



AGE-FRIENDLY ORILLIA
'What We Heard Report'
Community Engagement Summary Report



Age-Friendly Orillia
COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all the City of Orillia residents, Members of Council, Staff, and community organizations for taking the time to share your experiences, wisdom, and guidance throughout the various age-friendly community engagement activities.

We are especially grateful to have the Age-Friendly Orillia Advisory Committee providing leadership and support through the age-friendly planning process and for providing guidance in the direction of the Community Action Plan:

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Orillia and the Age-Friendly Orillia Advisory Committee are taking important steps to becoming an age-friendly city, where all residents can be active and engaged members of the community at every stage of life. Work is currently underway to develop the City's first Age-Friendly Community Action Plan. As part of this work, a series of community engagement activities were carried out from May to August 2021. This report summarizes the experiences and insights shared by residents, community service providers and organizations, and City staff and Members of Council.

Engagement activities were aimed at hearing a range of opinions and experiences on the current and future age-friendly needs across the City of Orillia, and to begin to identify actions for the future. This report outlines what we are hearing so far.

More opportunities to engage with residents and stakeholders on the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan will be coming up in November 2021.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Age-friendly communities support aging with dignity, respect, and independence, and promote the inclusion of older adults in all areas of community life. Importantly, by planning for the needs of the older-adult population, age-friendly communities are designed to better meet the needs of all residents.

The concept of age-friendly communities was developed in 2006/2007 when the World Health Organization (WHO) developed the Global Age-Friendly Cities Project. This project brought together cities from around the world that had an interest in supporting healthy aging by creating communities that were more age-friendly. The activities of this project helped to identify eight key areas of community life in which communities can become more age-friendly.

The WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities was established in 2010 and now includes 100 cities and communities worldwide, including age-friendly initiatives across many communities in Canada¹.

In Ontario, the province developed an Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide, updated earlier this year, that is aligned with the WHO framework and that defines an age-friendly community as “one that responds to both the opportunities and challenges of an ageing population by creating physical and social environments that support independent active living and enable older people to continue contributing to all aspects of community life”².

The City of Orillia’s Age-Friendly Community Action Plan is guided by the WHO framework and Ontario’s Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide, and considers these eight dimensions.

¹ World Health Organization (WHO). About the Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities. <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/who-network/>

² Ontario (2021). Creating a more inclusive Ontario: age-friendly community planning guide for municipalities and community organizations. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/creating-more-inclusive-ontario-age-friendly-community-planning-guide-municipalities-and-community>

³ Adapted from Ontario (2021). Creating a more inclusive Ontario: age-friendly community planning guide for municipalities and community organizations. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/creating-more-inclusive-ontario-age-friendly-community-planning-guide-municipalities-and-community>

Key Areas of Community Life³



Outdoor spaces and public buildings are pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible.



Public transportation is accessible and affordable, a variety of transportation options are available, and transportation-related infrastructure is designed with older adults in mind.



Housing is affordable, appropriately located, well built, well designed and secure.



Opportunities exist for social participation in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities with people of all ages and cultures.



Older people are treated with respect and are included in community life.



There are opportunities for employment and civic participation that cater to older persons’ interests and abilities, and accessible workplaces are available.



Age-friendly communication and information on programs and services is available in appropriate formats.



Community support and health services are tailored to older persons’ needs and are well promoted.



ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Engagement Process

Listening to and learning from the experiences of residents and community stakeholders is the core component in defining a direction forward and in creating a more age-friendly community for all. An inclusive and robust community engagement plan was critical to the development of Orillia’s Age-Friendly Community Action Plan.

Community engagement activities are all aimed at building awareness for the project and age-friendly planning, sharing key learnings and experiences, and collecting experiences and feedback on the current and future age-friendly needs and opportunities across the City of Orillia. Ultimately, the insights collected will help create a meaningful and impactful Age-Friendly Community Action Plan to guide the city and community partners in future planning.

