

AGING WELL IN K.L.

Making Kirkland Lake an Age-Friendly Community

An
Age-Friendly Community Plan
for Kirkland Lake and Area

Corporation of the Town of Kirkland Lake

Department of Physical Services

04/17/2018



"A society for all ages is multigenerational. It is not fragmented, with youths, adults and older persons going their separate ways. Rather, it is age-inclusive, with different generations recognizing — and acting upon — their commonality of interest."

— Kofi Annan,
Secretary General of the United Nations

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What is Age-Friendly?

The Age-Friendly Community Planning Outreach Initiative is a joint effort by the *Ministry of Seniors Affairs (MSA)*, the *University of Waterloo*, the *Ontario Interdisciplinary Council on Aging and Health (OICAH)* and the *Seniors Health Knowledge Network (SHKN)* to develop communities that will promote active and healthy aging. The idea is to accommodate the needs of the aging population, which continues to increase. An Age-Friendly Community will benefit more than just seniors in the long term. Targeting older adults and taking into account their various needs will enable communities to improve the quality of life for all residents, regardless of their physical or mental capabilities.

Incentive for Change

The population is aging. The *Annual Demographics Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2017* released by Statistics Canada¹ states that “In 2015, population estimates showed that Canada had more people aged 65 and older than children aged 0 to 14.” They go on to say that 16.9% of Canadians are at least 65 years of age, while only 16.0% of the population were aged 0 to 14. They estimate that by 2024, the amount of people aged 65 and over will make up 20% of the population while children aged 0-14 will remain around 16%. This growth in the aging population will see service providers scrambling to keep up with the increasing demand for services. A small community such as Kirkland Lake, where services are already limited, will not be able to support this growth the way it is now.

Change needs to happen. A community must be able to accommodate its residents or risk losing them. As it stands, our community will not be able to keep up with the increase in senior residents and the services they will require. However, if change is taken seriously by this community, Kirkland Lake will be able to achieve an Age-Friendly Community status.

¹ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-215-x/91-215-x2017000-eng.pdf> - Accessed March, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Kirkland Lake Census Data

Percentages shown in the following section were calculated using the 2016 Census of Population by Statistics Canada for Kirkland Lake². According to Statistics Canada, Kirkland Lake had a population of 7,980 residents in 2016. Of this amount, 21% of people were 65 years and over and only 15% of people were children aged 0 to 14 years. The senior population outnumbers children by 475. In addition, those aged 50 to 54 years, 55 to 59 years and 60 to 64 years each represent 8% of residents for a combined 24% of the total population. This means that, in 2016, people aged 50 years and over made up 45% of the total population.



Broken down further, 3,950 people (49% of the total population) are male and 4,035 (51%) are female. 19% of the male population is 65 years or older and 23% of the female population is 65 years or older. The amount of women aged 85 years or over is double the amount of men aged 85 and over. The average age in Kirkland Lake was 43.8 years in 2016. This was 42.5 years for men and 45.1 years for women. Not only do women outnumber men in Kirkland Lake, but they are also older overall. Finally, the 2016 census reported 5 people over 100 years of age in Kirkland Lake, all of which were women.

² <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=3554068&Geo2=CD&Code2=3554&Data=Count&SearchText=Kirkland%20Lake&SearchType=Begin&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1> – Accessed March, 2018

Goals and Objectives

VISION STATEMENT:

