

# Age-friendly Kingston Community Alliance Backgrounder



In late 2011, City Council appointed a Seniors Advisory Committee with a mandate to develop an “Age-friendly” Plan for the City of Kingston in keeping with the theme and direction of the World Health Organization (WHO)’s Age-friendly Cities Programme.

The WHO Age-friendly Cities Programme is an international effort to help cities prepare for two global demographic trends: the rapid ageing of populations and increasing urbanization. The Programme targets the environment, social and economic factors that influence the health and well-being of older adults. The City of Kingston became part of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities in 2012.

The first stage in becoming an Age-friendly city is a planning stage requiring completion of a baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the city ensuring involvement from older adults in the planning process.

City staff prepared a Profile of Older Adults providing socio-demographic information about older adults in Kingston who currently account for 16.5% of the total population. Factoring in the 45-65 year age group or the future cohort of older persons, the reality is approximately 44% of the population of Kingston is already in or will be entering into the older adult classification in the next decade.

The City followed the WHO protocol which adopts a locally-driven and “bottom-up” approach that starts with the lived experience of older persons regarding what is, and what is not, age-friendly, and what could be done to improve the City’s age-friendliness. Six focus groups were held with citizens, caregivers and community agencies. The feedback collected from these focus groups as well as input from City staff across the Corporation forms the basis for this report.

Information was collected on the eight domains identified by the WHO, namely: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; civic participation and employment; communication and information; and community support and health services. For each domain information is presented on: the WHO key features; identified gaps from focus group feedback; challenges for Kingston; current strengths, planned City initiatives and policies; and recommendations from the Seniors Advisory Committee.

While participants presented a range of perspectives and opinions on the age-friendliness of the City, four themes emerged from the focus group participants.

### **“We want to stay in our homes”**

Ensuring the built environment and community supports are in place to allow citizens to live in their homes and their neighbourhoods for as long as they are able.

### **“We want to be actively involved in the Kingston community”**

Ensuring transportation is accessible; and affordable recreational, cultural and social opportunities are available across the geographic region.

### **“We want to know what is going on and where to get help when we need it”**

Ensuring timely, accessible and clear communication is provided on everything from events to community supports using a variety of methodologies.

### **“We want to be respected”**

Ensuring opportunities for seniors to contribute through volunteerism are coordinated; customer service training is provided on the needs of our ageing population and municipal planning activities are carried out through an age-friendly lens.

In total, there were fifty-eight recommendations in the Age-friendly Kingston Stage One Report to address these themes. The recommendations were focused on municipal programs, services and infrastructure as well as suggested partnerships with business and community organizations.

City Council then established an Age-friendly Advisory Committee in 2013 to work with staff to develop an action plan. In consultation with the appropriate City staff, the committee assessed the recommendations in the Stage One Report, determined which recommendations had already been implemented and to what degree by City staff in 2013 and 2014 and which recommendations still required further action in 2015 and 2016. The resulting Age-friendly Kingston Stage Two Report – Action Plan is a companion document to the Stage One Report and recommended twenty actions for the City of Kingston for 2015 and 2016.

One of the twenty recommendations was the creation of a community-based age-friendly committee to broaden the mandate beyond municipal programs and services. The new Age-friendly Kingston Community Alliance (AFKCA) began meeting in 2015 with a purpose to engage the community in assessing how age-friendly the community is based on the WHO eight domains; build on the work done through the City of Kingston; and build awareness and provide support to age-friendly initiatives across the community.

AFKCA membership includes a core planning group comprised of the United Way of KFL&A, Seniors Association Kingston Region; Kingston Police, KFL&A Public Health, the City of Kingston, Alzheimer’s Society of KFL&A, Ontario Seniors Secretariat, Centre for Studies in Aging and Health-Providence Care and the Ontario Age-friendly Community Planning Outreach Initiative. Additional members are added as needed to fulfill the Alliance’s purpose.

In 2015, AFKCA hired Nanos Research to conduct a phone survey of 600 older adult households in Kingston to get their views on the age-friendliness of the community. The results of the survey were in line with the results of the focus groups held in 2012 and will be used to identify future work for the AFKCA to work toward continuous improvement in the age-friendliness of the city.