District of Saanich, British Columbia, Canada
World Health Organization's

Global Age-Friendly Cities Project

CONTENTS

Message from the Mayor

The District of Saanich is proud to have participated in the World Health Organization Age-Friendly Cities Project. I would like to thank the Province of British Columbia, University of Victoria's Centre on Aging, Healthy Saanich Committee, Age-Friendly Task Force, and the many community, agency and staff volunteers for their help in defining the community perspective on how to overcome common barriers to an age-friendly community. Their special contribution has enabled Saanich to provide valuable research to an international effort aimed at making communities more flexible and responsive to the needs of an aging population. Saanich will continue to work cooperatively with health, education, mobility agencies and the community to ensure its piece of the planet is age-friendly – a place where all residents from children to seniors feel supported. As our citizens age, they can count on healthy lifestyle choices, active participation in community life, and safe and secure "age- friendly" surroundings.

Frank Leonard, Mayor

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) released a Policy Framework on Active Aging in 2002, to support communities in developing and strengthening health and social policies in an aging world. This policy framework recognizes that older people face increasing challenges due to the sensory, physiological and other changes that age brings.

The Global Age-Friendly Cities Project, which is funded in part by the federal Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), is an attempt to make large urban centres around the world better places to live for the aging population. The Global Age-Friendly Cities project builds on the Policy Framework on Active Aging by focusing on the environmental and social factors that contribute to healthy, active aging in urban settings. There are 33 partner cities including Rio de Janeiro, Cancun, Nairobi, Moscow, New Delhi, and Tokyo. Each partner city consulted with older persons, community leaders and gerontology experts to identify the major physical and social barriers to active aging. This knowledge has been used to identify concrete age-friendly indicators and to produce a practical tool to guide advocacy, community development and policy changes to support an age-friendly environment.

In 2006, the Province of British Columbia selected Saanich as a partner city to collaborate in this world-wide project to make the urban environment more "age-friendly". Working with support from the Ministry of Health and in partnership with the University of Victoria Centre On Aging, Saanich has developed over 60 recommendations to ensure the future of Saanich is age-friendly.

What is an Age-Friendly City?

WHO defines an "age-friendly" community as one in which service providers, public officials, community leaders, faith leaders, business people and citizens:

- recognize the great diversity among older persons,

- promote their inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life,

- respect their decisions and lifestyle choices, and

- anticipate and respond flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences.

In an age-friendly community, policies, programs, services and infrastructure related to the physical and social environment are designed to enable older people to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate in society in a meaningful way. It takes into account the biological, psychological, behavioural, economic, social and environmental factors that operate over the course of a person's life to determine health and well-being in later years.

An age-friendly community benefits people of all ages. Secure neighbourhoods are safe for children, youth, women and older adults. Families experience less worry and stress when their older relations have the services and supports they need. Barrier free buildings and streets enhance the mobility and independence of both younger and older persons with disabilities. The whole community benefits from the participation of older persons in volunteer or paid work and civic activities. Making cities age-friendly is one of the most effective policy approaches for responding to demographic aging.

The District of Saanich – An Age-Friendly Partner

The opportunity for Saanich to participate in this global study has indeed been timely. The population of Saanich is forecasted to increase by approximately nine percent by 2026 with migration from other parts of Canada expected to be the major source of population growth. The age profile of the population is predicted to change significantly over this period, with an accelerating proportion of the population in older age groups.

Canadian census figures indicate that persons aged 60 and older made up nearly 22 percent of the population of Saanich in 2001 and 23 percent in 2006. The proportion of the Saanich population aged 75 and over is nine percent, compared to six percent for British Columbia and 5.8 percent for Canada. Factoring in the 45-60 year old age group, or the "future" cohort of older persons, the reality is that nearly 45 percent of the population of Saanich is already in or will be entering into the older adult classification in the next decade. Our populations are aging and we need to plan for this change in a positive way.