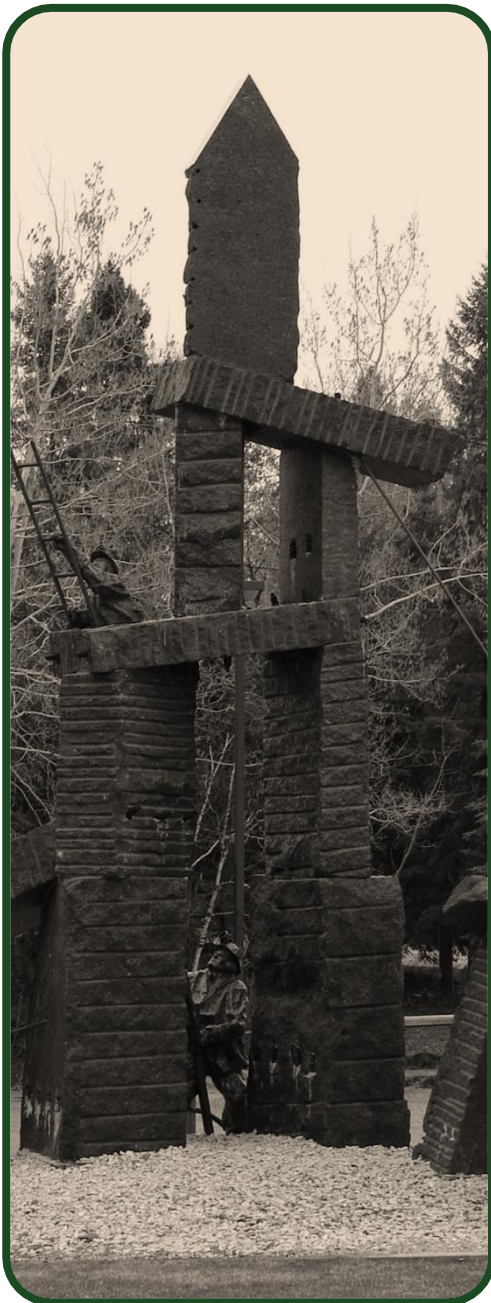
As the number of older adults rise within Kirkland Lake and Area, so does the need for services and infrastructure to accommodate their growing needs. The Age-Friendly Community Plan aims to enhance the quality of life for older adults within the municipality. The initiatives resulting from this plan would benefit the community as a whole by accounting for a wide range of physical and mental abilities.

GOALS:

- ❖ Promote active aging within the community
- ❖ Remove barriers that prevent seniors from leading fulfilling lives
- ❖ Allow seniors in our community to age with dignity in a safe environment

OBJECTIVES:

- ❖ Improve pedestrian environment, especially in winter
- ❖ Enhance existing transportation and make it more affordable
- ❖ Encourage housing initiatives that promote independent living for older adults
- ❖ Promote better access to social activities/events
- ❖ Promote education workshops on various topics of interest to senior residents
- ❖ Encourage community groups and businesses to accommodate older volunteers/employees
- ❖ Improve the availability/accessibility of information to seniors
- ❖ Improve access to services within the community



Eight Dimensions of an Age-Friendly Community

In 2007, the World Health Organization (WHO) released “*Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide*”, which outlined eight areas of urban living. These were then adopted by the Age-Friendly Outreach Initiative as the eight dimensions which make up an Age-Friendly community.

OUTDOOR SPACES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS

This includes the physical environment that impacts the mobility, independence, and quality of life for senior residents.

TRANSPORTATION

The services and means that are available to senior residents in order to move throughout the community.

HOUSING

This includes the structure, design, location, and affordability of housing, as well as any related community and social services.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

This includes the physical, social, cultural, and spiritual activities that are available to seniors in the community.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Fostering positive attitudes towards seniors and recognizing their voice within the community.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

This includes any volunteer or employment opportunities that can accommodate seniors and their respective needs.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Ensuring that information about services and activities are readily available and easily accessible to senior residents.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES

This includes all services available to senior residents which would help them to maintain their physical health and personal independence.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Public Consultation

FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

Public meetings were held monthly in order to gain insight from seniors, caregivers, service providers, and other interested individuals. Each meeting focused on one of the eight dimensions of an Age-Friendly community. Discussions centered on the major issues or barriers to seniors in the community, what services already exist and where improvements can be made, as well as what can be done to make the community more Age-Friendly.

The community was enthusiastic about the project and the public meetings generated quite a bit of interest. Those who attended these meetings helped to identify the key issues within each of the eight dimensions and made some recommendations for change. These key elements have been outlined in this Plan to support future community incentives and improvement projects.

COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY

A survey was distributed throughout the community in October, 2017, in both French and English, as a means to gain more direct insight from senior residents. The survey, which addressed all eight dimensions of an Age-Friendly community and gathered background information on respondents, generated over 140 responses from community members.

A full report detailing the data collected from the survey has been completed and is available in tandem with this Community Plan.



