

City of Kitchener *Older Adult Strategy*



FINAL REPORT

dmA Planning & Management Services
3044 Bloor Street West, Suite 315 Toronto, ON M8X 2Y8
Tel: (905) 275-4458 • dma@dmaconsulting.com • www.dmaconsulting.com

June 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	STUDY PURPOSE AND SCOPE	1
1.2	THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK	2
1.3	STUDY PROCESS	2
2.0	BACKGROUND REPORT SUMMARY	4
2.1	PROJECTED GROWTH AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS	4
2.2	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE EMERGING OLDER ADULT MARKET	5
3.0	THE OLDER ADULT STRATEGY	7
3.1	PART ONE: CLARIFYING THE DEPARTMENT’S MANDATE IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE EMERGING OLDER ADULT MARKET	7
3.1.1	<i>Overview</i>	7
3.1.2	<i>Issues and Future Directions</i>	7
3.2	PART TWO: COMPATIBILITY OF THE CURRENT PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM WITH THE FUTURE OLDER ADULT MARKETS	13
3.2.1	<i>Overview</i>	13
3.2.2	<i>Issues and Future Directions</i>	13
3.3	PART THREE: NEW APPROACHES TO SERVICE PROVISION – REPOSITIONING THE DEPARTMENT TO BETTER SERVE FUTURE MARKETS	18
3.3.1	<i>Introduction</i>	18
3.3.2	<i>Issues and Future Directions</i>	18
4.0	CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	23

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 STUDY PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The City of Kitchener has a long history of providing quality recreation programs and services for older adults, with three Older Adult Centres currently in operation, and a variety of other facilities and agencies offering programs, services, and opportunities of relevance to this age group. Growing recognition of the significant demographic shifts being experienced on a National, Provincial, and local level with the aging of the “Baby Boom” generation has led many municipalities to review their service provision to older adults. Municipalities across Canada – and Kitchener is no exception – are looking for a strategic response to the challenges and opportunities emerging from this rapidly growing segment of the population.

In 2007, the Community Services Department, with the assistance of another consultant, initiated a study process with the aim of positioning itself to respond to the current and future needs of its older adult population. The initial phases of the study included documentation of relevant socio-demographic and population characteristics, development of an inventory of older adult facilities, programs, and services, and a number of consultations with older adults and community stakeholders. This initial attempt concluded with a number of draft recommendations, but a report was not finalized. The initial study largely proceeded from the assumption that the existing approach to serving older adult recreational needs in the City of Kitchener would be, in most respects, retained into the future. For example, the original terms of reference for the study stated that the Older Adult Centres would continue to be a feature of the City’s recreation facility inventory. Consequently, while it was anticipated that the earlier study would identify improved approaches to serving older adults, it was assumed these would be largely consistent with past practices. The draft recommendations from the earlier study were consistent with this assumption.

In November of 2008, dmA Planning & Management Services was retained by the City to further the investigations into older adult needs and interests and develop an Older Adult Strategy. The dmA study process began with no assumptions that future service delivery would replicate past practice. On the contrary, research into the older adult market shows that it will be so significantly different in the future that a fundamental change in facility models, planning standards, policies, and service delivery approaches will likely be required to adequately serve the older adult market of the future. These fundamental changes guided the strategic directions outlined in this report.

Finally it is necessary to comment on the scope of this study and the resulting strategy. The study’s purpose is to provide “strategic direction” for meeting the needs of older adults. This is a high level strategy, and while a number of implications are discussed, it is anticipated that many issues will need to be resolved or investigated further before the strategy is fully implemented. While the study process included opportunities to interview a number of City staff, and to review draft recommendations with staff through a facilitated workshop, the study process did not involve broader consultations with community representatives; other service delivery agencies; politicians or the general public. It is anticipated that the future directions outlined in this report will need to be reviewed more extensively prior to being fully implemented.

1.2 THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The Older Adult Strategy was prepared for the City's Community Services Department. Similar to any Departmental initiative, this strategy and any related initiatives must be aligned with the broader planning framework of the City and the Department. The City's Community Strategic Plan: *A Plan for A Healthy Kitchener (2007-2027)* establishes the overall framework for City services and for the Community Services Department. The Department also has a Strategic Plan (2008-2010) that outlines a Vision, Mission, a number of Core Values, and Guiding Principles for service delivery. Building on four key themes, the Departmental Strategic Plan identifies strategic initiatives for the next 2 year period. Of the themes identified, those most relevant to the Older Adult Strategy fall under the theme of *Complete Communities*. These are reprinted below:

Goal: To create communities where engaged residents can live, work and play, supported by an enhanced quality of life.

The Community Services Department:

- Will strive to remove barriers related to such factors as age, income, ability and culture that affect residents' access to and participation in the life of the community.
- Will continue to develop positive relationships with the community that allow staff to respond to the needs of the community.
- Will recognize the community's diverse neighbourhood identities and strive to build pride, engagement and a sense of place.

There are also a number of other Departmental studies underway or in the planning stages (Parks Master Plan, Neighbourhood Development and Community Sustainability Strategy) and it is anticipated that the Older Adult strategy will inform and help focus the issues investigated in these studies.

1.3 STUDY PROCESS

The study process involved three distinct phases and a number of tasks. In **Phase One**, the consultants met with the study Steering Committee, received and reviewed background reports and data of relevance to the study, toured the City's Older Adult facilities and held a number of interviews with City Staff. At the conclusion of Phase One, a *Background Report* was prepared to document the planning context and background information relevant to the development of the Older Adult Strategy.

The *Background Report*, (May 2009) includes the following:

- A profile of the older adult population nationally, provincially, and in the City of Kitchener;
- A profile of the emerging older adult market segments, and relevant trends and best practices in service provision to these populations;
- An inventory of City facilities, services and programs for older adults;
- A review of program participation statistics and membership trends; and
- A summary of observations relevant to the development of the strategy.