In our engagement approach to help develop the best Plan possible for this community, we aim to:

- Bring people together and listen to all perspectives because all stakeholders have important insights.
- Make sure all consultation activities are respectful and meaningful.
- Use both creative and critical thinking.
- Gather input and ideas in different ways, so that we get a full understanding of ideas, opinions, and opportunities.
- Create recommendations that bring all the ideas together so decisions can be made confidently to grow age friendliness in Orillia.

What We Did

Our approach to engagement during this phase including the following activities:

ACTIVITY	DATE	PARTICIPATION
Telephone Survey with residents 55+	June 20th to June 26th, 2021	155
Online Survey	June 14th to June 28th, 2021	214
Focus Group 1: Age-Friendly Orillia Committee	June 9th, 2021	8
Focus Group 2: Community Service Providers, Organizations, and Clubs	June 16th, 2021	5
Focus Group 3: Council Committees	June 17th, 2021	7
Focus Group 4: Community Service Providers, Organizations, and Clubs	June 17th, 2021	4
Visioning Workshop	June 21st, 2021	25
Pop-Up 1: Meet You on the Patio	August 20th, 2021	22+
Pop-Up 2: Orillia Farmers’ Market	August 21st, 2021	28+
LGBTQ2S+ Community	September 8, 2021	6
Stakeholder Interviews	July to September 2021	8



COMMUNITY REACH⁴

A project-specific website was created on the City's website and a link to the project website was provide on the Age-Friendly Orillia (AFO) website. Multiple communications tactics were used by both the City of Orillia and Age-Friendly Orillia Committee to create awareness about the project and age-friendly community planning and promote the engagement opportunities.



City Project Website:
487 unique views

AFO Website Views⁵:
473 unique views



AFO Facebook:
5 posts

92 people reached



Direct Emails Sent:
68



Media Releases:
2
City Bulletin Ads:
2
Newspaper Articles:
3



Information Orillia eblast:
639 contacts

⁴ As of August 25, 2021
⁵ Between May through to August

What We Asked

As part of the engagement activities, residents and stakeholders were asked to share their perspectives on the following questions:

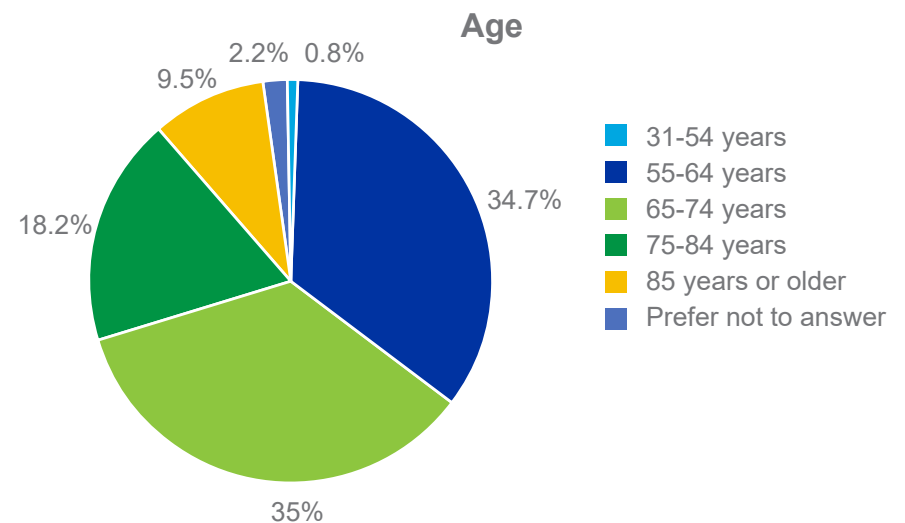
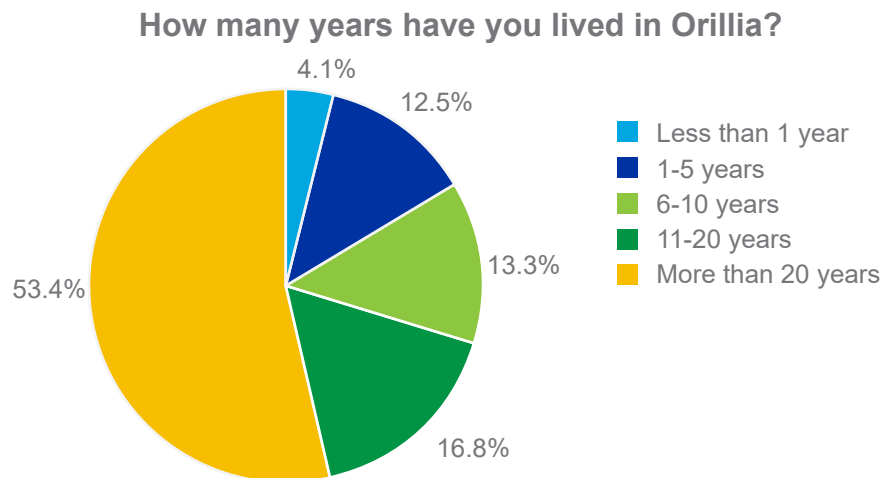
- What kind of city do you want to live in?
- What values do you think should guide the age-friendly planning process?
- In what ways is Orillia an age-friendly community?
- In what ways is Orillia not an age-friendly community? What is missing?
- Are there barriers to remaining in Orillia as people age?
- How could Orillia be more age-friendly?
- What is needed to help people age-in-place?
- What do you think should be a top priority to address in the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan?

