
The Mayor’s Advisory Council for Kitchener Seniors (MACKS) is pleased to provide its third progress report on the implementation of the Age-friendly Kitchener Action Plan (approved by Kitchener City Council in 2017). In addition to reporting on the 2020 achievements towards the 19 actions of Kitchener’s Age-friendly Action Plan, this report also highlights several new initiatives implemented to support Kitchener’s older adult population during the pandemic.

Age-friendly communities enable older adults to actively age in their homes and neighbourhoods by planning for the impacts of programs, services, policies and infrastructure for aging residents. The Covid-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges in planning for and responding to the needs of older adults in the community.

Concerns regarding social isolation, the digital divide, and access to vital community and health resources have been substantially heightened during the pandemic. Additionally, staff, volunteers and City Council have faced unfamiliar challenges in adapting or launching programs and services to meet the needs of residents, while implementing new safety protocols.

2020 MACKS Membership

MACKS, along with Older Adult Services staff have remained especially committed to identifying and advocating for the needs of Kitchener seniors during this time. While in-person meetings have been postponed, MACKS has adapted to meeting virtually on a regular basis with the goal of ensuring effective community input to the City of Kitchener related to the impact of its programs, services and pandemic responses as they affect older adults.

The Age-friendly Kitchener Action Plan continues to provide the framework for MACKS’ work.

Despite difficult circumstances, collaboration between municipalities, the Region, and community organizations has never been stronger as we have worked together to creatively problem solve, plan and leverage resources to assist older adults in navigating the pandemic.
MACKS wishes to recognize and thank members of City Council, staff and community volunteers for their leadership and commitment to supporting residents of all ages throughout this challenging time.

Despite challenging times much has been achieved, and together we remain committed to ensuring Kitchener is a community where we can all live well and age well.

2020 Age-friendly Kitchener Achievements

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| 2020 Achievement | 1. MACKS input to Kitchener’s Affordable Housing Strategy.  
2. In partnership with Waterloo Region Age-friendly Network, MACKS gathered information and provided input regarding different types of housing models for older adults (e.g. home share programs, new developments, and co-ops).  
3. Older Adult Services staff expanded neighbourhood based programming for seniors to an additional five Community Centres. |

| Sub-Category | Promote Leisure Access Service |
| Action Item | Educate and develop awareness of Kitchener’s Leisure Access Program |
| 2020 Achievement | Distributed Leisure Access fee assistance information and application forms at Rockway Centre free Income Tax clinic for older adults with lower incomes. |

| Sub-Category | Age-friendly Parks, Trails and Outdoor Spaces |
| Action Item | Create intergenerational opportunities and experiences with our parks, trails, and public spaces. |
| 2020 Achievement | Appointed MACKS representative to Cycling and Trails Master Plan steering committee to provide older adult perspective. |

| Sub-Category | Sidewalk Maintenance |
| Action Item | Explore opportunities to improve sidewalk maintenance and snow clearance to support older adults to remain active, engaged, and safe in their neighbourhoods. |
2020 Achievement

MACKS participated in review of Winter Maintenance Pilot Projects and presented to Council regarding final recommendations.

2020 Achievement cont’d

Assisted Sidewalk & Windrow Clearing Program expanded for winter 2020/2021, MACKS staff and City Council promoted program information throughout community.

Sub-Category

Transportation Training Program

Action Item

Partner with the Region of Waterloo to offer transit and LRT training workshops

2020 Achievement

MACKS, in partnership with Waterloo Region Age-friendly Network: Advocated for development of GRT online video resources to support Public Transportation Training during pandemic. Advocated to Regional Council for free off-peak/free one day a week GRT transit fares at Regional Budget meeting.

Sub-Category

Age-friendly Neighbourhood Planning

Action Item

Improve access to programs and services for older adults at the neighbourhood level

2020 Achievement

MACKS input to Kitchener’s Affordable Housing Strategy. In partnership with Waterloo Region Age-friendly Network, MACKS gathered information and provided input regarding different types of housing models for older adults (e.g. home share programs, new developments, and co-ops). Older Adult Services staff expanded neighbourhood based programming for seniors to an additional five Community Centres.

PRIORITY

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Sub-Category

Age-friendly Communication

Action Item

Provide timely information in a variety of formats and languages

2020 Achievement

Staff provided pandemic program updates and community resources through: City of Kitchener Seniors webpage and Active at Home webpage. Weekly email newsletters from Rockway Centre to participants. Weekly/bi-weekly social support calls to over 380 older adults. Provided support to Multicultural Centre through staffing assistance and obtaining a grant to offer social support calls in various languages for older adults. Continued to advocate for community information to be provided in multiple formats (in addition to digital).

Sub-Category

*Improved Technology Literacy
**Action Item**
Collaborate with community partners to promote digital access and literacy

**2020 Achievement**
Received $25,000 New Horizon’s grant to purchase technology devices, create lending program and develop training resources for older adults in partnership with Digital Kitchener, Bits & Bytes Computer Club and the UofW enTECH Computer Club. (Program to launch in 2021). Created and launched Bits & Bytes Zoom training programs (parts 1 & 2) to teach older adults how to connect with others by video during pandemic.

**Sub-Category**
*Age-friendly Information on City Website*

**Action Item**
Develop a dedicated centralized source of information for older adults

**2020 Achievement**
With input from MACKS, launched Seniors information landing page on City of Kitchener website, featuring program updates and community resources.

