



# Age Friendly Edmonton

## The First Five Years

June 2018

Facilitated by:



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*Age Friendly Edmonton addresses the key factors that contribute to healthy, active, creative aging in Edmonton.*



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# Introduction

## Age Friendly Edmonton: Sharing Our Journey with You

This is a different kind of report. It tells the stories of Edmontonians who've chosen to work together to build a city that's happier, safer, friendlier, warmer – for everyone, of any age.

This is the work of everyone in this city. It's everyone's job to connect people in caring neighbourhoods, to respect and support our neighbours no matter what year they were born, to make sure public decisions are made with every Edmontonian in mind. It's also the work of Age Friendly Edmonton (AFE).

Our group, led by the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council (ESCC) brings leaders and volunteers together to encourage Edmontonians to recreate the kinds of ideas you'll read about in these pages. Our work has been guided these past five years by the *Vision for an Age Friendly Edmonton Action Plan*. In sharing the stories of what Edmontonians have accomplished these past five years, we hope to inspire greater participation in the age friendly movement. Age friendly environments support healthy aging. They enable thousands of seniors to continue to be active and engaged as volunteers, workers, community builders and contributors to our economy.

At the other end of the spectrum from healthy aging, is social isolation. Somewhere in Edmonton, perhaps somewhere near you, seniors sit isolated and alone. They are disconnected from neighbours and family. Their home is increasingly tougher to manage. They can't drive. They can't afford taxis. Their health care is confounding. Life is confounding. In some cities people might not understand, or care to understand, why these individuals are worth our time, our best thinking, our investment. In Edmonton, we understand. More importantly, we act.

Our community has large numbers of seniors at both ends of the health spectrum and everywhere in between. When a community begins to consider how its services and infrastructure connects people of all ages, it not only supports the health of individuals, but of the community as a whole.

Some of the examples in these pages are projects funded by AFE. Others are simply worthy and powerful stories, ideas a new generation of Edmonton volunteers, funders and business leaders can emulate. By working together in community, we can invent ways to connect people and create a community that is healthier, more prosperous and fun.

These are the stories of Age Friendly Edmonton, the first five years.

(Excerpted and adapted from *aging better together*, an Age Friendly Edmonton storybook.)

# Executive Summary



AFE is a partnership united by a vision of a community that values, respects and actively supports the safety, diversity and well-being of seniors. Co-led by the City of Edmonton and the ESCC, this partnership received City Council approval in 2012 to implement a five-year *Vision for an Age-Friendly Edmonton Action Plan*, coupled with ongoing annual funding of \$375,000 to support the work beginning in 2013.

Using a framework from the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities, which Edmonton was among the first to join, the plan identified specific ways to enhance age friendliness in the following social and physical domains: community support services, healthy aging, communication and information, social and recreational participation, transportation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation, volunteerism and employment, housing, outdoor spaces and buildings. Nine working groups were established, each tasked with addressing one of those domains.

Since 2013, the AFE steering committee and working groups have worked with stakeholders from non-profit organizations, businesses, health professionals, community leagues and the seniors community to undertake more than 50 projects that address one or more of the 18 goals and 58 actions listed in the plan. As the 5 years drew to a close, 41 of the actions were completed with ongoing programs and services, 8 were on track with established completion dates. 17 of the actions had made partial progress and would require more resources if prioritized by the community to be completed, including 1 action that was deferred due to a lack of stakeholder involvement.

By taking a holistic view and involving a broad diversity of stakeholders, AFE has spurred significant improvements in awareness, service delivery, policies and systems. Examples include a central phone line with enhancements specifically for seniors, coordinated home support services and integrated case management for isolated seniors. Perhaps most significantly, senior-serving agencies have experienced the power of working collaboratively to achieve united ends. Trust and expertise built over these past 5 years is making it possible for the sector to partner in larger projects that no single agency has capacity to accomplish.

Going forward, AFE will continue to advance the age friendly movement through collaborative action. Based on extensive input from stakeholders as well as learnings from the first five years, the work plan for 2018 and beyond will be guided by these four goals:

1. Seniors have access to what they need when they need it.
2. Seniors are respected and included.
3. Seniors are safe and well in their homes and communities.
4. Seniors are engaged, participating and their contributions are appreciated.

To ensure greater integration of efforts, the work will zero in on the following 4 priority areas: **Reducing ageism, supporting aging in place, encouraging intergenerational connections and responding to diversity.**

AFE will build on the momentum of its first five years, leading the way in the crucial task of making Edmonton happier, safer, friendlier, warmer, more interesting for seniors—and thus for everyone, of every age.



# Overview



## Age Friendly in Action: The First Five Years

In 2013, Age Friendly Edmonton partners embarked on a five-year action plan guided by a vision of a city that values, respects, engages and actively supports its seniors. The following pages highlight the work done to turn the *Vision for an Age-Friendly Edmonton Action Plan* into reality.

“Together with its seniors, Edmonton will move into the years ahead with a clear vision of how to actively support the well-being of its aging population.”

— Vision for an Age-Friendly Edmonton Action Plan, 2011

Led by the City of Edmonton and the ESCC, dozens of leaders and volunteers from the senior-serving sector, community, governments, agencies and other stakeholders came together to implement the plan. They learned from and shared information with the WHO's Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, of which Edmonton was one of the first Canadian cities to join.

## BY THE NUMBERS

In 1971, seniors accounted for 8% of Canada's population.  
By 2036, that number will rise to 25%.

— Age-Friendly Communication: Facts, Tips and Ideas, Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010

Work accomplished these past five years by the nine working groups has given us a rich bank of research, resources and programs to draw upon as we enter a time when Canadians 65 and older outnumber those younger than 15. Yet much remains to be done to take the AFE ethos to the streets and neighbourhoods of our city.

AFE 2.0 is poised to accept that challenge. After considerable community consultation, the aim is to drill deeper into 4 priority areas: **reducing ageism, supporting aging in place, encouraging intergenerational connections and responding to diversity.** Let's start with a closer look at AFE's first 5 years of work.





“We have grey hair and wrinkles but are not feeble-minded.”

— Participants in Advancing Age Friendly Edmonton: What We Heard, 2017

## Shared Foundations

AFE’s first 5 years of work is also grounded in these shared principles and beliefs:

- Society has a responsibility to ensure the basic needs of seniors are met.
- Seniors have the right to choose where and how they live as long as they don’t pose a risk to others.
- Seniors have the right to feel safe in their homes and communities.
- As seniors age, their needs may change and services can adapt to meet these changing needs.
- Services are accessible, affordable, equitable and comprehensive to address a wide range of needs.
- Seniors access to needed services will not be limited by ability to pay.



“Where old age was once viewed by some as a time to slow down, even decline, today’s seniors are dismantling myths of aging. They are active, resilient community members, engaged politically and socially.”

— Edmonton Seniors: A Portrait, 2010

- Services will be inclusive and respect diversity: they will be responsive to cultures, varied English language skills, marginalized individuals and persons with disabilities.
- Programs and services will be based on best practices, research and innovation and will be evaluated for their effectiveness.
- Programs and services will reflect the character of the community.
- Communities will be engaged in supporting seniors.
- Seniors will be actively involved in the implementation of this plan.

Two other foundational documents also guide Edmonton’s age-friendly journey: the *Edmonton Seniors Declaration*, in which City Council commits to improving the age friendliness of our city and calls all residents to join in; and *Edmonton Seniors: A Portrait*, a snapshot of seniors’ realities, contributions, needs and interests.

## The Plan of Action

Drawing from a decade-long journey of research and public consultation (see Timeline), the *Vision for an Age-Friendly Edmonton Action Plan* identifies nine key strategic areas:

1. Community Support Services
2. Healthy Aging
3. Communication and Information
4. Social and Recreational Participation
5. Transportation
6. Respect and Social Inclusion
7. Civic Participation, Volunteerism and Employment
8. Housing
9. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

For each key area, our 5-year plan includes an overview of WHO recommendations and a snapshot of local strengths and challenges, coupled with the area's goals and the progress on their related actions. In all, the plan set 18 goals and proposed 58 actions. You can find the full plan at [seniorscouncil.net](https://seniorscouncil.net).





## Jean Innes: Aging into Ageism

Ever since retiring from nursing 25 years ago, Jean Innes has advocated against ageism and for respect and inclusion for seniors. She played a key role in birthing the ESCC and in the roll-out of AFE.

Now, in her mid-80s, Jean is the one being ignored and passed over because of her age. With two bad knees and a bad back, she's on one list for knee surgery and another for assisted living. She worries about being separated from her roommate, who needs a walker and is losing her memory. Her own mobility issues struck home when she dropped her keys in the driveway and spent the next 15 minutes figuring out how to pick them up without falling.

"I'm not telling you a story – I'm telling you life," she says. "The simplest things can be the most difficult when you're my age. You have to be problem solving all the time."

Jean knows the value of a teachable moment to help put a face on seniors' reality. After waiting 7 months for a consult with an oral surgeon, and another 2 hours spent in the waiting room, she was surprised to hear him say, "Gosh, you just caught me; I was about to go home." After hearing more about the pain caused by the wait and the reasons why she too is busy, the surgeon had the grace to say, "I like your attitude." Next time a senior waits for service in that office, perhaps staff will have the courtesy to check whether the patient can take the wait.

Hearing Jean's story, we need to ask ourselves: 'If I were to meet her on the street or at a service counter, would I take the time to recognize the wise, weary, world-traveled woman inside that worn body? Would I see her as just another in a growing mass of older people or would I listen for the uniqueness in her experience? Would I speak with her? Or to her?'

## Funding and Governance

Age friendly initiatives around the world vary in their governance and funding. In Edmonton, the ESCC and the City of Edmonton teamed up to lead the work, with the City of Edmonton allocating \$375,000 a year in funding.

### AFF ORGANIZATION CHART



As shown here, the initiative is co-chaired by an ESCC board representative and a City of Edmonton director, and is co-managed by the ESCC executive director and a member of the City's Seniors Team. These four individuals serve as an executive committee.

Nine working groups came together to address the key strategic areas. Each working group was allocated an annual budget based on anticipated need from City Council's Community and Public Services Committee. The working groups were linked by a steering committee that included members from the groups and the executive committee.

AFF also linked to other seniors-related entities, such as WHO's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities. By joining this global network shortly after its launch, Edmonton benefited from sharing best practices and by being at the forefront of a movement that was gaining momentum.

“Having the mission and purpose of an international movement was really helpful. That framework gave Age Friendly Edmonton credibility.”

— Anne Smith, J.A. Smith Research and Consulting Services Inc.

The extent of civic investment in launching AFE attracted the envy of other cities in the global network. Besides allocating dollars, City Council provided visible support for the movement. Former Mayor Stephen Mandel was especially vocal and involved, attending numerous events and appointing Betty Loree as his “Seniors Ambassador Liaison.” Councillor Linda Sloan, who held the seniors portfolio, was instrumental in the passage of the *Edmonton Seniors Declaration* in 2010. Such commitment at the highest levels gave the movement early momentum – and remains essential to building on what has been accomplished.

## Working Group Legacies

Each working group began by identifying concrete, achievable initiatives related to their assigned goals and actions. They created their own implementation plans and several commissioned research to pinpoint particular areas of need to be addressed. While some promising initiatives did not continue, often due to time and energy constraints, each working group seeded projects that continue to make a difference for seniors, their caregivers and the entire community. Some examples of those legacy initiatives include:

- **Age Friendly Edmonton Innovation Fund** (Community Support Services Working Group) offers grants of around \$5,000 to community groups with great ideas for serving seniors. By late 2017, the fund had seeded nearly two dozen projects, including boulevard benches, pickleball tournaments, intergenerational piano lessons, all-ages gardening and urban pole walking.



- **Seniors Communication Access Network (SCAN)** (Communication and Information Working Group) is drawing together professionals to collaborate on improving access to information for seniors by optimizing existing communication systems among network members.
- **Access Design Guide** (Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Working Group) raises civic standards for the accessibility of Edmonton's public buildings and outdoor spaces, setting design and maintenance guidelines that private developers are also encouraged to follow.
- **Home for Life** (Housing Working Group) guidelines and website encourage builders and consumers to design homes for all ages and stages of life – with features such as no-step entries, wide doorways and hallways, and accessible bathrooms, kitchens and bedrooms.
- **Upgrade Your Mindset Workshop** (Respect and Social Inclusion Working Group) offers strategies for making interactions with older adults as positive, respectful and inclusive as possible.
- **Driving and Beyond workshops and Seniors Transportation Information Hubs** (Transportation Working Group) help seniors transition from driving to public transit and other ways of getting around the city.
- **Healthy Aging Information Series** (Healthy Aging Working Group) offers a roster of speakers to senior-serving organizations interested in hosting free workshops. Selected topics were also offered via teleconference as Healthy Aging Phone Chats to reach home-bound seniors.
- **Employing Older Workers: Promising Practices** (Civic Participation, Volunteerism and Employment Working Group) provides research-based strategies employers can use to avoid ageism and appeal to senior workers.
- **Fit Forever Festival** (Social and Recreational Participation Working Group) connected seniors with ideas and opportunities for being active, as well as offering free training to frontline staff who lead seniors in recreation.

Although working groups typically addressed a small subset of the issues that could be tackled, that their work demonstrated the potential of collaboration. Already, larger initiatives have resulted from these efforts.



The *Healthy Aging Phone Chats*, for example, helped to seed an innovative Seniors' Centre Without Walls at the Edmonton Southside Primary Care Network (ESPCN), connecting isolated and vulnerable seniors by phone and offering engaging programs.

Working groups that attracted a broad range of expertise at senior levels and had administrative support made the most progress. The Healthy Aging Working Group drew members and administrative support from the co-lead's within Alberta Health Services (AHS). The Communication and Information Working Group engaged a part-time animator to help create, promote and support its Seniors Communication Access Network and address concerns about gaps in information about seniors services.

The sheer number of working groups led to an overlap in responsibilities and some uncertainty as to who should be doing what. The Respect and Inclusion working group disbanded after two years when it was determined its work should be threaded through all initiatives. Other groups suffered from flagging interest as participants were drawn away by competing priorities. In some cases, civic staff stepped up their involvement to ensure plans reached completion. Both staff and volunteers expressed concern that in some areas civic leadership outstripped the community and senior involvement envisioned for AFE, potentially shifting outcomes. Learning from those experiences, AFE is reducing its areas of focus from 9 to 4 going forward, and redoubling efforts to engage the community.