The online and telephone survey included more specific questions related to the 8 areas of an age-friendly community. The more detailed questions and responses are provided in Appendix A.

Who We Heard From

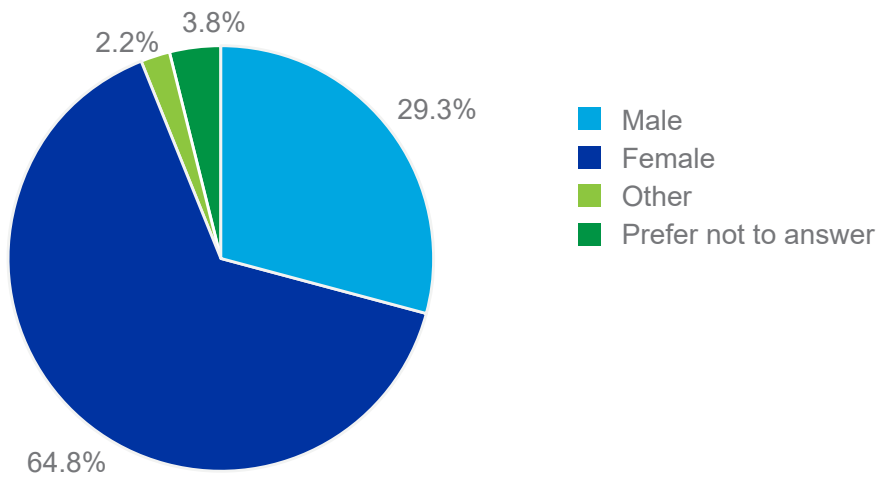
To date, we have heard from approximately **470** people through the engagement process for the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan.

Of the **369** people who have completed either a telephone or online survey, we have heard from the following demographics:

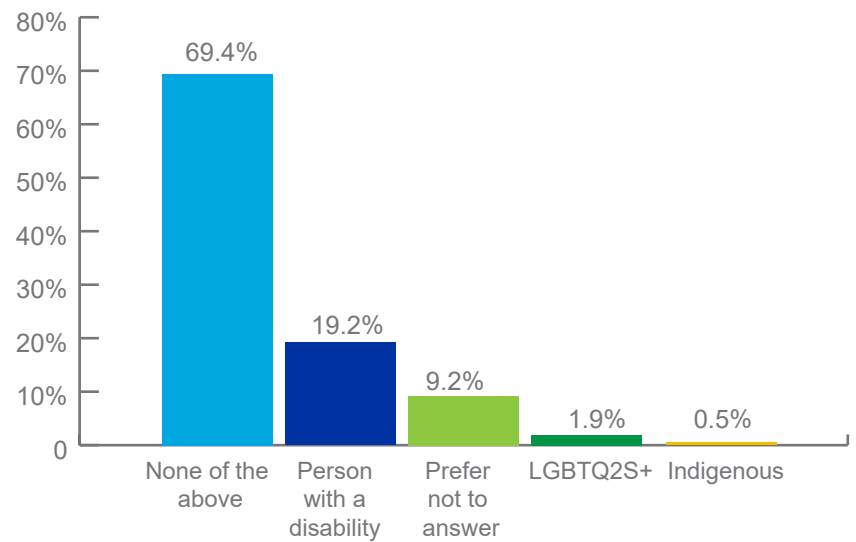




What gender do you identify with?