OUTDOOR SPACES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS



OUTDOOR SPACES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS

1. Safety and Comfort in the Pedestrian Realm

Residents felt that walking around the community was difficult. One concern was that sidewalks are not as well-maintained as they should be. Many areas have cracked and heaved, and some areas do not have sidewalks at all. Another concern was regarding pedestrian lights downtown. It was felt that the “walk” signal did not last long enough for people to cross at a comfortable pace. Inconsistencies were also noted between crossing times at each light, which creates confusion over how much time one actually has to cross. The final concern was snow. Many sidewalks do not get plowed during winter months, forcing residents to walk along the road and in the way of vehicular traffic. There is also the issue of snow banks between the streets and sidewalks creating a barrier for those trying to access businesses. These banks have very few openings shoveled out, if any. Those with limited mobility or balance issues cannot get over these banks, and even younger people risk falling when trying to climb over.

2. Accessibility of Buildings

The issues mentioned above impact the community's overall accessibility. Poor sidewalk conditions or snow covered sidewalks makes it even more difficult for those who use scooters, wheelchairs or other mobility aids. Other concerns included parking, access to buildings and availability of washrooms. It was felt that the community did not have enough accessible spaces, or that they were inappropriately placed. Many accessible spaces still have a curb and some have trees or service poles blocking the passenger side of parked vehicles. As for getting into buildings, many businesses downtown have steps at their entrances and very few have automatic doors. These accessibility issues create barriers for residents, and businesses may lose out on potential customers. Finally, it was noted that few places in the downtown core allow the public to use their washroom facilities especially if they are not paying customers. This can be problematic for those walking downtown who will have nowhere to go if they suddenly find themselves in need of a washroom.

TRANSPORTATION



TRANSPORTATION

1. Cost and Availability of Transportation

Many were concerned with the lack of transportation options and the cost of existing options. The municipality does not have a public transportation system and those who do not drive have to rely on family/friends or take taxis. There was also concern over the cost of taxis, especially for seniors who take them often for medical appointments or to run errands. Out-of-town travel is also a concern as finding a ride can be difficult. Residents were disappointed with the Ontario Northland bus service. Since moving locations, the station is not open on weekends, which leaves people to stand outside to wait for the bus, regardless of weather. There can sometimes be transfers that delay the trip, and the overall lack of travel times makes it much easier for someone to become stranded out of town for hours or even overnight. Timiskaming Home Support offers in and out of town transportation services, however many people do not know how to access this service, if they even qualify, nor how much it would cost them.

2. Road Conditions for Drivers

The lack of transportation options has many older adults continue driving despite the decline in their vision and reaction times because they fear losing their independence. With this in mind, older drivers are concerned about visibility at intersections and narrow streets, especially in winter. The layout of some intersections around the community can make it difficult to see if there are vehicles coming. Drivers can pull out of an intersection without knowing if there is a vehicle coming or how fast it is coming. This is worse in winter when snow banks are piled up on the corners of intersections. With regards to narrow streets, many places around town do not have sidewalks. This forces pedestrians to walk in the roadways. During winter months, snow banks can sometimes encroach into the roadway and many people park their vehicles on the street during the day. This makes it difficult for two way traffic to get through, and also makes it dangerous for pedestrians who have no sidewalk to follow. Finally, it was mentioned that many seniors enjoy cycling, but that not all streets are safe for cyclists, as they must share the roadway with vehicular traffic.

HOUSING



HOUSING

1. Transition Between Independent Living and Long-Term Care

Residents were concerned that there was a severe lack of “transitional” housing. This is housing that accommodates older residents who can no longer maintain a house or those who require some assisted living, but that do not yet require long-term care. Unfortunately, there is a lack of accessible housing in the community. Because of this, the buildings that are able to accommodate this demographic have long wait lists. Another concern was that there are not enough clean, updated apartments that were affordable for fixed incomes. It was also expressed that mixed age groups in apartment buildings can cause neighbour disputes due to different lifestyles, making the environment uncomfortable for seniors to reside in.

2. Lack of Services to Keep People in their Homes

The community is also lacking in at-home services which would help older adults remain in their own homes longer, and help reduce the need for “transitional” housing. While some people have family members or younger friends who can help with everyday tasks, not all senior residents have that luxury. Many seniors may require help with yard maintenance, small home repairs, or even daily chores like laundry or house cleaning, especially if they need to go up and down stairs to do so. Some people have the help of Personal Support Workers. However, the workers only have so much time with their clients and are not necessarily able to help with chores and such. Another issue with getting help for maintaining a home is the cost. Hiring a landscaper, repairman or housekeeper is costly and many older adults do not have disposable income. If the cost of utilities and taxes are also considered, the financial upkeep of a house is not always feasible for seniors on fixed incomes.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION



SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

1. Getting to and from Events/Activities

Older adults may not participate as much as they would like to due to difficulties getting to and from events. Residents identified difficulties getting transportation, building accessibility issues, and winter weather as key items that make it more difficult for older adults to get out and about. The lack of transportation prevents seniors from getting to places, event or activities, even though they may want to. Those with mobility issues may also be impeded by the venue of an activity or event if that particular venue is not fully accessible. Winter also discourages people from leaving their homes because of the cold weather and snow making it difficult to walk. Moreover, some seniors may not comfortable driving in winter conditions. It was also mentioned by some service providers that it can be difficult to convince people to try something new or to change their routine, even when activities are in the building they reside in.

2. Difficulties Accessing Information on Events/Activities

Another concern was that many people are simply not aware of the events, activities or programs available to them. Information is sometimes on many different platforms, which forces people to go searching for specific information themselves. The issue is that people do not necessarily go looking for events or activities. Those who do go looking for information are likely already leading socially fulfilling lives. However, most people will simply happen upon information either by radio, newspaper, on bulletin boards or even on social media, which leads to the next concern. Residents felt that community groups rely too heavily on social media because it is free. Unfortunately, this means that a large number of seniors who do not use social media, or do not have access to a computer, cannot access this information and so do not attend.

RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION



RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

1. New Technologies Creating Barriers

Residents were concerned that technology, which is meant to make life more convenient, is actually making things more difficult for the senior population. Things like automated tellers and online banking are removing face-to-face interactions that are sometimes needed. There is also the use of complicated telephone directories that may prevent people from accessing services. Many older adults already struggle with technology, and to force them to use online or automated services can be trying. It is likely to take them longer to use an automated service than it would be to speak to someone directly, especially if it is their first time using that particular service. This shift is not limited to services either. As mentioned in the previous section, there is an over-reliance on social media for advertising, which excludes the portion of the population that cannot access this medium. Finally, there is the concern that using computer and internet services creates more opportunities for scammers to take advantage of people through email scams or adware, which are used to scare people into paying money or releasing financial information.

2. Lack of Consideration for Seniors' Needs

For many areas, there seems to be an overall lack of consideration for seniors. This does not mean that people are intentionally disrespectful, but that they may not be taking into account what older adults need. Accessibility is a major concern. Many buildings, especially in the downtown core, were built long before accessibility standards were implemented. This means that many businesses have stairs, steps, narrow doorways and/or heavy doors, and their washrooms are not fully accessible. The needs of senior residents may also be neglected with regards to customer service as employees are not always taught specifically on how to deal with seniors and the varying types of issues (mobility, sight, hearing, etc.) they might have. Some may even appear rude even without intending to be. As for older workers, some employers may not consider that their needs differ from younger employees. This could include ergonomic issues, standing for too long, lifting heavy items or even just needing to use the washroom more frequently.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT



CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

1. Too Much Pressure on Older Volunteers

As most seniors are retired, employment was not much of a concern for residents. As such, this section pertains to issues regarding volunteer work. Firstly, many residents felt that there was a lack of younger volunteers which places more of a burden on older volunteers. If senior volunteers become too overwhelmed, they are more likely to burn out sooner and stop volunteering. It was expressed that more commitment from younger volunteer was required. Unfortunately, it was felt that the current volunteering program in high schools does not work for the long term as most youth will stop volunteering as soon as they have their required hours. There was also concern that “exclusivity” may play a role in why younger adults do not join community groups. Community groups are seeing fewer and fewer members and it was suggested that they start actively recruiting younger members in order to keep these groups running. There was concern that once the older adults “running the show” are no longer able to volunteer, the community groups and the services they provide will end.

2. Finding Volunteer Opportunities

Another concern was regarding difficulties finding volunteer opportunities. Many community groups use current members to recruit new volunteers and do not necessarily advertise when they are looking for new members. It was also mentioned that there are some people who cannot always commit due to mental or physical health issues, but that they are still interested in volunteering when they can. These people would benefit from a service where they can inquire about opportunities that would fit their lifestyle. There are also those who would like to see opportunities for at-home volunteering. They might do things such as talking over the phone to other isolated seniors, or completing tasks such as managing finances, making schedules or recruiting new volunteers.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION



COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

1. Difficulties Obtaining Accurate Information

Many concerns with the other dimensions in this plan include being unable to find the right information. The community is not necessarily lacking in services, events or programs for older adults. The issue is that many people are either uninformed or misinformed about what is available. Seniors who rely mainly on word-of-mouth may not be getting accurate information from others. Miscommunication can even occur when contacting provider directly due to hearing problems or if the provider is speaking too fast. It can also occur if someone uses complicated terminology or if they simply assume that the other person understood them. Another concern was that information can be “all over the place”. Some information is in the newspaper, some on the radio, some online or on social media and some on bulletin boards around the community. This makes finding information difficult as people have to go looking for it on various platforms.