**Sub-Category**
*Age-friendly Information on City Website*

**Action Item**
Develop a dedicated centralized source of information for older adults

**2020 Achievement**
MACKS provided input to City of Kitchener website review process

**PRIORITY**
**BELONGING**

**Sub-Category**
*Age-friendly Volunteering Opportunities*

**Action Item**
Develop and provide supportive and Inclusive City-wide volunteering opportunities for older adults of all abilities

**2020 Achievement**
MACKS continued to meet regularly and remain active throughout pandemic via Zoom meetings. Provided Covid safety training for volunteers who wished to continue in their role supporting programs at Community Centres where possible. Volunteer Engagement team continued to work with staff to create short-term, interest based and flexible volunteer opportunities, such as A City for Everyone, which currently has 8 volunteers who are over 60.

**Sub-Category**
*Community Ambassador Program*

**Action Item**
Create Welcoming City facilities, develop meaningful volunteer Ambassador roles in locations visited by older adults

**2020 Achievement**
To be re-evaluated post pandemic.

**Sub-Category**
*Supportive and inclusive Programs and Activities*
**Action Item**

Engage and partner with organizations to provide programming opportunities that reflect the diversity of Kitchener’s older adult population.

**2020 Achievement**

Older Adults Services staff launched the following new programs to help minimize social isolation of older adults during pandemic:

- Grand Connections Program providing virtual letters of support to older adults during pandemic in partnership with Kitchener Youth Services.
- Regular social support calls to over 380 Centre participants and those referred from the community.
- Kitchener Connections – daily telephone conference call based social program for those without access to technology.
- Adapted 21 Centre programs from an in-person to online format during pandemic.
- Launched 9 new virtual programs, not previously offered.
- Created online social support program for former Golf-Fore-Life participants via Zoom to continue supporting participants living with dementia.
- Maintained Peer Connections Program virtually to continue supporting persons living with dementia and their care partners in partnership with Alzheimer’s Society.
- Developed and analyzed Centre participant survey in summer, to establish fall re-opening priorities.
- Rockway Centre outdoor coffee circles – coordinated small groups of Centre participants to gather safely on patio outdoors to socialize in person.
- Older Adults Services relaunched some modified in-person programming at 7 Community Centres starting in September.
- Senior Day Program provided weekly Zoom programs and individualized phone programs to existing participants during lockdown.
- Initiated Connected @ Home Program, delivering monthly activity kits to isolated older adults.
- Hosted annual seniors Christmas party virtually, attended by over 50 older adults.

**Sub-Category**

Community Engagement

**Action Item**

Support inclusion of Age-friendly practices through the development of the Special Outreach Strategy.

**2020 Achievement**

MACKS met with staff to provide input and encouraged use of Age-friendly Decision-Making Lens in development of Special Outreach Strategy.
**Sub-Category**  
**Older Adult Recognition**

**Action Item**  
Heighten recognition and collaboration of older adults in the community.

**2020 Achievement**  
MACKS organized Senior of the Year Award recognition program in partnership with the Mayor’s Office (Award recipient Sue Morgan). June event cancelled due to pandemic. All nominees and recipient recognized individually in fall.

**Sub-Category**  
**Business Recognition Through Community Partnerships**

**Action Item**  
Develop a training and recognition program for businesses which provide exceptional Age-friendly customer service through community partnerships.

**2020 Achievement**  
To be re-evaluated post pandemic.

**PRIORITY**  
**CONNECTEDNESS AND WELLBEING**

**Sub-Category**  
**Block Connector Approach**

**Action Item**  
Develop and implement the Block Connector Approach to connect socially isolated older adults to their community and services.

**2020 Achievement**  
MACKS representatives participated in initial program planning meeting. Work to continue in 2021.

**Sub-Category**  
**Neighbourhood Links**

**Action Item**  
Explore the feasibility of “Neighbourhood Links” which seek to provide services and supports to older adults in their neighbourhoods through community partnerships.

**2020 Achievement**  
Increased collaboration between by-law staff and older adult services staff in connecting vulnerable residents with community supports where needed (e.g. yard maintenance, snow shoveling). Additional collaboration to continue post pandemic at neighbourhood level.

**Sub-Category**  
**Prevention and Education**

**Action Item**  
Expand older adult driven prevention and education workshops.

**2020 Achievement**  
Older adult program instructors and volunteer convenors trained in Covid safety protocols for safe return of modified in-person programs in fall. Staff coordinated online Virtual Seniors Expo during Seniors Month in June including 18 different online presentations. Hosted online Community Conversation for older adults with Mayor Vrbanovic via Zoom during Seniors Month. Promoted community resources available during pandemic through online and telephone-based presentations for
older adults. Developed comprehensive resource list of recreation options and community supports and services available during pandemic; utilized by staff during social support calls and shared with care partners of older adults and other community agencies.

**PRIORITY**

**AGE-FRIENDLY KITCHENER**

**Sub-Category**

**MACKS**

**Action Item**

Collaborate with City staff to provide an older adult perspective on projects and initiatives.

**2020 Achievement**

Throughout the pandemic, MACKS continued to advocate and ensure an older adult voice was included in pandemic related decisions and programs, and provided representation to the following committees and City initiatives: Cycling & Trails Master Plan steering committee, Mayor’s Task Force on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Waterloo Region Age-friendly Network, Love My Hood Placemaking Grants Selection Committee, Block Connectors Planning Group

**Sub-Category**

**Coordination of Grant Opportunities**

**Action Item**

Coordinate the City’s approach to applying for external grants related to older adults to maximize Age-friendly planning

**2020 Achievement**

Age-friendly staff champions continued to collaborate regularly, including reviewing grant opportunities which align with the Age-friendly Kitchener Action Plan.

*Priorities have been identified by MACKS based on feedback from the Age-friendly Kitchener community engagement process and based on emerging needs highlighted throughout the pandemic.*