Numbers and Proportion of Older Persons Population in Saanich

(Total Population = 108,265)

Age	Percentage of Population	Total Persons in Age Group	Male	Female
60-74	13.5 %	14,620	6,920	7,700
75 and older	9.5 %	10,335	4,330	6,005

Data Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census Profile

Local Voices, Community Actions

Phase 1: Age-Friendly Focus Groups

The first phase of the WHO Age-Friendly Cities Project involved assessing each community's strengths and weaknesses in promoting active aging. The University of Victoria Centre on Aging research focused on the "lived" experience of older people – what seniors experience in their daily lives in the community. The data was collected by means of focus groups with older persons, caregivers, community leaders and service providers. This process was developed during the WHO Age-Friendly Cities meetings held in Vancouver, B.C. in 2006 and represents a consistent protocol for all partner cities across the globe.

Participants in the citizens' focus groups were English speaking, Saanich residents, 60 years or older. They included a mix of persons varying levels of abilities and disabilities consistent with the make up of the older population of Saanich. Focus groups were also held with caregivers and local service providers representing regional and local agencies such as B.C. Transit, Silver Threads, Saanich Volunteer Services Society, the Vancouver Island Health Authority and several national banks and community associations.

> " *Very modest improvements to our municipality make dramatic differences to visually and physically impaired people. So, the rewards for input are great.* "
>
> *- Older persons focus group participant*

Participants were asked to comment on 8 topic areas as defined by the World Health Organization:

1. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

- Does the natural and built environment help older persons get around easily and safely in the community and encourage active community participation?

2. Transportation

- Can older persons travel wherever they want to go in the community, conveniently and safely?

3. Housing

- Do older persons have housing that is safe and affordable and which allows them to stay independent as their needs change?

4. Respect & Social Inclusion

- Are public services, media, commercial services, faith communities and civil society respectful of the diversity of needs among seniors and willing to accommodate seniors in all aspects of society?

5. Social Participation

- Do seniors have opportunities for developing and maintaining meaningful social networks in their neighbourhoods?

- Are the needs and preferences of seniors considered in planning by a diverse range of agencies and institutions?

6. Communication & Information

- Are seniors aware of the diverse range of programs and services available within their community?

- Is information readily available, appropriately designed and delivered to meet the needs of seniors?

7. Civic Participation & Employment

- Do older persons have opportunities to participate in community decision making?

- Do older persons have opportunities to contribute their experience and skills to the community in paid or unpaid work?

8. Community Support & Health Service

- Do older persons have access to social and health services they need to stay healthy and independent?

This research identified the top three issues for older persons/caregivers and service providers were barriers to:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings,

- Transportation and

- Housing appropriate to older persons remaining independent longer.

Further results are identified under the eight topic areas as common barriers. Further information can be found at ***http://www.coag.uvic.ca.***

Phase 2: Developing Local Actions with Community Partners

The first part of developing an action oriented response to the common barriers and issues raised by the focus group results involved consultation with community members, local senior serving agencies and municipal services. The group, chaired by Saanich Councillor Susan Brice, consisted of Saanich citizens and representatives from the B.C. Ministry of Health, University of Victoria's Centre on Aging, B.C. Transit, Saanich Silver Threads, the Vancouver Island Health Authority, Saanich Volunteer Services Society, TD Canada Trust, Planning, Engineering and Parks and Recreation staff. Through several meetings and discussions, this group developed over 30 suggestions for local actions that can be directly linked to the focus group responses. The efforts and ideas of this task group have established a solid foundation for the whole community to support an age-friendly environment.

The second part of phase two involved municipal staff identifying policies and initiatives already in place to support an age-friendly environment. Finally, this group identified and prioritized new projects that could further improve physical infrastructure or improve social network opportunities that will guide "the way forward" to an age-friendly city. The findings and major conclusions of this consultation process have been categorized by the eight topic areas and presented in the following format:

| a. **Common Barriers** to an age-friendly community | b. **Saanich Best Practices…** current initiatives and projects | c. **The Way Forward…** Recommendations for an age-friendly future |

1. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Common Barriers

(identified by older persons / caregivers and service providers)

- Poor pedestrian safety and comfort
- Accessibility – facilitating access for those with disabilities
- Inadequate signage and directions
- Lack of benches and washrooms on pedestrian routes
- Communication is challenged by background noise in buildings