It should also be noted that the work program was not intended to duplicate the work completed in the earlier study, but rather to build on and advance the work that began in 2007. While the demographic and inventory data compiled for the initial study was updated, we largely rewrote the analysis of trends and best practices based on a thorough literature review and our experience working in the field. It was not possible to use the input from the earlier study's community and staff consultation efforts because the issues and questions addressed were not relevant to the strategic directions that became the focus of the current work program.

Phase Two of the study process involved a half day workshop with Departmental and City staff. The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Review issues identified through the initial study phases, including the inventory and demographic analysis, the review of trends and best practices, and the key informant interviews with City staff and other stakeholders;
- To review preliminary Future Directions for the strategy to meet the needs of Older Adults;
- To discuss the possible implications of these Future Directions for the Department's future service provision;
- To finalize the Older Adult Strategy based on the input of workshop participants.

In preparation for the workshop, participants received a Discussion Paper which summarized Phase One findings and guided participants through a series of questions related to the strategy's development.

Phase Three involved the preparation, review, and submission of the Final Report for the City of Kitchener's Older Adult Strategy.

2.0 BACKGROUND REPORT SUMMARY

The following sections summarize the socio-demographic, population growth, and market considerations for the provision of older adult services in the City of Kitchener in the years to come¹.

2.1 PROJECTED GROWTH AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS

The following points summarize the information from the Background Report on population growth and socio-demographic characteristics:

- The City's 2006 population was 204,668, with approximately 28% or over 57,000 in the 50 years of age and older category;
- Consistent with National trends, the City of Kitchener's population is slowly aging, although not to the same extent as the Province overall;
- The future age profile of the City will be influenced by the aging of the "Baby Boomers" cohort (those born between 1946 and 1964). Today's 40+ year olds will gradually shift into the older age categories over the next 10-15 year period and those in their 50s are on the cusp of a new lifestyle as they enter retirement or partial retirement;
- By 2021, 34% of the City's population will be in the 50 years of age and older category, and this number will grow to 38% by 2031.
- By 2031, the 50+ cohort will include over 108,000 persons.
- According to the 2006 Census, the City of Kitchener's population had a slightly lower average household income than the Province as a whole and when compared to the nearby municipalities of Waterloo, Cambridge, Guelph.
- Ethnic diversity in Kitchener will continue to increase, partly as a result of new immigrants to the Greater Toronto Area seeking more affordable housing than available in the larger metropolitan centres.

Implications:

- Absolute growth in the number of older adults in the City will result in increasing demand for programs and services of interest to and required by older adults. The impact may be experienced by the full range of health, social service, and leisure service providers in the City of Kitchener and Waterloo Region.
- The 2006 household data points to a growing segment of the population that is child free. These childless adult households, many of whom will be retired at a younger age, represent a very significant and growing market for leisure services.

¹ For more detailed information, refer to Older Adult Strategy, *Final Background Report*, May 2009, dmA Planning & Management Services.

- While the research implies that the upcoming generation of Older Adults will generally have more economic freedom, this may be mitigated somewhat in communities like Kitchener with average household incomes below the Provincial average. In any given City, a higher percentage of older adult households tend to have income levels below the Statistics Canada low income cut-off² than other household categories. There will always be segments of the Older Adult population for whom cost remains a barrier to participation, and this will be an important consideration of this strategy.
- Increasing ethnic diversity in the City will have implications for marketing and outreach, program offerings, and overcoming the barriers faced by New Canadians in accessing these services.

2.2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE EMERGING OLDER ADULT MARKET

The research points to two distinct older adult market segments whose leisure needs will demand attention in the coming years. We will refer to these two market segments in our analysis as they form the basis of a recommended long term strategy for older adult services. Please refer to the *Background Report* for a more thorough review of trends and best practices for older adult service provision.

A) The Traditional Senior, becoming the Frail Elderly: The “traditional senior” largely defines the older adults being served by the City’s Older Adult Centres today. The majority of these individuals are over the age of 65, and as they age, many will be moving into the category termed the “frail elderly”. They are the parents of the “Baby Boomers”, with interests and expectations reflective of that generation. These individuals will require more assistance and support as they grow older and may struggle with mobility challenges, loneliness and isolation, and in some instances dementia. There will be many more “frail elderly” in the coming years, and municipal recreation departments will need to determine their role and primary responsibilities to this group, particularly relative to health service providers and other agencies.

B) The “Baby Boomer” generation, becoming the Zoomer: The Baby Boomers are now entering their older adult years, and are being redefined as the “Zoomers”, with vastly different perceptions of and expectations for their retirement years than the previous generation of older adults. On the whole, Zoomers are healthier, more affluent, more active, more technologically savvy, more culturally diverse, and ready to enter a new phase of life, free from full-time work obligations. They have interests in travel, lifelong learning, health and wellness, aging well, and staying physically active. There are significant implications for leisure services. For example, Zoomers will avoid services and activities targeted towards “seniors”; on the whole, they will have disposable income and be willing to pay for program and services that cater to their needs and are of high quality; they will seek out programs and experiences that are empowering, incorporate more opportunities to learn, help broaden horizons and help develop leadership and other skills; they will prefer flexibility in program options, and will be less likely to make a long-term commitment or pay membership fees; they are less likely to volunteer, but when they do, they will look for positions that match their level of skill, interests, schedules, and personal goals; they will focus on health and wellness and staying active; and will demand high quality, comfortable, welcoming facilities that meet a variety of interests and a range of needs.

² Statistics Canada defines Low income cut-offs (LICOs) as the income thresholds, determined by analysing expenditure data, below which families or households will devote a larger share of income to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family or household would.

This description of the older adult “Zoomer” is not only significantly different than the traditional senior, but is in many respects indistinguishable from the adult market. Indeed, it is probably most useful to think of the older adult market of tomorrow simply as an adult market. While there will be differences in program demand due to age and retirement (e.g. such as interest in daytime access – and slightly different program focus, such as a therapeutic rather than a conditioning focus) the Zoomer’s interests will largely be similar to those of the Boomer adults of today. Consequently, a strategy to serve older adults may be quite compatible with a shift to serving an adult market. We would argue that the adult market of today (i.e., the Boomers of today) represent a hugely untapped market for recreation services.

