Appendix D – 2018 Age Friendly Initiatives

Age-friendly community

As Canada's senior population continues to grow, it's more important than ever to support the health and wellbeing of older Canadians. That's why the Town of Oakville is taking steps to become a more age-friendly community where all residents can be active and engaged members of the community at every stage of life. Conducted in 2016, the town's Age-friendly Assessment established a baseline of the town's current "age-friendliness" and set a direction for moving forward with future age-friendly planning.

In 2017 continuing into 2018, work began on implementing recommendations to help Oakville become more age-friendly. Progress is explored in detail in each of the eight World Health Organization (WHO) dimensions of an age-friendly community (descriptions of the WHO age-friendly dimensions are from the Ontario Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide).

1. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

When people view a neighbourhood as safe and accessible, it encourages outdoor activities or engagement with the community. Accessibility involves removing barriers that limit opportunities for people with disabilities, including older adults with age-related impairments, and allowing older adults to participate in social activities or to access important health and social services and businesses.

Common Barriers:

- Crosswalks not providing enough time to cross
- Accessible walkways (widening sidewalks, sidewalks on more roads, accessible curb cuts, maintenance of sidewalks)
- Roads not wide enough to accommodate motorists, cyclists and parking
- More rest spots needed at bus stops, parks and along streets
- Accessibility of parks and trails
- Need for more public washrooms (in some parks)

Actions

Baseline
1. Municipal facilities constructed and renovated to Oakville Universal Design Standards for town facilities. The standards provide an innovative and detailed approach for the design of barrier free and accessible facilities that consider the usability and respect the dignity of persons with disabilities

2. Improved safety of crosswalks through Pedestrian Safety Program which identified over 170 locations for controlled pedestrian crossings throughout the town to improve crossing time and distance to controlled crossing locations
3. Improved safety and accessibility of sidewalks through sidewalk inspection and trip ledge repair program
4. Initiated accessibility audit of town's 224 kilometre recreational trail network
5. Installed playgrounds with accessible features at Trafalgar Park, Florence Park, Margot Street Park, Munn's Creek Park, and Riverbank Way Park
6. Improved availability and accessibility of park washrooms through construction of barrier-free washroom buildings at Forster Park and Memorial Park
7. Strong agreement by residents of availability of public parks, trails and conservation sites in Oakville; residents praise Oakville parks as "favourite spaces"

Update

- Updated Oakville Universal Standards for town facilities to include lessons learned as well as latest developments in accessible design
  - Completed construction of Trafalgar Park Community Centre meeting all of the accessibility standards of the Oakville Universal Design Standards for town facilities. Accessibility features include accessible ramps, large power operated doors, colour contrasting throughout, LED lighting, accessible washrooms and change rooms, and an accessible senior's kitchen facility
  - Improved accessibility at several town facilities through targeted renovations
- Installed 10 pedestrian crossovers as part of the Pedestrian Safety Program and installed 444 tactile plates to sidewalk ramps
- Completed 1,033 kilometres in annual sidewalk network inspection and trip ledge repair program
- Completed accessibility audit of town's recreational trail network and added 700 metres of multi-use trails in Burloak Waterfront Park
- Designed town parks with accessibility features such as sensory and active play components, and have a ground surface that is firm and stable and sufficient clearance for people with disabilities to move through and around the play space
- Constructed barrier-free washroom buildings at Oakville Park
- 2017 Town of Oakville Citizen Survey results indicate 67 per cent of Oakville residents identified that they are "very satisfied" with Oakville's parks and green space

2. Transportation

The condition and design of transportation-related infrastructure such as signage, traffic lights and sidewalks affects personal mobility. Access to reliable, affordable public transit becomes increasingly important when driving becomes stressful or challenging.

Common Barriers:
- Access to affordable public transportation
- Ease of cycling in Oakville
- Seniors not accessing public transit
- Available transit to parks and trails
- Events and programs not coordinated with transit schedules
- Insufficient lighting on some rural roads

Actions

Baseline
1. Reviewed the Active Transportation Master Plan to improve the town's cycling, walking and transportation networks
2. Accepted reservations for specialized transit via phone and interactive voice response (IVR)
3. Seniors Working Action Group (SWAG) and Oakville Transit host a "Ride the Bus" information session for seniors to improve education, awareness and accessibility of transit services
4. Offered free transit for seniors every Monday and partnered with Halton Region in providing a subsidy for Oakville residents living on low income or receiving Ontario Disability Support payments
5. Provided dedicated once-per-week special transit service for seniors to a destination of their choosing for those living in one of the town's three senior residences
6. Provided specialized transit services for persons with disabilities
7. Allowed support persons to travel free of charge when accompanying someone with a disability who has an identified medical requirement for support
8. Provided Intelligent Transportation System which delivers electronic pre-boarding and on-board visual and verbal announcements of route, direction, destination or next major stop as well as real time bus times and tracking making it easier for people of all abilities to ride the bus
9. Provided accessibility training for transit drivers
10. Continued annual program to improve accessibility of bus stops

Update
- Completed 2017 Active Transportation Master Plan and approved by Council. Added new signed bike routes and bike lanes and introduced bike stands at select transit stops to enhance access to services by all modes
- Launched new self-serve booking options for using specialized transit. Customers can book by web, app or automated phone, seven days per week during service hours, providing greater flexibility for customers. This new system also provides day before automated reminder notifications
- Continued to provide existing programs and services

3. Housing

For many older adults, aging in place is desirable. The availability of appropriate, affordable housing with a choice of styles and locations which incorporates flexibility through adaptive features, is essential for age-friendly communities.