Saanich Best Practices . . .
Current initiatives and projects

- Municipal Facilities have been upgraded to include ramps, handrails and other amenities to improve access

- Development Permit Guidelines update as part of the Official Community Plan (OCP) review process design requirements

- Healthy Saanich Committee's Senior Friendly Business Decal program assesses and recognizes local businesses that apply age-friendly principles and practices

- Sidewalk and curb improvement programs which emphasize accessibility with crosswalks and curb cuts

- Development of Trail Guidelines to promote better access to trails for all ages

- Buildings in Saanich parks have washrooms for those using nearby trails and park space

- Bench Dedication Program in parks and at bus stops to allow rest areas for the public

- Zoning Bylaw provides mixed-use zones that allow for apartments, attached housing, congregate care, home occupation and community care for children in conjunction with commercial uses

- Recreation Centres offer "quiet" or noise reduced times in weight room and pool facilities to address the concerns of those with hearing issues

- The provision of community programs designed for the interests and abilities of older adults

The Way Forward . . .
Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

- Adopt new Design Guidelines for major centres that consider accessibility and access

- Evaluate current design of reception desk areas in all municipal facilities

- Develop policy on social issues impacting older persons through Official Community Plan process

- Expand the Bench Dedication Program in conjunction with new development to encompass major neighbourhood centres and adjacent public right of ways integrating benches and street furniture with existing landscaping

- Evaluate wheelchair and scooter access at all civic facilities

- Consider wider sidewalks and multiple sidewalk standards to address the increased use of wheelchair and scooters and changes in scooter design

- Offer incentives for developers to include public washrooms in their development plans

- Improve design of entrance to commercial/public buildings with no step entry to main entrance

- Conduct an accessibility inventory of parks and trails

- Improve signage around public facilities to provide more clear directions to supportive parking and access ways

- Complete Phase II of the Centennial Trails Project

2. Transportation

Common Barriers

- Challenges with the timing, routes and accessibility of public transportation services
- Location of parking and walking distances to facilities
- Indaquate and poor visibility street signage
- Length of walking distance between bus and home or destination
- Program and service scheduling that does not promote daytime driving

Saanich Best Practices . . .
Current initiatives and projects

- Access to Transit Study regarding access to/from place of residence and transit stops completed

- On-going program to improve safety/visibility and crossings through streetscape improvements as seen on West Saanich Road, Cordova Bay and Tillicum-Burnside Streetscape Action Plans (e.g. reduced road widths, addition of bike lanes, sidewalks, improved parking, improved bus stops, medians, improved pedestrian crossings and use of pedestrian countdown timers)

- On-going trail enhancements and guideline for "Sharing the Trails" have brought awareness of the use of trails as safe and effective corridors to major retail and recreation centres

- Ongoing work with BC Transit to define neighbourhood bus routes (e.g. proposed Gordon Head Cordova Bay Village Community Bus routes supporting travel within that community)

- Mature Drivers Education Workshops offered by Saanich Police

- Pedestrian and Cycle amenities at Recreation facilities promoting neighbourhood access and active transportation (e.g. covered cycle and scooter parking and trail connections to main entrance)

- Installation of count down timers for the pedestrian crossing phase at key signalized intersections

The Way Forward . . .
Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

- Report to Council and implement "Access to Transit" study recommendations through amendments to the Zoning Bylaw, Development Permit Guidelines and Engineering Servicing requirements (e.g. improved bus stop accessibility, improved sidewalks, driveway crossings and curb drops)

- Improve signage at major intersections and investigate the effectiveness of back lit LED signs

- Increase awareness of trail corridors as transportation alternatives providing safe access to major commercial and recreation centres (e.g. Lambrick Park and Gordon Head trail system leading to Gordon Head Recreation Centre and University Heights Shopping Mall)

- Review road standards with regards to sidewalk widths and style of ramps to best accommodate scooters and wheelchairs and engage in discussions with manufacturers of scooters regarding the increased width and length of scooters to better plan for the future

- Encourage developers to consider the needs of older persons in the design of lobby waiting areas particularly in office/medical buildings (e.g. covered waiting areas where residents can see the arrival of Handi-Dart, taxis or other vehicles)