**"We never want it to be just City-led or just ESCC-led. The role should be around mobilizing – giving people the tools and resources to be age friendly within their work."**

— Brenda Wong, City of Edmonton, inaugural AFE co-manager

## Buttressing the Backbone

Administrative support proved crucial not only to working group success, but to the entire initiative. The decision to team ESCC with the City of Edmonton opened doors to both community and civic resources. Continuity in leadership also proved an asset, with the ongoing presence of co-chair Elaine Betchinski at the City and co-manager Sheila Hallett at ESCC.

Initially, the aim was to avoid using AFE dollars to add a dedicated administrator. But as work ramped up it became harder for the fledgling working groups to sustain momentum. From 2015 to 2017, Elizabeth Stephen was added to the team to provide focused administration, event coordination and communications support.

## Nimble Together

AFE was born at a time when overtaxed senior-serving organizations struggled to serve a growing and increasingly diverse population of seniors. The ESCC was launched in 2004 to strategically plan for a more coordinated approach to serving the coming bulge in seniors. At first, progress was painful and slow. As one participant observed, “We were looking at transforming the whole system, including changing some of the understanding of where funding should go, without anyone having total control”.

Trust and expertise built over these five years is now making it possible for the sector to partner in larger projects that no single agency has capacity to accomplish. The federally funded Pan-Edmonton Group

“Enhancing collaboration is one of Age Friendly Edmonton’s biggest successes. People rolled up their sleeves and made something happen.”

— Roger Laing, retired from Sage Seniors Association and co-lead of the AFE Housing Working Group

“It was neat to see groups that wouldn’t ordinarily be doing work in the seniors area really step it up. Some of those we hadn’t thought about became our biggest advocates.”

— Brenda Wong, City of Edmonton inaugural AFE co-manager

Addressing Social Isolation of Seniors (PEGASIS) project offers an excellent case in point. When the federal government called for proposals for a three-year, multi-party project to address social isolation among seniors, a collective quickly formed to submit a winning bid. “They had the ability to look beyond their own agencies, identify potential partners and agree on what the project should look like,” says Roger Laing, former Executive Director of Sage Seniors Association. “If we hadn’t had AFE, that wouldn’t have happened. AFE helps us to learn to collaborate”.

## Evaluation Learnings

As an early adopter of the WHO’s Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, Edmonton needed to evaluate its work even before a common template was available from the WHO. With support from Jim Klinge, Birgitta Larsson and Anne Smith, the AFE team developed a two-pronged evaluation framework. They did a developmental evaluation of the Seniors Information Phone Line (SIPL), a partnership developed with AFE support, where senior-specific information was available by dialing 211. That evaluation confirmed the value of the service while also pointing to adjustments needed to ensure consistent follow-up ,and formal agreements between the SIPL and several senior service providers were organized and annually reviewed with help from ESCC as a result.

“Many projects are breaking new ground in terms of collaborative processes and areas of focus. It is important to assess what is working, what is not working and what is being learned.”

— A Guide to Articulating Your Age Friendly  
Edmonton Learning, 2015



The evaluation tool, *A Guide to Articulating Your Age Friendly Edmonton Learning*, encouraged working groups, sub-contractors and beneficiaries to self-evaluate processes and outcomes. It encouraged partners to apply an evaluation lens to the initial step of selecting projects – to check whether intended outcomes would address real community needs. “In the first few years those working groups had a lot on the go,” recalls AFE co-manager Sheila Hallett. “Having that evaluation lens was meant to help them focus in a little bit more and choose projects that achieved their goals without burning them out”. With help from the evaluators, several working groups narrowed their focus and were able to sustain an effective project or initiative.

An assessment of seniors needs was conducted in 2015 by the AFE working group Social and Recreational Participation. This assessment compared to a 2008 assessment helped AFE gauge progress and understand where more work is required. See Page 60 for more information.

An “age-friendly” city is an inclusive and accessible community environment that optimizes opportunities for health, participation and security in order that quality of life and dignity are ensured as people age (WHO). In 2015, AFE commissioned an evaluation focused specifically on collaboration. BIM Larsson & Associates conducted an electronic survey of working group members which confirmed that the decision to draw as many players around the table as possible in working groups and other capacities was in fact a good way to move forward. The survey also reflected difficulties being experienced in some working groups. Given that the survey was conducted at a point when some working group members were experiencing burnout while others were continuing to build trust and momentum, that mixed response was not surprising. Funding has already been set aside for more comprehensive evaluation as part of AFE 2.0. Both the Public Health Agency of Canada and WHO have devised evaluation templates in each area of concern, coupled with ways to measure improvement. AFE is working on ways to adapt those measurements to local circumstances and gather relevant data from available civic, community and national sources.

“If you don’t evaluate outcomes, you don’t know what you don’t know. We need to do more of that, so we know in fact if what we’re doing is effective – and if it isn’t, figure something else out.”

— Jean Innes, long-time ESCC leader

“Generally people understand there are going to be more and more older people, and I think for the most part Edmonton is very outside about that, but there needs to be a catalyst for making sure those needs are front and centre.”

— Grace Maier, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital  
and co-lead of the AFE Housing Working Group



## Focus on Seniors

A newcomer hearing the name “Age Friendly” might assume the initiative focuses on all ages – and indeed, it does aim to make Edmonton a friendlier place for all ages by improving life for seniors. When seniors can maintain their engagement and contributions to our community we all benefit.

Going forward, some stakeholders would like to see greater emphasis on the “all ages” aspect of the name. Edmonton has initiatives focused on children (Child Friendly Edmonton) and the 18-40 year old generation (Edmonton’s Next Gen), and building stronger bridges with such initiatives could impact the common goal of building a welcoming and inclusive city. AFE’s decision to focus more intentionally on intergenerational connections will help realize that goal. Many, however, caution against losing the focus on seniors and their concerns. While agreeing that intergenerational understanding and action are important, they say work is still needed to counter ageism throughout our culture. AFE has built the networks and collaborative approach that position it to help align efforts within and across organizations so that seniors’ needs stay at the forefront in decisions made about the future of our city.

## Guided by Seniors

Besides focusing on seniors, there’s hope that AFE will continue its efforts to deliberately engage a wide variety of seniors in shaping as well as doing its work. With AFE support, the Age of Wisdom Collective was launched as a possible model for digging deeper. The collective is made up of the immigrant and refugee seniors it seeks to serve – both those most in need of support and younger bilingual seniors who can bridge cultures and lead the way. Another AFE supported initiative, the Edmonton Pride Seniors Group, is also led by the seniors who directly benefit from its work. Such inclusive approaches have the benefit of being close enough to the ground to address seniors most urgent concerns.

## Extending the Reach

How many Edmontonians, including seniors, know about AFE and what it aims to accomplish? Not as many as hoped, despite valiant efforts to spread the word. Numerous events showcased the initiative, including the original launch which put former Mayor Stephen Mandel and Councillor Linda Sloan in the spotlight as high-profile advocates. Public celebrations such as *More Happy Birthdays* party in 2014 at City Hall invited the entire community to ponder what it takes to make birthdays both numerous and happy. Events such as the *Fit Forever Festival* and the *Seniors' Health and Wellness Forum* connected seniors, caregivers and providers under the Age Friendly Edmonton banner.

**"We've made some progress, but there's a lot more that needs to be done. And we need to find more ways to engage seniors."**

— Peter Faid, co-chair, AFE

Realizing the power of story, the team hired Story Engine to create a booklet of stories encapsulating the age friendly spirit. Titled *Aging Better Together*, the booklet illustrates how attention to seniors' needs in home design, gardening, transportation, snow shovelling and other aspects of life benefits the entire community.

To address concerns that AFE's brand has not been fully embraced by the community, the team allocated funds for a new community connector position and increased communication efforts as AFE 2.0 moves forward.

**"The whole AFE initiative has put some things on the map: aging in place, changes with housing, working with elders, transportation, communication, health information, intergenerational work."**

— Aleem Rajani, Alberta Health Services, co-lead of the AFE Healthy Aging Working Group



Associate Minister Dave Quest (3rd from left), presented the Age Friendly Alberta Recognition Award (from left) ESCC board members Peter Faid and Mary Jane McLaughlin and City of Edmonton Councillors Scott McKeen, Amarjeet Sohi and Andrew Knack.

Through a monthly newsletter and the use of Facebook and Twitter, the aim is to inspire involvement not only among non-profits and governments but in businesses that may have never considered how their facilities and services impact senior clientele. Keeping seniors top of mind amid competing priorities takes ongoing vigilance by internal and external advocates. As one member of the AFE team put it, “We all work in our silos, and sometimes you don’t know what you don’t know. Age Friendly Edmonton is a way to see the big picture, to make sure things are aligned and connected.”

Within the civic structure, awareness of seniors’ needs has gradually grown along with the size of the team focused on serving seniors. That shift is important, as City of Edmonton policies, procedures and priorities touch many parts of seniors’ lives. Thanks in part to AFE working groups, new tools are available for civic staff and contractors, including design guides for making outdoor spaces, public buildings and private homes accessible to all ages.

The challenge now is to expand awareness of AFE and invite more community involvement by the entire range of seniors who make Edmonton home.

“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.”

— Social and Recreation Participation: Promising Practices Summary Report Part One, 2014

# Knowledge to Action (K2A)

Midway through AFE's first 5 year mandate, it became apparent that many of the studies, toolkits and guides created by the working groups were not receiving widespread use. As the WHO put it, "Implementation of research-based knowledge in real life is complex and riddled with barriers." For many frontline agencies, those barriers include lack of money and time to incorporate new ideas.

As the working groups slowed down, some of the funds became available for other priorities. Age friendly leaders put out a call for proposals and offered some of those dollars to organizations with excellent ideas for using age friendly philosophy, findings and resources to enhance their work with seniors. In 2016 and 2017, six projects received Knowledge to Action (K2A) funding to do exactly that:

- GeriActors Theatre embarked on an intergenerational playwriting and teaching initiative.
- A2S Age-ing to Sage-ing (Sage Seniors Association) supported seniors building community in low-income Beverly.
- Edmonton Pride Seniors Group and friends hosted LGBTQ2S youth and their senior counterparts to engage in conversations at Sage Seniors Association
- Age of Wisdom Collective supported by the Multicultural Health Broker Cooperative (MHBC), drew immigrant and refugee seniors into a new advocacy group that aims to catalyze change for fellow seniors.
- Seniors and Youth for a Non-ageism Community (SYNC) intergenerational events are regularly drawing multi-age, multicultural crowds to the Strathcona Place 55+ Centre.
- The Edmonton Social Planning Council is working with an advisory group to learn more about social isolation among Edmonton's Indigenous seniors.

Going forward, AFE is seeking additional opportunities to expand on the research-based starting points for neighbours, businesses and other groups inspired to improve life for Edmonton seniors.



## GerActors Engage All Ages in Showing the Story

GerActors Theatre is using K2A dollars to write and perform a suite of new plays that view growing old from multiple generations.

Laughter and hijinks erupt when GerActors Theatre brings its signature blend of story acting into a circle of seniors. “We invite people to come in, have fun and laugh,” says Associate Director Becca Barrington. “That playful approach breaks down walls and creates a safe place where people feel they can share.” In recent years, the company has tapped AFE funding to launch a training program, write a suite of new plays and create a training manual for intergenerational theatre at the high school level.

Begun in 2001 by University of Alberta professor David Barnet and based at the Sage Seniors Association, GerActors fosters “creative aging,” an approach that engages seniors in artistic activity at a level of comparative mastery. With demand for workshops outstripping the company’s ability to deliver, GerActors obtained AFE Innovation Funding in 2016 to develop a “train the trainer” program aimed at equipping more people to facilitate experiential, intergenerational storytelling and theatre.

**“The major success of our project was the outreach to isolated seniors. These seniors, when asked to tell stories, were delighted that people from outside their community had interest in their lives.”**

— GerActors Theatre Ltd. Funding Final Report

AFE’s Knowledge to Action funding is now enabling the GerActors to embark on a two-pronged intergenerational theatre project that builds on the work of both parties. The first prong involves writing and performing five new plays about growing older. The second involves working with the Jasper Place High School drama program to develop a teaching manual for intergenerational theatre. Having a mix of generations onstage creates a special sort of magic, Becca says. “Seniors tell such wonderful stories. They’re wildly imaginative, not afraid to be silly and poke fun at themselves. Students bring excitement and wonder. They complement each other so well.”



## A2S (Age-ing to Sage-ing) in Beverly

“I want to use music to bring people together.” That’s what Russ said during community conversations to explore how seniors in Beverly might support children in that low-income sector of the city. A talented entertainer and event organizer, Russ soon had his wish when an invitation to perform at a Candora Society event in 2014 sparked regular jam sessions where upwards of 80 people enjoy music and conversation.

### BY THE NUMBERS

The Early Childhood Mapping Project in Alberta found that less than two-thirds of kindergarten-aged children in Beverly are ready for school; across Alberta, closer to three quarters are ready.

Russ is not the only senior in Beverly who has engaged in the community through A2S (Age-ing to Sage-ing). Launched by the Sage Seniors Association in 2014, this initiative invited seniors to take the lead in finding ways to support each other and their neighbours, flipping the paradigm that expects older people to receive rather than give help.

**“Russ is a fantastic example of the potential of seniors in our community, who, with a little support, are doing big things for community building.”**

— From *Age-ing to Sage-ing* report, 2015

Seniors said they wanted to mentor local children. Soon more than 20 seniors were familiar faces at R.J. Scott School, sharing skills in gardening, cooking, knitting, reading and games. Seniors also began exercising together, donating cold-weather clothing and food-and discovering other ways to contribute.

With initial expectations surpassed, A2S began receiving Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) funding in 2016 to become an ongoing Sage initiative. They also received a K2A grant to mobilize AFE resources, fuel emerging initiatives and support efforts to evaluate and share results.