Common Barriers:
- Access to affordable housing
- Inadequate range of housing options for seniors (i.e., accessible housing, housing with supports, long-term care homes)
- Lack of supports to age at home
- Insufficient awareness of housing and support options
- Housing that is located near transportation, amenities and services

Actions

Baseline
1. Reviewed regulations to permit second units (basement apartments, garage suites) to help seniors remain at home or close to family
2. Offered driveway snow windrow clearing program for seniors 65 years and older and people with physical disabilities or medical conditions that are unable to clear the windrow on their own
3. Participated in Halton Region's Older Adult Full Property Tax Deferral Program financial assistance program designed to help eligible, low-income seniors by deferring their property taxes
4. Provided information on Halton Region programs and resources to assist older adults with meeting their housing needs such as Housing Stability Fund, Accessibility Repair Program and the Housing Options for Older Adults in Halton guide

Update
- Updated Zoning By-law 2014-014 and Zoning By-law 2009-189 to include provisions which permit second units throughout the town
- Continued to provide existing programs and services (for items 2-4 above)

4. Respect & Social Inclusion

Community attitudes, such as a general feeling of respect and recognizing the role that older adults play in our society, are critical factors for establishing an age-friendly community. Age-friendly communities foster positive images of aging and intergenerational understanding to challenge negative attitudes.

Common Barriers:
- Feelings of ageism and being undervalued
- Need to recognize diversity to better understand how people engage and participate in the community

- Gap in connecting with individuals who are isolated
- Insufficient outreach to new (older) residents

Actions

Baseline

1. Provided safe spaces for older adult programs and services such as book clubs, seniors' focused programs and access to free WiFi as well as assistive technologies and special collections at seniors centres, libraries and community centres
2. Offered weekly friendship luncheons at three seniors centres for 60 socially isolated seniors. The program includes a hot lunch, exercise program and socializing with volunteers and peers
3. Provided Oakville Museum Exhibition Outreach Program to seniors residences and assisted living centres, reaching audiences across town who are unable to visit an exhibit
4. Offered conversation circle groups at Iroquois Ridge Older Adults Centre and the Oakville Seniors Centre to provide seniors from diverse communities an opportunity to talk with new immigrants and practice speaking English
5. Offered virtual tours of the second floor of the Oakville Museum (using a large screen installed on main floor) for visitors with physical disabilities

Update

- Launched Meet, Move and Play program providing free recreational programs at local parks with activities that are diverse and inclusive to get residents of all ages and abilities active and engaged
- Hosted a National Access Awareness Week event promoting awareness about accessibility and celebrating inclusion
- Continued to provide existing programs and services

5. Civic Participation & Employment

Civic engagement includes older adults' desire to be involved in aspects of community life that extend beyond their day-to-day activities, such as volunteering, becoming politically active, voting or working on committees. Economic security is important for many older adults, particularly those with low and fixed incomes. The ability of an older adult to remain employed or find new employment provides economic security, and it benefits employers who recognize the experience and commitment that older employees bring to the workplace.

Common Barriers:

- Uncertainty among residents of opportunities to participate in municipal processes
- Meeting needs of diverse interests and skills level of older adult volunteer sector
- Creating employment opportunities for 'young' seniors (i.e., 50-65 years)

Actions

Baseline
1. Provided accessible voting locations and accessible equipment for municipal elections and trained election staff on accessible customer service
2. Implemented Planning Accessible Meetings and Events Procedure ensuring reasonable accommodations were made to ensure all participants could access meeting space and event information
3. Provided live and on-demand closed captioning of Town Council and committee meetings through the town's YouTube channel
4. Oakville Public Library and town seniors' centres partnered with Volunteer Halton to assist older adults find volunteer opportunities and make connections within the community
5. Provided volunteer opportunity for older adults to provide delivery and pick-up services for all residents who are confined to their home, a senior's residence or a health care facility due to a physical and/or mental disability
6. Provided support to the town's Seniors Working Action Group that assists town staff in supporting the well-being of seniors and holds information sessions for the community on topics pertaining to the senior population
7. Implemented Accommodation Procedure which offers support to employees who required temporary or permanent work accommodation

Update
- Provided accessible voting locations and equipment for 2018 municipal election
- Launched public engagement hub providing all town engagement activities/initiatives in one location on town's website
- Continued to provide existing programs and services

6. Social Participation

Interacting with family and friends is an important part of positive mental health and community awareness. Social participation involves the level of interaction that older adults have with other members of their community and the extent to which the community itself makes this interaction possible.

