



Report on the
**Strathcona County
Older Adults Plan**

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES



**STRATHCONA
COUNTY**

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Background

The need for the development of an Older Adults Plan for Strathcona County was recommended in Strathcona County's Social Sustainability Framework in 2007. A need was recognized to prepare and plan for changing demographics. In 2007, Strathcona County residents aged 65 and older comprised 13 per cent of the total population. It was projected that by 2031, this percentage would increase to 25 per cent of the total population.

The Older Adults Plan was developed through extensive community consultation. Using a variety of methods, and involving over 1,100 participants, these key issues emerged as the top concerns and needs for older adults:

- Access to seniors housing
- Access to health care
- Rising living costs combined with fixed incomes
- Availability of personal care and home services
- Transportation
- Outreach services
- Information about programs and services

Current Status

Strathcona County is one of Alberta's fastest growing communities. Over the last ten years there has been a 16% increase in population, increased diversity, growth in seniors population and changing community connections. According to data from Statistics Canada 2016 census, for the first time in Canadian history, there are more seniors than children living in Canada (5.9 million people over the age of 65 versus 5.8 million children under the age of 14). The 2016 census confirms that the Canadian population is aging at a rapid pace.

In June of 2013, Strathcona County received the first ever Age-friendly Alberta Award. Age-friendly communities promote healthy and active aging. People in age-friendly communities are supported in maintaining their independence and have access to the community supports and services they require. Age-friendly communities are good places to age. In Strathcona County, seniors are encouraged to stay active and engaged and this has been demonstrated by the many actions in the Older Adults Plan. These principles will be further supported through the belief that "Aging in Place" continues to be an ideal for many Strathcona County seniors currently and into the future. This will require continued intention toward the identification of the changing needs and the urban/rural challenges in our community and the development of transformative approaches to these needs.

Given this principle and what we know about the rapidly growing aging population we are thinking ahead to plan and prepare to support older adults in Strathcona County. We start by taking a look back to Strathcona County's Older Adults Plan. This report will highlight the achievements from this plan and provide a springboard for conversations going forward, as we continue to prepare and plan for the needs of our aging population.





Older Adult Plan Vision

Strathcona County is an age-friendly and caring community that values the contributions and strengths of older adults, is responsive to their diverse needs and desire for choice, and provides a spectrum of opportunities for active and purposeful lives.

Process and Implementation of Older Adults Plan

Members of the Older Adults Plan met on a monthly basis to update status of goals and strategies, to review priority areas and to set goals for each coming year. This included assessing emerging trends and gaps and identifying areas where collaboration could enhance/create efficiencies in implementation. As the goals and strategies were tracked and assessed, potential solutions were developed to address implementation barriers.

While the level and layers of individual department and collaborative efforts are wide and detailed, this report brings attention to the broader areas of success from the Older Adults Plan.



Goals & Strategies: Key Accomplishments

Healthy, active aging allows people to realize their potential for physical, social, and mental well-being throughout their lives – to participate in society – while being provided with adequate protection, security and care when needed.

Factors that influence aspects of aging are called determinants. These determinants interact throughout our lives, and are an accumulation of a lifetime of effects and experiences.

The goals of the Older Adults Plan are organized within the determinants and the following are highlights of key actions that have been achieved from this work. Key achievements are highlighted for each area as follows.

Cross Determinants

Goal 1: Coordination and Goal 2: Information

- In support of our Age-Friendly community status, Age-Friendly Communications Guidelines are available to all Strathcona County staff and a first ever in Alberta, Age-Friendly Community of Practice was established.
- A Seniors Resource Directory was developed and is delivered to community once per year.
- Connections with older adults in rural communities increased through different initiatives, including the Seniors' Travelling Café Project and information for seniors on the Family and Community Services website.

Social Determinants

Goal 3: Social Connection and Goal 4: Learning Opportunities

- A Friendly Visitor Program was developed to connect older adults with a friendly volunteer.
- Lifelong learning opportunities have increased. This includes free library programs and ESL conversation circles.
- A library outreach program was delivered in urban and rural communities through the Bookmobile and library volunteers.
- The Active Living Conference brought older adults together to connect and learn.
- Indoor and outdoor community gathering spaces and functional and accessible trail networks were implemented.

Physical Environment Determinants

Goal 5: Housing, Goal 6: Transportation, Goal 7: Universal Design and Goal 8: Safety/Crime Prevention

- An Affordable Housing Task Force, Transit Master Plan and Accessibility Advisory Committee were established. Heartland Housing Foundation struck a Sub-Regional Housing Implementation Committee to address some of the Mayors Task Force on Community Housing recommendations. Heartland Housing Foundation hosted the first Housing Symposium in November of 2016.
- Accessible design features have been implemented at the Strathcona County Library and recreational facilities.
- There is a RCMP member on both the Elder Abuse Committee and Older Adults Committee.
- The Strathcona County RCMP have included the media to advise residents of current frauds/theft and prevention tips (e.g. holiday theft prevention, community mailbox thefts and prevention, locking doors during the day, securing vehicles, increase in rural break and enters and prevention tips, Kijiji scams and fraud prevention).
- The Strathcona County RCMP conducts (CPTED) Crime Prevention through Environmental Design of senior (+55) complexes as requested.
- Strathcona County RCMP works closely with two community groups (Citizens on Patrol and Crime Watch) that assist in crime prevention and information distribution to senior and all members of the community.
- A variety of housing types are available to accommodate life-stage housing, income and accessibility. Heartland Housing Foundation are building more senior affordable housing funded by a debenture from Strathcona County. Clover Bar Lodge is being replaced, increasing to 144 units, and including Supportive Living level 4. Funding is from the Provincial Government; the land is provided and serviced by Strathcona County.
- In 2015, the Land Use Bylaw was revised to accommodate the inclusion of “permitted” and “discretionary” use of Garden Suites/Secondary Suites on certain zonings.
- Walkable communities were implemented (e.g. Centre in the Park, Aspen Trails and Salisbury Village).