2. Over-Reliance on New Technologies.

As discussed previously, the use of more modern technologies can create barriers for older adults. This also includes how information is dispersed. Most seniors prefer to get their information via radio, newspaper or word-of-mouth. However, more and more places are relying heavily on social media to advertise events because it is free. Otherwise, information may be placed on a service provider's website. Unfortunately, not all seniors have access to a computer and not all websites are easily navigated, especially for those who do not use the internet often. There is also the issue of navigating automated phone services to find information. Firstly, finding the right number can be an issue and it is easy for people to call the wrong provider thinking that that is who can help them. Also, if someone does not have a phone book, they would then need to look up the provider online. Finally, they may end up with the number for the wrong branch or for the main office out of town, especially when the providers use toll free numbers.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES



COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES

1. Transportation for Out-of-Town Appointments

As mentioned previously, many older adults struggle with getting to and from appointments due to costs and lack of availability of transportation. This is even more difficult when trying to get to out-of-town appointments. While many seniors still drive, some out-of-town appointments are for procedures where you would not be able to drive yourself afterwards. As such, it is not always easy to find someone willing to take the time to drive out of town, even when one has family nearby. It can also be inconvenient for older adults to take a bus because of limited travel times, transfers and long hours sitting. Residents were concerned that the loss of the passenger rail service has had a negative impact on seniors in the community. Many people had previously used the rail service as it was much more comfortable than a bus, was more likely to be on time and could better accommodate mobility needs. While Timiskaming Home Support also offers out-of-town transportation, many do not know how to access this service or feel that they cannot afford it.

2. Difficulties Finding/Accessing Service Providers

The other concern for this dimension comes back to the difficulties seniors face when trying to access information. People are simply not getting the proper information about the available services, how to access these services, or who to contact to get more information. Again, there is the issue of information being online-only or people being given the wrong information via word-of-mouth. Residents felt that better coordination between service providers was needed in order to make information more accessible to older adults. If someone calls the wrong provider, they should be directed to the appropriate number to call, or if someone is already using a provider and needs a service they do not offer, they can at least direct them to the appropriate provider to contact. The community offers many services to accommodate older adults. Unfortunately not very many people are aware of these services.

SUMMARY

The feedback received during the public consultation process was invaluable for determining the strengths and weaknesses of the community with regards to "Age-Friendliness". Between items discussed at public meetings and the data collected from the Community Survey, four dimensions were identified as key concerns for the community. These dimensions are:

- Communication and Information
- Transportation
- Housing
- Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings

"Communication and Information" is the most important dimension for the community to focus on. The difficulty accessing accurate information means that less people are taking advantage of available services, programs, activities and events, and the community will see less and less of them. Service providers will have funding cut, activity coordinators will have to cancel programs due to low registration, and community groups will not be able to host as many events. "Transportation" also comes up in several other dimensions. Although most seniors still drive themselves, this dimension is important because it is a major factor for social isolation. Also, if other options were available, older adults who may no longer be safe on the roads would be more willing to stop driving, as they would still be able to maintain their independence afterwards.

"Housing" is important for the community in order to keep older adults living independently for longer and relieve pressure on long-term care services. This would encourage seniors to stay in the community. Currently, finding appropriate housing or in-home services can be a challenge, which may lead people to move out of the community in order to be closer to family or the services they require. "Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings" would address accessibility issues, enhance walkability, and improve the physical environment of the community. Fixing items which may create barriers for seniors will also improve the environment for others with varying levels of mobility, such as children, people with disabilities, or even parents with strollers.

Finally, while improving all eight dimensions is important, focusing on these four areas is likely to have the strongest impact towards achieving an Age-Friendly Community status.

