to reform outcomes for people enrolled in Medi-Cal (Medicaid) such as new resources and community-based approaches to housing instability to improve health

equity across the state (e.g., National Academy for State Health Policy, 2022). Now that the public health emergency has ended, federal funding (and political will) that once supported this creative coordination among agencies may begin to wither. Additional approaches are needed to help integrate housing and health needs for older adults to prevent homelessness and provide supports for older adults experiencing precarious housing.

Many services lack culturally responsive approaches

Historically, communities that have the highest risk of social, political and economic marginalization and exclusion face the highest risk of economic and housing instability. Research has found increased risks of and/or overrepresentation of homelessness among Black and Latine communities (Henderson et al., 2023; Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2023), LGBTQIA+ adults (Ecker et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2020), and older women (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2023, Sorrell, 2016). Structural barriers drive much of this disparity in housing insecurity, including poverty, residential segregation, racial and gender discrimination, economic exclusion, and mass incarceration (Fowle, 2022; National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2023). Traditional approaches to homelessness require a documented history of being unhoused before someone can access public housing assistance programs. However, historical experiences of discrimination or exclusion, especially toward communities of color and LGBTQIA+ communities, may deter many people from reporting homelessness (e.g., Ecker et al., 2019).

As noted previously, older adults are the fastest-growing group of people experiencing homelessness, and many are becoming unhoused for the first time at or after age 50 (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2023; Kushel & Moore, 2023). Acute crises for older adults (e.g., death of a spouse; health issues) can decrease an already limited monthly income for housing, particularly for those with limited social capital (i.e., financial security, income). Older adults with fewer financial resources often experience greater care needs (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2023). Moreover, because women are more likely to live longer, they may need care longer than men (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2023). Rising care needs can funnel money otherwise designated for housing to health and caregiving – thus increasing one's risk of homelessness, especially for women and other minoritized older adults.

Although there have been some significant recent shifts toward equity in homeless service delivery models, often services for those who are unhoused lack an intersectional frame. When combined with the fact that there is a severe lack of evidence around equitable aging-in-place interventions for older adults (Gustavson et al., 2022), the need for culturally responsive approaches grows greater. Intersectionality provides a framework to

understand the layers of power, privilege and oppression in the context of social identities such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, income, age, and ability. Within this framework, identities are interconnected and dynamic and fluidly responsive to contemporary society (Collins & Bilge, 2020). The intersectional nature of power and discrimination that leads to housing insecurity puts older adults at high risk of experiencing housing insecurity, particularly LGBTQIA+ adults, women, and communities of color (Ecker et al., 2019; Otiniano Verissimo et al., 2023). At the same time, it also highlights the need for more culturally responsive approaches that illuminate the intersecting positionalities (e.g., racism, sexism) of people who are at the highest risk of experiencing homelessness.

The promise of homesharing programs

Homeshare programs respond to the problems above in three interrelated ways: by (1) shifting the focus from crisis to intervention, support, and prevention; (2) bridging housing and health to address rising housing instability and caregiving needs among older adults; and (3) presenting more culturally responsive housing options for older adults. We provide more details below.

Homeshare programs shift focus from crisis to community resilience

Homeshare programs shift the focus from a triage model of crisis services to promoting the resources and resilience within communities. One of the most untapped pools of affordable housing stock is underutilized space in single family homes owned by older adults (Anderson & Bokhari, 2024). Just over 60% of homes across the nation have a spare bedroom (Ghilarducci, 2023). Homeshare programs leverage existing infrastructure and community resources like spare bedrooms to help fill that need – and can do so prior to someone seeking more intensive housing stabilization and homelessness services.

