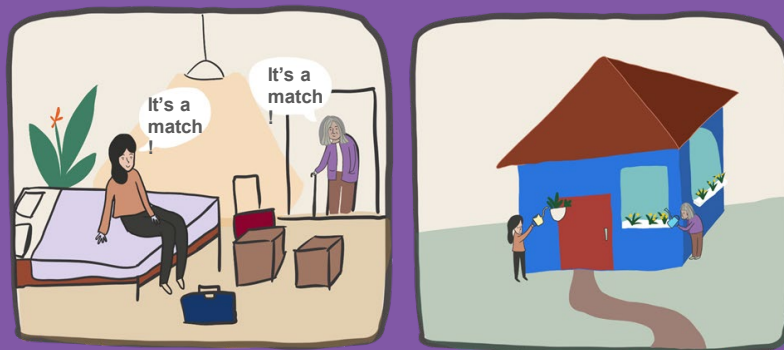


Housing Supply Through Shared Accommodation



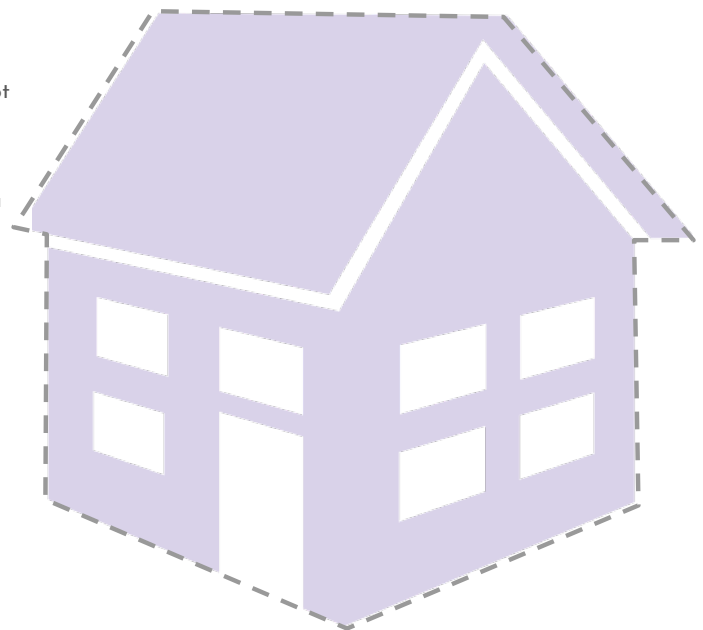
Housing Supply Through Shared Accommodation

Providing a safer and more sustainable gateway to shared accommodation

What is the Challenge?

This team began with a large problem statement, that there is not enough housing stock for women+ at risk of violence and homelessness in Victoria. The challenge was then to come up with a model in which both the housing providers and housing seekers would feel safe and comfortable. They realized that, to produce a workable prototype, the best approach was to focus on a more targeted solution which would positively impact at least a portion of their target population.

Recognizing an existing backlog in the city's transitional housing programs, they sought to find an accessible option for those moving on from 2nd and 3rd stage housing. For women transitioning out of these supportive programs, there are increasingly limited options for safe and stable housing; subsidized units are scarce to non-existent and rents in market housing are largely out of reach, particularly for those who rely solely on IA or PWD benefits. That leaves shared accommodation as the only affordable option in many cases. This can be a risky prospect for anyone, as shared living has no oversight body to protect tenants from issues that may arise, but even more so for women who have experienced abuse.

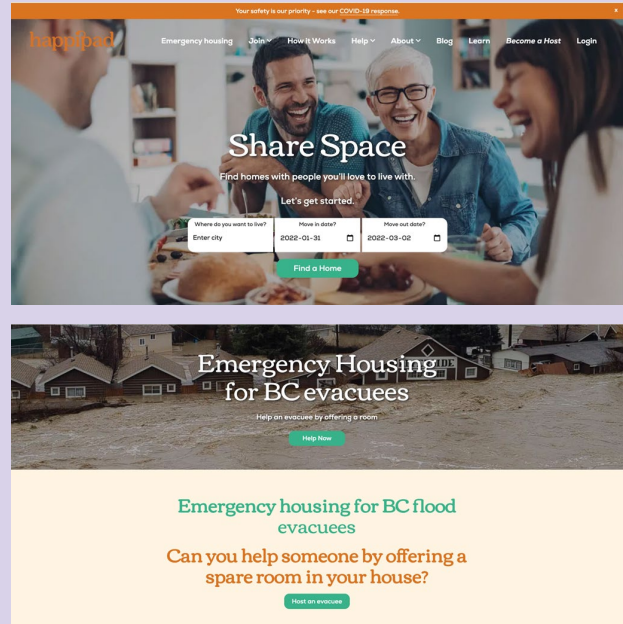


What is the Prototype?

Through research, the team discovered an existing housing website in BC, **Happipad**, a social purpose venture, which matches prospective tenants with home owners who wish to rent out space in their homes. What makes it different than a Craigslist ad? The organization strives to ensure that the tenant and the homeowner are compatible to share a living space.

While the site currently focuses on matching seniors who want to stay in their homes with students seeking affordable accommodation and may be open to helping out with some basic practical tasks, the team saw its potential to benefit their target group. **Working in partnership with Happipad, women's support organizations can provide a safer and more sustainable gateway to shared accommodation**, through assessments and screenings of both parties before move in, lowering risk and increasing the chances of a successful outcome.