## Edmonton Pride Seniors Group: Aging Out of the Closet

“We need to be doing something to support older gays and lesbians.” That refrain had come up often over the years when Sherry McKibben and Michael Phair crossed paths, but about six years ago the duo of former City Councillors decided to act. Pulling together others from the LGBTQ2S community, they launched the Edmonton Pride Seniors Group. They turned for support to the Sage Seniors Association, where Michael was already a board member. Sage readily agreed to serve as fiscal agent and provide meeting space so the group did not need to divert energy into creating a separate administrative body.

The Edmonton Pride Seniors Group wanted to find out what concerns were top of mind for Edmonton’s older gay and lesbian residents, which fit perfectly within the purview of AFE. With AFE funding, Edmonton Pride Seniors Group commissioned Ann Goldblatt and Tammy Horne to survey and interview members of the LGBTQ2S community and gather best practices and policies regarding housing and services for this population. The survey received 141 responses, achieving a much higher

**“I think there’s a willingness on the part of many programs to be more open, not only to seniors, but to gays and lesbians. Oftentimes, staff and managers are looking for someone to help.”**

— Michael Phair, Edmonton Pride Seniors Group

return rate than the norm among other cities. The resulting report, *Into the Closet Again?* highlights significant issues, including fears of not being welcome in seniors housing and programming.

Edmonton Pride Seniors Group also sits on provincial advisory councils regarding seniors and health, adding their perspective to everything from care manuals to policy discussions. While working with others across the nation to review toolkit supplements for working with gay and lesbian seniors, they realized how unique their group is. For more information about the Edmonton Pride Seniors Group, [visit epsg.ca](http://visit epsg.ca).



## The Age of Wisdom: Giving Voice to Edmonton's Immigrant Seniors

Consider the life of a senior who has moved here from another country, perhaps to help look after grandchildren. Piled on top of the usual trials of an aging body and mind are the many challenges of navigating a foreign culture in which even the language is likely unknown.

How well are such seniors faring in Edmonton? *Age of Wisdom: Giving Voice to Edmonton's Immigrant Seniors and Identifying Their Needs*, a 2015 study funded by AFE, begins to answer that question. The ESCC, together with leaders from the Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative (MHBC), the Multicultural Women & Seniors Services Association and the City of Edmonton's seniors and multicultural teams, commissioned Zenev and Associates to write the report based on a review of relevant literature and multiple consultations with immigrant and refugee seniors, service providers and stakeholders.

**"We really appreciated the K2A funding component of Age Friendly Edmonton for the second phase of work for the Age of Wisdom. It created an opportunity for us to explore some ways of making visible the realities of our population of seniors and begin to do some work around catalyzing change."**

**— Yvonne Chiu, Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative**

Gathered in focus groups, seniors born in other lands spoke evocatively about the impact of the challenges they face in Edmonton. They spoke of a sense of dependence, of feeling like a burden on their families, of lack of agency and self-worth, of being overwhelmed with family responsibilities and of daily isolation. Circumstances that can all too easily lead to health and mental health struggles as well as elder abuse. Seniors and service providers both named barriers that keep immigrant and refugee seniors from accessing programs and services – not knowing the language, feeling unwelcome, lack of money, housing insecurity, transportation issues and information gaps.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Age of Wisdom notes that, while 20% of the overall Canadian population were immigrants in 2006, 30% of seniors were immigrants. That figure has likely risen since. Almost 6,000, or 7%, of seniors in Edmonton do not speak English or French, according to Statistics Canada's 2011 census.



The seniors also identified what might attract them to programs and services:

- More free programs. For many, even a modest membership fee is unaffordable.
- Convenient locations of programs and services near transit stops.
- Respect and welcome from staff and other seniors.
- Knowing that someone, whether staff or volunteer, can speak their language.
- English language learning geared for seniors from elsewhere, with opportunities to practice by socializing.
- Programs targeted to their culture or language and recommended by workers or community leaders they trust.
- Activities that need minimal language, such as fitness and dance.
- Learning that addresses day-to-day challenges, including financial literacy, how to use transit and seniors benefits.
- Things that encourage relationship building, e.g., through food and time for socializing.
- Easy to understand promotion, preferably in their language and/or making liberal use of photos.

Now funded by an AFE K2A grant, the agencies involved have committed to working together with the seniors affected toward policies, programs and services that better serve immigrant and refugee seniors.

# Timeline

## Laying the Groundwork: An Age Friendly Edmonton Timeline

Age Friendly Edmonton is built upon foundations jointly laid by many community partners and grassroots citizens. Here are a few of the key milestones along our journey:

**2000** Edmonton Seniors Community Network, formed amid concern about gaps in services for our ballooning senior population, hosts 160-plus stakeholders at *Moving Research Into Action – Seniors 2000 and Beyond*.

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**2000-2004** Task Force on Community Services for Seniors interviews over 1,000 seniors, senior-serving organizations and funders who say the sector lacks the coordination needed to build capacity for seniors. The *“Let’s Make it Happen!” Blueprint for Action* urges the formation of a coordinating council of service providers for seniors.

**“You told us that any approach to the planning and delivery of social and recreational programs and services for seniors should reflect five key principles: sustainability, diversity, accessibility, equity and community involvement.”**

— *Blueprint for Action: “Let’s Make it Happen!”* 2003

**2004** The framework is established for the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council, which begins working with member agencies and stakeholders to uncover needs and enhance collaboration – initially focusing on transportation and older immigrants/refugees.

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**2006** At the suggestion of former Mayor Stephen Mandel, the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council teams up with the Alberta Motor Association to organize a round-table on seniors’ transportation. Some of the ideas generated go on to be implemented by Age Friendly Edmonton working groups.

**“Transportation is about more than getting from point A to point B. It is really about independence, about freedom, about socialization and about the ability to choose where we go and how we get there.”**

— ESCC Board Member Arlene Meldrum, speaking at the roundtable on seniors’ transportation

**2007** *Aging in Place: A Neighbourhood Strategy*, a study completed by Peter Faid, Community Services Consulting Ltd. for the City of Edmonton Community Services highlights that older seniors often require additional services and assistance to age in place and reports the potential for seniors organizations to play important roles in meeting those needs.

The City of Edmonton develops a 10-year seniors' centres funding strategy that recognizes the important role the centres play, and names six core services – social services, recreational programs, nutrition services, health and wellness, community development and volunteerism opportunities.

The WHO implements international "age friendly" pilot projects and releases guidelines to support communities in becoming more responsive to seniors' needs and quality of life.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Seniors 85 years and older represent the fastest growing subset of seniors. Between 2005 and 2041, the number of people age 85 and over is expected to increase by 229 per cent.

— *Aging in Place: A Neighbourhood Strategy*, 2007



**2008** The City of Edmonton conducts the *2008 Seniors Needs Assessment* to learn what services are most helpful to seniors, what should be improved and where opportunities exist to take action.

The Creative Age Festival launches to showcase and celebrate the contributions of senior artists and foster increased art-based participation later in life through quality programming and engagement.

Edmonton Fire Rescue Services holds the first of several summits focused on issues in the provincial building code that compromise the safety of those who need help evacuating in case of fire.

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**2009** Leaders of senior-serving organizations start work toward a strategic plan to address identified gaps. *A Discussion Paper, Services for Edmonton's Seniors: Creating a Strategic Plan Towards 2015* is shared with stakeholders.

*Strategic Plan for Services to Edmonton's Seniors – Towards 2015* is published by the ESCC to inform stakeholders of the work-to-date and seek input and commitment to collaboration on stated goals and recommendation. Age Friendly Edmonton's strategic plan draws heavily from this document.

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**2010-2012** Building on the 2007 *Aging in Place* study, the City of Edmonton receives funding from Alberta Health and Wellness to implement two Aging in Place community demonstration projects. More than 100 stakeholders come together to pilot collaborative ways to enhance the community supports needed for seniors to remain in their homes as long as they wish and can safely do so. The work culminates in ESCC's development of *Helping Seniors Age in Place – A Strategic Framework to Improve Outreach to Isolated and/or At-Risk Seniors*.



**“Age is a gift to the city. We will value all the individuals who bring it to us.”**

**— Edmonton Seniors Declaration**

# Our Declaration



*Edmonton's commitment to seniors rests on four ideals:*

**Individuals are respected** regardless of age. All generations have much to teach and learn from each other.

**People of all ages are safe** in their homes and neighbourhoods. Safety has physical, environmental, financial and health aspects.

**The city's transportation systems, urban design and physical infrastructure** allow all people to participate in full lives. No one is barred by mobility or resources from involvement in city life.

**Older people have ready access** to programs, employment, activities and services that help them stay engaged, respected and appreciated.

City Council declares that it will work towards making Edmonton age-friendly as part of our vision for an integrated, sustainable, livable city. To do so, we will use the best knowledge available from international, national and local research. We will ensure our decision-making and policies embrace this perspective. We will encourage other organizations, individuals, businesses and institutions to adopt this declaration. And we will work with other orders of government to increase commitment and coordination on seniors' issues.

Age is a gift to the city.

We will value all the individuals who bring it to us.



## 2010

The Edmonton Seniors Declaration, the first of its kind in Canada, commits City Council to working towards making Edmonton an age-friendly city in which individuals of all ages, seniors included, are respected, safe, connected to appropriate services and able to participate fully in community life.

Seniors centres, the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council work to create a *Seniors' Centres Plan 2011-2021*. Besides outlining core services centres will strive to offer, the report forecasts the capital development needed to serve Edmonton's growing senior population.

The Government of Alberta releases two documents that set direction for initiatives involving seniors: *Ageing Population Policy Framework* and *Addressing Elder Abuse in Alberta – A Strategy for Collective Action*.

The City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council release *Edmonton Seniors: A Portrait*.

Edmonton is accepted as a member of the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, opening opportunities to share best practices for serving and engaging an aging population.

**2011** Continuing conversations with thousands of Edmontonians about what should be included in a strategic plan for serving Edmonton's seniors culminate in *Vision for an Age-Friendly Edmonton Action Plan*, published by the ESCC.

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**2012** City Council agrees to co-implement the *Vision for an Age-Friendly Edmonton Action Plan* together with the ESCC. City Council allocates \$375,000 a year for five years, 2013-2017, for implementation.

Edmonton hosts the provincial Grey Matters Conference with Alberta Seniors and Community Supports. Keynote speaker from Age Friendly New York initiative is impressed by age friendly tools such as hailer kits for visually impaired transit riders and takes the idea back for consideration.

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**2013** Age Friendly Edmonton co-chairs Elaine Betchinski and Peter Faid present Edmonton's plans at a WHO conference in Quebec City.

The work of Age Friendly Edmonton officially commences, with working groups formed with the help of steering committee co-leads to address the nine key areas identified in the action plan.

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**2014** Edmonton becomes the second Alberta community (after Strathcona County) to receive the Age Friendly Alberta Recognition Award.

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**2015** An Age Friendly Edmonton coordinator is hired to support the working groups.

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**2016** Knowledge to Action (K2A) grants are distributed and work begins on charting Age Friendly 2.0, the next phase of Age Friendly Edmonton.

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**2017** Following extensive public consultation, insights are captured in *Advancing Age Friendly Edmonton: What We Heard Report*, September 2017.

# Key Strategic Areas

In 2013, Age Friendly Edmonton embarked on an ambitious five-year work plan with 58 actions in our nine key strategic areas.

- Community Support Services
- Healthy Aging
- Communication and Information
- Social and Recreational Participation
- Transportation
- Respect and Social Inclusion
- Civic Participation, Volunteerism and Employment
- Housing
- Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

We recognize that we all have a role in connecting people in caring neighbourhoods, to respect and support our neighbours no matter what year they were born, and to make sure public decisions are made with every Edmontonian in mind.

Some of the Actions were directly funded by AFE, while others demonstrate how our entire community is involved in building an age-friendly city. Completed/On Track Actions are either finished, established as ongoing programs or services, or have established completion dates. Partial Progress Actions will require more resources if prioritized, or have been explored and require no further action going forward.

**As of June 2018:**

**Completed/On Track** 41

**Partial Progress** 17



# Community Support Services

## GOALS

1. Community support services are inclusive and responsive in meeting the needs of seniors.
2. The community is engaged in meeting the needs of seniors.

## ACTIONS COMPLETED /ON TRACK

- Develop/enhance outreach services to isolated and/or at risk seniors, including immigrant and refugee seniors.
- Establish working agreements between neighbourhoods, community hubs and city-wide organizations.
- Develop an ongoing process to evaluate service delivery, identify where additional or new services are needed and identify the resources required.
- Increase the ability of organizations to provide services for seniors that are more culturally sensitive.
- Develop guidelines for core and optional services delivered by seniors centres which act as community hubs.
- Develop and implement a model that defines core and optional services and how they are best delivered and administered.

## ACTIONS PARTIAL PROGRESS

- Develop guidelines for core and optional services that are best delivered and/or administered city-wide.
- Develop and implement strategies for encouraging and promoting both formal and informal aging in place services and supports.
- Develop and implement a strategy for encouraging volunteerism to support aging in place services and supports.
- Develop and implement strategies to encourage businesses and other community stakeholders to support seniors.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM Community Support Services Working Group: Seeding Innovation

They say it takes a village to raise a child. AFE's philosophy extends that expectation to the other end of the age spectrum, when our neighbours may again need extra help due to declining abilities. That need is especially acute in an era when families are smaller, geographically scattered and pressed for time, leaving many seniors more alone than in the past.

The Community Support Services Working Group initiated two legacy projects that invite the community as a whole to join in meeting seniors needs – an Age Friendly Edmonton Innovation Fund to support groups wishing to adapt or develop initiatives for seniors and an Age Friendly Business Audit Tool to help businesses gauge how well they are serving seniors.



## Age Friendly Innovation Fund

Drama classes. A pickleball tournament. Walking poles. Intergenerational piano lessons and gardening. Those are a few of the senior-focused initiatives seeded by the Age Friendly Edmonton Innovation Fund. Between 2014 and 2017, the fund disbursed \$117,000, supporting 23 groups with grants of about \$5,000.

It began with one bench and soon a crop of whimsically painted front yard benches sprouted in the Holyrood neighbourhood in spring of 2017. Inviting passersby to rest and chat awhile, the benches boosted walkability and neighbourliness.