ACTION PLAN

1. OUTDOOR SPACES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS

ACTION ITEM(S)

TIMEFRAME

1.1 – Search for Ways to Improve Snow Removal

- A public meeting was held on March 15, 2018 in order to discuss Snow Service Standards. Feedback was reviewed and options to improve services are being explored. It would be beneficial to host a second meeting next year to review and assess the changes made.
- Consider the creation of a By-law to transfer the responsibility of clearing snow in the Downtown core. Property owners/business owners/occupants would be responsible for clearing the portion of sidewalks directly adjacent to their buildings.

Medium-Term

1.2 – Consider the Creation of a Sidewalk Improvement Plan

- Recommend that a public meeting be held to discuss the existing maintenance standards and to request public input on potential improvements. Have costs associated with the changes and/or additions available for public feedback
- Encouraging the implementation of a program that addresses the areas of concern presented in the Accessibility Review completed August 29/17

Long-Term

1.3 – Extend Time to Cross at Pedestrian Lights

- Direct staff to begin preparations (budgeting, pre-installation planning, etc.) to install new pedestrian lights which meet accessibility standards
- Ensure that times to cross are extended

Medium-Term

2. TRANSPORTATION

ACTION ITEM(S)

TIMEFRAME

2.1 – Conduct Traffic Study

- Encourage staff to identify problem areas through town where traffic calming measures could be introduced (e.g. 4-Way Stops, Speed Bumps, etc.)

Medium-Term

2.2 – Partner with Taxi's to Provide Discounted/Flat Rates

- Encourage Police Service Board to introduce senior rates and/or special rates when using taxis regularly to attend local medical appointments
- Encourage the creation of a courtesy plan (e.g. training on opening doors for seniors, loading groceries, etc.)

Short-Term

2.3 – Work to Enhance Out-of-Town Transportation

- Direct staff to discuss opportunities for transportation with other municipalities to look at a more regional approach.

Long-Term

3. HOUSING

ACTION ITEM(S)

TIMEFRAME

3.1 – Promote the Creation of Senior Housing

- Offer incentives (e.g. waiving planning application fees) for the introduction of affordable and/or senior-friendly housing
- Direct staff to advertise a need for senior oriented housing and/or age-friendly services (delivery services, social visits, small home repair services, etc.)

Long-Term

3.2 – Investigate Opportunities for a House-Sharing Program

- Direct staff to inquire with various agencies that may be able to host a program that will pair older home owners with other seniors, to assist with living expenses.

Long-Term

4. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

ACTION ITEM(S)

TIMEFRAME

4.1 – Films for Seniors

- Encourage museum and/or Heritage North to host “senior matinee movies” similar to the existing program for children.

Short-Term

4.2 – Encourage Common Areas in Seniors Housing

- Direct staff to find ways to encourage apartment building owners to create common spaces in their buildings
- Modify Official Plan to include common areas in all new apartment complexes.

Medium to Long-Term

5. RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

ACTION ITEM(S)

TIMEFRAME

5.1 – Age-Friendly Checklist for Businesses

- Request the creation of an Age-Friendly Checklist which would be distributed to local business owners and operators in order to encourage the adoption Age-Friendly Practices.
- Items could include: accessibility recommendations, staff training to deal with seniors, accommodating older employees, etc.

Short to Medium-Term

5.2 – Connect Isolated Individuals

- Encourage local community groups to create a list of volunteers willing to simply chat with individuals who may feel lonely. This list should be circulated in senior housing units and to any individuals who are at risk of becoming socially isolated

Short-Term

6. CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

ACTION ITEM(S)

TIMEFRAME

6.1 – Create a “Volunteering Database”

- Identify organizations and agencies that are looking for volunteers and advertise on a “volunteer database”.
- Direct staff to inquire with organizations and agencies that may be able to host such a database.

Medium-Term

7. COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

ACTION ITEM(S)

TIMEFRAME

7.1 – Creation of an Age-Friendly Community Guide

- Direct Staff to create a Community Guide which would detail the services and programs available in the community, as well as the contact information of the service providers

Medium-Term

7.2 – Golden Years Expo

- Request that the Golden Years Expo, which occurred in October 2016, be held annually in order to present senior related information to residents.

Short to Long-Term

8. COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES

ACTION ITEM(S)

TIMEFRAME

8.1 – Better Transportation Options

- See “Transportation”

Medium to Long-Term

8.2 – Better Communication of Available Services

- See “Communication and Information”

Medium to Long-Term

