



agefriendly
EDMONTON

SOCIAL AND RECREATION PARTICIPATION

PROMISING PRACTICES SUMMARY REPORT

Part One



February 2014

Table of Contents

A. Introduction to Age-Friendly Framework and Collaborative	3
A.1. Social and Recreational Programming Promising Practices Research.....	4
A.2. Outline of the Report(s).....	5
A.3. Edmonton and Alberta Statistics – Senior Projections.....	6
B. The Changing Face of Seniors	8
C. Trends Impacting Seniors and Program Implications	10
D. Innovative Programming:	15
To successfully innovate programmers and providers must:	15
E. Common Themes from the Research	16
F. Future Consideration	19

An age-friendly city encourages active ageing by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. In practical terms, an age-friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.

A. Introduction to Age-Friendly Framework and Collaborative

The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed an Age-Friendly Framework which is based on the primary concept of “active ageing”. In an age-friendly city, policies, services, settings and structures support and enable people to age actively by:¹

- recognizing the wide range of capacities and resources among older people;
- anticipating and responding flexibly to ageing-related needs and preferences;
- respecting their decisions and lifestyle choices;
- protecting those who are most vulnerable; and
- promoting their inclusion and contribution to all areas of community life.

Edmonton joined other cities from across the world to adopt the Age-Friendly Framework and in late 2010 Edmonton was officially accepted as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities. The City of Edmonton and its various community partners developed a Vision for an *Age-Friendly Edmonton Action Plan (Vision)* in the spring of 2011. The Vision document is based on a commitment to ensuring Edmonton is a “community that values, respects and actively supports the well-being of seniors and promotes an age-friendly community”². The Action Plan outlines eighteen specific goals that guide the implementation of the Edmonton Age-Friendly initiatives and outlines how the City will actively support active aging within the growing senior population of Edmonton.

Age-Friendly Edmonton Strategy identified the following two goals and actions for the social and recreation participation area of focus.

Goal 1: Seniors have access to a wide array of affordable and personally relevant activities.

Action 1: Develop and implement new programs and activities that respond to emerging needs and interests.

Action 2: Develop and implement strategies for access to social, recreational, artistic, intellectual and cultural opportunities and physical activities.

Action 3: Develop and/or facilitate the use of current and emerging technologies to connect seniors.

¹ Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide pg. 1

² Vision for an Age-Friendly Edmonton Action Plan pg. 1

Goal 2: Opportunities for social engagement and recreation are inclusive and welcomes diversity.

Action 1: Develop and facilitate social and recreational opportunities that are sensitive to the needs and interests of diverse populations’.

Action 2: Plan and implement strategies that enhance organizational capacity to engage diverse populations and isolated seniors.

Action 3: Develop and implement strategies to encourage businesses and other community stakeholders to support social and recreational activities for seniors.

The primary research questions:

If the program and service providers are to implement an age-friendly approach to program and service delivery what would it look like?

What would be different than what is currently being offered?

What are the promising practices that would demonstrate a new or innovative approach to social and recreational programming for seniors?

The City of Edmonton in partnership with the Seniors Coordinating Council contracted the Consulting Team of Toby Rabinovitz and Punch Jackson to conduct promising practices research to:

- Identify and analyze research and resources on promising practices related to social and recreation participation, programs and initiatives.
- Research trends and promising practices that will engage seniors in active recreational and leisure pursuits.
- Identify current operational and management models from other municipal areas, both nationally and internationally, that support comprehensive programming for seniors.
- Work with the Social and Recreation Participation Committee and other stakeholders to develop recommendations that will increase the capacity of the program service providers to be able to address the changing needs and priorities of the growing senior population.

A.1. Social and Recreational Programming Promising Practices Research

The focus for the promising practices research involved finding those social and recreational programs/services that are anchored in the Age-Friendly Edmonton Vision and will further the implementation of the primary goals for the social and recreational participation aspect of the action plan. It is often very difficult to determine what would be defined as a promising practice, for success is often defined by the local context. The research focused on those innovative and creative approaches to social and recreational programming that may be unique or different from a ‘traditional’ approach to program design and delivery.

There are two parts final report:

Part One (Summary Report) identifies the common themes and trends in seniors programming. The report also provides suggested promising practices and practical tips for programmers and providers.

Part Two (Case Studies and Resources) is a practical guide for social and recreational programming.

The resource toolkit is designed as a practical guide and tool for practitioners who are looking for new and innovative program ideas. A brief description is provided along with the links and applicable websites

Relevant research articles and reports are also provided in this report.

The study components included:

- Review of relevant literature.
- Interviews with practitioners and professionals who are currently working in the field of seniors social and recreational programming.
- Online research and analysis of innovative and creative programming for seniors and identifying common themes and promising practices.
- Case study analysis of nine municipal Age-friendly Cities (nationally and internationally) and identified common themes and priorities.
- Facilitated a focus group with representatives from various program and service delivery agencies from across the city.