- Amend Development Permit Guidelines to require electrical outlets in underground parking areas

- Amend Zoning Bylaws to include designated parking spots with wider dimensions in municipal parking regulations

- Assess optimal locations for automatic or motion sensing cross walk signals

- Work with BC Transit to offer age-friendly bus stops that include covered seating, lighting and no lip, textured curb cuts, if there is no impact to visually impaired persons

- Establish consistency in the location and visibility of road and facility identification signs

3. Housing

Common Barriers

- **Affordability and housing type options**
- **In home mobility challenges impact an individual's ability to maintain independent living**
- **Lack of support to remain in home as long as possible**
- **Inadequate awareness of avenues for support for independent living**
- **Allowance for secondary "garden" suites**
- **Lack of housing options in proximity to multiple services**

Saanich Best Practices . . .
Current initiatives and projects

- Zoning Bylaw amended to indicate Saanich Adaptable Housing regulations for apartments and voluntary guidelines for townhouses and single family dwellings to better facilitate independent living (e.g. wider than normal doorways, no step entry ways, reinforced walls for grab bars and handrails and appropriate switches and handles)

- Saanich Adaptable Housing guidelines are being used as a model for the implementation of the Provincial Model Bylaw for Adaptable Housing

- Zoning Bylaw provides for diverse housing types, mixed-use and seniors congregate housing in most multi family zones

The Way Forward . . .
Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

- Encourage mixed-use housing options within all neighbourhoods to facilitate an older person to move into alternative housing enabling the retention of social networks (e.g. townhouse, apartment, supportive living)

- Incorporate seniors housing within mixed-use housing developments (e.g. Housing agreements to encourage a range of housing by type, price and tenure)

- Ensure adequate area and appropriate quality of outdoor/indoor social amenity spaces are provided

- Investigate options for addressing affordability barriers (e.g. additional contributions to the regional housing affordability fund, flex housing, co-housing, incentives for affordable housing and well designed infill housing)

- Consider guidelines for the size of civic visual identity or street number by including visibility, font size, colour and location

- Consider making the voluntary adaptable housing guidelines mandatory for townhouses and single family housing

- Explore requirements for single family and town housing to include a multi-use room on the ground floor that could be converted into a bedroom and facilitate independent living and aging in a preferred place

- Support zoning for demonstration homes to educate builders and the public and facilitate partnerships in providing housing options for seniors

- Investigate options for small houses and "granny flats"

4. Respect & Social Inclusion

Common Barriers

- Perceptions exist that the older a person gets, the more likely he or she is to be stereotyped or treated less respectfully
- Desire for older persons to be invited and involved in community events
- Need to improve public awareness of disabilities especially mental disabilities and dementia
- Desire for intergenerational connections through schools and community programs

Saanich Best Practices . . .
Current initiatives and projects

- Intergenerational Recreation and Social Programs bringing groups of teens and older persons together in a social setting to play cards, games, billiards and share good conversation

- Construction of a community seniors' centre at Cordova Bay Elementary School. Cordova Bay Community Place is the home of the Cordova Bay 55 Plus Association offering recreation and social opportunities for older persons in that community. This unique centre places older persons and children as the focal point of community activities

- Participation of older persons on Advisory Committees of Council and Municipal Task Forces encouraging the building of relationships and inclusive practices

- Health education workshops and seminars offered through municipal recreation facilities improving public awareness of health issues facing the older population such as Diabetes Education and Heart and Stroke indicators

- Honouring pioneers of our community through the creation of the Saanich Centennial Book and through the delivery of Centennial Celebrations Special Events such as the Pioneer Tea

- Healthy Saanich Advisory Committee's Senior Friendly Business Decal program recognizing local business for efforts in supporting age-friendly environments

- Community centres that provide vibrant, safe environments for the delivery of daytime programs and services focused on older adults

The Way Forward . . .
Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

- Encourage mixed-use and inter-generational social interactions in partnership with existing seniors associations and organizations and school districts as seen in the development of Cordova Bay Community Place

- Develop and implement a staff training session that encompasses an improved awareness of the specific needs of seniors and methods to best assist seniors in accessing municipal services