A grassroots fund such as this was recommended in a “*Promising Practices*” report completed for AFE to support seniors who wish to age in place and prefer community-based rather than centralized programs. As anticipated, the fund enabled grassroots groups all around the city to turn ideas into action and many of the resulting projects continue to serve seniors today.



## Business Audit Tool

The Age Friendly Business Audit Tool was developed and initially used in collaboration with the Westend Seniors Activity Centre. The Tool was then adapted to include a checklist of key concerns which offers a user friendly way to evaluate the age friendliness of physical environments and customer service. At the encouragement of former Mayor Stephen Mandel, who promoted the audit as part of his ongoing support for Age Friendly initiatives, the Chinatown District Business Improvement Area piloted the audit in 2014. The revised audit tool is available at [agefriendlyedmonton.ca](http://agefriendlyedmonton.ca).

## Going Forward

Numerous initiatives seeded in recent years hold promise to strengthen the network of community support for Edmonton seniors. While some received direct support through the AFE Innovation Fund and other AFE resources, other benefited from the enhanced collaboration as leaders in the sector met more frequently around common tables. Nurturing of that collaborative spirit will be essential to the growth of a cohesive approach to supporting seniors. Continued evaluation is also crucial to assess service delivery, identify where additional services are needed and predict resources requirements.

“The senior population is not just becoming larger – it is becoming increasingly diverse.”

— Seniors Centres of the Future Final Research Report, 2017





## Seniors Home Supports Program

For many seniors, having help with lawn mowing, shovelling snow, housekeeping, repairs and personal care means the difference between staying in their own home and moving elsewhere. Yet it can be hard for seniors to find help they can trust and afford. Following the winter of 2012, a particularly bad year for seniors struggling to shovel their own snow, the ESCC invited seniors groups to the table to find a solution and a plan was developed with support from AFE.

Launched in 2015, the Seniors Home Supports Program now offers referrals to at least three screened providers for snow removal, yard help, home repairs and maintenance, housekeeping, personal services such as companionship and moving help. In each of 6 districts, a seniors centre serves as a hub, hiring a part-time home supports coordinator who recruits and screens service providers and provides referrals to seniors requesting services. It's up to the senior to choose one service provider and pay them directly for the work. There is no extra charge for the referral service.

**“There is an inverse relationship between age and income: as seniors grow older, their income decreases. Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement rates are falling behind and many seniors are retiring without adequate retirement savings or pensions.”**

— Seniors Centres of the Future Report, 2017

## BY THE NUMBERS

Poverty among Canadian seniors almost tripled between 1995 and 2013 (from 3.9% to 11.1%), with close to 30% of single senior women living in poverty. Only 15-20% of middle-income Canadians have saved enough for retirement.

— Seniors Centres of the Future Report, 2017

More than 2,400 seniors have used the Senior Home Supports Program since October 2015, with inquiries growing each year. For those who are low income, the district coordinators seek out low-cost service providers, including local businesses with reduced rates and community league members. Even so, some seniors don't use the service due to cost. To address that issue, AFE provided funding in early 2018 for a subsidy pool that will be tested first for snow removal through the Seniors Home Supports Program.

### Seniors Centres Serving as Home Support Hubs

- Westend Seniors Activity Centre
- North West Edmonton Seniors Society
- North Edmonton Seniors Association
- South East Edmonton Seniors Association
- Mill Woods Seniors Association
- SouthWest Edmonton Seniors Association





## Keys for Seniors: Unlocking Memories, Unleashing Joy

Photo credit:  
Keys for Seniors

Seniors in Edmonton care centres are honing long-lost talents and learning new ones with the help of volunteer piano teachers from the Keys for Seniors Piano Program Foundation. Launched with the support of the Age Friendly Innovation Fund, the fledgling program is the brainchild of University of Alberta science student Emma Lee, who knows from experience the power of piano playing to de-stress and release anxieties.

Keys for Seniors is unique in aiming to benefit both the seniors involved and the volunteer teachers. The volunteer University of Alberta students get to polish their interpersonal communication, patience and other life skills; and the seniors enjoy activities that build social bonds, enhance cognition and sometimes unlock doors to memories past. The AFE grant, coupled with Student Union dollars and fundraising, enables the club to host music concerts, pay for volunteer police checks, copy music and take seniors on outings to purchase piano books.

**“Val, my student, has taught me more about life, music, family and friendship than I could’ve ever learned on my own. I am her teacher, yet, she is also mine.”**

**— Anna, volunteer with Keys for Seniors**



## Other Initiatives Expanding the Reach of Services to Seniors

Many of the actions outlined in the AFE strategic plan have seen progress not as specific age friendly initiatives but through the leadership of other organizations and partnerships:

- **Core Community Support Project** - The ESCC drew seniors' service providers together to identify which services are essential and agree on the best way to deliver those services. Information needed for healthy aging and supports for aging in place, for example, were seen as core services requiring a degree of consistency across the city. AFE has supported several enhancements to those core services, including the Seniors Information Phone Line (SIPL) and the Seniors Home Supports Program.

**“Shifting our vision of seniors centres as independent physical spaces to one that embraces the collective work of seniors centres as a way to meet the needs and strengths of seniors creates opportunities for a more fully integrated, coordinated, responsive and person-centred approach.”**

— Seniors Centres of the Future Final Research Report, 2017

- **Strategic Framework to Improve Outreach** - Beginning in 2014, ESCC worked with seniors centres to assess the outreach services needed to reach isolated seniors. Together, a service model and toolkit that equips all outreach workers to use the same assessment methods, referral practices and case management approaches was created. The ESCC facilitates the outreach workers to meet regularly to identify emerging issues and update the framework as needed. All FCSS funded outreach workers in Edmonton now use the *Edmonton Seniors Sector Outreach Worker Toolkit*.
- **Seniors Centres Strategy** - This City of Edmonton-led project addresses the future role of seniors centres in healthy, active aging, building on a 10-year *Seniors Centres Plan* approved by City Council in 2011. *Seniors Centres of the Future*, a 2017 report commissioned by the City to guide the project, concludes that seniors centres are well positioned to offer the sort of collaborative, community-based, person-centred service that would help many seniors thrive. Seniors, academics, practitioners and other community stakeholders are now using everything learned to date to craft a vision and strategy for ensuring seniors centres play an essential role in our community's future.

## BY THE NUMBERS

The majority of current senior centre users are 75 to 84, primarily single or widowed women.

— Seniors Centres of the Future, Final Report, 2017

# Healthy Aging

## GOALS

1. Comprehensive health services address cultural and language barriers and are available, timely, appropriate and easily accessible to help seniors remain in their community.
2. Seniors have methods of obtaining education, knowledge and skills that are critical for them to support their own health.
3. Information and technology are available to support seniors in managing their own health needs.

## ACTIONS COMPLETED /ON TRACK

- Work with primary health care providers, including Primary Care Networks and Community Care and seniors to examine service delivery methods.
- Develop and implement innovative strategies to involve community support organizations in collaborating with health services in prevention and early detection of health problems.
- Develop and implement a strategy for supporting family/ friend caregivers.
- Find effective ways of making sure seniors are aware of what technological tools are available.

## ACTIONS PARTIAL PROGRESS

- Work with AHS and health professionals to develop and implement strategies to ensure seniors who experience periodic and/or long-term health problems receive well coordinated, safe and effective care.
- Ensure senior volunteers are provided with the support and training to provide mentoring and support to their peers in health promotion and disease prevention (e.g., preventing falls, learning new technologies, etc.).
- Support personnel to ensure those who work with older adults are knowledgeable about the aging process and are appropriately trained to meet the unique needs of seniors.
- Encourage seniors to be actively engaged in the research of best practices, planning, implementation, and evaluation of health services.
- Ensure innovative age friendly technologies by connecting seniors and tool developers.\*

\* Following initial exploration, no further action was required.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM Healthy Aging Working Group: From Set Meal to Wellness Buffet

The research that set the groundwork for AFE revealed a gap in accessing clear, accurate information about healthy aging. To address this, the Healthy Aging Working Group focused on offering easy access to the health topics that interest seniors most.

This working group attracted a diverse mix of members who offered time, expertise and in-kind support. Together, they launched two legacy projects: a Healthy Aging Information Series featuring a roster of expert speakers and Healthy Aging Phone Chats that evolved into a Seniors' Centre Without Walls. Members also provided advice and energy to the Seniors Health & Wellness Forum, first held in 2016 with funding and support from AFE.

“Part of our goal was making information to support seniors’ healthy living available through any organization, so the community is supporting good health versus someone from Alberta Health Services saying we will put on a workshop.”

— Aleem Rajani, Alberta Health Services and co-lead of the AFE Healthy Aging Working Group

### Healthy Aging Information Series

In 2013, the working group fielded a roster of speakers to deliver up-to-date knowledge on a range of health topics. Since then, speakers have been available at no charge to any organization requesting them – from major seniors centres to neighbourhood coffee clubs. AFE funding made it possible to contract a recreation therapist to scout out the speakers as well as build and maintain the information series.

Initially 15 experts signed on in 2013, and by 2016 that number had risen to 43 speakers offering 63 presentations. Topics covered managing finances, finding supports, preventing falls, living with dementia, transportation options, medications, nutrition, leisure activities and other aspects of healthy living.

“The speakers’ series has real value because the presenters are qualified and trusted, yet it puts the choice of topics and locations into people’s hands.”

— Mary Whale, Edmonton Southside Primary Care Network and co-lead of the AFE Healthy Aging Working Group

In 2018, the information series moved to online booking, allowing AFE to track how often speakers are booked. Presentation topics are posted on [agefriendlyedmonton.ca](http://agefriendlyedmonton.ca) and the booking requests automatically go to the intended speaker. The roster is being stewarded through AHS.

## Healthy Aging Phone Chats

Knowing that some seniors have difficulty coming out to events, the working group made selected topics in the speaker series available by teleconference. Healthy Aging Phone Chats piloted in 2015, with homecare recreation therapists helping identify isolated seniors who could benefit. The line offered 33 presentations on 13 topics, and attracted 60 seniors. For those involved, the chats became a time for socializing as well as learning. Operators would phone out to connect anyone who had a hard time dialing, including one woman who could not see.

“Every presentation I enjoy very much and look forward to the next one. The facilitators are wonderful.”

— Phone chat participant



## Seniors' Centre Without Walls

Positive response to the Phone Chats pilot prompted the federally funded Pan-Edmonton Group Addressing Social Isolation of Seniors (PEGASIS) to incorporate teleconferencing into its work plan. In 2016, the Edmonton Southside Primary Care Network (ESPCN) launched an expanded menu of phone chats under the name Seniors' Centre Without Walls. Anyone 55 or older in the Edmonton area can now join a wide array of free workshops and activities by phone. These include exercise groups, brain games, relaxation sessions, coffee chats and more. As part of a national network of Seniors' Centres Without Walls, the seniors chat regularly with other seniors across Canada, adding another dimension to their connectedness.

### BY THE NUMBERS

In its first year, the Seniors' Centre Without Walls offered 130 phone chats; 242 isolated and homebound seniors took advantage, including some who joined for nearly every program. Evaluations indicate that 91% are satisfied or extremely satisfied with the chats and 96% would recommend them to other seniors.

Participating seniors suggest the chat topics, and some serve on an advisory group that gauges progress and reviews suggestions for new programs. "We're really big on feedback loops – seeing what works, what doesn't and building on the work of others," says Heather Drouin, who manages the program. While a shift to video conferencing has been discussed, relying on the phone has some surprising advantages, especially with some participants having limited income and living with physical or mental health challenges. "There's a sense of security and equality when we can't see each other's faces," Heather says.

Seniors' Centre Without Walls is proving invaluable for vulnerable seniors to learn new skills and connect with community. For those who wish to meet in person, the ESPCN began hosting occasional meet-ups that were so lively no one wanted to go home. "They really do form deep bonds and care about each other, even if they have never seen each other before," Heather says.

“It has been really beneficial to get to know and highlight some of great services and activities in the community that really aren’t reaching this socially isolated and marginalized population otherwise.”

— Heather Drouin, Seniors’ Centre Without Walls



## Going Forward

Members of the Healthy Aging Working Group are committed to ensuring that seniors have ready access to information about healthy aging. PEGASIS is actively seeking funding to ensure that the Seniors’ Centre Without Walls phone chats continue beyond March 2019 when the initial grant ends.

“I wouldn’t talk to anyone three or four days at a time. Without anyone to talk to, it’s hard to have a purpose in life.”

— Seniors’ Centre Without Walls participant





## Navigator Workshops: Caring for Caregivers

Working as a palliative care nurse, Deb Paches once confiscated the distributor cap of an overburdened caregiver to stop him from driving while under the influence of alcohol. Having looked after her own dying mother, she knew even the strongest caregivers need outside intervention at times. Now, as a caregiver advisor with Caregivers Alberta, she offers Caregiver Navigator workshops that give healthcare professionals a glimpse of the stresses caregivers endure, coupled with tools for responding. AFE helped promote those workshops and provided annual grants that made it possible to offer the sessions at reduced cost, or even free.

Deb, who also served on the AFE Healthy Aging Working Group, jumped on the “age friendly bandwagon” to speak for the many seniors who serve as caregivers. A 2010 profile of Alberta seniors found that 17.3% of those 65 and older are caring for someone else, many while coping with complicating conditions of their own. What’s more, seniors stressed by caregiving have a 64% higher mortality rate than their non-caregiving peers.

“When the stress of caregiving threatens families and relationships, care professionals are often well positioned to help,” Deb says. Those are the messages Deb shares with medical professionals at the one-day workshops. Equally important, she shares tips for identifying stressed caregivers, supporting their self-care and connecting them with resources.

News of the Caregiver Navigator workshops has spread to Ontario, where significant funding is being devoted to caregiver support. Caregivers Alberta is advocating for similar funding in Alberta, so that momentum built through AFE is not lost.