A.2. Outline of the Report(s)

The challenge for this research was to take a non-traditional approach to seniors programming and find those programs and services that demonstrate a new lens for seniors programming. The primary research question involved: “If the program and service providers are to implement an age-friendly approach to program and services delivery what would it look like? What would be different than what is currently being done?”

The research findings and resources are provided in two separate but complementary reports.

Part One: *Age-Friendly Promising Practices Summary* presents the following information:

- Research, summary of the trends in seniors programming and the implication for programming in the future.
- Analysis of what the promising practices tells us about social and recreational programming for seniors in the future.
- Future considerations that will help the Social and Recreation Committee move forward. The consultants will work with the social and recreational committee to develop the specific recommendations that stem from this research.

Part Two: *Age-Friendly Case Studies and Resources* present the following information:

- Summary of the nine Age-Friendly Cities case studies analysis that were reviewed for this research.
- Examples of successful programs that have responded to the changing trends and that have been successful in engaging seniors in a unique or innovative way.
- Resources, toolkits and program resources with websites and links which provide detailed program information.

A.3. Edmonton and Alberta Statistics – Senior Projections

The following chart demonstrates the dramatic change in Canadian projected aging population.

Population 65 years and over, Canada, Historical (1971-2011) and Projected (2012-2061) (percent of the total population)

1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021	2031	2041	2051	2061
8.0	9.6	11.5	12.6	14.4	18.5	22.8	24.0	24.7	25.5

Alberta Facts:

In April 2011 there were about 410,000 seniors in Alberta and by 2035 the senior population is projected to reach over 1 million.

There will be a dramatic increase of 266% in the plus 80 age group while at the same time the number of seniors age 55-64 years will more than double within the next 30 years.¹

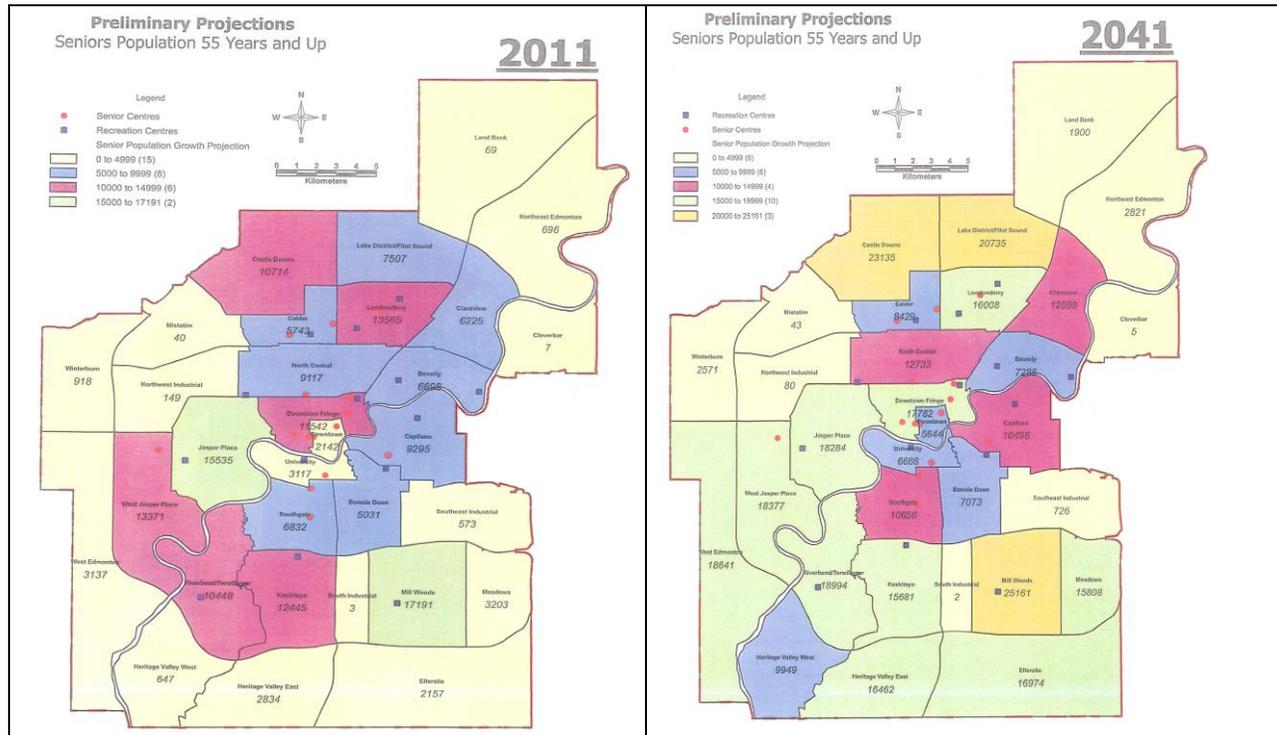
Edmonton seniors are diverse in age, material status, cultural background and incomes.