Economic Determinants

Goal 9: Employment and Volunteering and Goal 10: Financial

- Volunteering opportunities for Older Adults are promoted in various locations in the community.

Behavioural Determinants

Goal 11: Social, Recreational and Cultural Activities, Goal 12: Health and Wellness, Goal 13: Supports in the Home, Goal 14: Vulnerable Older Adults and Caregivers and Goal 15: Elder Abuse

- RAP (Recreation Access Program) was created.
- Glen Allan Recreation Centre was revitalized and health and wellness programs for older adults were created throughout all recreation facilities both urban and rural.
- Many community partnerships have been developed that support the social recreation and cultural needs of older adults. Examples of these partnerships include: the Primary Care Network and Recreation Parks and Culture.
- Some organizations have played lead roles in specific programming such as: the Primary Care Network's walking program (coordinated with Millennium Place), the Chronic/Complex/Geriatric Program and coaching that is provided to older adults regarding the use of exercise in the management of chronic disease, as well as the Mental Health Program which provides non-urgent health supports and navigation to social services for older adults suffering from anxiety, depression, bereavement and other social stressors.
- Heartland Housing Foundation is a depot for the frozen Meals on Wheels Program.
- Fire and Falls Prevention Program. At the age of 65, older adults are twice as likely to be killed or injured in a fire compared to the population at large. Strathcona County Emergency Services implemented the National Fire Protection Association, "Remembering When" program that is centered on educating seniors on fire and fall prevention strategies to reduce this risk.

Health and Social Services Determinants

Goal 13: Supports in the Home

- Snow Busters, Lawn Busters and Small Jobs Big Hearts volunteer programs were created to support older adults living in the community with home maintenance supports.
- The Home Support Program continued and is increasingly in high demand.
- A Seniors Outreach Program was implemented.
- A Strathcona County Elder Abuse Working Group was established.
- Alberta Health Services Home Care supports older adults with supports in their homes.
- Home Safety Survey Program - Strathcona County Emergency Services is committed to supporting our older adults in the home. SCES implemented an in-home safety survey where both fall and fire hazards are identified and we work with the resident to mitigate any dangers. We further assist in developing a home escape strategy around any disabilities and test all smoke alarms for sensitivity.



Going Forward

With the completion of the current Older Adults Plan we are looking forward to align future directions for older adults with the 2017 Strathcona County Social Framework outcomes of affordability; access to programs and services; safety; and connectedness and inclusion. While multiple actions including programs and educational opportunities will continue to support older adults in a variety of ways, it will be important to identify how to bring activities together in a way that helps to address persistent issues facing the older population. The public engagement which informed the development of the Social Framework pointed to issues such as social isolation; and the need for streamlined access to programs and services, affordable housing, and increased mental health services.

The Social Framework calls for a systems approach which recognizes that all social organizations and the individuals within them are connected and form a complex whole. At a systems level, when contributing organizations work together to see beyond silos, they can identify areas for greater, system-wide, collaborative approaches to address issues facing the older adult population in Strathcona County.

New approaches are being developed to assist families facing complex challenges. The newly evolving **solutions navigation** approach is based on the strengths and assets of the individual and their family. It will offer office-based and outreach support to access resources and help navigate systems that might appear as roadblocks to connect and receive social supports. This solutions navigation approach is built on strong collaborative working relationships with community members, service providers, community agencies and volunteers building successful connections.

Creating path ways that are easy to navigate is a clear direction tied to the Social Framework outcome of providing citizens straightforward access to programs that are easy to find. Strathcona County is undertaking a study to assess the feasibility of a **community hub/seniors centre** which would serve as an entry point for community residents to connect with one another and more easily access programs and services.

The **home making program** in Strathcona County will continue to support older adults and other eligible residents who need assistance in their homes. The home making program aligns with the solutions navigation approach and contributes to the Social Framework outcomes by providing affordable accessible services, enabling individuals to remain safely in their homes and reducing their social isolation.

Walk-in counselling is being implemented to provide accessible, affordable services to meet the social needs of the community, including older adults. No appointment is necessary and fees are “pay what you can afford”. Free adult counselling groups are also available for adults to gather together for support and encouragement.

To effectively address the current and future needs of our older adult population and in alignment with Strathcona County’s new Social Framework, a thoughtful and aligned approach will be used as we continue to work alongside individuals, families, organizations and community groups, to envision what our community can do together, so that everyone including older adults feel supported, safe, and connected.





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