This redefinition of the “older adult” is an important consideration in the strategy. As noted above, the emerging older adult market will be very similar to the adult market. Increasingly the recipients of these services will not be isolated seniors, predominantly women, with health limitations and limited income. This demographic will be superseded by the Zoomer – an older adult by age but with recreational interests that in many cases will not be dissimilar to the childless adult market of today. Furthermore, unlike other segments of the adult market, these individuals will be retired or partially retired and consequently will represent an extraordinary market for leisure services – they are healthy, have time on their hands, and want and are willing to pay for quality recreational experiences.

Indeed, this market can be viewed as the “second coming” because just as young parents of the Baby Boom generation defined public recreation in the 1970s, they are about to redefine it as older adults in the coming decades. The same people who demanded and were willing to pay for quality recreational services for their children in the 1970s, and were the driving force behind an unprecedented expansion in municipal recreation infrastructure and services in Ontario, are retiring with expectations that the superior public recreation system that they helped to build for their children will now serve their needs. This is a major change in the market for recreation that most municipalities are only now beginning to address. The City of Kitchener’s Older Adult Strategy must be focused on this market.

3.0 THE OLDER ADULT STRATEGY

3.1 PART ONE: CLARIFYING THE DEPARTMENT'S MANDATE IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE EMERGING OLDER ADULT MARKET

3.1.1 OVERVIEW

As the market for leisure services shifts with the changing demographics, it will be increasingly important for the Community Services Department to clarify its mandate with respect to populations served and priorities. Questions related to mandate such as: What role does the Department have in meeting the needs of the emerging older adult market or today's adult market? Should services for older adults and adults command the same priority as services for children and youth? These questions must be addressed before the implications for the facilities, programs and policies governing recreation service delivery can be considered. Similarly, the question of what role the Department can and should play in providing services to the frail elderly will be increasingly important, as this segment of the population grows. These are Issues #2 and #3 and are discussed below.

While these are the central issues associated with the Department's mandate for leisure services and consequently the issues of relevance to this study, a more general question related to the priority outcomes of the Department needs to be addressed before these issues can be clarified. The broader service delivery framework for leisure services must be reviewed, with particular attention devoted to the identification of preferred outcomes. This issue, with implications that reach far beyond the Older Adult Strategy, should be considered as part of the planning for older adult services. We have discussed the need for a Coordinated Framework for service delivery as Issue # 1 below.

3.1.2 ISSUES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Issue #1: The Department's Mandate – A Coordinated Framework for Service Delivery

One of the most significant problems in determining any municipality's mandate for recreational services is confusion (or lack of attention) to desired outcomes and service delivery principles. This report defines outcomes as the end product, benefit, or result of the services provided – what the Department hopes to accomplish; and service delivery principles as preferred methods of operation – or how services are delivered. The overview of the Planning Framework in Chapter One discussed the linkages between the City's Strategic Plan and the Department's Strategic Plan. The Departmental Strategic Plan's Guiding Principles are effectively service delivery principles, as defined above. However the desired outcomes of leisure services in Kitchener do not appear to have been clearly articulated in the Strategic Plan or other department documents and this is necessary to prepare an Older Adult Strategy.

The following are examples of outcomes commonly adopted by municipal leisure service departments. It should be pointed out that each community will prioritize outcomes differently, or may include other outcomes that are considered more important than those listed below.

- Social Interaction/Community Cohesion
- Community Image/Attract Residents and Business
- Healthy/Active Lifestyles
- Community Development/Strong Community-Based Organizations
- Economic Development/Tourism
- Environmental Protection
- Personal Growth and Development/Social Skills
- Athletic Skill Development

These are typical outcomes associated with leisure services and to develop a strategy for older adults, or any other sector of the community, the services outcomes (or what we hope to accomplish by providing the service) must be clearly stated and priorities adopted. Outcomes have not been clearly articulated for the Department in a way that can direct the provision of older adult services. The Department has adopted plans that provide some sense of priority outcomes, but these tend to be for specific areas of responsibility. For example, the recently completed Leisure Facilities Master Plan³ identifies four priorities for investment in leisure facilities that, in order of priority, reflect (1) broad based participation and children/youth competitive activities; (2) the specialized needs of targeted populations (including traditional seniors but apparently not adults/older adults); (3) key strategic initiatives of the City such as downtown redevelopment, and (4) national/international athletes and sport tourism. These outcomes and priorities presumably only apply to facilities, but they do not capture outcomes that would usually be associated with adult or older adult services – such as health or social interaction – and provide limited direction for the Older Adult Strategy.

The Department is currently in the process of developing, or has recently worked on, a number of other initiatives including a Parks Master Plan, a Youth Strategy, a Neighbourhood Development and Community Sustainability Strategy, and an Athletic Services Review. The scope of this study did not include a detailed review of past studies or the terms of reference for current and anticipated studies, but it appears that they are being developed without the benefit of a complete service delivery framework that clearly documents outcomes and their priorities for the Department as a whole. The question of how to best serve the expanding adult market and the emerging older adult market will of course be of relevance to all of these studies. To ensure the results of the Older Adult Strategy, and the plans and strategies noted above, are coordinated and consistent – common outcomes should be adopted.

This Department should revisit their Strategic Planning framework and their overall service delivery framework, with a view to confirming their service goals, service delivery principles, priority outcomes, and resulting policies. This

³ City of Kitchener, *Leisure Facilities Master Plan, Executive Summary*, February 2005, prepared by F.J. Galloway Associates Inc. p.3-1.

review will provide the foundation for all of the separate strategies that are being developed and ensure they are consistent and interrelated. This initiative is not specific to the Older Adult Strategy, but if undertaken, the Older Adult Strategy should be reviewed and revised as warranted based on the identified outcomes and service delivery principles.