# Communication and Information

## GOALS

1. Seniors and those who support them easily access the information they need when required.

## ACTIONS COMPLETED /ON TRACK

- Promote and encourage strategies to address elder abuse issues, preventive measures and resources.
- Determine how/where seniors access information.
- Promote and encourage personal safety and fraud prevention education for seniors and their families.
- Develop and/or adopt age-friendly communication guidelines and templates for service providers. Ensure these tools address the diversity of the senior population.
- Encourage stakeholders to develop and provide ongoing age-friendly communication.
- Develop and facilitate the use of current and emerging technology to enhance access to information.
- Bring together stakeholders to develop and implement a comprehensive, coordinated communication model based on concrete and clearly articulated goals.





## HIGHLIGHTS FROM Communication and Information Working Group: Learning from the London Underground

With so many agencies and government programs serving seniors, what is the best way to ensure that information about those services reaches the people who need it? That's the challenge tackled by the Communication and Information Working Group. Rather than recommending the expected one-stop shop, the group took inspiration from the London subway system which sends travellers to their destinations no matter which station they enter.

**"At every senior-serving round-table, you hear that people don't know where to go for information."**

— Karen McDonald, Sage Seniors Association and co-lead of the AFE Communication and Information Working Group

### Phase I: Assessing the Status Quo

As a first step, the Communication and Information Working Group engaged a contractor team to do a literature review, conduct focus groups and interview a wide range of seniors. Their 2014 report, *How Edmonton Seniors Access Information*, points out that while English-speaking, middle income seniors with strong networks can usually find out what they need to know, the same cannot be said of many seniors who speak little English and are financially squeezed.

Ensuring accuracy is also a key concern. Sage Seniors Association Executive Director Karen McDonald recalls phoning individuals responsible for supportive living for updates to Sage's much-used *Directory of Senior Services* only to be referred back to that directory as the best source of supportive living information.

A search of best practices for communicating with seniors revealed that seniors and caregivers turn to a variety of information sources, including trusted community organizations and leaders, cultural centres, libraries, physicians, coffee groups, housing staff and churches. The information they seek ranges widely, from housing, health and in-home help to income supports and immigration. Something needed to be done to ensure the accessibility, consistency and accuracy of the information available to seniors, in particular those on the margins of the community.

## BY THE NUMBERS

At least 30% of the Edmonton seniors counted by Statistics Canada in 2011 were immigrants whose first languages were neither English nor French.

— How Edmonton Seniors Access Information Final Report, 2014

“To reach a broad audience, information needs to be in multiple formats and made available in many locations both real and virtual.”

— How Edmonton Seniors Access Information, Final Report 2014

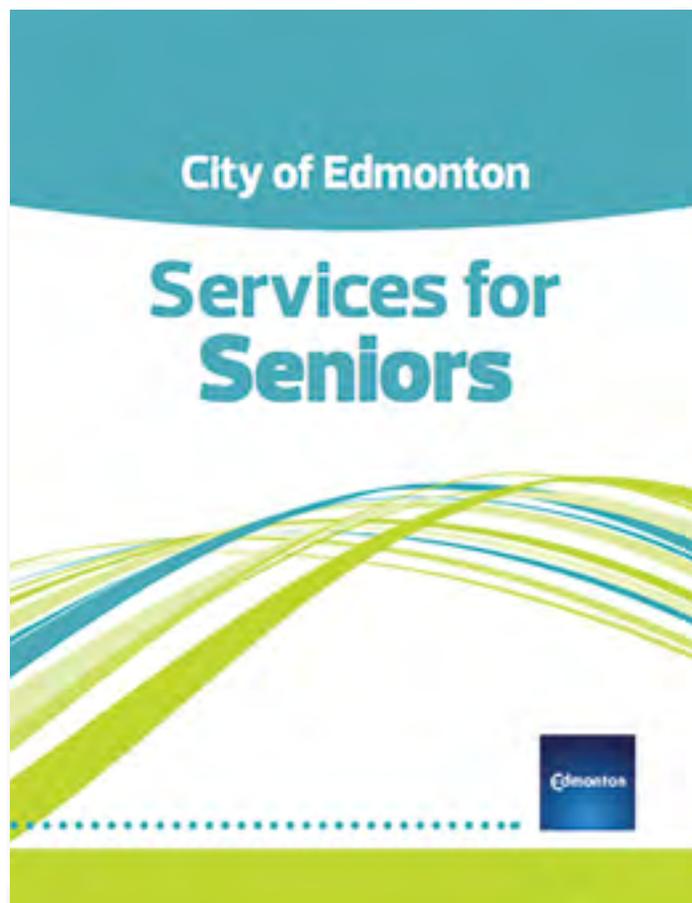
## Phase II: Designing the Model

The Information and Communication Working Group took the findings from the first phase of work and then contracted a team to develop a research-based model for improving seniors access to accurate information. The *2015 Roadmap and Strategic Plan for Improvement of Seniors Information Services and Resources* recommends a collaborative systems model inspired by the London Underground. Just as subway riders can get on at any stop and find their way to where they need to go, seniors should receive (or be pointed to) accurate, useful, consistent information no matter where they begin their search. What seniors learn by talking to staff at the public library should match what is in a directory from their local pharmacy or found by dialing 211. To achieve this, the report recommended creating a collaborative system that connects the existing individual systems without having to consolidate them.

## Phase III: Operationalizing the Plan

That collaborative system is now a reality and it's called the Seniors Communication Access Network (SCAN). SCAN draws together professionals who collect and distribute information about senior services that extend beyond their own organizations. Using AFE funding, the working group had the help of a part-time animator to help create, promote and support SCAN.

The City of Edmonton's Age Friendly communication initiatives includes this guide outlining seniors programs and services offered or supported by the City of Edmonton. This guide includes recreation and social programs, transportation resources, seniors centres and organizations, housing and home help services, libraries, grant programs, recognition and safety initiatives etc.





As an early step, each member of the network is mapping its approach to gathering, vetting and disseminating information. Already this analysis has revealed opportunities missed in the past, including potential for Alberta Senior's Communities & Housing Association (ASCHA) and Sage to team up to coordinate the collection and dissemination of seniors' housing information. SCAN also hopes to better address the needs of seniors on the margins. "Essentially, we're starting to get to know each other, build trust and create the space for conversations about how to work together," Karen McDonald says. "It's slow work, not sexy. But we can see lots of years of work coming to fruition."

"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."

— Age Friendly Social and Recreation Participation Promising Practices Summary Report  
Part One, 2014

## Going Forward

SCAN aims to retain a network animator to maintain its membership roster, support meetings and facilitate conversations. With continued support, SCAN holds the potential to play an important role in ensuring that the full diversity of Edmonton seniors has access to information.



## Valuing and Respecting Our Seniors

For nearly 25 years, City of Edmonton Social Worker Pat Power has facilitated a support group for seniors about relationships with their adult children. The life stories shared over the years speak volumes about how helpless many seniors feel when those relationships degenerate into abuse.

In one all-too-familiar case, a senior was signing his pension cheques to an addicted son to ensure his grandchildren would not go hungry, leaving no funds for his own utilities. Community partners have banded together to offer multiple avenues of support to seniors caught in (or at risk of) abuse. This gentleman was referred to the Senior Protection Partnership (SPP), a team involving an Edmonton Police Service officer, a Covenant Health nurse and social workers from Catholic Social Services, Sage Seniors Association and the City of Edmonton. Team members helped the senior set up protective mechanisms such as automatic bill payments and invited him into the *Relationships with Your Adult Children* support group.

**“In our society seniors don’t yet have the same respect and value as the rest of population. Ageism comes up as a factor over and over, first in abuse not being identified and secondly in the right actions not being taken.”**

— Pat Power, City of Edmonton

Other places to turn for Edmonton seniors experiencing abuse include the Sage Safe House, which provides a temporary haven coupled with support, counselling and connections to community resources; and an Elder Abuse Resource and Supports (EARS) ministry operated by Catholic Social Services. As part of its goal of ensuring seniors have easy access to crucial information, the AFE strategic plan highlights the importance of arming seniors with knowledge to ward off abuse and fraud.

## BY THE NUMBERS

The Seniors Protection Partnership, which marks its twentieth year in 2018, responded to more than 200 urgent cases in 2017, while the CSS EARS team served a similar number. Many other seniors continue to suffer abuse in silence; the National Elder Abuse Prevalence Survey done in 2015 indicates there may be as many as 8,000 situations of elder abuse in Edmonton.

As part of AFE's strategic goal on the importance of arming seniors with knowledge to ward off abuse and fraud, AFE supported efforts by the Seniors Protection Partnership and the City of Edmonton to help bank staff identify signs of financial abuse among senior clients. Results included a powerpoint presentation and brochures banks can use to train staff about financial abuse of older adults.

Community collaboration has made a huge difference for hundreds of at-risk seniors, Pat Power says, "So often abuse involves social, health and police issues. That makes it so much more effective to actually have each of those professionals working together, discussing and implementing best approaches."

### Elder Abuse Contacts

Seniors Protection Partnership	Daytime	780-477-2929
Edmonton Police Service Complaint line	Urgent & After-hour	780-423-4567 or 211, dial 2
Seniors Financial Empowerment Network		780-392-3267



## Making 211 a Go-To Source for Seniors

Since 2004, Edmontonians have been able to dial 211 for information about community services such as transportation, recreation, medical care and housing. It was discovered that not many seniors were dialing 211, and yet there was an identified community need for a central phone number to help seniors navigate community support information. The Communication and Information Working Group began asking whether 211 could fill that void by becoming more age friendly.

Senior-serving organizations came together to discuss what it would take to make 211 a go-to resource for seniors and their caregivers. It became clear that serving seniors well by phone demands not only accurate, pertinent information but sensitivity to their diverse and particular challenges. Initially collaborating with the Support Network before it merged with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), the organization which operates 211, and senior centres all across the city, an enhanced system was launched in 2014 called the “Seniors Information Phone Line”(SIPL)

Anyone wanting information specific to seniors can dial 211 at any time, and then press 2. Certified information specialists can pull up an age friendly screen containing information specific to seniors’ needs drawn from such sources as HealthLink, municipal and provincial directories, senior centre schedules, transportation groups and more. In the past two years, the SIPL has fielded 8,819 calls on everything from in-home help, food and health care to bullying, financial abuse and safety. Languages requested have included Punjabi, Spanish, Hindi, Mandarin and Urdu, which can be accommodated through 211’s access to an interpretive service. Whenever it becomes clear that a senior needs support as well as information, the call is transferred to an outreach worker near the senior’s home. The CMHA and the organizations that employ outreach workers have a memorandum of understanding to outline roles and responsibilities and this is reviewed annually with help from ESCC.

**“I have become very resourceful because of 211. Have used it numerous times and have learned many things and information about different programs and benefits.”**

— Senior who called 211

# Social and Recreation Participation

## GOALS

1. Seniors have access to a wide variety of affordable and personally relevant activities.
2. Opportunities for social engagement and recreation are inclusive and welcome diversity.

## ACTIONS COMPLETED /ON TRACK

- Develop and implement new programs and activities that respond to emerging needs and interests.
- Develop and/or facilitate the use of current and emerging technologies to connect seniors.
- Plan and implement strategies that enhance organizational capacity to engage diverse populations and isolated seniors.
- Develop and facilitate social and recreational opportunities that are sensitive to the needs and interests of diverse populations.

## ACTIONS PARTIAL PROGRESS

- Develop and implement strategies to encourage businesses and other community stakeholders to support social and recreational activities for seniors.
- Develop and implement strategies for access to social, recreational, artistic, intellectual, and cultural opportunities and physical activities.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM Social and Recreational Participation Working Group: Enticing Active Engagement

Does Edmonton offer the range of social and recreational activities needed to draw seniors of all abilities, cultures, income levels and interests into healthy pursuits? If not, where are the gaps and how might they be filled?

Those were key questions for the Social and Recreational Participation Working Group. Members of the group were well aware of the power of social and recreational involvement to help seniors maintain and even regain health and joy. Highlights of their work include a toolkit of promising practices for engaging seniors, an assessment of older adult needs in Edmonton, a fitness festival and a greater emphasis of training for frontline workers who engage seniors in social and recreational activities.

“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 seniors centres are being challenged to redefine their brand or focus.”

— Age Friendly, Social and Recreation Participation: Promising Practices Report Part One, 2014



## From Research to Tool Building

In 2013, the working group commissioned a search for programs and services that demonstrate a new lens for seniors programming. A contracted team conducted a literature review, looked for best practices in 9 age friendly cities and held focus groups with social and recreational programmers who work with seniors. Their report, *Social and Recreation Participation: Promising Practices*, highlights a shift in how seniors engage with their community.

The Promising Practices research became the basis for a toolkit that describes successful programs in other Age Friendly cities to help inspire and equip local programmers. The toolkit was used at seniors events and at workshops with community leagues and can be found [agefriendlyedmonton.ca](http://agefriendlyedmonton.ca).

A number of the promising practices highlighted in the toolkit have since been seeded in our community with AFE support:

- Seniors' Centre Without Walls
- Men's sheds
- Intergenerational programming
- Outreach to isolated seniors and caregivers
- Partnering with malls and libraries
- Expanded volunteer opportunities
- Training recreation staff to better serve older adults
- Offering more free and low-cost activities
- Encouraging emerging activities such as pickleball and pole walking
- Using technology and community partnerships to expand the reach of programming



## Assessing Local Needs

In examining how well Edmonton's social and recreational programs and facilities serve seniors, the working group recommended research into seniors' participation rates, motivations and barriers. Banister Research Consulting Inc. conducted the research with the intent of using the results to improve facilities, policies, programs and services.

Researchers concluded that, overall, older adults in Edmonton feel their social and recreational program and facility needs are being met. Seniors who do not participate as much as they'd like more often cite lack of time and health conditions rather than facility and service issues. That said, some subgroups said they are more apt to feel socially isolated, including those who do not feel financially secure, those who are not married or who are widowed, those who did not volunteer in the past year and those who rarely use a computer. The *2015 Older Adults Needs Assessment* is available online at [agefriendlyedmonton.ca](http://agefriendlyedmonton.ca).

To connect seniors with the social and recreational programs available in Edmonton, the working group hosted a *Fit Forever Festival* in 2014. The festival included workshops, a panel of local fitness experts, opportunities to experience a range of activities, a catered lunch and a lively resource fair for seniors and anyone working with them.