Do you identify as being part of any of the following groups?



WHAT WE HEARD

During the engagement process, we heard a variety of perspectives and thoughts on a wide range of issues related to current strengths, challenges, and opportunities in age-friendly planning across the city. These views have been organized by the eight (8) areas of age-friendly communities.

Visioning

As part of the engagement process, one of the activities included a virtual Community Visioning Workshop. Residents and stakeholders were invited to attend to share their ideas for an age-friendly Orillia.

Residents were asked to share their thoughts and experiences on what their ideal community would look like as it related to each of the 8 key areas of age-friendly communities. The workshop included a graphic facilitator who listened in to each of the discussions to visually capture the key themes and messages from the various conversations.



Key Themes by Key Areas of Age-Friendly Communities



OUTDOOR SPACES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Residents appreciate the number of park spaces and accessible buildings within the city. While many residents indicated that there are sufficient features like park benches, rest spots, accessible washrooms, and signage, they indicated that there is a need to improve the accessibility and safety in these spaces by fixing pathways to make them accessible by all users, providing more wheelchair parking, and making park furniture sturdier. Residents and stakeholders would like to see more opportunities for intergenerational activities that they can participate in and contribute to the planning efforts.

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many park spaces available to use in the city • “Building spaces within parks are very accessible and clean; spaces are attractive and inviting” • Recreation Centre is a great facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents do not go to some locations throughout the city because of accessibility and safety concerns • Pathways and walking trails are not advertised well so they aren’t being fully used • Uneven sidewalks and lack of accessibility on walkways • Sidewalks and pathways can be difficult to use in the winter if they are not regularly cleared of snow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve snow removal on streets • “Ensuring that [outdoor spaces and buildings] are accessible for all to encourage an active healthy lifestyle.” • Provide raised garden beds in community gardens • Maintain public access to beach • Provide more seating/benches in shaded areas and downtown • Protect trees and tree canopy • Protect existing, and ensure continued creation, of park and open spaces • Provide public washrooms in the downtown • Enhance trail markings



TRANSPORTATION

The City provides public transportation options that are easy to use and plan travel times through available apps and offers some affordable transit programs. While most residents indicated that there are sufficient crosswalks with option to plan travel times on major roads, they felt that several of the pathways and sidewalks are missing connections to important amenities, are often snow-covered and unsafe to use in the winter months and can be dangerous where they are shared with bikes and motorized wheels. Residents also indicated that roads throughout the city are not wide enough to accommodate all uses (parking, motorists, and cyclists) and transit stops are poorly lit and provide inadequate shelter. Residents would like to see more people with mobility issues engaged in the design of the pathways and roads to ensure they are safe and accessible to all modes of travel. Stakeholders and residents also indicated that they would like to see subsidized transit options for seniors.

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public transportation is available and easy to use and plan travel times through the app “OWLS Bus (monthly rate) is good, more affordable, and staff are friendly” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing sidewalk connections reduce connectivity to amenities, especially in newer communities Lack of a variety of affordable modes of transportation for vulnerable populations Safety concerns for pedestrians on pathways that are shared with users on bikes and motorized wheels Transit costs can be a barrier Cannot get to Barrie GO Station by bus Need to improve bike connectivity and signage Parking rates for visitors can be a barrier to attracting visitors and tourists to the area Many people are not aware of transit options within city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and construct roads and sidewalks that are safe and accessible to all modes of travel Increase the number of crosswalks and extend the crossing times to ensure more time for seniors and those with mobility issues to cross safely Engage with people with disabilities when designing transportation and transportation equipment (bus) Offer reduced rates or low-income fares for seniors that rely on public and private transportation Advocate for integrated transportation between communities Ensure transit stops provide shelter and are well lit Provide greater frequency of bus routes Provide more accessible parking Provide alternative transportation options (i.e., door to door accessible transit)