The following charts demonstrate a projected shift in where the seniors will be living in the next 30 years. With the increased urban sprawl comes an expectation to provide services in a more decentralized system for program service delivery. This shift in demographics will have a dramatic impact on the program and service delivery providers as there will continue to be a growing demand for localized, neighbourhood seniors programming.

The City of Edmonton has already acknowledged this change and is in the process of implementing a new Senior Centre Plan where the city services will be more focused on the neighbourhoods and will move away from the more centralized model of the past.

It is important to note that this shift in demographics will have a dramatic impact on the local and community based social and recreational service providers as well. Not only will there be a greater demand for community-based programming, but it will also challenge the service providers to find innovative and creative ways to deliver the programs in a more decentralized model.

Changing face of the senior population Edmonton Seniors Population Projections 2022-2041.



Understanding the availability of resources is essential to successful programming. Edmonton is blessed with a very wide range of physical resources in the form of recreation centres, swimming pools (indoor & outdoor), golf courses, walking trails, a river valley park, zoo, green spaces, bike paths, lawn bowling greens, tennis courts, curling rinks, playing fields for soccer & baseball, spectator facilities, cross country ski trails and in city-based downhill ski hills.

The opportunities for social and recreational activities for seniors are endless in the city. Research has shown that the boomer generation are more engaged in their community than previous generations and are increasingly using the community spaces and recreational facilities for their own recreational pursuits. They are self-organizing such as walking and hiking clubs and are not totally relying on the “professional programmer” to organize the activity. This may result in a shifting role where programs and service are localized in a particular facility, such as a seniors centre. This point will be explored in greater detail in the trends section of this report, but an important point to highlight is that the role of the programmer may be shifting from program delivery to more of a facilitative and community development perspective.

B. The Changing Face of Seniors

The term senior generally refers to anyone over the age of 55. They are not a homogeneous group, but rather a very diverse population with very different interests and priorities. With the boomer generation aging and older seniors living longer, there are now three distinctive groups of seniors with their own unique characteristics.

Zoomers

There is a new term for active baby boomers - "Zoomer". They are "coloring outside of the lines, zigzagging and zooming towards a bright new horizon chock-full of possibilities for reinventing retirement and redefining what it means to be a mature adult in the new millennium".

(www.demko.com/zoomers.htm)

Baby Boomers (55 – 70)

Those aged 55-70 are at a time of life when many couples and individuals are either preparing to retire or have retired and for the most part are still active in programs and organizations they have previously been involved with. If they are retiring during this period they may be travelling or focused on downsizing their lives. For an increasing number of individuals they are taking care of aging parents, who are now living well into their 80's and 90's. Like every other period of time, the aging boomer generation will have a dramatic impact on the level and nature of seniors programming and services. This generation have their own interests and priorities and are far different than any other previous generation.

Mid-range Age Group (70 – 80)

The current older adults in this age group are healthier and more active than previous generations, but are starting to have health issues that impact their ability to be socially or physically engaged in community activities. It is difficult to assess what impact the boomer generation will have as they age and reach 70 -80 years of age. It is fair to assume that for the most part this group will be in full retirement and will start experiencing the health and wellness impact of aging. There will be a greater degree of medical issues starting to impact their quality of life. It is anticipated that a greater number of individuals will continue to live in their homes with assistance from family members or community support care workers. This trend is often referred to as – aging in place.

Older Adults (80 plus)

Those 80 plus older adults will continue to be impacted by health and other social issues. It is at this age that they are starting to consider moving into a senior's complex with some assisted living support. However it is important to note that there is an increasing number of seniors in this population group that are still living in their own homes and are either supported by family members or home care providers. Either way there is a concern for increased potential to become isolated, due to limited mobility or other health related issues.

Research has shown that the average age of participation at the seniors centres, generally is around 75 plus. The younger boomers may attend specific programs, such as an arts class, but generally do not appear to identify with the “seniors centre” at this stage in their lives.

As one boomer noted:

I am going to continue to participate in my local ski club and fitness programs at my local recreation facility. I am going to continue doing what I have always done but now have more time to enjoy myself. I am not ready to go to the seniors centre that is a place that my parents would go. Maybe when I am older I might consider checking it out, but not now. (Anecdotal comment from various sources.)

Boomer – Zoomer Impact

This new generation of “seniors” are stretching the boundaries and are reinventing our whole concept of aging and what it means to be a senior. In fact we are now finding that the boomer generation are not identifying themselves as seniors, for their attitudes, interests and concept of “retirement” are far different than any other generation.

Trend studies related to older adults or seniors are currently focused on the movement of Baby Boomers into the older age group and their impact on all types of services.

