

Age-Friendly Kitchener Action Plan

A community in which we can live well and age well.





Age-friendly
Kitchener



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What is an Age-Friendly Community?

All across the world, governments have recognized the need to make communities more age-friendly to respond to the increasing aging population.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has been a leader in supporting communities to be more age-friendly through the development of a number of tools and resources. The WHO defines an age-friendly community as one that “provides an inclusive and accessible urban environment that promotes active aging through supportive policies, services and infrastructure”.

In 2012 the Ontario Government released a report entitled Living Longer, Living Well that committed to making the Province the best place to grow up and grow old. In order

to achieve this commitment, the Province and Municipalities are working together to ensure that communities are accessible and have the physical and social infrastructure in place to enable older adults to age in their neighbourhoods. To support municipalities in becoming age-friendly, the Province of Ontario developed a grant program to assist with the development of local age-friendly action plans.

The City of Kitchener was one of several communities to receive a grant from the Ontario government to develop an age-friendly community action plan. Since late 2015, staff has been working with an age-friendly advisory committee to engage with older adults to determine priorities for ensuring that this community is prepared for, and responsive to an aging cohort.

How did we create the Age-Friendly Kitchener Action Plan?

We Engaged.

Through the spring and summer of 2016, we engaged with close to 1200 older adults in our community to hear their ideas and better understand their needs.

We Built a Vision.

Residents told us that it was important for people to be able to age in their neighbourhoods but policies, services and supports are required to enable them to do so. To ensure we are working towards this goal, the following community vision was developed:

“A community in which we can live well and age well.”

We Identified our Priorities using Community Feedback.

Through focus groups and surveys, we identified existing community assets and gaps as they relate to age-friendly principles. Using this feedback, the age-friendly advisory committee developed 4 priority areas for action as a first step towards achieving our vision.

1. Accessible and Affordable Neighbourhoods

Residents want to age in place and live in their neighbourhoods for as long as possible. This requires coordinated,

accessible and affordable programs and services including transportation and housing, at the neighbourhood level.

2. Access to Information

This community offers numerous programs, services and activities that people value and want to continue to use as they age. Older adults experience difficulties finding and accessing information and supports which limit their participation. In an age-friendly community, information is centralized and available in a variety of formats.

3. Belonging

There is tremendous pride that exists in this community and a willingness to give back. Older adults want to be engaged in decisions that impact them and to have their views heard and respected by government. This was reinforced in our consultation. Our community must value its diversity and be inclusive and welcoming to all residents.





4. Connectedness and Well-being

Older adults want to be active and vital members of the community through increased opportunities for connectedness and well-being. To achieve this they need a network of supports to help them feel safe, connected and valued, which can include neighbours helping neighbours. This means reducing isolation, feeling safe physically and emotionally, having positive mental and physical wellness, and ensuring we have trails and barrier free outdoor spaces.

We Developed an Action Plan.

The Age-Friendly Kitchener Action Plan was created in collaboration with older adult community members and is the foundation for creating an age-friendly

community. This plan contains 19 actions focused around the four themes. A number of these actions align with planned or existing City of Kitchener and community strategies, initiatives and projects. This plan is achievable and will require collaboration between the City of Kitchener and different organizations, associations, community groups and levels of government.

We are Planning for Implementation.

The Age-Friendly Kitchener Action Plan was endorsed by City Council in April 2017. City Staff, with guidance from the Mayor's Advisory Council for Kitchener Seniors, are planning for implementation. It is expected that these actions will be implemented over the next five years. We believe that the implementation of these actions will help move Kitchener closer to our vision of being a community where we can live well and age well.

We are Committed.

Council and staff of the City of Kitchener are committed to working together to accomplish this vision through:

- Respecting and valuing the contribution that older adults bring to this community
- Supporting older adults to be engaged in decisions that impact them
- Applying an age-friendly lens to decision making
- Advocating on behalf of Kitchener's older adults to the other levels of government on issues of concern.

The Action Plan

Accessible and Affordable Neighbourhoods

1. Age-Friendly Neighbourhood Programming

As recommended in the Neighbourhood Strategy, improve access to programs and services for older adults at the neighbourhood level. Resident led and City supported systematic planning processes will be developed to:

- Increase the number of older adult programs in community centres and aquatic facilities
- Create neighbourhood demographic profiles

- Create an inventory of neighbourhood age-friendly assets and resources
- Support the development of neighbourhood action plans (as recommended in the Neighbourhood Strategy), by engaging with older adults to identify their needs for programs, services and supports
- Develop a new tool within the neighbourhood action plan guide and toolkit to help ensure the inclusion of older adults



2. Promote the Leisure Access Service

Educate and develop awareness within the older adult community about the City of Kitchener's Leisure Access Service.