FUTURE DIRECTION:

- 1. The Corporation of the City of Kitchener and the Community Services Department have developed a number of studies, strategies and plans outlining service goals and service delivery principles related to specific areas. The Community Services Department should establish preferred outcomes that are consistent across the Department.**

Issue#2: The Department's Mandate for Adult and Older Adult Services

Most parks and recreation departments in Ontario were created in the post war years and expanded significantly in the 1970's and 1980's to serve families with a focus on the recreational needs of children and youth. At the time, this was the primary market driven by an unprecedented growth in the population under the age of 18. This of course is no longer the situation in Kitchener or in most other Ontario communities, yet it might be argued that the service focus in most communities remains on the younger age groups. Further, to the extent that adults are reflected in the Department's mandate, these would appear to be "seniors" receiving traditional services directed to the "traditional seniors" market as defined in the previous chapter. The adult market and the emerging older adult market or the Zoomer – is not generally identified as a service target, let alone a possible priority.

The City of Kitchener has no specific mandate that would indicate a priority on services to children and youth or another segment of the population. However, this emphasis is apparent in some current documents, such as the Leisure Facilities Master Plan cited earlier, and in a number of municipal policies, such as affiliation and facility allocation policies, that specifically assign preference to children and youth. While not researched as part of this study, we expect that in Kitchener, as in most communities, the total number of program hours and participants using municipal parks and recreation services would be disproportionately representative of children and youth. This is likely also the case for staff resources. We note, for example, that the City is currently involved in a "Youth Strategy" and an "Older Adult Strategy" (which was originally defined as traditional seniors), yet there is no similar strategy directed to Adults. And while specific facilities publish lists of leisure programs geared towards adults, the City's leisure guide has program categories for youth, 50 and better, and Inclusion Services, but a specific focus on adult programs generally and those of interest to the Zoomer is not apparent.

While a focus on children and youth seems apparent, the rationale for this is not clearly stated. It is of course possible that the focus on children and youth is simply a reflection of expressed demand. If this was the case in the past, we should not expect it to continue in the future. In 2006, of the roughly 80,000 households in Kitchener, about 22,000 of these included a couple without children (about 44,000 adults in total), many of whom are likely adults

beyond the 'family phase' of their life (early to mid 50s and older). One could argue that the leisure needs of this group, with the "Zoomers" as the older segment of this group, represent an untapped market segment whose leisure needs could in part be met by municipal services and programs.

Of course, it is also possible that the emphasis on children and youth in most parks and recreation departments has reflected a view that adults are either less in need of leisure services and/or more able or willing to purchase these services privately. The validity of these perspectives might also be questioned. The "need" for leisure services must of course be rooted in priority outcomes, and as noted earlier, these are not well defined in Kitchener. However, if a priority outcome is a healthy and active lifestyle, the empirical evidence in Kitchener and elsewhere in Ontario clearly indicates that adults are as much in "need" of leisure services as children. One should expect that this would also be the case for other possible outcomes – such as social interaction, community cohesion, community development and economic development. It is also not clear why the ability or willingness to purchase services privately would be a factor. While a number of leisure time activities have traditionally been assigned to the private sector and consequently may have higher costs than public sector services, these cater to individuals of all ages. We are not suggesting that the City introduce services that are currently being provided by the private sector. Furthermore, the perspective that adults and older adults might be treated in the same manner as children with respect to their access to municipal leisure services is not necessarily connected to pricing policies. We are not suggesting that adults (or children) who can afford to pay for leisure services should be subsidized. The manner in which the City elects to subsidize its users is an issue unconnected to how it defines its priority services, and whether age should be a consideration in determining priorities.

Finally, it must be emphasized that arguing that adults and older adults (Zoomers) should be eligible for services in the same manner as children and youth is not suggesting that they should have priority over children and youth. Rather, the suggestion is that leisure services should be provided in a manner that is consistent with clearly stated priority outcomes, expressed community demand and available resources – rather than on the basis of the age of the recipient.

It is recommended that the Department clarify its mandate with respect to populations served and priorities and more specifically to formally adopt a service mandate that is driven by priority outcomes as described in the preceding section, rather than by the age of the recipient. This may of course suggest a shift in the number and types of services available that ultimately will encompass a greater number of adults.

We believe this is a change with potentially significant implications for services, resource allocation, and policies. It is also an essential consideration in the development of the City's older adult strategy. If the City's mandate continues to place a lower priority on active older adults in a manner that excludes the Zoomer – then the City will only serve the fragile elderly among that growing segment of its population that will be over the age of 55 in the next 20 years. In this situation the proportion of the City's population served by leisure services will decline significantly and the Department's ability to fulfill its outcomes will presumably be constrained. Neither circumstance is desirable nor a defensible basis upon which to build an older adult strategy for the future.

FUTURE DIRECTION:

- 2. The Community Services Department should meet community demand for leisure opportunities in a manner consistent with available resources and agreed-upon priority outcomes and should not establish service priorities based solely on the age of the service recipient. Programs, policies and approaches to service delivery should be reviewed to revise those that are not consistent with this direction.**

Issue #3: The Department and the Frail Elderly

There will be more “frail elderly” in the coming years, and these individuals will require more assistance and support as they grow older and as they struggle with issues related to physical, cognitive, and/or intellectual deterioration. The Senior’s Day Program offered at the Downtown Community Centre offers supportive leisure programming and nutrition to older adults with health or mobility restrictions. The majority of the funding for the program is from non-municipal sources. Staff note that although the annual number of participants in this program has remained fairly stable over the past 5 years, the participant visits has increased more dramatically, meaning that participants are accessing the program more frequently. Other trends noted by staff include an increase in the number of men involved in the program, an increase in the number of participants who are in the very old categories, and consequently the range of supports and skills required to meet their diverse needs has expanded. Staff identified a number of issues related to the space they use at the Downtown Community Centre for the Senior’s Day Program, including: a lack of an adjacent, accessible, private washroom specifically designed for staff to provide the required support and assistance; and generally a lack of segregated program space to accommodate a growing number of participants.