- This new generation of seniors will be hard to differentiate from “older adults” and they will shy away from being labelled as seniors. Their participation patterns will not change simply because they are now identified as a “senior”.
- The boomers are going to be healthier, more financially stable, more technologically aware, and more culturally diverse.
- While there will be an increasing number of seniors staying in the workforce beyond the age of 55 – 65 there will be an equal number of boomers who will be free of full time work obligations.
- The boomers are bringing a new attitude about retirement. They don’t see themselves as a rocking chair generation. They are interested in being active, travelling, maintaining health and wellness, aging well and staying active physically and mentally.
- This group of older adults has had the ability to influence policy directions their whole life and there is an expectation that their voices will be heard when it comes to facility development, programs and services.
- They will want programs that will have a holistic impact on them; they will not be looking to be simply entertained!
- Studies are saying they may be less likely to volunteer but when they do they will want to use their skills and be challenged.

The wave of aging boomers will reshape the health care system forever and the impact on the medical system will continue to increase as boomers age. The onset of these conditions may be later in life than previous cohorts but at some time health, both physical and cognitive, will start to diminish.

It is estimated that by 2030:

- The over 65 population will nearly triple as a result of the aging boomers.
- More than six of every 10 boomers will be managing more than one chronic condition.
- More than one out of every three boomers – over 21 million –

Men's Shed Program

Example of a successful and innovative men's program.

There is a new movement that started in Australia – Men's shed program.

So what is so special about this new type of Men's focused program. Most men have learned from our culture that they don't talk about feelings and emotions. There has been little encouragement for men to take an interest in their own health and well-being.

Unlike women, most men are reluctant to talk about their emotions and that means that they usually don't ask for help. Becoming a member of a Men's Shed gives a man that safe and busy environment where he can find many of these things in an atmosphere of old-fashioned mateship provides and is located in their own community.

will be considered obese.

- One of every four boomers – 14 million – will be living with diabetes.
- Nearly one out of every two boomers – more than 26 million – will be living with arthritis.
- Eight times more knee replacements will be performed than today.
- Meeting these future health care challenges will require more resources, new approaches to care delivery and a greater focus on wellness and prevention.”³

With all the enthusiasm for the new Zoomer group, we must recognize that not all baby boomers (boomers) are Zoomers. Boomers exist along a continuum of age, a wide continuum of health, financial status, housing situations, access to transportation and a willingness to participate as with any other population group. Therefore it will be important to recognize that there will be a need for a diverse and varied program delivery model that meets the needs of all seniors throughout the continuum.

C. Trends Impacting Seniors and Program Implications

A number of different innovative and creative success stories are profiled in the Case Study and Resource Report. These program examples provide insight into how various program providers have taken a different approach to program and service delivery based on the trends and shifting priorities. What is clear throughout the research is that many of the successful programs are not necessarily new ideas, but rather a shift in delivery and design of the program or service. For example, one of the most successful highlighted programs is the Men's Shed program, where men can meet and continue to do their odd jobs they previously did at home (garage).

Providing a place for men to gather and work on their own projects is not a new concept by any means. A number of senior centres in Edmonton have woodworking shops in their facilities, but it appears that they are under used.⁴ In communities in Australia and Ireland the concept of providing a “shed” for men to gather and work on woodworking is thriving. So what is different? It is not part of a larger more complex structure, but a place for them in their community where they connect with the neighbours. We know that today's older adults do

³ When I'm 64 – How Boomers will Change Health Care - Intro

⁴ This is a general observation by the consulting team and confirmed through interviews, however there is no statistical information to validate this statement.

Impact on Seniors Centres

As baby boomers are aging they are staying engaged in their community and are not joining or participating at the “traditional” seniors centre programming.

The impact of this trend is dramatic for senior centres where the average age of participants appear to be 75 years plus. The baby boomers are not looking to the seniors centre as a location for programs and services. They are staying in their own communities. As a result the seniors centre is being challenged to redefine their brand or focus.

not identify with the traditional model of a senior centre, but do identify with the “activity” of woodworking, small appliance repair, etc. It is self-managed by a group of seniors with common interests.

Programming of any kind can be impacted by changes in direction (trends). Trends are triggered by changes in technology, medical advancements, design changes, transportation innovations, housing, shopping centres, economic shifts, environmental changes, natural disasters, political policy shifts and even attitudes of individuals to name just a few.

A breakthrough in chemistry can result in thousands of new products or changes in old ones. A discovery with microchips or miniaturization can result in new devices for amputees or change traditional bowling lanes into age-friendly modified bowling for seniors.

The following is a summary of the key trends and the program implications that will impact the ability of social and recreational program providers to attract and engage seniors in the future.

Trend #1: Baby Boomers reaching retirement age are changing the face of what it means to be a senior.

The sheer numbers of baby boomer seniors could become overwhelming for program and service providers unless they are prepared with good data analysis tools for assessing the demographics. Data should reveal locations, access to facilities, abilities, and a general profile of seniors which will help the programmers adapt their programs accordingly.

Trend #2: Baby Boomers are healthier, have more financial resources and do not identify with the previous generation of older adults.

The boomers are changing the face of aging and are expecting a totally new level of service than ever before. Programmers/providers will have to be prepared with a wider array of program options plus various levels of program intensity. Seniors fitness programs need to accommodate a broad level of intensity from the high active “boot camp for seniors” to the low impact fitness class for the frailer senior. Diversity and variety will be the norm in future senior programming.

