

Hamilton: A City for ALL Ages



Age-Friendly Hamilton

**First Report
to our Community**
January 2010

Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA)



THE CITY OF
HAMILTON
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

The City of Hamilton is pleased that the Hamilton Council on Aging has engaged the senior citizens of our community in Age Friendly Hamilton focus groups.

On behalf of the City, I would like to thank the Ontario Trillium Foundation for its funding support for this project; the Age Friendly Advisory Committee who has directed the project; and the many community, agency, staff and volunteers and especially the older adults involved for their help in defining the community perspective and contributing to the suggestions on how to overcome common barriers to an age-friendly city.

This contribution will enable the City of Hamilton to be at the forefront of initiatives in Ontario aimed at making our city and province more flexible and responsive to the needs of an aging population. The City of Hamilton endorsed the Age Friendly Initiative by the Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA) on February 12, 2009 (NOTE: See the Community Services Report CS090224).

The City of Hamilton will continue to work co-operatively with health, education, mobility services and the community to ensure that our city is truly a “place for all ages” – a place where children to seniors feel supported. As our citizens age, they can count on healthy lifestyle choices, active participation in the community, and safe and secure “age-friendly” surroundings.

Sincerely,

Fred Eisenberger
Mayor



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Introduction

The Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA) is funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation to help our community become an Age Friendly City. HCoA held rounds of consultations with older residents in several neighbourhoods, and with caregivers and service providers. HCoA is now ready to present its first report of its findings and our initial round of recommendations for public consideration.

This first report back to the community summarizes the concerns and observations of Hamilton's older adults. It also lists the barriers and obstacles identified and suggests some recommendations for overcoming each such obstacle.

HCoA hopes to both inform and generate public discussion about these obstacles and recommendations, and recruit the support of other partners with whom we hope to further refine and implement these recommendations. Our purpose is aimed at developing an action plan, then implementing that plan and finally conducting an evaluation to ensure these objectives have been met.

This Age-Friendly initiative is based on work conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) of the United Nations. It began in a select number of cities across the world. As a result WHO produced a useful guide which may be found at: http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf

These guidelines set out performance standards which together make a community age friendly. For example:

- Well maintained and well lit sidewalks
- Public buildings that are fully accessible to people with disabilities
- City bus drivers who wait until older people are seated before starting off and priority seating on public transit vehicles
- Enough reserved parking spots for people with disabilities
- Housing integrated in the community that accommodates changing needs and abilities as people grow older
- Friendly, personalized service and information instead of automated answering services
- Easy-to-read written information in plain language
- Public and commercial services and stores in neighbourhoods close to where people live, rather than concentrated outside the city
- A civic culture that respects and includes older persons
- Health and community services which respond to and serve the needs of older persons.

WHO found that the obstacles and challenges identified by older adults generally fell into eight broad categories. These eight key features were examined by HCoA to develop practical and workable recommendations aimed at reducing or removing the obstacles identified here in Hamilton.

Older adults were the main source of information in this report. HCoA focus groups were conducted early in 2009 with residents who were 60 years and older from all walks of life and in various neighborhoods of the city.

Fifteen focus groups were conducted with 130 older persons in 11 of Hamilton's 15 city wards. To obtain information from those who were unable to attend the focus groups due to physical or mental impairment, focus groups were also conducted with caregivers and service providers which delved into the experience of the older people for whom they were caring or providing services. Two separate focus groups were held with 16 service providers and a further focus group was held with 5 caregivers. Each focus group was conducted to ensure the widest cross-section of respondents and responses.

HCoA believes that making our city fully "age-friendly" will be the most effective way to respond to the demographic aging of our city and region. The WHO Age Friendly Cities guide requires a "bottom-up - participatory approach". This means older adults are invited to analyze and express opinions about their situation in the community and to develop practical recommendations for policy and other needed changes. HCoA also adopted this participatory process because it helped empower older adults, it enabled them to contribute to our society and to become more active participants in the decision-making processes. HCoA highly respects the notion that older persons are the ultimate experts on their own lives.