**"The Fit Forever Festival really opened the eyes of a lot of people who didn't know many of these services existed."**

— Lesley McEwan, Provincial Fitness Unit, University of Alberta

## Training Frontline Staff

The 2014 AFE *Social and Recreation Participation Promising Practices Summary Report* highlights the importance of ensuring that everyone offering social and recreational activities for seniors has expertise in recreation and active living for an older population. The report recommends educational sessions for programmers, caregivers, health professionals, support workers, community leaders and others.



A project coordinator with the Provincial Fitness Unit at the University of Alberta, Lesley McEwan develops and teaches certification programs for fitness trainers who work with older adults. To equip more workers to safely lead physical activities with clients who may have mobility, cognitive and other issues, a shorter course focused more specifically on maintaining functional independence was designed. Functional Independence Training (FIT), an eight-hour intensive course on working with seniors, focuses on practical, safe, appropriate strategies for helping seniors maintain endurance, strength, flexibility and balance.

Lesley adds, “Given that turnover is high in the field, the ideal would be to require FIT training of all frontline workers interacting with seniors.”

“The research clearly identified the need for a comprehensive training course for program and service providers who may not have the background or expertise in working with seniors.”

— Social and Recreation Participation: Promising Practices Summary Report, 2014



## Going Forward

Many agencies in Edmonton have a hand in offering seniors opportunities to engage in social and recreational activities. The working group highlighted the importance of ensuring that activities for seniors are safe, appropriate and affordable. Frontline workers now have access to new resources, including the toolkit and FIT training.

# Transportation

## GOALS

1. Seniors have access to a range of appropriate transportation services that are available, acceptable, accessible, adaptable and affordable.
2. Senior drivers are supported to ensure the safety of themselves and others.

## ACTIONS COMPLETED /ON TRACK

- Develop and implement a plan for a seniors assisted transportation service model (a service providing door to door assistance for customers).
- Develop and implement a plan to share resource information on transportation options for seniors.
- Research the needs of older drivers and the supports they require.
- Review the current processes for determining older driver competency and the supports available for transitioning from driver to passenger.
- Develop and implement a plan for assessing driver competency and supporting older drivers.

## ACTIONS PARTIAL PROGRESS

- Develop and implement strategies for transportation providers, city planners, developers, AHS, and others to be responsive to the transportation needs of seniors.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM Transportation Working Group: Helping Seniors Take Back Control of Travel

Like other working groups, the one ensuring seniors have access to appropriate transportation attracted leaders in the field. Co-leads Caroline Gee and Margaret Dorey had contributed to Aging in Place research leading up to AFE, and both served seniors in their professional roles: Caroline a seniors' advocate with the Alberta Motor Association and Margaret an accessible transit coordinator with Edmonton Transit.

Under their leadership, the working group launched two legacy initiatives: Driving and Beyond workshops and the Seniors Transportation Information Hubs.

*"If you're 70 or 80 and hanging up the keys after decades of traveling by private vehicle, you assume there's just one choice: become a hermit. But there are options out there, and they're probably not as expensive as you think."*

— Caroline Gee, formerly with the Alberta Motor Association and co-lead of the AFE Transportation Working Group

### Driving and Beyond

Numerous Driving and Beyond workshops were offered to mature drivers and their families and friends on the issues faced as drivers age. These include slower response time, effects of medication, additional requirements for licensing, and when to transition away from driving. The workshops also highlighted alternatives to driving, such as transit, taxi, DATS and Drive Happiness. The workshops had their genesis in transportation forums held during Aging in Place, a City of Edmonton priority in 2010-2013 that helped lay the groundwork for AFE.



The working group dissolved with the conclusion of AFE's first five years, though the hope is that the workshops continue and expand. In addition to the 45-minute in-person session, the group envisions a half-day course offered not only where seniors live and socialize, but at work sites and other places where caregivers and those exploring retirement gather. An online version of *Driving and Beyond* for self-study or use in group settings is being developed.

## Seniors Transportation Information Hubs

Not every senior who has questions about getting around town without a car can or will attend a workshop. Knowing that, the working group placed information about transportation options in places where seniors gather. At 11 or more senior centres and residences, as well as the Bonnie Doon Shopping Centre, you'll find brochures and other information on everything from transit bus schedules to license renewal to alternative transportation options. A coordinator at each site alerts the ESCC when stocks are low.



**“On average, women will live 10 years beyond their ability to drive, men about seven years. That is a long time to conceive of staying at home.”**

— Caroline Gee, formerly with the Alberta Motor Association and co-lead of the AFE Transportation Working Group

## Bus Buddy Program

As driving becomes more difficult, transit offers a way to stay mobile and connected. But for a senior who has rarely ridden a bus or the LRT, the system may appear daunting. Bus buddies would help seniors plan their trips and take advantage of the system's accessible features, with the goal of traveling independently.

Consultants hired in 2013 researched and designed a Bus Buddy program, complete with manuals, publicity materials and a database for matching volunteers and seniors. Edmonton Transit committed to providing bus schedules, maps and other in-kind support.

"We did a couple of practice training sessions for volunteer buddies, and it became clear that managing this program would require a half-time position," working group co-lead Margaret Dorey says. "With no funds available to hire an extra person, the program was put on hold." The Bus Buddy program can be a model to revisit should resources become available.

"The percentage of seniors in Alberta is projected to double to 20% by 2026. Mobility is essential for meeting one's basic needs and is an important contributor to higher order needs of quality of life and well-being."

— Alternate Transportation for Seniors: An Examination of Service Providers in Urban and Rural Alberta, Medically At-Risk Driver Centre, University of Alberta



## Going Forward

Access to transportation remains essential to helping seniors stay engaged. The resources created and piloted through AFE will become increasingly important as the number of seniors who cannot drive swells.



## Drive Happiness: Giving Seniors a Lift

“If it wasn’t for you Pete, my mom would be sitting at home looking at the walls.” That testimony on Drive Happiness in the *aging better together* booklet illustrates the key role played by dedicated volunteers like Peter Salahub, who ferry seniors to appointments, shops, restaurants and events.

Connecting drivers with the seniors needing transportation takes hard work behind the scenes. Over the years, several groups have taken root in our city to do exactly that, each with its own territory, focus and way of doing things – and each scrambling for funds to keep going. The ESCC and the City of Edmonton played a key role in helping these services work more closely together, not only to help keep them afloat, but to help them serve everyone better.

Drive Happiness was formed in 2014 to offer low-cost, volunteer-driven transportation for seniors. Financial support from AFE, the City of Edmonton, the Province of Alberta and the Stollery Foundation allowed the groups to hire a marketing company to create and market the brand. It also allowed Drive Happiness to recruit, screen and train new drivers, and implement Ride Scheduler, a web based ride scheduling system. Now serving all of Edmonton and area, Drive Happiness provided nearly 14,000 rides in 2017 to seniors. “It’s just a wonderful service,” says a rider who recently lost her driver’s license and has difficulty walking long distances. “I feel less worried about losing my license since my experience with them.” “For me, it means I can get to the senior centre and I can actually be with people not only my own age, but interact, even talk to people,” said another service user.

Volunteer drivers like Peter Salahub say their role offers them a purpose in life. Off work due to a disability at age 63, Peter was moping around home before the opportunity arose to offer his long-haul trucking expertise to Drive Happiness. “My wife says, ‘I’ve never seen a guy who changed his life as much as you did. You’re excited to get up in the morning,’” he recounts. “I’ve gained 30 or 35 new friends.”



## Equipping Taxi Drivers to Serve Seniors Well

Participating in the Transportation Working Group on behalf of Greater Edmonton Taxi Service Inc. helped reinforce for Geoff Waters the important role taxi drivers play in seniors' lives. The company manages multiple taxi lines, including wheelchair accessible taxis, and holds contracts with numerous DATS drivers.

Training for drivers of DATS and other wheelchair accessible vehicles emphasizes the care that's required to transport anyone with reduced mobility or other challenges. "When I started working with Age Friendly Edmonton, I realized that what we're doing with DATS can spill over into our regular taxi service," Geoff says.

Indeed, that's exactly what is happening, says Ahmed (Monty) Munawwar, who manages the firm's training. Key points from the DATS training are incorporated into training for all new taxi drivers. The course also includes strategies picked up by attending the Alberta Council on Aging "Senior Friendly"™ workshop, including the idea of subjecting drivers to conditions similar to what passengers experience. For example, they'll immobilize a trainee's arm to mimic the challenge of using a walker with just one dependable arm.

Drivers also learn how to use, store and tie down wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility aids. They're alerted to signs of hearing loss and have strategies for communicating through lip reading or on paper. They're shown how to transport guide dogs. They're advised to slow down for corners and bumps. They know how to offer an elbow (rather than grab an arm) when seniors have balance concerns. "Have patience and try to be helpful," Monty tells the drivers. "This may be that senior's only outing, the highlight of the week."

# Respect and Social Inclusion

## GOALS

1. Seniors are treated with respect.
2. Seniors have opportunities to participate in, and be engaged by, their communities.

## ACTIONS COMPLETED /ON TRACK

- Develop and provide innovative, age-friendly resource guidelines for stakeholders and community organizations to engage seniors.
- Work with community stakeholders and organizations to develop and implement strategies that encourage respect and inclusion of seniors.
- Develop and implement a plan for stakeholders/community organizations to engage and support isolated seniors.

## ACTIONS PARTIAL PROGRESS

- Develop and implement opportunities for utilizing and showcasing seniors' skills and contributions.

### What is Ageism?

Robert Butler coined the term "ageism" in 1969 to express systematic stereotyping and discrimination against elderly people. He defined ageism as a disease and prescribed knowledge as the most basic antidote. The City of Edmonton's 2017 *Seniors Centres of the Future* report notes that ageism refers to two separate but connected ideas:

1. A way of thinking and making assumptions about older people based on negative attitudes and stereotypes about aging.
2. A tendency to structure society based on the assumption that everyone is young and failing to consider the needs of older people.

Ageism can lead to isolation, invisibility, social exclusion, age discrimination and elder abuse.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM Respect and Social Inclusion Working Group: Ageism Meets its Match

The Respect and Social Inclusion Working Group sought to help Edmontonians recognize and guard against the assumptions about relationships with elders in our culture. Their work culminated in Upgrade Your Mindset, an interactive online workshop anyone can use to unmask their assumptions and learn to engage respectfully with seniors.

*“Ageism causes society to discount, and at times completely discard, the wisdom and experience acquired by people over the course of adulthood.”*

— From *Agewise*, by Margaret Morganroth Gullette

### Shifting Perspectives

The working group began by engaging a contractor to build an annotated bibliography about ageism and how it impacts the respect and inclusion of seniors. Drawing upon the findings, a Respect and Social Inclusion for Older Adults Workshop was created to equip anyone who interacts with older adults to make those interactions as positive, respectful and inclusive as possible. The workshop uses interaction and humour to help participants recognize their often unintended stereotypes about aging, ending with an invitation to become champions for change in their own families, organizations and communities.

To extend the workshop’s reach, a facilitator guide was created with everything needed to conduct the workshop, including handout materials and instructions for each activity. The interactive online version can be found at [upgradeyourmindset.ca](https://www.upgradeyourmindset.ca). Working individually or with a group, the online workshop takes about 90 minutes to complete.

## Going Forward

Combatting ageism will continue to be a key focus of AFE going forward. It's one of 4 key priorities alongside diversity, aging in place and intergenerational connections. The social inclusion that is so crucial for seniors' health and well-being depends on a culture of respect.

“At a societal level, ageism can influence policies that, without intending harm, can marginalize older adults, pushing them aside, so we no longer benefit from their participation in society.”

— Respect and Social Inclusion for Older Adults Workshop



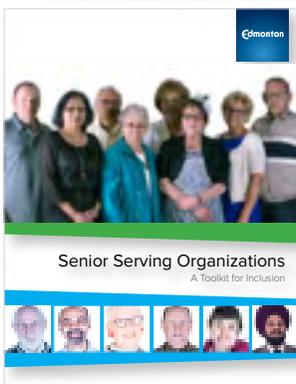
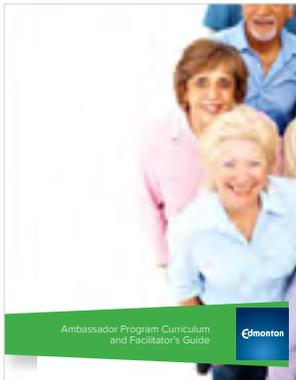


## Tools for inclusion: Building on What Others Have Learned



Three documents that grew out of efforts by the Mill Woods Seniors Association to build a more inclusive culture are now available at [agefriendlyedmonton.ca](http://agefriendlyedmonton.ca). These resources have already been used by numerous seniors organizations to view their cultures through an inclusion lens:

- **Senior Serving Organizations: A Toolkit for Inclusion.** Offers ways to ensure that facilities, policies, programs and services feel welcoming and inclusive to all seniors. Useful for boards, staff and volunteers.
- **Ambassador Program Curriculum and Facilitator's Guide.** A manual for equipping members to serve as ambassadors, welcoming and including everyone in our diverse community.
- **Senior Serving Organizations: A Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings & Events.** A practical resource for planning and leading meetings and events to maximize inclusion and participation.



**“An inclusive organization is one that acknowledges and respects diversity, recognizes barriers to inclusion, and works to actively meet the needs of seniors with varied and diverse backgrounds.”**

— Edmonton Senior Serving Organizations:  
A Toolkit for Inclusion, 2016



## Creating Opportunities for Youth and Seniors to Connect



The Mill Woods branch of the Edmonton Public Library is home to the Mill Woods Seniors and Multicultural Centre. It's a place where both seniors and students gather – and where ageism could rear its ugly head. Wanting to create a positive experience from the mix of ages, the librarians seized the opportunity when AFE offered funding to pilot a new Intergenerational Programming Toolkit. The branch used its grant to launch “Then and Now,” a 10-week program that drew youth and seniors together to create memory kits. The project highlighted examples of how things have changed, and also about what has remained the same. The Intergenerational Toolkit can be found at [agefriendlyedmonton.ca](https://agefriendlyedmonton.ca)

As the memory kits came together, so did the people involved. “To be honest, I used to think elders were a joke,” one student confessed. “But when they told us what they had gone through, what they’d built, how they improved their lives and our lives, I see it all differently.” In addition to the Mill Woods branch, four other community groups received AFE funding to pilot the toolkit. Their diverse initiatives hint at the broad potential of intergenerational programming:

- The **Creating Hope Society of Alberta** pulled together elders and youth to share their experiences, including times in residential school and the child welfare system.
- The **Multicultural Family Resource Society** drew youth and seniors together to share recipes and cooking in a collective kitchen.
- The **Westend Seniors Activity Centre** invited students to serve as personal trainers and join seniors in Christmas celebrations.
- The **Senior Citizen Opportunity Neighborhood Association** launched a multigenerational community garden.