Trend #3: Urban sprawl is creating home bound seniors.

Urban sprawl will affect older seniors who may become housebound because of a loss of their driver’s license and unfamiliarity with alternate transportation options. Urban sprawl will have a dynamic impact on the ability to meet the growing demand for services at the

Technology is everywhere. The impact of technology is far reaching and will ultimately influence how we communicate with seniors, to different engagement and participation strategies. It is important to note that consistently one of the most successful programs for seniors is the use of technology – computers.

As with the general population there are seniors – boomers – who have been using technology for years as part of the workforce and they are very comfortable with technology, facebook and twitter.

There are others – predominately the older seniors who are not as comfortable with the technology.

Computer courses are a growing trend in seniors programming.

local and community level.

Trend #4: Transportation continues to be a challenge for seniors.

A relatively few number of seniors use public transit and the majority of the boomer population are more dependent on their own car for transportation. Transportation becomes an even greater consideration for the older adult who may lose their drivers licence due to health concerns and as a result may become isolated and unable to access programs. As more community or neighbourhood seniors programs are provided the issues of transportation and access may be minimized. However no matter where the activity is located there will have to be some form of support to ensure easy access to the program.

Trend #5: Adapting and utilizing technology.

There are a variety of examples of programs where technology has opened up a world of opportunities to communicate and engage with this senior population, such as “senior’s centre without walls”. A greater number of seniors are using facebook and Skype to stay connected with family members from all parts of the world. There are examples of using iPads to connect with participants in their own home.

Trend #6: Program emphasis shifting from “entertain yourself” to groups with goals.

During the 1980’s and 90’s organizations were striving for financial accountability and the bottom line became a major priority. There were significant staff reductions and organizations like the YMCA created wonderful “do it yourself” fitness machine oriented program centres. While the baby boomers will continue to use these facilities they are far more likely to stay engaged in their organized groups where they have established social relationships than shift their focus to a new seniors focused facility. For example quilting clubs are seeing an increase in senior participation as are arts programs, photography.

Trends #7 Care givers in the 50+ age bracket becoming isolated.

With the advances in health people are living longer and in their own homes. The result of this is that their children, who often are baby boomers are seniors themselves, are now in a role of caregiver. This group is sandwiched between aging parents and their own family responsibilities. Greater attention must be paid to all caregivers but this group in particular could easily become isolated. Finding ways to find them and reach out to them will be challenging. Partnerships with Care Givers organizations will be required.

Traditional volunteer roles are changing. There used to be a time when the retired senior would have the time and interest in volunteering for the local board or organizing committee.

Governance roles are shifting:

Those who are more likely to take on the governance and coordinating roles within the “senior centres” tend to be older adults (75 plus) who have the time and interest to do so. This is causing some concern for succession planning with the governance or board role for many senior centres.

Trend #8: Availability of skilled seniors for part-time work & volunteering valuable skills.

The boomers and younger seniors are staying in the workforce longer and as a result are not volunteering for the traditional volunteer roles their previous generations have. That is not to suggest that seniors are not volunteering, but rather that they will volunteer in different ways. They will volunteer for short-term projects or program activities, or increasingly as peer facilitators or leaders in specific programs, such as: teaching an arts session, or facilitating a fitness class. In order to maximize the involvement of the boomers in particular, programmers and providers are going to have to be much more creative in reaching out with opportunities that are challenging that will utilize the skills of the senior volunteer.

Trend #9: Boomers have different expectations for involvement than previous generations.

The challenge to programmers/providers is to be very much in touch with a wide scope of seniors as their needs and desires will vary dramatically. Programmers/providers will have to pay attention to seniors as the boomers are politically astute and expect to be involved in decisions and policies that directly impact them.

Trend #10: People are living longer and healthier well into their later lives.

Due to medical advancement and healthier lifestyles seniors are living longer and healthier well into their 80's and 90's. As a result there is a larger gap between the younger seniors (55-65) and the older generation of 75 plus. It will be increasingly difficult for one agency, such as a seniors centre, to meet the needs of the broader senior population. Different program providers may focus on a particular segment of the senior population.

Trend #11: Seniors will be more socially and culturally engaged, healthier, have increased mobility and more independent.

There is a trend for self-organizing groups who come together for specific interests, such as hiking, knitting, music, etc. Facilitation of unstructured club groups may be required to meet the needs of walkers, runners, competitive games, travelling or less active groups such as book clubs.

Trend #12: The role of entrepreneurs will create niche providers of services such as fitness trainers specializing in senior's fitness.

The private sector is quickly realizing the influence of the aging population, especially the Zoomers". Innovation and creativity from the private sector should be included in all discussions and planning as

Computer technology such as Smartphone's, Smart TVs, IPADs and computers will impact how programs are delivered, who can participate and where they can participate. Microchip technology, for example, has increased the ability for monitoring/tracking and locating isolated individuals and program participants. Access, safety, isolation impacted.