Although this WHO initiative used a "bottom-up" approach, HCoA also saw the need for a "top-down" strategy that engages stakeholders and partners at various levels who can influence and support these recommendations for change. An example of HCoA using a "top-down" approach is having a representative on our Advisory Committee from the Planning and

Economic Development Department of the City of Hamilton.

References are made in this report for the need to have "complete communities", which is the direction that the Urban Hamilton Official Plan (2009) of the City will be taking in the coming years when planning for development. "Complete communities meet people's needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime by providing convenient access to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, a full range of housing, and community infrastructure including affordable housing, schools, recreation and open space for their residents. Convenient access to public transportation and options for safe, non-motorized travel is also provided" (Government of Ontario, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006).

HCoA wishes to thank all the participants of our focus groups for their frankness, willingness to take part and their active contribution. We also acknowledge the contribution of caregivers and service providers. Together, their input to this first stage provided important validation for many of the comments received from other groups. Their voices and concerns have provided us with a purpose, fill us with confidence, and inspire us to move forward toward a better Hamilton.



What is an Age-Friendly City?

The World Health Organization defines an age-friendly community as one in which service providers, politicians, community leaders, faith leaders, people in business, and citizens:

- Recognize the great diversity among older adults
- Promote their inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life
- Respect their decision and lifestyle choices, and
- Anticipate and respond flexibly to aging and its related needs and preferences.

An age-friendly community establishes policies, programs, services and infrastructure that support the physical and social environment that is designed to enable older people to live in safety, enjoyment, good health and well-being, and continue to participate in society in meaningful ways. It takes into account biological, psychological, behavioural, economic, social and environmental factors that combine to determine health and well-being.

An age-friendly community benefits people of all ages. Safe neighbourhoods are safe for all, children, youth, women and older adults. Families benefit from less worry and stress when their older relatives have the services and support they need. Barrier-free outdoor spaces, 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 people in volunteer roles, employment and engagement in civic life; thus the title of this report “Hamilton, A City for ALL Ages”. Making our community age-friendly is one of the most effective policy approaches for responding to the increasing numbers of older adults, a phenomenon known as demographic aging.

Demographics and Trends

The opportunity for the Hamilton Council on Aging to spearhead this age-friendly initiative is timely. The population of Hamilton and area is aging and there are immigration trends that will influence the future of our city. Hamilton has the second largest number of older adults in the province. Immigration trends account for 24% of new citizens to Hamilton and a good portion of those immigrants will eventually sponsor their parents to this area to be closer to their family members.

2006 census figures indicate that persons aged 65 and older makes up nearly 14.9 % of the population of Hamilton or 75,395 people, up from 2001 when the percentage was 14.3% or 70,255 people. By 2021 it is projected that older persons will account for more than 20% of Hamilton’s population if trends continue.

Our population is aging and we need to plan for this change in a pro-active and positive way. Although there is evidence, as seen in this report in the sections “What is Being Done” to address the eight key features, there is much left to be done.

While change is occurring slowly in some areas, we need to ask if the efforts to adapt our society is taking into account older persons who are not in the mainstream...those from diverse ethnic groups, those who live with physical or developmental disabilities, those who are economically vulnerable, etc. For instance, in 2006 16.6% of older adults in Hamilton live below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO), many of whom are single and/or women.

Focus Groups Results & Recommendations

Participants were asked to comment on 8 Key Features as defined by the World Health Organization:



1. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Does the natural and built environment help older persons get around easily, safely 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, accessible and affordable that allows them to stay independent as their needs change?



4. Social Participation

Do older persons have opportunities for developing and maintaining meaningful social networks in their neighbourhoods? Are their needs and preferences considered in planning by a diverse range of agencies and institutions?



5. Respect & Social Inclusion

Are public services, media, businesses, faith communities and the public respectful of the diversity of needs among older persons and are they willing to accommodate them in all aspects of society?



6. Civic Participation & Employment

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



7. Communication and Information

Are older persons aware of the diverse range of programs and services available within the community? Is information readily available, appropriately designed and delivered to meet their needs?