# Civic Participation, Volunteerism and Employment

## GOALS

1. Seniors have a voice in decisions that affect their community.
2. Seniors are valued as employees and volunteers.

### ACTIONS COMPLETED /ON TRACK

- Research, identify and share best practices with regards to seniors' needs and interests in volunteering.
- Research, identify and share best practices with regards to seniors' participation in the workforce.
- Develop and implement strategies to encourage seniors' participation in civic affairs.
- Conduct age-friendly community consultations.

### ACTIONS PARTIAL PROGRESS

- Develop a plan to assist organizations in recruiting, retaining and supporting older workers.
- Develop a plan to assist organizations in recruiting, retaining and supporting senior volunteers.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM

### Civic Participation, Volunteerism and Employment Working Group: Tapping the Wisdom of the Ages

When seniors help shape their community, whether as voters, volunteers or employees, the benefits flow both ways. Research shows that seniors who contribute to the community are healthier and happier than those isolated at home. The community has much to gain from seniors, whether it's professional expertise, wisdom gleaned over a long life or tips for canning the perfect jar of pickles. Yet ageist assumptions continue to limit opportunities for older Edmontonians.

**“Studies have found that older adults who volunteer have reduced stress-related illnesses and higher self-esteem and are less likely to feel isolated.”**

— Promising Practices: Comparable Cities Profiles Resource Toolkit, 2014

The Civic Participation, Volunteerism and Employment Working Group set out to expand awareness of the value of senior involvement, promote the range of opportunities available to seniors and advocate for the removal of barriers to participation. The group led or supported a variety of initiatives, including strategies to encourage seniors to vote and initiatives to connect seniors with employment and volunteer opportunities. Among the work's visible advocates were former Mayor Stephen Mandel and Betty Loree, who served as his liaison to seniors. Both spoke at a Seniors Connections event at City Hall in August 2013 that highlighted employment and volunteer opportunities for seniors.

**“We need to make seniors feel like they still belong to society, not isolate them.”**

— Betty Loree, Seniors Ambassador and Liaison



## BY THE NUMBERS

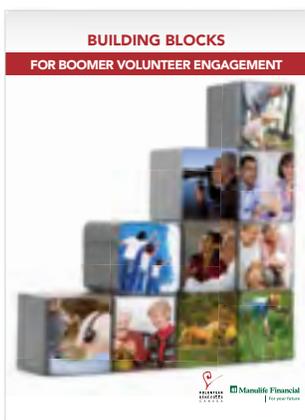
According to Statistics Canada, Canada's senior adults volunteer an average of 223 hours each year, more than any other age group.

### Matching Up Volunteers

During the working group's tenure, Edmonton's volunteer landscape evolved significantly. Volunteer Edmonton went from a matching service operated by the Support Network to a hub for information and professional development managed by the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (ECVO). Potential volunteers who contact ECVO are now encouraged to sign up online at [govolunteer.ca](http://govolunteer.ca) or dial 211.

Meanwhile, research pointed to a shift in the type of volunteer positions sought by the latest crop of seniors. Boomers are tending to retire later or semi-retire, and many juggle responsibilities for elderly parents and/or children and grandchildren. When carving out time for volunteering, they're likely to seek time-limited roles that tap their expertise and involve them in decision-making.

The working group's efforts to connect seniors with volunteer opportunities included an Engaging Boomers Volunteer Workshop in March 2014. The 30 attendees left with increased awareness about ways to attract and retain the right people from this experienced pool of potential volunteers. The group also promoted the Volunteer Canada publication *Building Blocks for Boomer Volunteer Engagement* at events and on the AFE website. The publication offers practical resources and tools for matching senior volunteers with needs that fit their personalities, interests and talents.



“Finding volunteer opportunities can be challenging. People truly do want to give back, but they may want to volunteer in a certain way at a very specific time, and not every organization can handle that.”

— Susan Kankkunen, City of Edmonton



## Employing Seniors

For some seniors, finding a post-retirement job is the ticket to fulfillment. To foster positive experiences that benefit both the employer and the older employee, AFE commissioned the ECVO to do a review of promising practices in 2013. The findings are summarized in *The Benefits of Age: An Annotated Bibliography of Strategies that Support Improved Labour Market Participation for Older Workers*. The following year, that research was distilled into *Employing Older Workers: Promising Practices*. The promising practices suggested to appeal to older workers include age-neutral job descriptions, flexible hours of work, project-based assignments, opportunities to mentor, a friendly culture, accessible workplaces and covering of critical illness insurance. The working group also drew upon and helped to publicize federal and provincial findings related to employing seniors.

“Seniors have a lot to contribute, and businesses that use and direct that energy will see nothing but profit. It’s a win-win.”

— Betty Loree, Seniors Ambassador and Liaison

## Making it Easier to Vote

A third priority of this working group’s agenda involved encouraging seniors’ participation in civic affairs. Following the 2013 election with the encouragement from AFE, Edmonton Elections reached out to populations that expressed concerns about barriers to voting. Through an online survey, in-person workshops and public consultation, feedback was gathered from seniors, youth, Indigenous people, new Canadians and persons with disabilities. Although voters said they were generally satisfied, some seniors expressed concern about getting to voting stations and accessing adequate support from voting station workers.

When assigning voting stations for 2017, officials put higher priority on factors such as proximity to public transit, parking availability, relative ease of finding the location and compliance with *Accessibility and Universal Design in Architecture Guidelines*. They also doubled the on-site voting at seniors' accommodations to 65 locations and offered bedside voting at several hospitals, care facilities and service organizations, such as the Boyle Street Community Services and The Mustard Seed. Changes to ballot design made it easier for voters with vision impairments to cast ballots and, where possible, election workers included individuals fluent in languages common in specific voting areas.

**“On election day, seniors want to be counted.”**

— Betty Loree, Seniors Ambassador and Liaison

## Going Forward

The wide scope of the working group's mandate meant that some areas received more attention than others. Many of the members had expertise in the volunteer sector as opposed to employment. Future efforts to promote seniors' employment would benefit from a focused effort involving human resources professionals and other leaders in industries likely to offer jobs to older workers.

This working group accomplished important advocacy, created tools that remain relevant today and piloted events that connected seniors with opportunities to be engaged in their community. Ongoing attention is needed to ensure that seniors who aspire to volunteer and work are welcomed into roles that fit – and that no barriers stand in the way of seniors' civic engagement.

# Housing

## GOALS

1. A range of age-friendly housing options, from single-family homes to congregate living, is available to seniors.
2. Seniors are informed about the available range of housing options.

## ACTIONS COMPLETED /ON TRACK

- Promote and/or develop resources to inform seniors and their families about their housing options.
- Seniors and senior organizations are informed about fire safety and personal emergency preparedness.
- Continue to inform and advocate for building code changes to enhance fire safety within residential care facilities and assisted seniors housing.

## ACTIONS PARTIAL PROGRESS

- Promote and/or develop guidelines and resources on age-friendly housing options.
- Develop a strategy for enhancing age-friendly housing options.

### Home for Life™ Essentials

The following seven features must be incorporated into a home's structure for it to qualify as a Home for Life™:

- Zero-step entrance
- Accessible kitchen
- Accessible three-piece bathroom
- Accessible bedroom or flex room
- Accessible laundry area
- Doorways that are 36 inches (0.9 metres) wide
- Hallways that are 42 inches (1.1 metres) wide

Ideally, all seven Home for Life™ essentials are included on the main floor. If the bedroom, bathroom or laundry is not on the main level, a stackable closet (for elevators) or straight stairs (for a stair lift) is required.

For more, see [homeforlife.ca](http://homeforlife.ca).



## Housing: Re-imagining Home – for Life

The working group charged with expanding seniors' access to appropriate housing joined a diverse circle of stakeholders already focused on creating guidelines for building barrier-free homes under the moniker Home for Life.™

**“The housing committee brought people together and developed resources and guidelines that could influence consumers and builders to consider adaptable homes at a much younger age.”**

— Brenda Wong, City of Edmonton, inaugural AFE co-manager

The seeds of Home for Life began germinating even before Age Friendly Edmonton was born, as more seniors than ever languished in hospitals for a lack of accessible places to live. “Adults with spinal cord injuries or stroke would come in to the Glenrose for rehabilitation and realize they couldn’t return home because they couldn’t do the stairs or use the bathroom,” recalls Grace Maier, the hospital’s Director of Specialized Geriatrics.

Those issues and others prompted former Mayor Stephen Mandel to host a one-day Mayor’s Round-table for Accessible Housing and Universal Design for Seniors. The resulting 2009 white paper recommended the establishment of a multi-sectoral action group on accessible housing and universal design. A cross-section of leaders from senior-serving agencies, disability organizations, builders, designers, realtor’s, customers, the City of Edmonton, AHS and the University of Alberta accepted the challenge.

The group first tried creating an online site for sharing the names of trusted renovators and ramp suppliers, before shifting into a more visionary mode. Grace recalls asking, “Wouldn’t it be good if everybody built a house that would be accessible for their whole lifetime?” That’s where Home for Life came from, and the name was trademarked by the University of Alberta through the efforts of Dr. Lili Liu, Chair of Rehabilitation Medicine.

## Bringing a Concept to Life

Working with experts such as architect Ron Wickman, a leader in barrier-free design, the committee developed seven common-sense guidelines for creating homes that meet accessibility needs at all ages and stages of life. Zero-step (stairless) entrances, coupled with wide doorways, hallways and turning radiuses, make getting into and around these homes easier for everyone, from babies in strollers to elders using walkers and wheelchairs.

Using AFE funding, the group commissioned the [homeforlife.ca](http://homeforlife.ca) website, pamphlets and articles to promote this innovative approach to aging in place. "Being able to build a robust website was significant," says Grace Maier, who co-lead the working group with Roger Laing of Sage Seniors Association.

## BY THE NUMBERS

In a 2015 needs assessment conducted by Banister Research & Consulting for Age Friendly Edmonton, 82% of older adults ranked staying in their home as important – four or five on a scale of five.

Committee members also met with numerous architects and homebuilders to promote the benefits of building homes for life. A few small builders incorporated some barrier-free features into their designs. Others were intrigued by the concept, but most were reluctant to pursue it, citing lack of consumer demand. It is expected that demand will naturally grow as the proportion of older adults increases.

"These homes can be aesthetically pleasing. They don't have to scream 'disability.' You should be able to go through a home, recognize it is a beautiful home and then after the fact be told, 'By the way, it's a Home for Life.'"

— Grace Maier, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital and co-lead of the AFE Housing Working Group



## Shifting the Norm

Making Home for Life the norm requires a shift in thinking by policymakers, developers and home buyers. For example, the typical Home for Life requires an unconventional approach to lot design and servicing. The stairless front entry often results in a deeper basement, which in turn requires deeper underground service lines, coupled with measures to keep water from pooling around the house. In addition, enough distance is needed between the front door and the sidewalk to achieve a gently sloping walkway.

In recent years, City Council has signalled interest in incorporating Home for Life principles into our community's housing stock. A draft roadmap for infill housing also suggests offering incentives to encourage the development of fully accessible and age friendly laneway homes. The new *Access Design Guide* developed to encourage age friendly spaces and buildings notes that homes meeting accessible or visitable design standards can benefit from parking reductions.

**“Design for the young and you exclude the old. Design for the old and you include everyone.”**

— Bernard Isaacs, Birmingham Centre for Applied Gerontology

## Future Directions

Continued advocacy with homeowners, builders and policymakers is needed to make Home for Life a way of life. Every home that is built in Edmonton represents an opportunity to put the principles to work in a way that benefits everyone.

“The vast majority of elderly persons prefer to remain in their homes as long as possible. With today’s housing stock, this is virtually impossible.”

— Ron Wickman, architect, writing in Curb Magazine





## The AFE Action Plan

The *AFE Vision for and Age Friendly Edmonton Action Plan* highlights the need to ensure that seniors can safely escape their homes in case of a fire. Edmonton Fire Rescue Services (EFRS) has played a leading role in that through both public education and advocacy.

### Filling a Gap in Code

Since 2006, EFRS has held fire summits to raise awareness of issues in provincial building code. Fire Summit II in 2008, which focused on individuals who need help evacuating, occurred shortly after a woman with Down syndrome died in a fire in her Edmonton group home. Fire Summit V in 2014, which focused on fire safety in Alberta's residential care facilities, followed a fire in a Britannia area apartment building where the elderly residents proved hard to protect and evacuate due to narrow hallways, lack of early warning systems and other issues. Each summit built awareness of code deficiencies and spurred change.

A gap still remains regarding smaller facilities that provide care, including group homes. Proposed code changes that may have required costly measures such as fire separations and sprinkler systems met with significant resistance and are still undergoing revision. Seniors residences constructed under older building codes also tend to lack built-in safety features such as fire sprinklers, smoke exhaust systems, pressurized egress, and instead depend more heavily on staff to ensure the safety of residents unable to self-evacuate.

### Preventive Measures

To reinforce the importance of being prepared for fire, EFRS provides free fire safety presentations and materials at seniors centres and other venues upon request. EFRS also does annual inspections of many buildings with residents who need help to evacuate.

# Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

## GOALS

1. Parks, outdoor spaces, communities and buildings are designed to be age friendly.
2. Parks, outdoor spaces, communities, walkways and buildings are maintained to ensure ongoing access by seniors.