- Implement a reception desk or kiosk at municipal facilities providing older persons with volunteer opportunities to act as "greeters," or ambassadors to municipal services assisting older persons in navigating services

- Recognize the important contributions of seniors to our community through a Seniors Award system similar to the Youth Awards

- Improve customer service to better meet the needs of seniors through physical changes to Reception and Front Desks in all municipal facilities (e.g. counter service with seating available)

- Work with the School Districts to replicate the Cordova Bay experience at other school locations

5. Social Participation

Common Barriers

- Accessibility is seen as a greater barrier than affordability to social participation by older persons/caregivers and service providers
- Affordability becomes a greater barrier for the older seniors

- Desire for the promotion of social interaction in neighbourhoods and the physical assets to facilitate social participation
- Need for increased opportunities for education and self improvement in lifelong learning

Saanich Best Practices . . .
Current initiatives and projects

- Parks and Recreation offers a diverse range of programs and services encouraging self development, learning, social opportunities and physical activity

- Seniors' rates and assistance for low income individuals through the Leisure Involvement for Everyone (L.I.F.E.) program facilitating access to recreation programs and services

- The development of volunteer opportunities for older persons in the Municipal Archives, Parks, Recreation and the Emergency Program

- Introduction of an annual Seniors Festival in partnership with Senior Living magazine providing opportunities for older persons to be fully involved in celebrating active aging in their community

The Way Forward . . .
Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

- Ensure Development Permit Guidelines consider senior's needs including the provision of public open or social space within development plans

- Provide incentives for development to include outdoor gathering places accessible for older persons to promote social networking opportunities in major neighbourhood centres

- Develop new volunteer opportunities for older persons to participate in their community through municipal and community events (e.g. one on one support for other older persons needing assistance)

- Assess the potential for a continuation of the recognition events that occurred during the Centennial Celebrations of 2006, such as the Centennial Pioneer Tea

- Focus on seniors issues through the Healthy Saanich Advisory Committee

- Foster the development of local, self supporting, community based groups of seniors to provide social and recreational activities for seniors in their local neighbourhoods, for example, the Cordova Bay 55 Plus Association

- Work with the School Districts to investigate further opportunities to provide physical space and intergenerational programs for a variety of seniors groups and associations

6. Communication & Information

Common Barriers

- Challenges exist related to print media (size of print), complex and automated services, and telephone solicitation

- Many older persons are uninformed or confused about existing support and assistance available to the aging population

- Repeated comments by individuals who stated "I did not know that," and "Where can I find out about that," and "When did that change?" etc.

Saanich Best Practices . . .
Current initiatives and projects

- Audio system available for use in the Council Chambers for those experiencing difficulties being involved in meetings and forums

- Education workshops and tours of Municipal Recreation Facilities covering strategies for reducing or eliminating common barriers to participation for seniors offered in partnership with the Vancouver Island Health Authority and local seniors' resident complexes

- Partnered with the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria and local senior resident complexes to provide recreational and social programs for various cultural groups and residents

- Offers registration options that include mobile registration in partnership with community based associations and organizations for recreation programs

- Supports community social and recreational organizations such as Saanich Silver Threads, Saanich Volunteer Services Society, Cedar Hill New Horizons, the Goward House Society and the Cordova Bay 55 Plus Association through facilities and/or grants

- An Oral History Program designed to provide first hand accounts of the experiences of Saanich pioneers and residents and offers an opportunity to preserve these personal accounts for education and research purposes

The Way Forward . . .
Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

- Offer tours of Saanich Municipal Hall and other municipal facilities and services

- Open House Seniors Days at Recreation Centres, Municipal Hall, Fire and Police facilities to engage older persons and improve the awareness of services offered while creating a social connection between municipal staff and citizens

- Work with local organizations to develop a resource guide specific to Saanich or to contribute to existing city directories to ensure Saanich specific information is included and have this directory available at all municipal counters

- Consider large print documents and audio formats of municipal publications

- Assess the feasibility of an Elders' council/ committee as part of the Community Associations for each neighbourhood

- Provide a senior specific brochure rack in the hall for information on community and/or local services available for seniors

- Improve promotion of educational tours and workshops at recreation facilities and municipal halls