8. Community Support & Health Services

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



1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Barriers & Obstacles

(Identified by older persons/caregivers & service providers)

- **Walkways** – not wide enough or well enough maintained (uneven surfaces)
- **Parking and drop-off zones** – too few or none in front of public buildings
- **Shopping** – safety with traffic, not accessible, unsafe walking in big box locations
Maneuvering in shopping malls due to traffic – too difficult
- **Fear of falling** – due to lack of ice and snow removal
- **Lighting** – insufficient on streets and in parks
- **Accessibility** – many streets difficult to access in wheelchairs
- **Knowing their way around community** – difficult for newcomers
- **Older buildings and risk of falls** – retrofitting needed
- **Traffic lights** – timing too short for walkability
- **Indoor recreation spaces for winter use** – too limited
- **Washrooms** – too few and lack of accessibility and maintenance (restaurants, transit hubs, parks)
- **Parks** – too few and inaccessible
- **Benches** – too few for walkability and enjoyment

What is Being Done.....

- There have been many improvements in accessibility in public buildings in recent years including the installation of elevators and ramps. Ongoing sidewalk and curb improvements have increased accessibility to many public spaces and buildings. The City has recently adopted many urban design policies in the Urban Official Plan that aim to create pedestrian-oriented places that are safe, accessible, connected and easy to navigate for people of all abilities.
- Initiatives to improve walkability have been established and are growing. The ‘Snow Angels’ program matches volunteers to those who require snow removal in the community. The City of Hamilton’s Hamilton Walks program produces a calendar of walking opportunities across the City, a guide to starting a walking group, and information on the benefits of walking. Many guides and maps are available to inform people of walking and bicycling trails in the greater Hamilton area. Canadian Walking Master Class Audits assisted in analyzing walkability in specific neighborhoods and made recommendations on improvements to the public realm to enhance the pedestrian environment.
- The Hamilton Council on Aging, Award of Excellence, awarded on an annual basis for businesses that go above and beyond to improve independence and active aging opportunities for older persons

The Way Forward....

Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

1. Implement Urban Official Plan policies supporting the development of building and public spaces that are safe, accessible and easy to navigate for all ages and abilities.
2. Investigate the use of tax incentives to encourage retrofit of public buildings for accessibility.
3. Ensure elevators are included in plans for recreation and shopping centres.
4. Design new commercial areas and encourage the retrofit of existing commercial areas for safety and accessibility for pedestrians.
5. Identify, develop and advertise ways that seniors can be involved in the planning phases of projects.
6. Identify opportunities for increasing parkland where deficiencies exist.
7. Ensure parks are planned and built in newly developing areas.
8. Conduct an accessibility inventory of all parks and trails.
9. Adopt/expand/advertise a bench dedication program in conjunction with new development and at parks and neighbourhood facilities.
10. Improve snow clearance on sidewalks and around intersections for safe crossing.
11. Maintain sidewalks to prevent falls.
12. Evaluate all city services for universal design concepts that increase age-friendliness.
13. Identify and improve access to public washrooms.
14. Develop a pedestrian master plan with older adult input.
15. Increase Policing through environmental design which promotes improved lighting, eyes on the street etc.
16. Re-design large shopping malls to be more pedestrian friendly.
17. Increase way-finding systems with cues (footprints, arrows, urban Braille) to label walkways and destinations for easy interpretation.



2. Transportation Barriers & Obstacles

(Identified by older persons/caregivers & service providers)

- **Transit System** – Difficulty coping with getting to stops, waiting without shelter, maneuvering routes etc.
- **Destinations of transit** – not always matching where older adults need/want to go
- **Accessibility** – Difficulty getting on and off buses, sudden movement before seating, cost and availability
- **Passenger Safety** – lack of awareness and sensitivity
- **Disabled and Aged Regional Transit System (DARTS)** – problems with booking systems
- **Transit Affordability** – too high cost for low income older persons
- **Parking** – problems for disabled and costs vary
- **Drop off zones** – some areas lack completely; others not close enough
- **Road Safety** – Need better lighting for visibility at night; difficulty with signage and line markings for night visibility
- **Options** – Need more choice in transportation especially in outlying areas

What is Being Done.....