## ACTIONS COMPLETED /ON TRACK

- Promote and encourage the use of an audit resource for age-friendly universal design and inclusion.
- Promote and/or develop guidelines and resources for parks, outdoor spaces, communities and buildings.
- Develop and implement age friendly guidelines for maintenance.
- Encourage the development of age-friendly parks, outdoor spaces, communities, buildings, and walkways.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM

### Outdoor Spaces & Buildings Working Group: Enhancing Access for Everyone

The Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Working Group's legacy project, the 90-page *Access Design Guide*, raises the bar for the design and maintenance of Edmonton's public buildings and outdoor spaces. Seniors of the future will enjoy wider walkways, dedicated change rooms equipped for adults as well as children, fully accessible recreation centres and other features that make it easier to be out and about rather than home alone. Caregivers will also benefit, as will anyone with mobility challenges or young children in tow.

"If we build spaces that are accessible or barrier-free, they will be age friendly and work for seniors."

— Mary Jane McLaughlin, ESCC and co-lead of the AFE Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Working Group

Like private developers, the City must follow accessibility standards set by the 2014 Alberta Building Code. The *Access Design Guide* goes beyond code with the goal of making all public buildings and spaces fully accessible. Developers are also encouraged to comply, so that Edmonton truly becomes an age friendly city.

"We tend to design for the larger audience, but I think we should think about the smaller population, because they're the ones who have the challenge."

— Yogi Subramonian, City of Edmonton





## Designing the Guide

Working group members, including a senior citizen and a wheelchair user, initially toured civic buildings and outdoor spaces to assess their accessibility. The committee also commissioned a review of best practices, coupled with public engagement to determine what seniors feel is required to make our built spaces and outdoor spaces more inclusive. The resulting report, *Buildings and Outdoor Spaces: Visioning for an 'Age Friendly Edmonton'* became the basis for a draft toolkit for the design of public buildings and spaces. The review highlighted the importance of ensuring that public spaces are not only designed to be accessible, but maintained to be barrier-free.

The search for best practices led down the road to Calgary, which had developed Access Design Standards for its buildings. Obtaining permission to adapt the Calgary guidelines, the working group created the *Access Design Guide*, which extends beyond buildings to outdoor spaces – and beyond design to maintenance. City of Edmonton staff, specifically architects and members of the seniors team, played key roles in development of the guide.

## Standards Set by the Guide

Following a year of rigorous review by more than 80 individuals from across City departments, the *Access Design Guide* received its final stamp of approval in winter 2017. You can find it online at [agefriendlyedmonton.ca](http://agefriendlyedmonton.ca).

“If buildings and public spaces aren’t made age friendly, social isolation becomes more and more a concern.”

— Mary Jane McLaughlin, ESCC and Co-lead of the AFE Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Working Group



AgeFriendlyEdmonton.ca

Some of the key standards to help make our city more accessible for all ages are:

- The minimum width for public walkways in Edmonton increased to 1800 mm rather than the provincial minimum of 1500 mm, so that two wheelchair users can safely pass each other.
- Places of public assembly will have courtesy seating along the aisles for seniors and persons with various abilities, plus companion seats next to all wheelchair spaces.
- All places of assembly shall be designed to enhance hearing ability, preferably by providing an induction loop system.
- Street parking stalls for people of all ages and abilities will be sited so that anyone exiting a vehicle is protected from vehicular traffic.
- Tactile strips in public spaces will be located not only on descending stairways, but on ascent as well.
- Parks will provide seating adjacent to all amenities with views to points of interest, including seating on top, middle and bottom landings where possible for multiple runs of stairs.
- Supporting a “complete streets” approach will ensure that pathways around buildings are clear of furniture, signage and other barriers.
- Community gardens will be barrier-free and include raised beds.
- Public spaces and buildings will be maintained to remain barrier-free.

## Going Forward

The *Access Design Guide* is a valuable tool for making our community more age friendly. In addition to reinforcing the importance of age friendly design and maintenance, the guide provides information on how to apply the design criteria to any project, private as well as public.

# Reducing Social Isolation



## Collective Action Takes Flight

Thanks in large measure to the networks fostered by AFE, senior-serving agencies across the city were ready to respond in 2015, when the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program called for collaborative proposals to reduce social isolation among seniors. They knew that as many as one in three seniors in Edmonton face challenges that limit social interactions. Through experience in AFE working groups and other initiatives, they also knew the value of teaming up with a united goal.

Over 20 organizations came together to discuss how federal funding could best be used to reduce seniors' isolation. In the end, 8 of them jointly submitted what turned out to be a winning proposal. In 2016, Edmonton received more than \$3.7 million over three years to launch the Pan-Edmonton Group Addressing Social Isolation of Seniors (PEGASIS), a collaborative of 6 interlinking projects with backbone support from the ESCC. The 6 partners include Drive Happiness, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Seniors' Centre without Walls, Greater Edmonton Foundation Seniors Housing, Sage Seniors Association and Westend Seniors Activity Centre

The six frontline projects and partners are creating or enhancing connections for seniors struggling with language barriers, mental health concerns, limited finances, lack of transportation and other issues. By working together in new ways, the partners are already seeing positive impact. It's not unusual for a senior identified by one of the partners to be co-served by another – perhaps for a ride, a learning opportunity, companionship or social services.

## BY THE NUMBERS

In an Older Adult Needs Assessment commissioned by AFE in 2015, 32% of respondents mentioned things that limit their social interactions, including poor health, mobility challenges and limited finances.

As the backbone agency, ESCC is taking steps to ensure senior-serving agencies know how they can help each other while also building government and community awareness of systematic barriers that can lead to social isolation. Activities include the website: [connectingedmontonseniors.ca](http://connectingedmontonseniors.ca), a journey map developed in partnership with *Mapping and Planning Support* (MAPS), public presentations and brochures in 6 languages.

PEGASIS partners are also tracking whether their efforts are making a difference. In 2017, ESCC engaged Insights West to conduct a population-level survey of Edmonton seniors' levels of social isolation, loneliness and related wellness. Results informed the 2017 *Edmonton Vital Signs Report* on belonging and numerous other public documents. A follow-up survey will be undertaken in 2019.

With federal funding set to end in 2019, the PEGASIS partners are seeking ways to sustain the work set in motion and nurture the spirit of collaboration that is proving so crucial to serving Edmonton's seniors.

## BY THE NUMBERS

24% of respondents in the 2017 Insights West survey of Edmonton seniors scored as lonely on an international scale. Seniors most likely to score as lonely include those whose health is fair/poor (41%), those who completed the survey in a language other than English (40%), those with incomes less than \$1,600 a month (39%) and those who live alone (36%). Many (42%) respondents said they would like to be more active in their communities or in everyday life; the most common barriers to becoming more active were health, cost and not wanting to go alone.





## Journey Map

The content of this map is drawn from in-depth interviews with seniors and senior-serving workers. Results show wide variations in personal experiences across a spectrum of factors that influence social vulnerability and social isolation. Each person’s journey is unique to their situation and participation in personally meaningful activities is the key to preventing and/or overcoming unwanted social isolation and loneliness. Findings support the scientific literature which acknowledges the complex and dynamic nature of this subject.

# Age Friendly Edmonton 2.0

## Bridging Across and Beyond

As AFE's first 5-year mandate drew to a close, attention turned to charting the next chapter – a process that involved extensive community consultation. The AFE steering committee held a series of stakeholder think tanks in 2016 to review what had been accomplished and identify the areas needing top priority going forward. Workshops held in 2017 with partner organizations and City of Edmonton staff confirmed and fleshed out the 4 priority areas:



### **SUPPORTING AGING IN PLACE**

- Diverse housing options
- Education and awareness
- Core support services
- Neighbour connections



### **ENCOURAGING INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS**

- Public space design
- Opportunities for programming
- Partnerships with organizations



### **RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY**

- Address seniors poverty
- Enhance supports
- Partnerships with ethnocultural groups
- Reduce age and ability related barriers



### **REDUCING AGEISM**

- Promote positive perceptions of aging
- Educate on the impact of ageist attitude and behaviour
- Celebrate contribution of seniors



“Aging is not for the faint at heart. It’s for the young at heart.”

— Participants in Advancing Age Friendly workshop

AFE leaders developed a draft vision and strategic actions, and shared these in 5 public workshops. More than 200 people attended, adding their wisdom to the mix, and another 11 people responded to an online survey. Those insights were collated into *Advancing Age Friendly Edmonton: What We Heard*. The document describes the public engagement process and outlines the highest priority ideas for moving forward along with potential opportunities for action. Ideas from the public engagement process will provide guidance as the work gains momentum.

The *What We Heard* report confirms the important role that bridging will play in the next chapter of Age Friendly Edmonton--bridging across the projects supported by the movement and outward to the broader community. We aim to ensure that sectors not specifically named in the four priorities, such as health, housing and transportation, continue to receive attention within the mix. Keeping the movement on track with community participation will help to focus on the needs and contributions of seniors.



## A Celebration of AFE and a Call to Action!

On June 22, 2018, Age Friendly Edmonton hosted a celebration event at City Hall. We had a look back at the accomplishments over the past 5 years and introduced our renewed focus for the future. Counsellors Andrew Knack and Moe Banga were on hand to confirm their support and participation for AFE 2.0. Co-chair of AFE Bauni Mackay and Becca Barrington of the Geriactors each spoke and shared their passion and interest for the work of AFE. Entertainment was provided by classical guitarist Ernst Birss and the talented Sage Line Dancers.



A “call to action” was brought forward during the celebration encouraging citizens to express their interest in helping to build a city that values, respects and actively supports the safety, diversity and well-being of seniors. It would be an opportunity for individuals to help direct the work of Age Friendly Edmonton to reflect the needs of older adults and the community at large. Citizens see an age friendly city as a place that supports aging in place, improves attitudes towards aging, provides opportunities for intergenerational interactions, and engages with diverse populations.

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

— Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations

As part of the WHO’s Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, AFE will continue to act locally with a global vision; applying international best practices and guidelines to the task of making Edmonton happier, safer, friendlier, warmer and more interesting for seniors – and thus for everyone, regardless of age.



# Glossary

**Age friendly** - In an age friendly community, policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to support and enable older people to "age actively."

**Aging in place** - The ability of people to choose to live in the home and community of their choice as independently and safely as possible.

**Assisted transportation** - A transportation service that provides door-through-door transportation for people who have mobility challenges and other special needs that prevent them from using public transportation or other existing ride services.

**Civic** - Pertaining to overall city, including municipal government, businesses, organizations, events etc.

**Communication** - Methods of relaying information including print, electronic, face-to-face, etc.

**Community** - An area which includes where you live, work, pray, play, etc. (broader than a geographical neighbourhood).

**Community characteristics** - Aspects of an area that make it unique.

**Housing options** - Options for housing that include adaptations and renovations to existing housing structures, new-built single-family homes or congregate living structures.

**Key stakeholder** - Any agency or organization that has an interest and/or expertise in the delivery of services to seniors and which are able to take action to achieve the goal/action.

**Lead partner** - Agency or organization that will play an initiating/facilitating role in guiding the process to pursue the goal/action.

**Neighbourhood** - An area defined by a geographical boundary.

**Promising practices** - Effective methods, techniques and activities that help senior serving providers be more effective. Often referred to as best practices.

**Referral services** - Networks that exist to connect people to appropriate services based on their needs e.g. The Seniors Information Phone Line, City of Edmonton 311, etc.

**Senior** - Refers to people generally ages 55 years and older.

**Social engagement** - Forms of interaction between people including physical, mental, recreational, artistic, cultural, spiritual etc.

**Stakeholder** - Any individual or organization that has an interest in the delivery of services to seniors.

# Acknowledgments

Thank you to the dedicated members of the Steering Committee and Working Groups of Age Friendly Edmonton who helped direct the work detailed herein. You have contributed to our continued efforts to make Edmonton age friendly.

Photographs were provided by the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council unless otherwise noted. Thank you to the many seniors who continue to share their wisdom – guiding actions and inspiring change to make Edmonton a special place to live and thrive.

## Age Friendly Edmonton Partners and Stakeholders Groups

Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council  
City of Edmonton

- Citizen Access and Inclusion
- City Operations-Edmonton Transit Services
- Edmonton Fire Rescue Services
- Edmonton Public Library
- Social Development-Housing and Homelessness

Advisory Board for Persons with Disability

Alberta Centre for Active Living

Alberta Fitness Leadership Certification Association/  
Provincial Fitness Unit

Alberta Health Department

Alberta Health Services/Glenrose Hospital

Alberta Motor Association

Alberta Senior Citizens Housing Association

Alberta Seniors

Assist Community Services Centre

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

Canadian Mental Health Association

Canadian Paraplegic Association

Caregivers Alberta

Chinatown Business Association

Christenson Developments/  
Arcon Design Services Ltd.

Drive Happiness

Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations

Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues

Edmonton Marigold Seniors

Edmonton Meals on Wheels

Edmonton's Senior Centres:

- Sage Seniors Association
- Mill Woods Seniors Activity Centre
- North West Edmonton Seniors
- Central Lions Seniors Association
- North Edmonton Seniors Association
- Westend Seniors Activity Centre
- South East Edmonton Seniors
- SouthWest Edmonton Seniors Association

Edmonton Social Planning Council

Edmonton Seniors Pride Group

Good Samaritan Society

Greater Edmonton Taxi Services Inc.

Home Instead Seniors Care

Lifestyle Options

Medically At-Risk Drivers Centre

Multiple Sclerosis Society

Parkinsons Association of Alberta

Realtors Association of Edmonton

Ron Wickman Architect

Shepherd's Care

Edmonton Southside Primary Care Network

Revera

United Way of Alberta, Capital Region

University of Alberta

YMCA



255 Bonnie Doon Shopping Centre  
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Edmonton, AB T6C 4E3  
**seniorscouncil.net**

Many of you have already chosen to work together to build a city that's happier, safer, friendlier, warmer and more interesting, for every one of every age. We are excited to find new ways to work with you - to lead, influence, connect and mobilize for an Age Friendly Edmonton.

Opportunities to stay informed and participate as we continue the work of Age Friendly Edmonton:

-  **Age Friendly Edmonton**
-  **@agefriendlyYEG**
-  **[edmonton.ca/agefriendly](http://edmonton.ca/agefriendly)**