Homeshare programs and services are also not confined to the HUD or associated state Housing and Community Development definitions of homelessness and thus are able to implement prevention and support models for older adults who are precariously housed and/or those who desire to age-in-place while maintaining community connection. This flexibility means that homeshare programs can better respond to the growing numbers of older adults who are at risk of homelessness for the first time – before they become homeless. For example, older adults who own homes but have limited economic means can face foreclosure or liens due to unpaid taxes when they encounter unexpected expenses (e.g., health costs, loss of income from death of a spouse) (e.g., Perone et al., 2024). Homesharing allows older homeowners

to stay in their home by supplementing their income through renting out extra space and providing assistance with certain tasks that help them live independently. It also provides housing to older adult home seekers who need access to affordable housing.

Finally, homeshare programs illuminate some of the invisibility of housing insecurity among historically vulnerable populations by providing services to individuals who may otherwise not be aware of or eligible for homeless prevention services. Homesharing programs are community-based and connect with participants through a range of strategies including attending local community events, sending postcards to residential addresses in service areas, building relationships with local agencies like retirement centers and places of worship, and advocating for the needs of older adult program participants in public commissions and forums. Homeshare programs also leverage collective communications to raise public awareness of available resources for community members who are not yet in the moment of crisis that often drives an intentional search for housing stabilization services.

Homeshare programs address both housing and health for older adults

Homeshare programs bridge concerns about housing and health in several ways. First, they often leverage benefits associated with many other communal living models, such as housing cooperatives and co-living communities, which are designed to encourage social interaction in the living environment (Quinio & Burgess, 2019). Homeshare programs also incorporate companionship, which can help reduce social isolation and loneliness. Nearly one in four adults, 65 and over are socially isolated, and 43% of adults 60 and older report feeling lonely (National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). Social isolation and loneliness have been associated with negative health outcomes (National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020), which can divert financial resources from housing to health and caregiving costs. There is evidence that homesharing participants experience improved well-being from participation in homesharing due to companionship and reduced loneliness (Macmillan et al., 2018; Martinez et al., 2020; Rekart & Trevelyan, 1990, p. 12). Findings comparing baseline and endline home seeker and home provider UCLA Loneliness Scale measures suggested a reduction in the perception of loneliness as an outcome of participating in the homeshare program (Macmillan et al., 2018). Other benefits included better sleep, a reduction in anxiety, and more engagement in activities outside the home (Altus & Mathews, 2000; Rekart & Trevelyan, 1990), though more recent research is needed. In one study, home providers participating in supported homesharing programs were likely to feel safer in their homes, eat better, and engage in social activities, particularly home providers age 70 and over (Altus & Mathews, 2000).

Relatedly, homesharing can provide a sense of safety that intersects both housing and health needs for older adults. Home providers have reported a stronger sense of safety (Labit & Dubost, 2016) and security (Rekart & Trevelyan, 1990) having another person in the home. A recent study of homeshare programs in five California counties found that both home providers and home seekers reported that they felt security and comfort during the matching process due to the involvement of a formal third-party homeshare organization (Perone et al., 2024). Homeshare organizations' background checks on both the home provider and home seeker sought to minimize risks of fraud and abuse, which provided comfort to both providers and seekers (Perone et al., 2024). Participants also reported feeling less stressed and mentally overwhelmed throughout the matching process, in part, because homeshare organizations provided guidance and support throughout the process (Perone et al., 2024). Thus, the formal matching process can reduce mental stressors associated with the realities of housing precarity and the process of securing shared housing.

Homeshare programs also blend housing and health by offering creative ways to provide caregiving. Companionship comprises one form of support, but homeshare programs offer many other forms of caregiving. Some homeshare programs offer explicit caregiving exchanges for reduced rent. Older adults with functional limitations benefit from help with personal care activities (Macmillan et al., 2018; Sánchez et al., 2011) or housekeeping (Macmillan et al., 2018; Rekart & Trevelyan, 1990). Research has demonstrated that home providers in particular can benefit from increased independence that comes from receiving this kind of help with tasks of daily living from a home seeker, such as carrying shopping bags or cleaning (Labit & Dubost, 2016; Perone et al., 2024; Rekart & Trevelyan, 1990; Sánchez et al., 2011). In intergenerational homeshare programs involving young people matched with older adults – which often involve exchange of tasks for reduced rent – students also reported financial benefits, reduced loneliness, and better living conditions than they would otherwise have (Legge, 2014; Suh , 2020).