Looking to the future, there will be more “frail elderly” in the City and the Department will need to determine their role and primary responsibilities to this group relative to health service providers and other agencies. We note that the growing number of frail elderly will include many of the current users of the City’s Older Adult Centres – these therefore are current users who may expect to continue to be served by the Department as their personal circumstances change.

Some specific issues with respect to leisure services for the frail elderly include: Where does the City’s recreation and leisure service mandate end and the role of health service providers begin? While most agree that the Department will not be the lead agency for provision of services to this population, will or should the Community Services Department assume a greater role in the future? As demand for these services grows, what priority for facility space should these services have over other facility needs? Should the facilities currently used to serve this group be renovated/ expanded to better meet their needs, or should other facility solutions be sought?

The Department has a continuing role to play in providing supportive leisure and nutritional programming for the “frail elderly”, however, this role should not be as the lead agency but as a partner with relevant health, social service, and other agencies, as appropriate. Stronger partnerships with agencies providing health, mental health, rehabilitation, therapeutic and social services to the elderly may be warranted. We understand that the cost of services for what we

are termed the *frail elderly* are largely covered by partner agencies and if this continues to be the case, service expansion may be curtailed by available resources. However, resources aside, the Department still should determine its mandate for these services because it will have wider implications than the Department's financial commitment. One such implication is the availability of appropriate facilities.

While the City can assume a secondary role in programming and services for the frail elderly, one of the roles that partner agencies may look to the City to fulfill is that of facility provider. This has been customary in many partnerships with social and health agencies but may not be viable as the demand for frail elderly services grows. The role of principal facility provider may be increasingly difficult because of the City's historic emphasis on more decentralized, smaller community facilities operated in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Associations. As the frail elderly population expands, indications are that their needs may outgrow the current space provided in the Downtown Community Centre. Further, despite being the City's best facility for providing services to the frail elderly, the Downtown Community Centre, as noted above, has a number of constraints. The future role of the Department in service to the frail elderly may be consistent with today's role, but this may still have implications given the growth in this segment of Kitchener's potential market and the relatively few facilities that could accommodate this type of programming.

It is recommended that the Department clarify its role with respect to the frail elderly as a secondary service provider in partnership with other agencies. In this case, the future role may be consistent with current practice, but there should be no assumptions that the City will continue to assume the responsibility of providing facilities to meet the needs of this population. It is recommended that the City, in partnership with other agencies, continue to explore creative ways to take on a secondary role in service to the frail elderly.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- 3. The Department has a continued role to play in providing supportive leisure and nutritional programming for the frail elderly, although this role should continue to be as a partner with relevant health, social service, and other agencies as appropriate, and not as the lead agency. The City, in partnership with other agencies, should continue to explore creative ways to take on a secondary role in service to the frail elderly, which may or may not include facility provision.**
- 4. In developing future recreation facility business cases, the Community Services Department should consider the needs of the growing frail elderly population, in addition to the local community needs.**

3.2 PART TWO: COMPATIBILITY OF THE CURRENT PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM WITH THE FUTURE OLDER ADULT MARKETS

3.2.1 OVERVIEW

Part Two of the strategy addresses the compatibility of the Department's current approaches to providing recreation services and a mandate and role that places greater priority on the new generation of adults/older adults (the Zoomers). This discussion addresses areas where major change may be required due to incompatibility. These are the areas where implementing new directions will be a challenge both from the perspective of reallocating resources and building community/political acceptance for the change.

The major issues addressed in this section include: the City's future model for major indoor recreation facilities and the role of dedicated older adult centres like Rockway Centre; a new role and/or working relationship with the Neighbourhood Associations; and new policies and approaches to the design and development of the parks and open space system.

3.2.2 ISSUES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Issue #4: Dedicated Facilities for Older Adults - The City's Future Facility Model

Trends suggest that the emerging population of older adults will be more interested in participating in leisure activities at facilities that offer a wide range of opportunities and include a variety of components. Future community recreation facility design must include considerations for accessibility, socialization, health and wellness, and lifelong learning, and must be welcoming and comfortable to all population segments. Components of these facilities might include the traditional recreation features (arenas or pools, fitness centres), as well as arts and cultural components (visual arts studio/pottery/woodworking shop, etc.), lecture rooms, food services/socialization spaces, meeting rooms, computer rooms, etc. They might also include additional components such as a community branch library, a health clinic, a physiotherapy clinic, etc. with partner organizations contributing to capital and operational costs. These multi-purpose facilities will support diversity, inclusiveness and convenience for all community members, will provide a balance of opportunities, and will support the concepts of health and wellness and inclusivity.

This general trend has two possible implications for the Department's current approach to facility provision.

First, there is little indication that the future program interests of Zoomers will be accommodated in dedicated senior centres such as the Rockway Centre. While the Breithaupt Centre and the Downtown Community Centre both provide opportunities for multiuse programming (but do not fully conform to contemporary facility models, as discussed here), the Rockway Centre is a traditional seniors centre reflective of a declining program model. Indeed, even as a centre dedicated to the needs of the traditional senior, the facility has a number of limitations inherent in its

age, historic uses, and accessibility limitations. This facility has very limited potential to serve the older adults of tomorrow, and alternative uses should be explored for this facility.

Second, the needs of the future older adult, the Zoomer, are best met by larger, multipurpose recreation centres. This has not been the traditional model in Kitchener where neighbourhood resource centres – smaller buildings with few specialized components, a more restricted range of facilities and serving a more limited geographic area – have been the preferred facility model. In the short term, Kitchener will experience some population growth in the South End and will have to determine how indoor recreation facilities will be provided. The needs of older adults (and facility trends generally) would point to a major multipurpose facility but this would be a departure from the traditional model and residents in new residential areas may expect to be provided with a neighbourhood facility. This may result in some difficult choices concerning the City's facility model.