- Investigate the need for a "help line or information line" for seniors to help meet their concerns and better address the enquiries that is connected to a staff persons as opposed to computerized options

- Consider age-friendly options on the Saanich Municipal Website such as larger font options and audio options

- Introduce all staff to TTY (teletypewriter) hearing impaired telephone service

- Develop a pamphlet on Age-Friendly guidelines or strategies with the support of local business, senior serving organizations and the Centre on Aging

- Distribute brochures and information regarding Saanich Archives to seniors' residences and facilities, including opportunities for orientation to the Archives

7. Civic Participation & Employment

Common Barriers

- Being able to make a contribution and feeling connected by and recognized for that contribution, are of major importance to older persons

- Expressed desire for opportunities for meaningful roles in their community

- Scheduling, auditory challenges and accessibility issues make involvement at civic meetings and community events difficult

Saanich Best Practices . . .
### Current initiatives and projects

- Older persons actively participate in Advisory Committees, Design Panels and Municipal Task Forces

- Staff retention program supporting work in the years after age 65

- Volunteer opportunities for seniors to contribute to their community in meaningful ways through the Saanich Emergency Program and Parks and Recreation

- Participation by seniors in civic elections is promoted by: mobile polling stations travelling to assisted living and seniors' residences, advance polling stations and the planned use of accessible facilities

- Older persons participate through elected positions on council and volunteer on a variety of advisory committees

The Way Forward . . .
Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

- Upgrade Council Chambers considering the needs of older persons to facilitate access to meetings and enhance opportunities for participation including improved sound system, setting, chairs, etc.

- Enhance the awareness of meaningful volunteer opportunities such as the Emergency Program through communication and partnerships with Saanich Volunteer Services Society, Saanich Silver Threads and other senior serving organizations

- Review the 2008 election process with a focus on the needs of older persons

- Offer a kiosk or reception desk on the second floor of municipal hall during tax season to answer questions and provide information regarding other municipal services

- Evaluate ways to increase the community's Social Planning capacity to help plan and strategize for the aging of the population
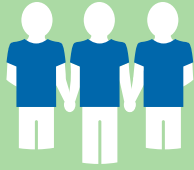
8. Community Support & Health Services

Common Barriers

- Older persons are concerned that health services and community support be affordable, appropriate and accessible

- Need to capitalize on partnership opportunities

- Need to consider non-traditional delivery of services such as outreach services in areas with a high density of older residents

Saanich Best Practices . . .
Current initiatives and projects

- Offer rehabilitation services and programs such as Frail Elderly Fitness, Gentle Fit, Osteofit, Water Walking, Massage Therapy and other adapted physical activity programs in partnership with the Vancouver Island Health Authority

- Provides Public Education programs on fire safety at times and locations suited to the needs of older persons

- Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program offers opportunities for older persons to be involved at the individual, family and neighbourhood coordination levels

- Training to Police officers regarding scams and frauds that most often affect seniors and recognizing the signs of elder abuse

The Way Forward . . .
Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

- Improve promotion of emergency preparedness training and volunteer opportunities with the Emergency Program including better communication through local seniors serving agencies or organizations

- Educate the older population in the health and social benefits of participation in recreation and leisure services and civic or community activities in conjunction with the Vancouver Island Health Authority (e.g. sharing personal success stories through the media)

- Host an annual community forum with health service providers, senior serving agencies, stakeholders and municipal representatives to share information and explore partnerships for improving community support and health services

A Saanich Model…How to be Age-Friendly

Participation in the WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities Project has left an indelible mark on the Municipality of Saanich. Through the research conducted by the University of Victoria's Centre on Aging and the planning and discussions of the community, Saanich is well positioned to be responsive to the changing demographics and needs of our population.