3. Age-Friendly Parks, Trails and Outdoor Spaces

Create intergenerational opportunities and experiences for our parks, trails and public spaces by:

- Engaging with older adults and service providers during the design stage of new or redeveloped parks, trails and public spaces
- As recommended in the Neighbourhood Strategy's Public Seating Program, increase the number of rest areas and public seating when developing/ redeveloping public spaces such as in the downtown, parks and trails



4. Sidewalk Maintenance and Snow Clearance

Safe, accessible and clear sidewalks were frequently identified as important factors in keeping older adults active and engaged in community life. Provincially, legislation related to winter sidewalk maintenance standards is currently under review. It is anticipated that any changes could have an impact on municipal processes, budgets, by-laws etc. Once the outcome is known, staff will inform and engage with the community to determine age-friendly, opportunities, creative programs, services etc. This item was repeatedly identified by the community as a barrier to aging in place and is key to ensuring that older adults, those with disabilities, and many other members of our community are able to accomplish day to day activities within their neighbourhoods.

5. Transportation Training Program

In partnership with the Region of Waterloo, offer transit and LRT training workshops that are applicable to both transit users and drivers to educate and support older adults in navigating our local transportation system. Additionally, ensure that the City's website has information related to transportation supports available to older adults.

Access to Information

1. Age-Friendly Communication Strategies

Provide information in a variety of formats and in contexts that are inclusive of older adults interests to ensure that the information is readily available and easily accessible.



2. Improve Availability and Access of Information on the City's Website

Develop a dedicated older adults page on the City of Kitchener website that provides a central source of information on directly delivered City programs, services and supports for older adults, and ensure that this information is frequently reviewed for accuracy.

3. Improving Technology Literacy of Older Adults

As recommended in Digital Kitchener, promote opportunities for digital access and literacy through collaboration with local organizations and partners.

Belonging

1. Inclusive Volunteering Opportunities

Develop and provide supportive and inclusive volunteering opportunities to ensure older adults of all abilities can fully participate in civic life.

2. Community Ambassador Program within City Facilities

Create meaningful volunteering opportunities and welcoming City facilities, by developing an ambassadors program in locations which older adults frequently visit. The role of the ambassador is to enhance the experience of the older adult by orienting them about programs and services and assisting them in locating recreational opportunities to meet their needs and interests.

3. Development of Supportive and Inclusive Programs and Activities

Engage and partner with community organizations to develop and implement programming opportunities that support the diverse needs of older adults in the community. This includes the LGBTQ+ community, persons with dementia, and aging adults with physical and intellectual disabilities as well new Canadians and individuals from diverse backgrounds.

4. Age-Friendly Community Engagement

Engage and consult with the Mayor’s Advisory Council for Kitchener Seniors (MACKS) in the development of the Special Outreach Strategy, as recommended in the City’s Community Engagement Review, to support the inclusion of age-friendly practices.

5. Recognizing the Contributions of Older Adults

Expand communications, events and activities to recognize and celebrate the contributions of older adults in this community during Senior’s Month.

6. Age-Friendly Business Recognition Program

Explore opportunities to partner with the Kitchener Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Improvement Association to provide training regarding accessibility and age-friendly business practices. Develop a recognition program for businesses that provides exceptional age-friendly customer service.

PHOTO BELOW: Members of the Age-Friendly Kitchener Advisory Committee Back Row: (left to right): David Dirks, Bethany Galbraith, Linda Flemming, Bethany Pearce, Martha Stauch Front Row: (left to right): Pam Ritz, Ernie Ginsler, Carolyn Cormier Following members were not available for the photo: Doug McKlusky, Lori Palubeski, Councillor Bil Ioannidis



Connectedness and Well-being

1. Block Connector Approach

Provide support to the development and implementation of the Block Connector Approach, as recommended in the Neighbourhood Strategy. This approach is an excellent opportunity to connect socially isolated older adults to their neighbourhoods and needed community supports.

2. Neighbourhood Links

Explore the feasibility of developing Neighbourhood Links to support the concept of aging in place and social connectedness. Neighbourhood Links are a collaboration of organizations and groups that work together to provide services and supports to older adults within a designated neighbourhood. The goal is to enable residents to access multiple services and supports in one location while providing social spaces for connectedness, as described in the Older Adult Strategy.

3. Prevention and Education Workshops

Expand prevention and educational workshops in partnership with community health and social service agencies. Workshop topics will be guided by input from older adults to ensure these are responsive to their interests.

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1. MACKS

The Mayors Advisory Council for Kitchener Seniors (MACKS) in collaboration with staff



to provide ongoing oversight of this action plan and provide an age-friendly lens to City programming. To support transparency, develop an annual community report card related to the Age-Friendly Kitchener Action Plan progress.

2. Coordination of External Grant Opportunities

Coordinate the City's approach to applying for external grants related to older adults. This will ensure that grant opportunities are maximized and are meeting the identified priorities as it relates to age-friendly community planning and the vision of living well and aging well in Kitchener.



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