The Leisure Facilities Master Plan⁴ appears to give some consideration to investigating alternative facility models to meeting future market needs through the following goal statement:

To give consideration to variable leisure services delivery models, building on the current model's successes and introducing new approaches that may be more reflective of the regional-based participation patterns, capital and operating cost implications and market trends and activity profiles.

The manner in which this goal is reflected in the Master Plan recommendations is less clear and should be re-examined by the City.

The City will need to address its preferred facility model in the near future as it plans for population build-out, and in the longer term as existing facilities need to be replaced. Consolidating existing community centres into fewer larger, multipurpose facilities is an option that must be considered. The Department therefore will need to review its inventory of existing facilities to determine those that could be redeveloped/expanded to better meet the demand from the emerging older adult and adult population and those that should be decommissioned and replaced. Conversions may be possible – indeed we understand that features such as walking tracks have been provided at the City's new arenas with considerable success. However, there may be some single purpose facilities that cannot be easily adapted or expanded to meet the needs of the emerging older adult market, and that cannot be easily repurposed to meet other identified needs. These should be considered for conversion to other uses or possible decommissioning. We should note this is not only a question of the number and type of facility components – it is also closely related to the quality of the facilities and user amenities. As noted in our profile of the Zoomer, these are individuals who are prepared to pay for quality facilities and where leisure time pursuits will often be combined with other social and educational activities. These future customers will likely not be satisfied with a room where a yoga

⁴ City of Kitchener, *Leisure Facilities Master Plan, Executive Summary*, February 2005, prepared by F.J. Galloway Associates Inc. p.2-4.

class can be held, they will also want high quality change rooms and a comfortable place to have a good cup of coffee after the class.

It appears the Department is at a critical transition point in determining the best combination of facility types to meet future needs. It should be emphasized that the appropriate facility model in Kitchener must be based on the community's preferences and, more importantly, priority outcomes (as discussed earlier). There has been a trend in most Ontario communities to larger, multipurpose facilities that are district rather than community serving. Some municipalities, including the City of Waterloo, have apparently embraced this model with the development of major complexes such as the RIM facility. However, this may not be entirely appropriate in Kitchener. If a high priority is placed on outcomes that focus on community cohesion and community development and on service delivery principles that emphasize volunteer/community based service provision, the more decentralized facility model that has been customary in Kitchener will continue to have merit. The future facility model in Kitchener will likely include a few large, geographically spaced district-serving multi-purpose facilities in combination with many of the existing neighbourhood association centres, with upgrades and improvements to better serve a changing market.

The appropriate facility model needs to be investigated further and a strategy put in place to re-purpose (or decommission) existing community centres and add others in a manner that best meets the needs of the older adult (as defined in this strategy) but also the broader needs of the community that are being explored in other strategies dealing with the neighbourhood associations, youth and athletes.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- 5. Dedicated Older Adult Centres should no longer be included in the City's recreation facility inventory and alternative uses should be explored and eventually adopted for the Rockway Centre.**
- 6. The City should review its model for indoor recreation facilities to determine a preferred approach to meet future needs, and if this indicates a departure from the current community resource centres, a long term strategy should be adopted for redevelopment and/or consolidation of the existing centres as well as the possible development of new centres.**

Issue #5: The Role of the Neighbourhood Associations

The City of Kitchener has developed a very strong and successful relationship with volunteer, community based Neighbourhood Associations. This is a somewhat unique arrangement that is not evident in most Ontario communities. These Associations play an active role in program development, programming and management of local community resource centres. Not surprisingly, the Associations were formed at a time when recreational programming was focused on children and youth and was neighbourhood based. Our review of background information suggests programming at the majority of Community Centres is still largely focused on activities for children and youth, although adult programs, including those that may be of interest to more physically active older adults, are increasingly available from some of these centres.

We understand that local residents are strongly attached to their neighbourhood facilities and considerable support for maintaining them as a community-based model might be anticipated. As noted above, we believe this may not be entirely consistent with a preferred long term facility model. However, the immediate issue is whether the Neighbourhood Association model, which has apparently worked well for children's programming, will be as successful for older adult/adult programming.

It would appear that Neighbourhood Associations need to better serve the changing demographics of their communities, including the emerging adult and older adult markets, and this may require a gradual transformation in their roles and responsibilities. Our review of best practices has seen a gradual merging of staff roles in serving adults and older adults, from program provider to program facilitator. Our discussions with staff to date suggest that this transformation may present some challenges with current volunteer roles. We also understand that the City will be preparing a Neighbourhood Development and Community Sustainability Strategy to address a wide range of questions surrounding the City's relationship with the Neighbourhood Associations and community volunteers. Challenges that are relevant to the Older Adult Strategy should be reflected in this larger review, and include:

- The viability of the Associations as volunteer organizations, particularly if an expanded focus on adult programming is introduced and the City moves towards a new facility model.
- The policies and procedures governing program identification, development and provision. A shift to adult programming may require new approaches and potentially greater involvement on the part of the City. Facility allocation and other policies may need to be reviewed (e.g the priority attached to children versus adult use).
- Improved procedures may be required for scheduling and monitoring programming to meet the expectations for convenience of the adult user and to provide a data base for planning and evaluating shifting needs and interests in this new market. We understand for example that the majority of the programming at the Neighbourhood Resource Centres is not managed by CLASS and this would appear to be a major constraint.

The Department has recognized the need for improved research capabilities and technical support, and has created a new unit, Departmental Planning, Research & Technical Support. It is anticipated that this unit will be addressing many of the shifting needs of the emerging market of older adults, such as a demand for on-line program registration and CLASS system accounting.