Care support may be reciprocal, too. One study found that home providers and home seekers provided care support to one another, even in the absence of a formal caregiving exchange agreement (Perone et al., 2024). In this study, for example, several home seekers without cars benefitted from home providers with cars who were willing to take them grocery shopping, and home seekers then helped carry groceries for home providers with physical limitations (Perone et al., 2024). The homeshare arrangement provided housing benefits and care support that helped home providers and home seekers sustain their housing and age-in-place.

Homeshare programs are also actively braiding complementary models like "shallow rent subsidies" (i.e., a small subsidy per month intended to bridge

a gap between income and rental rates [Hughes, 2009]) to address the unique needs of older adults and people with health-related disabilities. In many cases, housing instability among older adults and people with disabilities is fomented by the growing gap between fixed income sources like social security and the cost of living. These individuals are often unable to access permanent financial supports like housing choice vouchers or permanent supportive housing because they do not score high enough in coordinated entry assessments. These individuals often have permanent financial barriers to housing stability that are not appropriately addressed by temporary interventions like rapid rehousing and shared housing programs and are often the best suited actors to pilot and sustain new interventions that can serve housing needs of older adults.

Homeshare programs provide culturally responsive housing options for older adults

The disparate impact of homelessness across historically marginalized communities is well-documented (e.g., Henderson et al., 2023; Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2023; National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2023; Sorrell, 2016; Wilson et al., 2020). One strategy for responding to the diversity of homelessness is to shift from a one-size-fits-all approach that often centers on crisis response to a culturally responsive intervention and support model of practice that centers on the lived experience of those most impacted. Although this does not shift the larger structural barriers that cause homelessness across the nation, it does provide a stopgap to the current system. Homesharing utilizes a homelessness prevention, intervention, and support model that is particularly responsive to the needs of the intersectional identities of those providing and seeking housing due to the role of the third party. The homeshare organization has the potential to examine experiences of power, privilege, and oppression among home seekers and home providers through the ability to match based on homeshare participants' preferences. For example, homeshare organizations may match home seekers with home providers based on demographic information, language spoken, social and political interests, and cultural similarities (or differences), as needed. It also allows both home seekers and providers to choose compatible matches and test out the relationship before there is an agreed upon formal living arrangement.

The fact that homeshare programs may be able to provide culturally responsive matching strategies is not without complication or nuance. The reality is that homeshare programs cannot serve everyone who is unhoused. Third-party organizations report a high level of crises among home seekers, and they are not always able to work with everyone who reaches out for support (Perone et al., 2024). Additionally, homeshare programs are not able

to place home seekers with home providers who have significant ADL or other more complex needs (Perone et al., 2024) or personal preferences that may be hard to match. Furthermore, although homeshare organizations are able to match individuals based on demographic information and personal preferences, these organizations are only allowed to match preferences for a desired homeseeker or home provider within the confines of existing housing laws, which bar various types of discrimination in housing. Therefore, both home seeker and home provider preferences must be taken into account in accordance with the law.

One of the homeshare model's biggest strengths is that it builds on long-established practices of communal living, particularly in communities of color and LGBTQIA+ communities, using shared networks and community resources to informally house families, friends, and families of choice who may otherwise face unsheltered housing. Across history, historically marginalized communities have found grassroots solutions such as mutual aid societies, multigenerational housing, and informal social networks to ensure that members of their communities are housed and cared for (e.g., AARP, 2025; McKane et al., 2023; Perone, Toman, et al., 2025; Perone, Zhou, et al., 2025). Immigrants and refugees are more likely to live in multigenerational households (Cohn et al., 2022), and between 40–50% of Latine older adults live with other generations (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2023). Multigenerational households can provide both economic and cultural support in communities that are often multiply minoritized. In this sense, homeshare models are not unique, rather they build on communal living principles and familial and community responses by incorporating formal third-party structure and support.