Remote workouts are the next big thing.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/why-remote-workouts-are-the-next-big-thing/article10823458/>

they can clearly meet many of the specialized needs of the most active seniors.

Trend #13: Edmonton has its fair share of “snow birds” that only spend a portion of the year in Edmonton.

In addition to the “snow birds” leaving the city for half of the year, there are an increasing number of immigrants who are returning to their country of origin for half the year as well. Addressing this trend head on requires a good understanding of this market segment. Adjustments to program registration and fees will be required to make it easier for the “snow birds” to reconnect to the Edmonton community when they return in the spring. For example, allowing the registration fee to be cancelled for five months with no penalty, so they can resume their activity once they return. Drop in options for many programs will also facilitate this process.

Trend #14: Growing number of seniors living in poverty.

The gap between the wealthier seniors and those living in poverty is growing. While the boomers overall may have a higher level of income when they enter retirement, there may not be enough saved to sustain that standard of living in the later years, assuming they will live longer than previous generations. Increased support for organizations working with the urban poor will be required. ⁵

Trend # 15: Innovation in technology and science has enhanced the ability of seniors, disabled and others to stay active and engaged throughout their senior years.

Where advancements have been made are in the areas of clothing, equipment, facility design and construction materials, artificial hips/knees and computer technology.

- Clothing advancements in textiles like spandex, nylon, and Gore-tex, have created greater wind resistance, better water repellency, warmer products and lighter products. Under garment technology has impacted warmth and perspiration which has resulted in increased participation in any weather situation.
- Footwear advancements in footwear have added comfort, style, greater shock absorbency, light weight, stability and a wide range of functionality (walking, running, climbing, golfing, hiking, and skiing).

⁵ <http://globalnews.ca/video/992812/senior-poverty-rates-rising>



Innovation in the context of providing programs for the broad spectrum of seniors appears to be the ability to adapt activities, facilities, rules, treatments, equipment and attitudes.

- Equipment for activities such as downhill skiing and Cross Country skis has added durability, flexibility and safety features. Walking poles, tents, sleeping bags, tennis rackets, bowling balls, table tennis ball, gardening equipment, golf clubs/golf balls and golf carts, have all adapted to accommodate the older participant.
- Facility design, with ramps, lifts, lower lockers, enhanced lighting and better cooling/heating has increased safety and accessibility for seniors of all ages.
- Construction materials used in building floors, running tracks, playing fields, pools, air exchangers and safety, injury protection, has increased participation for seniors.

D. Innovative Programming:

Creating innovative social recreation programs for Edmonton's Seniors can be approached in several ways; using a standard program planning model or creating innovative recreation program options and building linkages between the eight other strategy elements to facilitate innovation. Creating new (innovative) recreation programs may be accomplished by reviewing all existing programs and services and assessing them with the adaptability lens.

To successfully innovate programmers and providers must:

- involve seniors (wide scope not just friends);
- understand the demographics by neighbourhoods and zones;
- understand which seniors are in the target market for your programs and services;
- involve a broad spectrum of service providers to facilitate information exchange;
- understand seniors behaviours (likes, dislikes, needs);
- understand how to communicate effectively with "your" seniors;
- understand the role of technology and how it can facilitate innovation;
- have an understanding of all the communication channels available to reach all seniors; and
- have an inventory of activities and facilities for adaptation.

Programmers and providers must follow trends and stay current on studies that track public participation patterns to understand the “program mixes” needed in their facilities, neighborhoods or the city generally.

So what does all this mean and what impact does it have on the provision of services for social and recreation participation? It will be important for the program and service providers to adapt their programs to meet the changing dynamics of the aging population. The spectrum of services will have to expand and be much more complex than in previous years.

There should be no surprises in the patterns for boomers for they are continuing to participate in walking groups, golfing, gardening, swimming, running, crafts and hobbies, and visits to museums, attend fairs or festivals, attend live theatre.¹ The research supports the trends that they will continue to participate in these activities well into their senior years. Also predictable is that eventually the boomers will start to shift their participation levels as they age. Programmers and providers will be challenged to create greater activity mixes as activity preferences change with age and health status.

It is also important to realize that while it will be important to adjust the programs and services to meet the new “demands” of the boomer (zoomers) there will still be a need to meet the shifting realities of the current senior population that are in their 80’s plus. They are not the boomers, but they are living longer and in the community, still within their own homes. The challenge for any service provider will be to provide a full network of support for the broader ages from 55 – plus.

E. Common Themes from the Research

Consistently the research focused on the need to put the required resources and strategies in place that support seniors to live healthy and active lifestyles throughout their senior years. There are a number of common elements that surfaced repeatedly throughout the research.

