

Seniors' Supports and Services Project

Stakeholder Conversations Report Summary
August 2021



Strathcona County is taking efforts to respond to the needs of seniors in the community. Through the combination of a research and public engagement, Strathcona County is working with community to identify what opportunities and services currently exist for seniors, and where the County can provide further supports. The focus of this project is on age-friendly approaches to gathering spaces, mental health, wellbeing, recreation, transit, housing, and volunteerism.

Engagement Results

From June – August 2021, Strathcona County hosted community conversations to collect a more robust understanding of the experiences of seniors in the County. Five stakeholder conversations were held with individuals representing seniors, and senior-serving groups and organizations.

The stakeholder conversations were focused on questions about the current and future needs of seniors, and opportunities for meaningful connection and participation in community. The following questions and probes were asked of participants:

1. In an ideal world, (acknowledging that we're not in an ideal world) what is your vision for what Strathcona County could look like for the variety of need of older adults?
 - What would support you in making this vision happen throughout the years?
2. How can we support seniors to become/remain active participants in community?
 - How can we honor the seniors in our community?
3. When and where do seniors have meaningful connection in the community?
 - Is a seniors-only hub an option?
 - What are the benefits of a seniors-only space?
 - What are barriers to seniors forming meaningful connection in community?
 - How could those barriers be minimized?

This document outlines the key themes and sample comments from those stakeholder conversations. The comments and conversations did not necessarily follow the structure of the questions; therefore, the conversations are presented by theme rather than by question. These findings will be used to inform the final report to Council at the end of the year.



Sense of belonging and inclusion for seniors

Theme	Sample Comments
Seniors need to be supported to feel a sense of belonging and inclusion	<p>We see seniors that are here and don't have many connection; moving to Sherwood Park in later years to be close to family but don't have many connections. Moving into a new community you don't have history and deep relationships.</p> <p>It doesn't matter your age. Everyone wants to feel needed. Everyone wants to get involved.</p> <p>They just want something to call their own place, this is where I'm comfortable, this is where my friends come.</p>
Recognition of seniors' value in the community	<p>I want to see greater awareness of the contributions and the needs of seniors now...</p> <p>I don't think the overall community has a good sense of what it's like to age, that we're not old and senile and useless and don't have anything to offer anymore, that it's quite the opposite, we're a wealth of information, and a wealth of experience, and the greater community would benefit from knowing that</p> <p>How do we continue to find and honour meaningful engagement in the broader community, how do we continue to drawn on their wisdom, how do show value in a community that may not recognize value because they are not contributing to the bottom line, how do we as a community show value and wisdom, how your life has so much value and meaning</p>
Solutions to support seniors feeling welcome and included	<p>Maybe meeting with parks and recs, and festival place, and GARC, and figuring out where to bring more of a senior's focus activities, more of a simple space where people can go to the same space and feel comfortable there. Maybe can rent festival place for senior's dances. Places in the community that can be focused more on the older adult group while we go through this process.</p> <p>Look into creative solutions, like partnering to use buses to transport seniors to events.</p> <p>Providing the spaces for connection. They want to connect. If you build it, they will come.</p>
Connection points in the community	<p>It's a connected community. We look at isolation – such a driver and determinant of health and outcomes. and loss of social engagement and skills. The connection both socially is important.</p> <p>The connection piece. No matter your ability you have a place to belong and participate fully.</p>
Intergenerational spaces	<p>Having a variety of groups involved in the conversation. E.g. multigenerational. To make sure we understand how we can actually interact together.</p> <p>I would love to see a blend of intergenerational and seniors' space.</p>