FUTURE DIRECTION:

- 7. The City should continue to work with Neighbourhood Associations to ensure that they can continue to play a meaningful role in providing quality services and programs to meet changing community needs and interests. The emerging demands of the older adult market will likely require changes in staff and volunteer roles and responsibilities, volunteer recruitment and training, program development and planning and existing policies and procedures.**

Issue #6: Outdoor Facilities and Parks Planning

The emerging market of older adults will have implications for outdoor facilities and parks development and planning. As with many other elements of the municipal recreation system, parks and open space have been designed with families and children in mind. The neighbourhood park, with minor sports fields and playgrounds is indicative of this focus and clearly has limited appeal to the older adult/adult market. Similarly, major community parks with full size, high quality sports fields may have less interest for the older adult.

While there is clearly a continuing need for neighbourhood and community parkland, revised standards of provision and design standards are likely warranted to better serve an adult/older adult market. It is not within the scope of this study to review your current parks policies and we understand that a study is underway for this purpose. It is anticipated that significant changes may be warranted. For example, provision standards might be changed to result in fewer neighbourhood parks and an expanded supply of community parks, special event parks, and linked open space to better serve the adult/older adult market. Trends point to growing interest in performing arts, exploring other cultures, and intergenerational activities such as festivals and special events. The City's parks classification system may need to include "special event parks" to accommodate these types of activities. The City's minimum size for a typical community or regional park may have to be re-visited to accommodate larger multi-purpose facilities and larger community-focused parks with a number of amenities to serve the growing needs of the older adult market. These developments would suggest a major restructuring of the parks and open space system guided by new Official Plan policies and revised park standards.

In addition to a new parks classification system and provision standards, revised design standards are likely required to provide more and different features and amenities that meet the needs of this growing segment of the population. This may include more shade features, accessible pathways, more seating/ social areas, accessible washrooms, etc. Features which appeal to adults such as Green Gym® equipment could be added to complement (or replace) traditional playground equipment.

There are likely also other implications for park design standards, including design standards for outdoor playing fields. As more adults and older adults use the playing fields and ball diamonds for active sports, typical standards for turf quality and field maintenance may have to be reconsidered to reflect the physical condition of the users.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- 8. Park provision standards, design standards and park classification systems should be reviewed and revised to better reflect the emerging needs of the older adult population. This may involve different types of parks with a wider range of features and amenities oriented to older adults/adults. In addition, the total supply of parks of various types should be reviewed with changes, as warranted, adopted for the Official Plan and other planning policies and guidelines. These issues should be considered as part of the Parks Master Plan currently underway.**

3.3 PART THREE: NEW APPROACHES TO SERVICE PROVISION – REPOSITIONING THE DEPARTMENT TO BETTER SERVE FUTURE MARKETS

3.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Part Three of the Older Adult Strategy deals with operational issues where change is likely required but where the implications are not as significant, costly or as potentially sensitive as those noted in Parts One and Two. It is anticipated that the new directions proposed in this chapter could be gradually introduced as the Department moves to a service delivery model aligned to address priority outcomes, and with recognition of the changing needs and interests of a growing number of older adults. These changes address such things as staff training; marketing; volunteer recruitment, the Department's organization, and new program offerings.

A number of possible new approaches are briefly outlined in the discussion that follows. It is anticipated that there are other implications of repositioning the Department to better serve the older adult market that have not yet been identified, but will emerge as the Department realigns its services to meet these needs. It is anticipated that the Service Delivery Framework that is eventually developed will allow for flexibility in meeting these needs.

3.3.2 ISSUES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Issue #7: New Approaches to Service Provision

Departmental Policies – Facility Allocation, Program Scheduling, Membership and Fees

In the years to come, there will be growing demand from adults and older adults for prime time facility access. Most municipalities are already experiencing prime time demand for facilities such as arenas by adult users. Facility allocation policies that place priorities on children and youth will likely need to be revisited, as will facility scheduling, to take into account the changing demographics of communities and priority outcomes. This review should consider daytime program and activity offerings at all indoor facilities across the City with a view to expanding program opportunities relevant to the adult market. Prime-time scheduling at all facilities across the City should be reviewed to ensure a balance of opportunities for children, youth, adults, and older adults during prime time hours based on demographics.

Trends reviewed in the background report indicate that the emerging market of older adults may experience time constraints and other demands that will restrict their ability to commit to fixed schedules and long term programming. Shorter program cycles, flexible fee/scheduling packages, or drop-in fees may be more appealing, and membership commitments will be less popular with this group. Participation and membership statistics reviewed in the Background Report already reflect these emerging trends – relatively fewer older adults are purchasing Older Adult Centre memberships, more are participating in programs geared towards Adults, and drop-in participation is growing.

A basic level of service accessible to all is an important aspect of older adult service delivery. Although as a whole tomorrow's older adults will be financially better off than the previous generation, there will still be a significant

number, including many elderly women, with limited incomes for whom access to low cost or free opportunities will be a necessity. Fee support should be available, however, the available evidence suggests that older adults will be willing and able to pay for services and this should be reflected in revised pricing and user fee policies.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- 9. Facility allocation policies and facility scheduling priorities will need to be reviewed to better reflect the needs of the older adult/adult market.**

- 10. Memberships for Older Adult Centre should be gradually eliminated and more flexible fee and program structures should be implemented. These could include programs with shorter, more intensive timeframes, drop-in programs and fees, daily or weekly rates for participation in a whole range of opportunities at one facility, etc.**

- 11. Fees and pricing policies should be reviewed and revised. Automatic fee subsidies based on age should be phased out and gradually replaced by “ability to pay” measures. For those for whom ability to pay is an issue, fee support should be available regardless of age.**

Program and Activity Offerings

Participation numbers and trends tell us that programs with a focus on active healthy living, physical activity, health and wellness, and lifelong learning will be increasingly demanded by the Zoomer population. Not only will participation patterns change, but a merging of staff roles from programmer through facilitator will be demanded, where participants have a hand in designing their programs and taking a leadership role in their outcomes. This suggests not only new program offerings but a new approach for municipal recreation staff in program provision.