1. The baby boomers are now seniors. The aging “boomer population” are stretching the boundaries and are reinventing the whole concept of aging and what it means to be “a senior”. The term senior is not a homogeneous term but rather means different things for different people. The spectrum of services will have to expand and be much more complex than in previous years and the gap between younger seniors and the older 75 plus group is increasing. The impact of baby boomers will have a dramatic impact on the community-based support

Creating new (innovative) recreation programs may be accomplished by reviewing all existing programs and services and assessing them with the adaptability lens. Innovation in the context of aging seniors appears to be the ability to adapt activities, facilities, rules, treatments, equipment and attitudes.

services. While it will be important to adapt the program support for the boomers, it is equally important to remember that there is a need to support older seniors with limited mobility and health issues.

2. Involve seniors at all levels of engagement. Clearly one of the top priorities for all age-friendly programming will be to engage seniors at levels from the program planning phase through to implementation and program delivery. As the baby boomers are retiring they will bring a wealth of expertise and knowledge and have an expectation to be recognized and consulted on issues that directly affect their lives. This level of engagement does not only apply to program specific consultation but rather engagement in such areas as facility design, open space planning, such as designing age-friendly bike paths and walkways.

At the program level we are seeing a greater number of seniors who are taking leadership roles as peer leaders and facilitators. Volunteer opportunities will continue to attract seniors; however they will volunteer in a different way than past generations. There is a shift in volunteering in Canada and seniors are no exception. They expect their experiences and background to be recognized and want to make a difference in the work they do as volunteers. They are taking on a greater degree of governance roles with community organizations and tend to self-organize and organize their own program if they see a need.

3. Communication is the key to successful engagement. It is important to ensure there is a comprehensive communication strategy in place that is intentional and engages seniors of all ages in the age-friendly process. Messaging will have to be targeted at those in isolation, those with disabilities, older seniors and younger seniors. It will be important to work with the non-traditional seniors programming agencies and help them adapt their communication strategies to effectively reach out to the seniors in the community.

4. Promising practices equates to innovation. The research revealed that there is an abundance of creative and innovative programming as we adapt to new trends and changing face of the senior population. It is not necessarily new programming but enhancing existing successful programming that reflect the diversity of interests and priorities of the senior population that are most successful.

5. Technological innovation. It is important to remember that the vast

Advancements have been made in the areas of clothing, equipment, facility design and construction materials, artificial hips/knees and computer technology, which has dramatically increased the capacity of seniors to stay active and engaged.

For example low impact fitness equipment has facilitated greater participation in fitness routines for seniors. Or footwear has responded to safety issues and makes it easier for seniors to continue hiking, walking or participate in basic fitness.

majority of the baby boomer population are comfortable with basic computer technology and are now fully embracing social media as a communication medium. While the current cohort of older seniors may not be as comfortable with computer technology, this will change as the baby boomers age. Computer technology such as Smartphones, Smart TVs, IPADs and computers will impact how programs are delivered, who can participate and where they can participate.

6. Renewed focus on community and neighbourhood. The concept of supporting seniors in their own communities and neighbourhoods is a strong theme throughout the research. There are an abundance of examples and promising practices where communities are putting a major amount of resources in supporting community-based organizations to meet the growing needs of their senior population. This type of support ranged from pilot projects, training for community programmers in working with seniors, to supporting self-managing seniors groups who have an idea for a local project, such as the Men's Shed concept.

7. Partnership engagement. Throughout the research there was an emphasis on engaging a broad spectrum of networks and partnerships as part of the age-friendly strategies. Many of the case studies have established partnerships with business, or "non-traditional senior program partners, such as: business, community based program (non-profit organizations) municipal recreation departments.

8. Professional development opportunities for program coordinators and leaders. As the age-friendly programming and services focuses on engaging community-based organizations it will be important to ensure the programmers and service providers have the skills and knowledge related to working with seniors.

In addition it will be important to provide training sessions in "recreational and social engagement" programming for seniors. This would involve educational sessions for care givers, health professionals, support workers, community leaders, etc. who may have a given expertise in seniors but not in recreation and active living.

Consistently throughout the research the most successful highlighted programs include:

- Computer courses
- Men's only programming, such as fitness classes, men's shed programs, etc.
- Intensive fitness classes for active seniors such as boot camp or Zoomba classes.
- Multigenerational programs bringing seniors and youth together in one common goal, such as gardening, photography, etc.
- Programs that emphasize a social and educational aspect
 - Lifelong Learning Conferences specifically for 55 plus.

Successful programs appear to be self-organizing groups focused on specific activities, such as skiing, quilting, choir, etc. In most cases the increase in participation is due to seniors staying involved well into their senior years. There is nothing new to the program, just providing the opportunity to stay engaged.

F. Future Consideration

The following are the primary themes that surfaced throughout the research. They are presented as points for future discussion and will form the foundation for recommendations for next steps.

1. Assessment of participation rates.

It will be important to assess the participation rates of seniors in community programs and services and establish a baseline of information of current statistics. In order to move forward with the age-friendly strategy it will be important to have a clear picture of the current interests and participation rates. It is recommended that the city partner with other agencies to conduct a comprehensive study that is focused on recreation and social engagement participation. If this information is available then it will be equally important to share this information on an ongoing basis with the broader community of program service providers, such as community leagues, recreation practitioners, health professionals, etc.