- There have been many improvements to policy and planning for the City's transportation network. The City's Transportation Master Plan, new Urban Official Plan and the Cycling Master Plan are promoting an integrated transportation network for multiple modes of transportation with an emphasis on active transportation (walking, cycling and transit). The transportation network is being planned to connect communities and destinations throughout the city to facilitate access to the transportation network for people of all ages and abilities. The Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan is emphasizing regional connections to maximize connectivity throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe. In addition, the DARTS program is being reorganized to improve operations.
- Other programs and initiatives are tackling transportation issues directly related to seniors. Such programs include:
 - o Free Golden Bus Pass program for seniors 80 years and older
 - o Taxi Script Program-subsidizing Taxi fares for qualified older persons
 - o "Heads Up" - Road Safety Points for Seniors and Youth (Seniors Advisor Committee Safety Project);
 - o Hamilton Strategic Road Safety Program (Hamilton Police Service); and,
 - o Senior Driver Group Education Program (Ministry of Transportation).

The Way Forward....

Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

18. Improve scheduling system for DARTS to eliminate duplicate services, improve method for repeat services, and accommodation of requests for group scheduling.
19. Initiate training of public transit and taxi drivers about age-friendly customer service.
20. Analyze and improve where necessary, lighting, signage on buildings and lane markings on roads for night time visibility.
21. Increase number of bus shelters in high senior density neighbourhoods.
22. Provide education and reinforce seating protocols with transit passengers to encourage courteousness.
23. Improve transit access in outlying areas.
24. Expand the “Golden Bus Pass” to seniors under 80 years of age and improve information on acquiring the pass.
25. Investigate fully separate walking, bicycling and automobile traffic lanes.
26. Increase visibility of road signs with increased size, lighting, tree trimming etc.
27. Increase safety features at problem intersections by monitoring safety statistics.
28. Increase audible noise, countdown and timing at crosswalks for safe crossing.
29. Tailor public transit systems to suit neighbourhood needs, ie: more frequent stops, smaller vehicles, specialized services like stopping for shopping trips.





3. Housing Barriers & Obstacles

(Identified by older persons/caregivers & service providers)

- **Options** – Inability to remain in one's own neighbourhood
- **Continuum of Housing Choices** – gaps in options within neighbourhoods
- **Safety and Security** – need for improvement in seniors housing
- **Infrastructure** – older buildings in need of repair and updating.
- **Affordable Seniors Housing** – shortage of sufficient supply
- **Maintenance** – difficulty maintaining home and property
- **Costs** – expensive to maintain home repairs on fixed income
- **Education** – lack of information on services for help in maintaining home
- **Falls Prevention** – high risk of falls in and outside homes
- **Education** – lack of knowledge about what is available to assist
- **Walkability** – long distance to amenities
(grocer, banks, pharmacy, doctors, library services etc)

What is Being Done.....

- The City of Hamilton's policies on housing support the need for a full range of housing choices (type, tenure and affordability) for every age group in every community. Planning policy promotes the development of complete communities where shops, services, housing, schools, institutions, and places of employment are all in close proximity and accessible.
- City of Hamilton provides a tax rebate for senior homeowners with low income.
- New affordable housing is being built by a variety of agencies and organizations. The Affordable Housing Flagship is a partner with the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (HRPR) and there is a shared agenda around access to housing.
- Several programs exist to provide assistance for home retrofits and maintenance. For example, the Ontario government's Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) is available for adaptation to make housing more accessible. The Home Adaptation for Seniors Independence Program (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) helps homeowners and landlords pay for minor home adaptations to benefit low income seniors. However, funding for these programs do not meet the need.

The Way Forward....

Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

30. Provide municipal planners, land developers and the home building industry with the information and training needed to understand the growing demand for a wide range of affordable barrier-free housing options aimed at older persons.
31. Provide a wide range of housing choices in neighbourhoods where older adults currently live , along the continuum of needs (single, apartment, supportive and long term care) so that people can stay in familiar surroundings and live in “complete communities” .
32. Support flexible zoning to allow innovative solutions like options for accessory units, home sharing, ‘granny flats’ and smaller housing forms within existing properties.
33. Require that all new buildings (public and private) comply with universal design features ie: accessible doorways and bathrooms that enable people to age in place.
34. Improve access to information about services and housing choices for seniors.
35. Improve the ability of seniors to age in place (in their own homes and/or neighbourhoods) by increasing funding available for home retrofits, home care services, subsidies for repairs and maintenance including snow removal, lawn care, etc.
36. Provide shelter allowances paid to occupants to expand housing choices and improve affordability for low income seniors and not make them move to subsidized units and away from familiar surroundings.
37. Provide specific information to educate about falls prevention.