Most communities provide children’s sports through volunteer organizations with municipal recreation departments playing a limited role, primarily focused on facility provision. As the population in the community ages, recreation departments may have a different role to play in supporting recreational sport programs for older adults. There may be a role for municipal recreation departments in training coaches to teach adults, facilitating league development, and providing skill development sessions for older participants.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- 12. The Department should explore opportunities to expand program offerings directed to adults and older adults.**

- 13. The Department should review current community development approaches aimed at sport development and determine if a different role is required to facilitate adult recreational sport leagues.**

Marketing and Communications

Most leisure service departments use program guides, web-page, and leaflets and flyers to market programs. As indicated in the Background Report, Zoomers will increasingly disassociate themselves from “seniors” focused activities and programs and new approaches to marketing leisure program may be required for this group. Zoomers are a generation familiar with the Internet and comfortable with electronic communication. Zoomers will demand easy and convenient access to information on available services. The need for easy access and convenience will extend to program registration – these are not individuals who will line up to register in a program. They are also a generation that have grown up with sophisticated marketing and will expect to see themselves in the marketing images used to reach them (i.e. healthy, active, older adults participating in a variety of engaging activities in comfortable surroundings). These considerations will have implications for marketing and communications.

As the City’s older adult population is becoming more ethnically diverse, marketing and communication tools must also reflect that cultural diversity: with images of participants from the non-dominant cultures, with access to translation services or pertinent information in the most common languages, etc. Information will also need to be available in other formats, for those who are differently-abled.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- 14. Program guides, web-sites, brochures and other marketing/communication tools should be reviewed to ensure they are convenient and easily accessible and that images presented are reflective of the changing demographics, and increasing ethnic diversity of the community.**

Volunteer Services

Discussion with staff indicate that, consistent with trends being experienced on a national and provincial level, volunteerism within Older Adult services is generally on the decline. Volunteers are less interested in making a long-term commitment, the existing volunteers are aging and are not being replaced by younger members of the community, and more tasks that were traditionally volunteer responsibilities are being completed by fewer numbers of dedicated individuals, or are being transferred to staff. Research into volunteerism indicates that the emerging population of older adults will have very different motivations, levels of commitment, and interests in volunteering. Volunteer services will need to adapt to provide relevant volunteer opportunities for the emerging older adult market. Some considerations include: providing a range of volunteer opportunities, from one-time, episodic opportunities to more rewarding, sustained, intensive commitments; invest time and resources in creating a range of volunteer opportunities that can contribute to both social and personal growth, rather than just simple tasks requiring minimal planning and supervision; consider a range of benefits for unpaid opportunities or services-in-kind, including free program participation, travel subsidies, free meal access, etc.

FUTURE DIRECTION:

- 15. The Department should review the current range and scope of volunteer opportunities and arrangements, and methods of recruiting and using volunteers, to better reflect the interests of the emerging older adult population.**

Planning, Research and Staff Training

The Department must place a higher priority on research aimed at understanding the needs, preferences, and interests of the older adult/adult market. This will involve reviewing literature and the research on older adults, conducting primary research, including surveys with the older adult market, and improving internal information gathering and analysis tools (e.g. better use of CLASS for research purposes). Because the majority of older adults will be technologically savvy and have higher levels of computer literacy, web-surveys and on-line needs assessments, on-line program evaluations, and on-line comment forms could be part of the ongoing research and evaluation activities aimed at better understanding their needs and interests. This research should also include best practices research with other leisure service providers and agencies serving older adults, and reviews of the literature, relevant journals, etc.

As the age distinction blurs, and adult participants make activity choices based on interest and level of skill or ability rather than age, staff unfamiliar with service provision to adults will need to be trained to better understand the motivations, needs, and interests of a growing number of older adult participants. Some considerations might be sensitivity training to better understand the impact of physical or other types of disabilities that some of the older adult participants may face, and training related to meeting the needs for comfort, security, and support of some older adult participants. Similar training will also be required for Neighbourhood Association representatives and other voluntary service providers involved in service provision to older adults.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- 16. The Community Services Department will need to dedicate resources to and place a higher priority on ongoing research aimed at understanding the needs and interests of the emerging markets.**
- 17. Appropriate training will be required for all City staff, Neighbourhood Association representatives, and other voluntary service providers to better understand the needs and interests of the emerging adult and older adult populations.**

Community Service Department Structure

The Community Services Department's Community Programs and Services division includes a number of management streams: Manager and Facilitators for the Community Resource Centres, Manager and Facilitators for the City's Older Adult Centres, Manager and Supervisor for the Senior's Day Program, and Supervisors for Aquatics and Athletics. Research has shown that Zoomers will increasingly disassociate themselves from activities aimed at

“seniors”, and will prefer to participate in programs related to their level of ability, and not necessarily segmented by age and future directions discussed elsewhere in the report suggest that dedicated older adult centres should be gradually phased out. These changes will likely indicate that new organizational structures, staffing and reporting relationships are required to best accommodate changes in the services offered to the community.

FUTURE DIRECTION:

- 18. The Community Services Department’s structure will need to adapt as services change and there is less emphasis on age segregated services for older adults.**

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The Older Adult Strategy is a first step in the City's strategic response to the challenges and opportunities of meeting the leisure needs of this rapidly growing segment of the population. This report identified a significant change in the composition, interests and needs of the adult and older adult market, which will be an increasing proportion of the City's population. The report outlines a number of issues that will need to be explored further before recommendations can be finalized. As well, it is anticipated that the directions outlined in this report will be reviewed extensively with community representatives; other service delivery agencies; politicians and the general public prior to being implemented.

The Older Adult Strategy will also inform the other planning processes currently underway in the City, and perhaps most importantly the review of the future role of the Neighbourhood Associations; the parks and open space strategy and considerations surrounding new facility models. We trust that this Strategy will help position the City's Community Services Department to meet the challenges of a growing older adult population proactively.