Common Barriers:
- Social isolation and loneliness
- Need opportunities to engage people from all backgrounds (cultural, ethnic, economic)
- Affordability of programs for low-income seniors

Actions

Baseline

1. Provided a range of recreational, cultural, spiritual and social activities for older adults such as music lessons, art lessons, bridge classes, fitness classes, language classes, book clubs and computer lessons
2. Provided two seniors' centres and three older adults centres located in community centres that provide a dedicated, welcoming and accessible space for older adults and help reduce social isolation
3. Through its Speaker Series program, Oakville Public Library provides free drop-in informative sessions on topics such as seniors housing, fire prevention and home safety, internet safety, tax planning, wills, probate and power of attorney, long-term care clients rights and seniors' license driver renewal
4. Provided support for residents in need to participate in recreational and cultural programs and services through the Recreation Connection Fund

Update

- Introduced Come Together: Intergenerational Storytime, a bi-weekly program at Chartwell Retirement Residence providing an opportunity for children, families, and residents to sing and read stories together
- Continued to provide existing programs and services

7. Communication & Information

Age-friendly communities ensure that information about community events and important services is both readily accessible and in formats that are appropriate for older adults. Moreover, an age-friendly community recognizes the diversity within the older adult population and promotes outreach initiatives to non-traditional families, minorities, newcomers and aboriginal communities.

Common Barriers:

- Residents and stakeholders expressed challenges navigating town website
- Lack of awareness of range of existing programs and services (housing, health, social support)
- Insufficient understanding of how older adults are accessing information
- Access to information in different languages and in appropriate locations/platforms for diverse backgrounds
- Many stakeholders reported often hearing about activities or events that they wished they'd known about earlier

Actions

Baseline

1. Published Seniors Services newsletter twice a year to highlight programs offered at seniors' centres

2. Offered the Seniors' Series, a free, weekly drop-in for older adults with diverse needs to increase awareness of community resources related to health and wellness, financial literacy and safety
3. Offered information sessions for the older adult community through the town's Seniors Working Advisory Group
4. Provided information Halton Seniors' Services Directory webpage provides information on services and community groups of specific interest to seniors and caregivers
5. Provided adult newcomer programming through Oakville Public Library including searching for work, computer classes, immigration information, settlement services, Canadian citizenship test preparation, ESL family sessions, conversation circles and immigration sessions for caregivers in Canada offered in both English and Mandarin
6. Provided inclusive customer service as town's main point of contact for the community and is equipped to address service requests in 150 languages through Language Line service
7. Offered assistive devices such as iPad Pro, TTY and wheel chairs to provide assistance for individuals with a variety of different needs including those where a language barrier may exist
8. Delivered the Oakville Beaver to seniors' centres to ensure older adults have access to information on current events
9. Provided free access to computers and Wi-Fi at library branches, seniors' centres and town facilities
10. Improved accessibility of town's website and provided access to information on town website in different languages through Google Translate

Update
- Provided new support groups to caregivers, spouses and family members of those with Alzheimer's and dementia
- Continued to provide existing programs and services

8. Community Support & Health Services

Good mental and physical health contributes to quality of life and age-friendliness. When evaluating age-friendliness, consider access to community-related services that support physical or mental well-being and the availability of health promotion or awareness services that promote and support healthy behaviours and life choices.

Common Barriers:
- Insufficient awareness of informal support services (i.e. meal programs, volunteer driving, places of social interaction)
- Need for greater knowledge, coordination, and delivery of current support services
- Gap in availability and accessibility of mental health services
- System navigation is a need; connecting seniors to the services they need when they need them

- Access to health care and support services in the home

Actions

Baseline

1. Provided information on services offered by Halton Region for seniors and older adults including emergency and short-term assistance; supportive housing programs; long-term care options; adult day programs; and fall prevention strategies and more
2. Provided support to agencies and organizations across the community that offer support services such as volunteer visiting, meals, home care, and educational programs such as fall prevention and legal advice
3. Provided information on services provided by community groups such as Halton Seniors Helpline, Oakville (Kiwanis) Meals on Wheels, OTMH outpatient clinics and community programs and ConnectCARE, and emergency response system run by Halton Healthcare Services and Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital
4. Provided information on services offered by the provincial government including general information on all provincial government programs and services, provincial government services pertaining to seniors (Seniors' INFOline) and Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
5. Provided information on services offered by the federal government including income security programs, Veterans Affairs Canada and Telefile Canada (a call-in tax-return service for eligible seniors)

Update

- Helped build awareness, remove stigma and develop tools on responding to mental health issues in the workplace through Workplace Mental Health Leadership Certification Program sessions
- Continued to provide existing programs and services