Considerations for supports, services, and spaces to meet seniors' needs

Theme	Sample Comments
Specialized considerations for supports, services, and spaces to meet seniors' needs	They just want to be somewhere that isn't really busy, or really noisy, or really active or difficult to get to.
	One thing that gets in the way is the ability of seniors to communicate. Hearing, vision loss. All those things can get in the way. In a social environment, she can only hear noise.
	Accessibly, whether that means running a bus, or is accessibility means something in the mail. Those are all accessibility issues. Don't make it difficult for people to get into the building.
Centralized point of services and supports	Long-term you need a place for seniors to come ... seniors centres are hubs, active, vibrant ...
	Coming together to share knowledge, share what works, for someone to find it in one spot
Affordability as a barrier	Sherwood Park generally has a high-income level, but seniors may be on fixed incomes ... access to programs is tied to how much disposable income a senior has ... if you have to pay for parking, or pay for transportation to get there, do you have enough left for registration fees
	I'm more concerned about the people who can't afford to get there and buy a membership and take a taxi to get there. I think the well-off seniors with means, seniors who are very active, they need a place to go. But I'm kind of thinking about that other group. They've always sort of been left behind and they will continue to be left behind.
Connection and accessibility for rural residents	Rural seniors and urban seniors may face different challenges. Our municipality is big. Transportation can be challenging.
	Location of centres are accessible and are localized, we can't forget SC is a large area, prioritizing to make locations as highly accessible as possible so physical location is not a barrier, coordinate transportation
Gathering spaces to be with and connect with people your own age	Important for seniors to interact with their peers for mental wellbeing ... critical to health and wellbeing
	We want to go to someplace where we can meet with people of our own age
Connecting with people with common interests	When they can connect with like interests. You can't put all seniors in the same bag. There's lots that have different interests They want to find people they can connect with that have the same interests as them, maybe it's a monthly dance, common ground that they can connect with others who have the same background or vision or interests ... yet still open to new experiences.
	One thing we forget, when seniors talk to seniors, they can share common memories. Some family members can't relate to these stories.



Coordination of information and services

Theme	Sample Comments
Coordination of information	Where can I go in the community? Its education and getting out to key leaders.
	Want to see seniors as full and active participants. Getting information. How do I get info online? It's confusing. How do I navigate the noise from what's online? Awareness of what's available and then figuring out how to get there.
	Getting information out. Conversation about silos within different organizations. Seniors Find something they like, and stay within that bubble.
	Critical to upgrade the website so it is dedicated to seniors, everything together/need to know what else there is, they have little patience in terms of wanting all the information.
System coordination	Having these activities to cross and interact with each other, lots of shared opportunities and knowledge. We aren't tapping into enough. The more I get involved with different groups it sparks and we cross connect. These types of gatherings and sharing's and building facilities and resources.
	Similar to the Social framework this is a good way to connect – initial group that find value in connecting. I know we started pre-COVID but we could reactivate to connect.
Vision, plan, and action moving forward	To have an actual vision and plan, an action plan, for moving forward
	Need to land on a pragmatic solution and engage the community in the conversation. There's a case to be made, but we need to be pragmatic
	Look at Sherwood park. Family orientated. As we are making that shift to being more seniors. Making that mindshift to incorporate seniors in all that we do.
	Needs to be sustainability, sustainability has to be in there
Collaboration and sharing resources	Looking at what's there already. We've got so many resources how do we link them together as a seniors I know what they are and what available. Not wanting to recreate the wheel.
	Awareness. Learning what is happening in our community.
	What else are we missing that is not well known? How do we get the information to everyone? Community understanding of the resources available. Not just to seniors



Supports to age in your own community

Theme	Sample Comments
Seniors aging in their own homes and community	<p>Look at the determinants of aging, how do we meet the physical, mental, social needs of older adults to stay independent and be able to live in their own homes longer</p> <p>By the time people need support their financial or health situation is dire, they could have been supported proactively, not aging as well as they could be – an earlier intervention could have kept them in their homes longer</p> <p>Currently looking into a provincial program to help seniors stay in their own homes. Those kinds of these things are all of the ways we can do a better job all the way around of helping our seniors.</p>
Providing caregiver support	<p>Supporting caregivers in an appropriate way and ensuring caregivers are getting their needs met in a way that is respectful of their needs.</p> <p>The important role that family members play in helping seniors thrive. The fact that by supporting family caregivers, we are actually supporting seniors. Allows for family members to focus on visiting, not caretaking.</p>

What's Next?

The analysis of these conversations, as well as the results from the Seniors' Supports and Services Survey, will be used to inform the final report to Council at the end of 2021.

For the full list of responses, see the Full What We Heard Report.



Find more information about seniors supports and services at strathcona.ca/seniors

More Information

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