Several key themes have emerged that reveal the Saanich perspective for the foundation of an Age-Friendly City:

Value Older Persons
Provide opportunities for meaningful participation and involvement of older persons in a variety of service activities and show appreciation for the valuable contribution of the collective knowledge and skills of this population

Responsive Planning, Development and Engineering Design
Acknowledge and recognize the diverse needs of older people in planning, development, regulation and public infrastructure design

Small Changes Make a Difference
The presence of appropriate features, design elements and adaptations to existing structures are important to this population and represent a strong commitment to age-friendliness

Create Relationships through Effective Communication
Improved communication with older persons and access to information for seniors in our community can build trusting and supportive relationships decreasing barriers to active participation

It Takes a Whole Community

This document is founded in the communication and involvement of a solid representation of the people and organizations that make up community. Many stakeholders have been involved including: B.C. Transit, the Vancouver Island Health Authority, the Ministry of Health, the University of Victoria Centre on Aging, Saanich Silver Threads, Saanich Volunteers Services Society, Seniors Serving Seniors, local business and the many older persons that attended focus groups and meetings. In order to become an Age-Friendly City the whole community needs to be involved through the creation of partnerships and the commitment of a diverse range of organizations and individuals.

It will take the whole community… to be age-friendly!

" I think Saanich is a great place to grow old, I mean people are friendly, there are lots of facilities, there are great walking areas, there are oodles of them, there are so many things that are offered for older people and safe, I feel safe. I don't think you could ask for much more really. "

- Older persons focus group participant

The local value of participating in this global project lies in listening to older persons in our community, learning from their messages and acting on their concerns. The District of Saanich is committed to continually supporting an Age-Friendly community through our strategic plans for 2008 and beyond.

Our key objectives for 2008 are:

1. Adopt new Design Guidelines for major centres that consider accessibility and access

2. Report to Council and implement "Access to Transit," study recommendations through amendments to the Zoning Bylaw, Development Permit Guidelines and Engineering Servicing requirements (e.g. improved bus stop accessibility, improved sidewalks, driveway crossings and curb drops)

3. Explore requirements for single family and town housing to include a multi-use room on the ground floor that could be converted into a bedroom and facilitate independent living and aging in a preferred place,

4. Encourage mixed use and inter-generational social interactions in partnership with existing seniors associations and organizations and school districts as seen in the development of Cordova Bay Community Place

5. Develop new volunteer opportunities for older persons to participate in their community through municipal and community events (e.g. one on one support for other older persons needing assistance)

6. Work with local organizations to develop a resource guide specific to Saanich or to contribute to existing city directories to ensure Saanich specific information is included and have this directory available at all municipal counters

7. Complete Phase II of the Centennial Trails Project

8. Improve promotion of emergency preparedness training and volunteer opportunities with the Emergency Program including better communication through local seniors serving agencies or organizations

9. Open House Seniors Days at Recreation Centres, Municipal Hall, Fire and Police facilities to engage older persons and improve the awareness of services offered while creating a social connection between municipal staff and citizens

10. Distribute brochures and information regarding Saanich Archives to seniors' residences and facilities, including opportunities for orientation to the Archives

11. Upgrade Council Chambers considering the needs of older persons to facilitate access to meetings and enhance opportunities for participation including improved sound system, setting, chairs, etc.

12. Review the 2008 election process with a focus on the needs of older persons

Online Resources

World Health Organization
www.who.int/ageing/projects/age_friendly_cities/en/index.html

Public Health Agency of Canada, Division of Aging and Seniors
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/index.htm

British Columbia Ministry of Health
www.gov.bc.ca/health

District of Saanich
www.saanich.ca

University of Victoria's Centre on Aging
www.coag.uvic.ca

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their contributions towards the Age-Friendly Cities Project:

Councillor Susan Brice	*District of Saanich*
Councillor Judy Brownoff	*District of Saanich*
Tessa Graham	*Executive Director, Healthy Children, Women and Seniors, B.C. Ministry of Health*
Elaine Gallagher	*Director, Centre on Aging, University of Victoria*

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Mike Davis and Darin Ramsay	*B.C. Transit*
Sue McCauley	*Saanich Silver Threads*
Susan Zerb	*Saanich Volunteer Services Society*
Gerri Hinton	*Saanich Resident, Caregiver*
Reeta Sanatani	*Saanich Resident*
Carolyn Rioux	*TD Canada Trust, Shelbourne Branch*
Barbara Harwood	*Seniors Serving Seniors*
Dawn Nickel	*University of Victoria Centre on Aging*

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