In addition it will be important to conduct regular updates of the latest demographic materials with all the sub-committees to facilitate an understanding of the analytics and implications for the location of new Senior Centres, bus routes and other program and support services.

2. Intentional communication strategy.

Based on the findings from the communication research it is assumed that a comprehensive communication strategy will be developed. However it will be important to ensure that the communication strategy is not only focused on engaging and communicating with seniors, but also involves communication with community based organization who will increasingly be offering programming for seniors. The Coordinating Committee may want to consider a study on finding the most effective channels for reaching all the various "program services providers, such as: community-based senior centres, community leagues, the Y's and recreation, centres Meals on Wheels, Home Care workers and Social Workers.

3. Involve seniors in the design of open spaces and facilities.

Ensure older adult needs are considered in the design and construction of new or repurposed Recreation Centres and Seniors Centres. It will be important to create opportunities for older adults (groups and individuals) to participate in the design of new and repurposed facilities.

Investigate age-friendly park design as a way to create gathering places and community focal points in parks. It will be important to ensure that

Interesting Program Ideas

Dance programs: Using dance programs to build bridges to other cultural communities. For example dance exchange programs – clogging, dances from Greece, Scotland, India, etc.

Neighbourhood Gardening Mentorship: This would be a slightly different twist on the community garden program. The mentorship program matches younger adults in the community with an older senior still living in their own home. The older senior may have limited ability to maintain their garden. The younger adults will help to maintain and cultivate the individual gardens and would in turn learn the skills and gardening.

the design of low-stress bikeways accommodates wider, more stable three-wheeled human-powered and electric-assist vehicles (tricycles) that older adults may utilize.

4. Establish a website portal or “hub” for programmers and services providers.

There will be a need to develop a web-based hub or website to host all the resources and training tools that are available. The City of Edmonton has an abundance of resources and tools for seniors programming that should be available on this website, as well as the multitude of links and websites profiled in this report. As more community service providers focus on seniors programming it will be important to remember that they may not have the expertise or background in seniors’ social and recreational programming. They will be looking for advice and resources they can use and adapt in their own programs. The website should also:

- repackage toolkits for specific target groups such as administrators, program coordinators, community recreation consultants, community league volunteers, and
- provide support and training in how to adapt programs and use the resources that are available. Online reminders and newsletter reminders are recommended.

5. Education and awareness: Promoting the benefits of recreation and active living directly to seniors.

Host a conference or event for seniors celebrating the opportunities for seniors in the Edmonton community. An additional component for the conference would be on educating the senior population on the benefits of participation in recreation and leisure services. (*Educating for retirement starts in the preschool years and lasts a lifetime*).

6. Professional development training.

The research clearly identified the need for a comprehensive training program for program and service providers who may not have the background or expertise in working with seniors. This strategy will support the move towards community-based program and services. Municipal recreation practitioners and programmers working in the City recreation facilities would be included in this training program. The training program may include:

- Understanding the trends in seniors programming and the implication for senior’s recreational programming.
- Communicating and marketing strategies to engage today’s seniors.
- Use of social media in reference to programming and communication with seniors.

Program Ideas:

Combining activities may be another way of revitalizing existing programs. For example:

-photography and travel, hiking or fishing

-painting and visiting historic sites

-creative writing with visits to the writer in residence at the local library

-creative writing and community memories

-scrapbooking the community reunions or history of the neighbourhood

- Innovative approaches to seniors programming – based on the promising practices research.
- Creative approaches to seniors programming, using the information in this report as a starting point.

7. Focus on community and neighbourhood.

Given the focus on aging in place and the focus on community-based programming there is a need to shift the level of support from a centralized seniors programming model to a more diffused community strategy. It is recommended that a “pilot project fund be develop where community agencies can apply for seed money for community organizations to either adapt existing successful programs or develop new initiatives.

8. Other considerations.

The Social and Recreation Committee should investigate the status of incentive program that encourages land owners to provide parcels of land for community gardens and small open spaces for seniors to gather. Programming Ideas – the following is a list of potential programs and support services that could be put in place to support the Age-friendly City Initiatives.

- Investigate the potential of creating a partners program for isolated seniors.
- Encourage large building manager/landlords to have greater connection to their senior residents (advertise programs, provide programs, space in building etc.).
- Work with health care providers and local advocacy partners to explore and expand a scholarship program for low-income seniors. (low income or seniors in poverty).
- Add additional staff members to meet the demand for senior recreational services.
- Assess the status of scholarship and fee-waiver budgets in order to provide support for older adults with recreation opportunities.
- Assess the demand for age-friendly fitness centers in community centers and outdoor fitness stations in park areas.
- Implement access recreation practices and policies that increase awareness of outdoor recreation facilities and their level of accessibility so that people can make more informed choices.
- Promote recreation programming in hospitals and clinics.