4. Social Participation Barriers & Obstacles

(Identified by older persons/caregivers & service providers)

- **Activities** – too few opportunities and not enough variety
- **Affordability** – too expensive for persons with low income
- **Knowledge** – not enough information about options
- **Intergenerational activity** – not enough activity with different age ranges
- **Isolation** – too many older persons living with loneliness and lack of social connection
- **Connections in the Community** – too few opportunities
- **Ethno-cultural aspects** – not enough opportunity for specific ethno-cultural programs, problems reaching out and attracting older adults from diverse communities to existing opportunities
- **Education** – not enough opportunities for life long learning

What is Being Done.....

- Many Seniors' Centres are encouraging multi-use activity, a variety of options and connections with others in the community.
- The City of Hamilton provides provisions for Seniors' rates and assistance for low income individuals to facilitate access to recreational programs and services.
- There are programs that provide incentives to adapt gathering places to be more accessible and to promote social networking opportunities in neighbourhoods.
- Development of volunteer opportunities for older persons to participate in the life of the community.
- The community provides Annual Seniors' Information Fairs sponsored by various partners in the community to inform and celebrate active aging
- Many organizations and associations have senior-specific groups meeting to foster social participation.

The Way Forward....

Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

38. Improve affordability of activities for seniors, especially those with low incomes.
39. Develop more volunteer opportunities and match skills to ensure older persons contributions are maximized.
40. Increase access to multi-use seniors' centres especially in areas of the city where no senior's centre presently exists.
41. Ensure that every seniors' centre and community recreation centre provides a variety of stimulating, affordable, accessible and active options for seniors which could also elevate opportunities for intergenerational activities. (City of Hamilton Parks, Culture, and Recreation Master Plan 2002 section 4.3.6 page 52 for recommendations).
42. Improve access to programming to provide vibrant, safe programming in the daytime focused on activity suiting older adults' needs.
43. Mobilize communities to increase activities that invite older persons to participate e.g. Community barbeques, walking programs etc.
44. Increase outreach to encourage/motivate isolated seniors to participate in activities using a buddy /friend/mentor system approach.
45. Improve support for informal and family caregivers in order for them to more fully participate in activity in the community.
46. Improve access to facilities that are more inclusive of seniors in diverse ethnic groups, including activities that are culturally sensitive (ie: cultural food and specific activity to meet their needs).
47. Encourage educational institutions to provide a range of opportunities for life long learning.





5. Respect and Social Inclusion Barriers and Obstacles

(Identified by older persons/caregivers & service providers)

- **Ageism** – lack of respect for older persons, devaluing contributions.
- **Involvement** – desire to be included in consultations and have a voice.
- **Awareness** – lack of awareness by younger people about aging experience.
- **Public Awareness** – lack of awareness and negative attitudes about aging particularly about mental health, disabilities, diverse communities, issues of sexual orientation etc.
- **Stereotyping** – treating all older adults as if they are the same and as if they all respond in the same way

What is Being Done.....

- Participation of older persons on Advisory Committees of City Council and Municipal task forces encouraging building relationships and inclusion.
- Courses in Gerontology to demystify the aging process and highlight contributions of older persons.
- City of Hamilton facilitates the Senior Citizen of the Year Awards.
- SAGE (Service Awards for Geriatric Excellence) sponsored by the Regional Geriatric Program for those working effectively with older persons.
- Intergenerational activities in schools and with daycare centres – seeking volunteers who are older to provide mentoring, literacy and supervision to students.



The Way Forward....

Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

48. Promote recognition of seniors as persons deserving of services.
49. Assess and evaluate needs of the aging population.
50. Increase opportunities for intergenerational activities in faith groups, schools, recreation centres etc. to improve respect and social inclusion.
51. Promote contributions of older adults in the community.
52. Increase education about ageism and importance of respect to older people including the ways we communicate with and about older persons.
53. Improve customer service to meet the needs of older persons by learning from companies that exemplify good customer service to older adults.
54. Develop and implement training programs that encompasses an improved awareness of specific needs of seniors and methods to best assist seniors in accessing city services.
55. Provide education to younger people to be aware of needs of older generation.
56. Increase opportunities and services for positive space for people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered (LGBT).
57. Develop a customer services for seniors manual.
58. Incorporate education and training about aging to those who provide services to older persons.
59. Seek opinion of older adults and encourage their voice at planning tables.





6. Civic Participation and Employment Barriers and Obstacles

(Identified by older persons/caregivers & service providers)

- **Options** – lack of variety in employment & civic participation
- **Work Arrangements** – not enough flexibility
- **Newcomers** – lack of opportunities to be involved due to barriers such as language and unique interests
- **Cultural Awareness** – not enough inclusion and sensitivity to issues, 10-year sponsorship issues for new immigrants
- **Contributions** – loss of value and importance (ageism)
- **Knowledge** – difficult to find information about opportunities

What is Being Done.....

- There have been many opportunities in the past few years that focuses on employment opportunities but most of these focus on younger people and/or attracting and keeping the best qualified people to Hamilton. Some examples include the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative, Hamilton Training and Advisory Board and the Skills Development Flagship.
- There are efforts to ensure older persons participation in civic elections by promoting travel assistance, employment at advanced polling stations and accommodations for accessibility in order to vote.
- Having a voice for older adults in the work and life of the city is accommodated through appointments to the Seniors' Advisory Committee to City Council and memberships and participation in various Community Associations/Hubs.
- There are volunteer opportunities for older persons to make meaningful contributions in their community through a variety of volunteer opportunities throughout the city. HCoA and Volunteer Hamilton have been actively recruiting senior volunteers for various roles.



The Way Forward....

Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

60. Increase opportunities for gradual retirement by offering flexible arrangements without loss of pensionable earnings.
61. Reduce the ten year sponsorship requirement by Immigration Canada for older newcomers.
62. Educate older adults about centralized systems of information gathering and sharing e.g. Inform Hamilton.
63. Improve opportunities to work part-time for older adults who wish this opportunity.
64. Increase opportunities for voluntary work which is flexible to older adults needs, gives value and provides compensation for out of pocket expenses such as vulnerable screening costs, transportation and membership fees.
65. Involve senior citizens on planning boards and strategy sessions to plan for an aging population.
66. Develop a Seniors Job Bank where jobs can be posted, with advocacy for the skills that seniors can offer and that highlights their ability to continue to contribute in meaningful ways in the workplace.
67. Increase political involvement in decision-making.
68. Increase opportunities to educate and coach for lifestyle changes in retirement.





7. Communication and Information Barriers and Obstacles

(Identified by older persons/caregivers & service providers)

- **Access to Information** – challenges getting information about community happenings
- **Education** – about issues and services e.g. income tax returns, where to go for help, recycling
- **Automation** – lack of face-to-face or voice-to-voice communication
- **Computer Technology** – lack of opportunities to learn new ways of communication
- **Readability** – small print in newspapers, telephone books, newsletters, community information channel on television
- **Hearing** – problems with communication and accessibility to information

What is Being Done.....

- “When I’m 64, A Hamilton guide to benefits and services” has been developed and distributed to older adults though funding provided by two local MPs.
- Newspapers have sections for Senior’s Activities.
- Inform Hamilton is working on 211/311 voice to voice system which will improve access to information with 24 hour live answering services.
- Hamilton Police Services offers information by Senior’s Support Officers to educate older adults about safety from frauds and scams and other high risk areas of concern such as personal safety.
- Some educational and seniors’ centres offer courses in computer technology specifically for older persons but they often do not know how to access these courses or afford the cost.



The Way Forward....

Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

69. Provide clear, readable and multi-lingual information for older adults through newsletters, brochures, educational workshops, telephone book, newspapers etc.
70. Consider hearing loss, sight impairments and other abilities when offering information to older persons.
71. Encourage businesses to adopt face-to-face encounters in reception areas as much as possible.
72. Provide Annual Open House Seniors Days sponsored by neighbourhood associations, ward offices, the municipality at recreation and municipal centres, fire and police facilities to engage older persons, improve awareness of services and create social connections.
73. Move forward with the 211/311 system of information and develop an educational campaign to inform older persons of its benefits.
74. Encourage and facilitate older adults' participation in neighbourhood associations in order to ensure that activities are relevant to all generations.
75. Promote and keep updated the "When I'm 64" pamphlets to give the most updated information to seniors about services of value to them.
76. Promote and market computer courses specifically for older persons.
77. Educate the public about TTY (teletypewriter) and other hearing devices for people with hearing problems.





8. Community Support and Health Services Barriers and Obstacles

(Identified by older persons/caregivers & service providers)

- **Home health and community care services** – not enough; not affordable for some; lack of information; difficult to access; poor access by ethno-cultural seniors; lack of continuity of care
- **Primary care physicians** – too few; difficult to access, age discrimination
- **Dental care** – too costly
- **Hospitals** – long wait times in emergency departments; lack of understanding in treating patients with dementia and delirium
- **Levels of care** – lack of access and understanding of needs for chronic conditions
- **Long-term care** – poor quality of care; poor quality of services (food, medications); lack of meaningful activities; too few alternatives
- **Caregivers** – not partners in decision making; need for respite care and support
- **Rehabilitation** – lack of access
- **Respite Care** – not available in emergency situations to eliminate need for inappropriate placement to long term care
- **Income Security** – high poverty rates among singles and newcomers

What is being done....

- Ontario provincial 'Aging at Home Strategy' is being implemented by the Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand-Norfolk, Brant- Local Health Integrated Network (HNHB-LHIN).
- Hamilton Health Science Corporation is beginning a process to make their hospitals more age-friendly in a program called "Enhancing Lives, Optimizing Healthcare for Seniors".
- The Regional Geriatric Program central has developed an on line Older Adult Programs & Services Database of health & community support services for older adults in the area.
- The Hamilton Council on Aging and other organizations are involved in several initiatives to improve access to services including: information fairs; tax clinics, (in partnership with Human Resources Skills Development Canada); a Guide to Income Supplements and Benefits for service providers; and is working with ethno-cultural communities to improve access to services.
- Transportation to medical appointments is provided by the VON, Red Cross Society, St. Elizabeth's Nursing Services and DARTS but often people do not know about the services or volunteers are scarce.

The Way Forward....

Recommendations for an Age-Friendly Future

78. Improve access, continuity and integration of home and community-based services.
79. Ensure referrals to specialists as necessary.
80. Provide public education and political action regarding need for continuity of care and improved connections between services.
81. Establish multi-disciplinary centres for rural areas including medical, dental, footcare, nursing, nutrition, pharmacy, therapies, labs etc.
82. Increase home care and community support services.
83. Provide services where people live to optimize aging in place.
84. Improve access to primary care physicians.
85. Improve access to medical procedures.
86. Support informal caregivers to be partners in care and provide additional respite and supportive services.
87. Improve access to the Guaranteed Income Supplement and other financial benefits to which older adults are entitled.
88. Provide alternatives to long-term care for middle and low income seniors.
89. Increase resources for respite and support services especially following crisis to avoid assumption that the older adult should be placed in Long Term Care.
90. Improve quality of life and quality of services in Long Term Care and Retirement Homes.
91. Provide opportunities for affordable dental care.
92. Increase training in Geriatrics and Gerontology for Medical and other allied health professionals.

How to be Age-Friendly?

Participation in the community focus groups has helped us to be more informed by the voices of older persons in our community. Through this research we have learned that Hamilton needs to heed the call to action. HCoA believes that our community is well positioned to respond effectively to the needs of our aging population during this time of changing demographics.

Several key themes have emerged that will ensure a foundation of an Age-Friendly Hamilton:

Value Older Persons

Provide opportunities for meaningful participation and involvement of older persons in a variety of community activities and show appreciation for the valuable contributions of older persons.

Responsive Planning and Development

Acknowledge and recognize the diverse needs of older persons in planning, development, regulation and public infrastructure design. Older adults need to be represented at every planning table with the mandate to review plans through an age-friendly lens.