HOUSING

Residents and stakeholders expressed interest in the need for more housing initiatives like the new hub on West Street where there is a variety of housing options, support services and social assistance all in one building. Stakeholders indicated that there is a lack of safe and affordable housing options, and many are living in poor housing conditions. Residents would like to see more in-home services available, like lawn care, cleaning, and home repairs, that offer them the ability to maintain living independently in their own homes. Residents also suggested they would like to see more multi-generational living options.

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• City has an Affordable Housing Committee• New Hub on West Street includes a variety of housing options for all ages, support services, social assistance all in one building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of safe, affordable, and appropriate housing options for all ages which can lead to more barriers to live independently• Many people living in poor housing conditions• “Affordable/accessible housing – lot of people want to live independently in community, but are unable due to lack of appropriate housing”• Lack of affordable housing, nothing is in reach for people on ODSP/social assistance• Homelessness is a concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a range of affordable housing types with access to nearby amenities• Offer home maintenance services (lawncare, home repairs) that allow for various levels of independence• More options for intergenerational living and ‘campus of care’ home care models• Support improvements to homes that make them more accessible• Provide affordable housing options to meet the needs of most vulnerable, persons who are living on income assistance, and people who are homeless• Create more accessible rental housing



RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Residents feel a strong sense of neighbourliness and community in Orillia and they indicated that there are several programs, like the ones offered by the library, that help them stay connected to family, friends, and their communities. Residents indicate that there is a large diversity of ages, interests, and accessibility in the senior's population which could offer a wide variety of inclusive ideas for activities and programs that connect them to their communities. Residents would like to see all ages inspired to work together.

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The City is a ready and willing partner that is aware of the importance of programs that foster respect and social inclusion• The library has programs that offer one-on-one help to seniors to help them stay connected to family, friends, and their communities, such as support with virtual communications and technology• Orillia is a friendly city	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large diversity of ages, interests, access, and ability amongst the senior's population• Booking venues for gatherings can be challenging with long lead times required and lack of availability• Seniors have different wants/needs, depends on person not simply age• Safety on main street is a concern for some	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer affordable, or free, space for non-structured social opportunities for seniors to gather, chat or play cards• Involve seniors in planning committees• "Make sure that programs sound inviting and inclusive. All ages should be inspired to get together"• Share and celebrate the artistic achievements of the community's seniors• Work to ensure equity across city (i.e., access and location of essential services)



CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Orillia offers a lot of opportunity for residents to volunteer and get involved. Residents and stakeholders indicated that they would like to see more training and opportunities to learn new skills. Residents felt that there needs to be more awareness of available opportunities to get involved in municipal affairs, more enrollment opportunities for affordable or free training, skill-building and personal development. Some stakeholders suggested to advertise opportunities for seniors in more locations than online, such as newsletters and newspapers.

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HomeFeast is an existing program that connects seniors with students to help with technology issues• Good that the city is engaging on age-friendly, “Glad you are talking about this”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of available and appropriate volunteers for the various programs and services• Need more financial resources to support the work involved in training running volunteer organizations• Lack of employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More opportunities for seniors to try something new through training and volunteer programs• Create more awareness of the available organizations that offer free help to seniors with technological challenges• Pair seniors with local youth to help with daily tasks, bridge generational gaps, and connect to community



COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Residents and stakeholders appreciate that Orillia offers access to information on programs and services available to adults over the age of 55. However, they felt that there is a lack of awareness and opportunities to learn more about what programs and organizations are being offered and how they can get involved. Residents would like to see networking opportunities to connect a variety of generations and volunteers to organizations within the city. Stakeholders and residents also suggested that using communication tools they are familiar with, such as tv, radio, and newspaper, could help to improve their awareness and access to information about programs, services, and support available.