A homeshare organization with well-trained staff can also provide culturally appropriate responses when tensions arise between participants from different backgrounds or lived experiences. Beyond inhouse staff with formal mediation training, many nonprofit homeshare organizations also offer free third-party mediation or conflict resolution (e.g. Bodkin & Saxena, 2017; Perone et al., 2024). Some organizations infuse restorative justice principles into their conflict resolution. These strategies can facilitate mutual understanding and empathy among homeshare participants while also preserving their safety and legal rights. For example, a culturally responsive homeshare program staff member could alleviate conflict between a same-gender-loving older Black man who repeatedly misgenders a younger white nonbinary home seeker by helping to contextualize the gendered salutations – i.e., that he was raised at a time and place where he faced physical violence by not addressing white women as "miss" or "ma'am" (e.g., Perone, 2024).

Homeshare organizations – and the staff that comprise them – are often part of the communities that they serve, especially in rural areas. Many live, work, and send their kids to the same schools. While there are undoubtedly

differences in power and privilege between participants in the homeshare program and a homeshare program's executive director, the community connections are important. According to the National Shared Housing Resource Center (2024), there are over 50 home share programs across the country that span from rural to urban communities. For example, in California, there are successful homeshare programs in San Diego County and Butte County – some of the largest and smallest counties in the state. These programs focus on their individual counties by providing community-level services. Being embedded in the community can help homeshare organizations and their staff provide more culturally appropriate responses than other models that may be more removed from the people they serve.

Conclusion

Overall, this commentary aims to stimulate thinking and advance gerontological scholarship on promising alternatives to traditional homelessness prevention models for older adults that present a more downstream approach to homelessness and elevate awareness among policymakers, practitioners, and researchers about the promise of homesharing. We argue that homesharing provides a promising avenue for prevention and intervention for homelessness that provides more targeted upstream supports for people experiencing precarious housing, particularly newly unhoused and housing insecure older adults. Supported homeshare programs build on the wisdom and experiences of multiply minoritized communities and respond to current gaps and challenges in housing for older adults. Homeshare programs present a shift from a crisis-centered paradigm to a proactive, preventative approach to homelessness and rising caregiving needs among older adults. By blending housing and health considerations, they disrupt prior practices that have siloed these needs. Homeshare programs also offer culturally responsive housing options that incorporate diverse and intersecting needs of historically marginalized communities, including people of color, older adults, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ individuals. With their unique approach to combining housing with social and health support, homeshare programs signify a pivotal shift toward more sustainable and culturally inclusive housing options to address growing concerns about housing instability and homelessness among older adults. Despite this promise, however, homesharing has limitations and is by no means the only solution to meet the growing needs of older adults facing homelessness. Supported homesharing programs do not exist in many regions of the country, and funding can be precarious for nonprofit homeshare organizations (Perone et al., 2024). They also may not be the best solution for older adults with complex health or housing needs or personal preferences. However, homesharing merits increased attention and visibility as a promising proactive and potentially preventative approach that blends housing and

health needs and culturally responsive approaches to address rising home-lessness among older adults.

KEY POINTS

- Homelessness among older adults is rapidly growing; more prevention tools are needed.
- Homesharing adopts an upstream, preventative approach to homelessness.
- Homesharing programming integrates housing and health for older adults.
- Homesharing programming provides culturally responsive housing options for aging.

Disclosure statement

This commentary was written by a team of academic researchers and community partners amidst a multi-method community-engaged research study on homesharing in California. In keeping with best practices for community-engaged research practices, this commentary incorporates two of our community partners as coauthors. These community partners are nonprofit organizations who facilitate supported homesharing programs in California. One of the coauthors is also the President of the National Shared Housing Resource Center.

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ORCID

Angela K. Perone 🔴 http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3307-9662

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