*While the team did reach out to Happipad, they have not yet had the opportunity for further conversations to discuss the interest or feasibility. However, because Happipad is already a social purpose venture, with funding from CMHC (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation), which also provides funding for women's shelter housing, it seems like a potentially well aligned partnership.



What does the process look like?



Sonya is referred to Happipad by her support worker as she transitions out of 3rd stage housing. She is greeted by a landing page mentioning a partnership between Happipad and women support organizations to provide housing for women fleeing violence.



Sonya fills out a questionnaire that has been tailored to fit the needs of women who are fleeing abuse, and notes her needs and preferences.



Sally, a senior who wants to rent out a room in her home, already plans to put a listing on Happipad. On their website, she sees a notice about a new Happipad initiative which seeks to offer housing options to women leaving transitional housing.



Sally fills out her profile and indicates that she's open to renting her room to a woman leaving transitional housing. She's looking for a quiet roommate who might enjoy having dinner together sometimes and can help with gardening.



Sonya sees the listing, with Sally's profile and preferences, and feels like it would be a perfect fit. She sends an application to Sally, and Sally also feels like the match is right.



Happipad gathers banking information, and creates a contract for Sonya and Sally to sign. They also remind users that they are available to support the process and any conflicts that might arise.

What does the process look like? (continued)



Sonya moves into Sally's house where she has a comfortable bedroom and her own bathroom, in addition to the shared living spaces. They have agreed in advance on how basic household chores will be divided.



On the weekends when she's not working, she and Sally garden outside and they are happy that they get along well. They enjoy sharing a weekly meal and the occasional coffee together, but maintain separate schedules most of the time.



Several months later, Sonya's support worker checks in with her to ask her how the arrangement is going and whether or not she would recommend it.



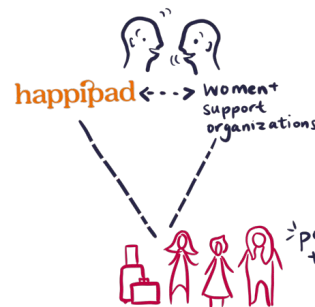
After 6 months, Sonya is offered a one-bedroom apartment in subsidized housing. While she has enjoyed living with Sally and feels a little sad to go, she hopes to keep in touch with her new friend and is excited to live in her very own space.

How does it work?

There are different potential levels of engagement for this prototype, which centres around women transitioning out of 2nd and 3rd stage housing using a matching platform like Happipad to find safer, lower-risk shared accommodation.

This lowers the barrier to implementing the prototype, by offering varying levels of interaction, investment, and oversight from women's support organizations, which are often stretched in capacity, funding, and resources.

Option 1: make it known that this is an option for women fleeing abuse to find affordable accommodation



This might be an introductory conversation with Happipad to make them aware of this potential user group for their service.



Several short info sessions or show-and-tells could be presented to different women's support organizations who could recommend this option to their clients.

How does it work?



Consult with homeowners to understand interest and how to frame the partnership and the equal win relationship

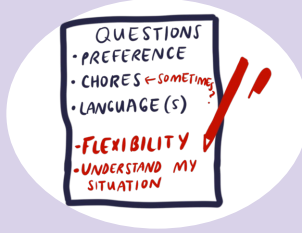


Could create content for a landing page that would inform homeowners of an opportunity to help others, and let women know how to use this website

Option 2: a more robust option where women's support organizations could become partner organizations with Happipad.



Ways to partner with Happipad



Could work with women+ to understand how to better tailor the matching questionnaire for their circumstance



Work with happipad to educate on the nuances of this target group and their needs, to make the process more user friendly for them

Key Learnings, Challenges and Opportunities



Testing

- Created a survey and info package, describing the existing Happipad service, to gauge the interest of women currently in transitional housing
- Received positive feedback that this could be a good option, especially for those who might already be considering shared accommodation



Future Testing



While this team experienced challenges and lacks the capacity to continue with prototype testing, they had some ideas on how others might further develop the idea..

- **With Happipad:** Develop relationship with Happipad and see if they can go through a sample end user experience as it relates to the site—see what application looks like, matching, interview process—is there a chance for parties to meet before agreements are made?
- **With Women and/or Support Organizations:** How to maximize the benefits of this option, while balancing the needs of applicants with those of homeowners and Happipad?
- **With Homeowners:** Could there be some advertising of Happipad to places where these types of homeowners exist (Seniors centre)? What would be their motivating factor to participate in something like this?

Key Learnings, Challenges and Opportunities



Scoping for the right Challenge

- This team began with such a huge problem scope that it was difficult to come up with ideas, as no one size fits all, especially for a user group with such a variety of different needs.
- Ultimately were able to narrow the scope on their own and create a great prototype idea that could be tested with women exiting transitional housing who might be more settled and no longer in crisis, and then scaled up with further research.



An opportunity to mitigate this would have been to start with smaller challenges so that different teams could be tasked with finding targeted solutions for more specific user groups.



Leverage existing projects

- With this prototype, there are different levels of potential to engage, which creates a low barrier of entry for support organizations to implement, depending on their resources and capacity. This is an opportunity for relatively low effort and cost, but could still be a very valuable resource for women seeking housing in today's market.