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programs are offered by OPP to educate and inform about senior's safety• Information Orillia is a great community resource for information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of networking opportunities that informs about what programs and organizations are doing and who requires additional volunteer support• Many seniors are concerned about being targeted and/or taken advantage of by telephone scams / fraud• Lack of access to or awareness about information sharing opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a contact list and share everything going on in the community• Improve access to information about available programs, services, events, and support information for vulnerable populations by using communications tools they are used to using (tv, radio, newspaper ads)• Offer networking opportunities to connect a variety of generations, volunteers, and organizations



COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES

Orillia citizens have good access to pharmacies and affordable quality food and residents and stakeholders agree that city committees continue to advocate for improved access to senior-specific health and wellness programs. Stakeholders indicated that their access to primary medical and dental care, affordable in-home services, and medical supplies is problematic with few practitioners, inefficient awareness and communication, and poor financial assistance to help cover costs. Residents would like to see more resources given to caregivers and improved access to affordable personal and in-home services.

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several groups provide medical assistance, stroke survivor guidance, and bereavement counselling for seniors in the city • Advocates in the city and on committees that continue to push for improved access to senior-specific health and wellness programs • Lots of services available • Geriatric clinic and geriatrician available in the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to primary care is a challenge with a need for more doctors, dentists and limited resources for medical supplies in the home, and lack of financial assistance to help cover costs • Limited access to affordable in-home services, like lawncare, cleaning, grocery delivery, etc. that would help seniors to stay in their homes • “Gaps in home service support” • Navigating the health care system and offering appropriate care for those most at risk (i.e., homeless, isolated seniors, etc.). • “Limited health and human resources” • Difficult to find information about free programming • Food security is a concern • Many people unaware of mental health services in the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more resources for caregivers and have them involved in the decision-making process • More assistance in homes for seniors (technology help, lawncare, groceries, etc.) and connect the senior population with the youth in the community • Improved access to affordable personal care supplies, medical supplies, dental care, health programming, in-home services, etc. • Provide more ‘free’ services to people in need • Create greater awareness of existing services



SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Orillia has a strong capacity for the community to come together, it offers great seniors' programs that help to keep residents feeling connected to their friends, family, and the community. Residents would like to see more programs that encourage intergenerational participation and connection, are affordable, and promote the importance of physical and social activity.

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Capacity for the community to come together, be responsive, and support initiatives”• Library offers affordable programs for tech help, exercise classes, conversation circles, etc.• Programs like Seniors at Play provide access to affordable social, recreational, and physical activity/exercise opportunities• Lots of activities/events, like the Patio event and closure of the main street	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Loss of the YMCA in the community (social hub, connected the community)”• Lack of accessible information to seniors programming in the community• “Ensuring seniors are connecting with one another and various populations”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programming that supports and encourages intergenerational connections, not just seniors and children, but also young and old seniors• Access to information about programs, more than just online communication• Social participation, such as programs like Seniors Helping Seniors, is important for making people feel valued and connected to their community

EMERGING PRIORITIES

Within the various conversations and feedback from residents and stakeholders, the following priorities for age-friendly planning in the City of Orillia are emerging:

- Ensuring the ease of access to information by providing details and announcements about programs, services, and opportunities in places aging adults are used to.
- Providing safe and inclusive access to transportation, open spaces and public buildings, housing, information, programs, and services to all residents.
- Improving accessibility of sidewalks and pathways.
- Increasing the types of housing options to accommodate the diversity of people's needs.
- Creating more awareness and connection to programs, services, and amenities.
- Promoting intergenerational connectivity through support services and programming.
- Ensuring all residents feel valued, respected, and included in the community.

Implementing the recommendations of the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan will not be the sole responsibility of the City of Orillia as a Municipality (as part of their 10-year strategic plan), but will include collaborative action by community service organizations, concerned citizens, and businesses.



NEXT STEPS

Thank-you to everyone for taking the time to share your experiences and insights with us!

These responses will provide guidance in developing the City of Orillia's Age-Friendly Community Action Plan.

Opportunities to provide feedback on the Draft Plan are coming up in early November. To stay informed, please visit

<https://www.orillia.ca/en/living-here/age-friendly-plan.aspx>.