Small Changes Make a Difference

Not all changes are costly or complex. Small changes to features, design and adaptations to existing systems are important and can represent a strong commitment to age-friendliness.

Relationships and Effective Communication is Key

Listening to and hearing what older persons are experiencing and increasing access to information can build trusting and supportive relationships thereby decreasing barriers to active participation.

It Takes a Whole Community

Involvement and communication with the whole community will be needed to establish a City for ALL Ages. Community partners in Transit, Health, Planning, Business, Research, Housing, Recreation, Social Services, Caregivers, and Older Persons themselves will help to inform how this initiative proceeds. 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!



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Community Advisory Committee

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Margaret Denton McMaster University (Gerontology) (Co-Chair)
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Online Resources

World Health Organization - Global Age Friendly Cities Guide

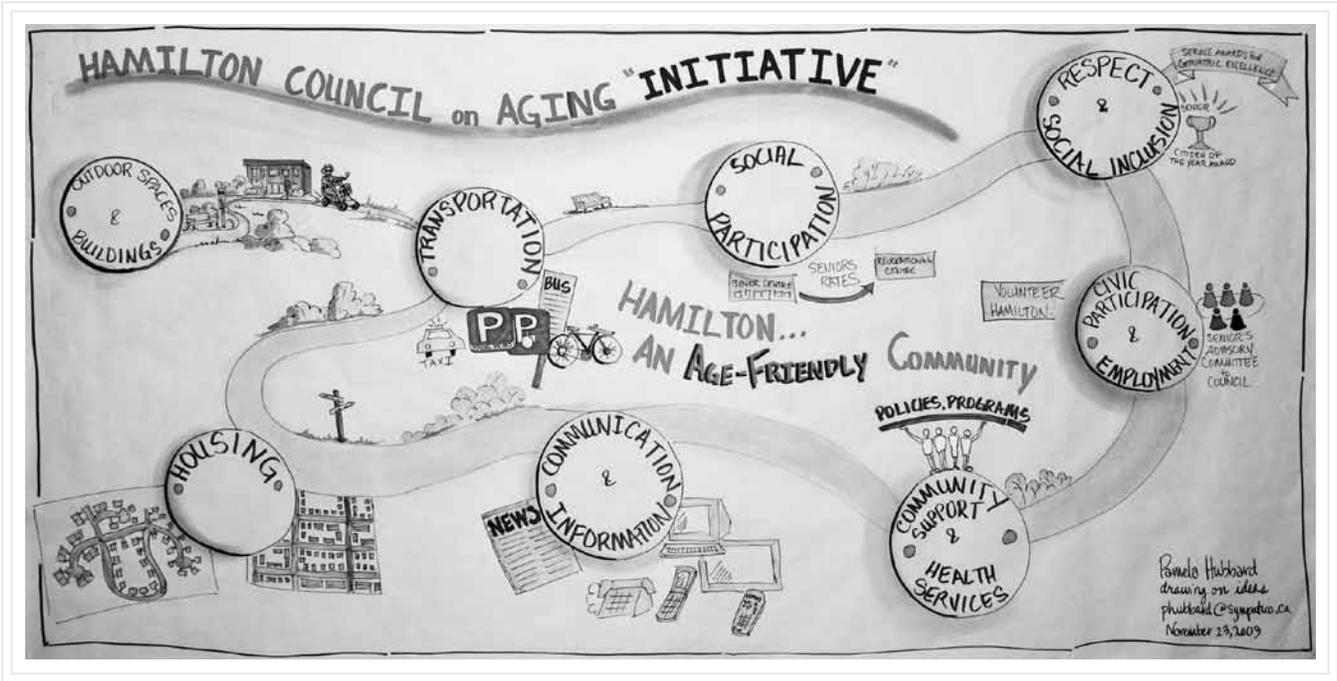
http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf

Public Health Agency of Canada – Rural and Remote Communities Guide

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/healthy-sante/age_friendly_rural/index-eng.php

Ontario Seniors Secretariat – Age Friendly Communities

<http://www.culture.gov.on.ca/seniors/english/programs/seniorsmonth/2009/agefriendlycommunities/index.shtml>



HCoA Hamilton Council on Aging

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